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THE OUTGOING OF SIMEON

By Elizabeth Duer



Simeon Ponsonby—the professor of botany at Harmouth—had married when over forty the eldest daughter of a distinguished though impecunious family in his own college town. His mother, on her deathbed, foresaw that he would need a housekeeper and suggested the match.

“Simeon,” she said, “it isn’t for us to question the Lord’s ways, but I am mortally sorry to leave you, my son; it is hard for a man to shift for himself. I was thinking now if you were to marry Deena Shelton you might go right along in the old house. The Sheltons would be glad to have her off their hands, and she is used to plain living. She would know enough to keep her soup pot always simmering on the back of the range and make her preserves with half the regular quantity of sugar. I like her because she brushes her hair and parts it in the middle, and she has worn the same best dress for three years.”

Soon after Mrs. Ponsonby died and Simeon married Deena.

She didn’t particularly want to marry him, but then, on the other hand, she was not violently set against it. She saw romance through her mother’s eyes, and Mrs. Shelton said Professor Ponsonby was a man any girl might be proud to win. If his sympathies were as narrow as his shoulders, his scientific reputation extended over the civilized world, and Harmouth was proud of the fact. Deena’s attention was not called to his sympathies, and it was called to his reputation.

He proposed to Miss Shelton in a few well-chosen words, placed his mother’s old-fashioned diamond ring on her finger, and urged forward the preparations for the wedding with an impatience that bespoke an ardent disposition. Later Deena learned that his one servant had grown reckless in joints after Mrs. Ponsonby’s death, and the house bills had shocked Simeon into seeking immediate aid.

At twenty Deena was able to accommodate herself to her new life with something more than resignation; a wider experience would have made it intolerable. She was flattered by his selection, proud to have a house of her own, and not sorry to be freed from the burdens of her own home. There were no little Ponsonbys, and there had been five younger Sheltons, all clamoring for Deena’s love and care, whereas Simeon made no claims except that she should stay at home and care for the house and not exceed her allowance. If she expected to see a great deal of her own family she was mistaken, for, while no words passed on the subject, she felt that visiting was to be discouraged and the power to invite was vested in Simeon alone. Respect was the keynote of her attitude in regard to him, and he made little effort to bridge the chasm of years between them.

He was a tall, spare man, slightly stooped, with a prominent forehead, insignificant nose, and eyes red and strained through too ardent a use of the microscope. He habitually wore gold-rimmed spectacles; indeed, he put them on in the morning before he tied his cravat, and took them off at the corresponding moment of undressing at night. His mouth was his best feature, for, while the lips were pinched, they had a kind of cold refinement.

He was a just man but close, and the stipend he gave his wife for their monthly expenses barely kept them in comfort, but Deena had been brought up in the school of adversity, and had few personal needs. Her house absorbed all her interest, as well as stray pennies. The old mahogany furniture was polished till it shone; the Ponsonby silver tea set looked as bright as if no battering years lay between it and its maker’s hand a century ago; the curtains were always clean; the flowers seemed to grow by magic—and Deena still parted her wonderful bronze hair and kept it sleek.

At the end of two years, when she was twenty-two, a ripple of excitement came into her life; another Shelton girl married, and caused even greater relief to her family than had Deena, for she married a Boston man with money. He had been a student at Harmouth and had fallen in love with Polly Shelton’s violet eyes and strange red-gold hair, that seemed the only gold fate had bestowed upon the Sheltons. He took Polly to Boston, where, as young Mrs. Benjamin Minthrop, she became the belle of the season, and almost a professional beauty, though she couldn’t hold a candle to Deena—Deena whose adornment was “a meek and quiet spirit,” who obeyed Simeon with the subjection St. Peter recommended—whose conversation was “chaste coupled with fear.”

But one day all this admirable monotony came to an end quite adventitiously, and events came treading on each other’s heels. It was a crisp October day, and an automobile ran tooting and snorting, and trailing its vile smells, through Harmouth till it stopped at Professor Ponsonby’s gate and a lady got out and ran up the courtyard path. Deena had been trying in vain to make quince jelly stiffen—*jell* was the word used in the receipt book of the late Mrs. Ponsonby—with the modicum of sugar prescribed, till in despair she had resorted to a pinch of gelatine, and felt that the shade of her mother-in-law was ticking the word *incompetent* from the clock in the hall—when suddenly the watchword was drowned in the stertorous breathing of the machine at the gate, and Polly whisked in without ringing and met Deena face to face.

“We have come to take you for a spin in our new automobile,” Polly cried, gayly. “Where is Simeon? You think he would not care to go? Well, leave him for once, and come as far as Wolfshead, and we will lunch there and bring you back before sunset.”

Deena’s delicate complexion was reddened by the heat of the preserve kettle, her sleeves were rolled above her elbows, and a checked apron with a bib acted as overalls. Polly twitched her to the stairs.

“What a fright you make of yourself,” she exclaimed; “and yet, I declare, you are pretty, in spite of it! Ben has to go down in the town to get some more gasoline, and then he means to persuade Stephen French to go with us, so rush upstairs and change your dress while I report to him that you will go, and he will come back for us in half an hour.”

Stephen French, who was to make the fourth in the automobile, was Harmouth’s young professor of zoölogy, a favorite alike with the students and the dons, with the social element in the town as well as the academic. To Ben Minthrop he had been a saving grace during a rather dissipated career at college, and now that that young gentleman was married, and his feet set in the path of commercial respectability, the friendship was even more cemented. On Ben’s part there was admiration and gratitude, on Stephen’s the genuine liking an older man has for a youngster who has had the pluck

to pull himself together. It was a bond between the Shelton sisters that their husbands shared one sentiment in common—namely, a romantic affection for Stephen French.

Deena was standing in her petticoat when her sister joined her in her bed-room—not in a petticoat of lace and needlework, such as peeped from under the edge of Polly's smart frock as she threw herself into a chair, but a skimpy black silk skirt with a prim ruffle, made from an old gown of Mrs. Ponsonby's. It was neat and fresh, however, and her neck and arms, exposed by her little tucked underwaist, were of a beauty to ravish a painter or a sculptor. Polly herself, boyish and angular in build, groaned to think of such perfection "born to blush unseen"; her one season in Boston had demonstrated to her the value of beauty as an asset in that strange, modern exchange we call society. She was evidently trying to say something that would not get itself said, and her elder sister was too busy with her toilet to notice the signs of perturbation. Finally the words came with a rush.

"Deena," she said, "when we were children in the nursery you once said I was a 'coward *at you*'—I remember your very words. Well, I believe I am still! You are so dignified and repressing that I am always considering what you will think a liberty. I have taken a liberty now, but please don't be angry. It does seem so absurd to be afraid to make a present to one's own sister."

She opened the bedroom door, and dragged in a huge box, which she proceeded to uncord, talking all the while.

"I have brought you a dress," she said; "a coat and skirt made for me by R—, but Ben cannot bear me in it because it's so womanish—pockets where no man would have them, and the sleeves all trimmed—and so, as I think it charming myself, I hoped, perhaps, you would accept it."

Both sisters blushed, Polly with shyness, Deena with genuine delight. She loved pretty things, although she rarely yielded to their temptations, and she kissed her sister in loving acknowledgment of the gift. It never occurred to her that Simeon could object.

Polly, in high spirits at her success, next declared that she must arrange Deena's hair, and she pushed her into a low chair in front of the dressing table, and fluffed the golden mane high above the temples, and coiled and pinned it into waves and curls that caught the sunlight on their silken sheen and gave it back. A very beautiful young woman was reflected in old Mother Ponsonby's small looking-glass, a face of character and spirit, in spite of its regularity.

"There, admire yourself!" exclaimed Polly, thrusting a hand mirror into her sister's grasp. "I don't believe you ever look at your profile or the back of your head! You are so busy enacting the part of your own mother-in-law that I only wonder you don't insist upon wearing widow's caps. Oh! I beg your pardon—I forgot that could only be done by forfeiting Simeon! Where do you keep your shirt-waists? This one isn't half bad; let me help you into it."

She chose the least antiquated blouse in Deena's wardrobe, and pinned it into place with the precision of experience; next she hooked the new skirt round the waist and held the little coat for her sister to put on.

"Where is your hat?" she demanded.

Deena fetched a plain black straw, rusty from the sun and dust of two summers, and shook her head as she tried to pinch the bows into shape.

"I shall be like a peacock turned topsy-turvy," she laughed—"ashamed of my head instead of my feet!"

Polly took it out of her hand.

"Of course, you cannot wear *that* with your hair done in the new way—besides, it spoils your whole costume. I saw quite a decent hat in a shop window in the next street. I'll get it for you!" and she was out of the room like a flash of lightning.

Deena ran to the window and caught her mercurial sister issuing from the door below.

"Stop, Polly!" she called. "I cannot afford a new hat, and I cannot accept anything more—please come back."

Polly made a little grimace and walked steadily down the path; at the gate she condescended to remark:

"Have all your last words said to your cook by the time I get back, for Ben will not want to wait."

In ten minutes she returned with a smart little hat, and in answer to Deena's remonstrances, she tossed the condemned one into the wood fire that was burning on the dining-room hearth; at the same instant the automobile arrived at the gate. Deena, nearly in tears, pinned the unwelcome purchase on her head, and followed her sister to the street. The hat set lightly enough on her curls, but it weighed heavily on her conscience.

After the manner of the amateur chauffeur, Ben was doubled up under the front wheels of his motor, offering a stirrup-cup of machine oil to the god of the car, but Stephen French stood at the gate, his grave face lighted up with the fun of a stolen holiday.

"You see a truant professor!" he exclaimed. "Simeon doesn't approve; we couldn't induce him to come. He said a day off meant a night on for him—he is so wise, is Simeon—but I positively had to do something in the way of sport; I am in a reckless mood to-day."

"I'll do the wrecking for you, if that's all you want," came from under the auto's wheels.

Stephen conveyed his thanks.

"I dare say you will, with no effort on your part," he said, opening the back door of the great, puffing monster. "Get in

here, Mrs. Ponsonby. Ben likes his wife beside him in front, he says, because she understands how to run the machine when he blows his nose, but I think it is a clear case of belated honeymoon."

Here Ben scrambled to his feet, his broad, good-humored face crimson from groveling.

"Deena, good-day to you," he cried. "How perfectly stunning you look! I declare I thought Polly was the pick of the Sheltons, but, by Jove! you are running her hard. What have you been doing to yourself?"

Stephen French was delighted—he laughed his slow, reluctant laugh, and then he called to Ben:

"Turn round and see whether you dropped them in the road."

"Dropped what?" asked Ben, his hand on the lever, making a black semicircle.

"Your manners," said Stephen, and chuckled again.

"You go to thunder," roared Ben, shooting ahead. "A poor, wretched bachelor like you instructing a married man how to treat his sister-in-law, and just because once upon a time I sat in your lecture room and let you bore me by the hour about protoplasm! Do you suppose I should dare admit to Polly that Deena is as handsome as she is? Why, man alive, a Russian warship off Port Arthur would be a place of safety compared to this automobile."

Deena, laughing though embarrassed, was trying to cover the countenance that provoked the discussion with a veil, for her hat strained at its pins and threatened to blow back to Harmouth before the knotty point was settled as to who should pay for it.

They were flying between fields strewn with Michaelmas daisies and wooded banks gay with the first kiss of frost, and gradually Deena forgot everything but the exhilaration of rushing through the air, and their attitude of holiday-making. She was thoroughly at her ease with French; he was Simeon's one intimate in the corps of professors, the only creature who was ever welcome at the Ponsonby table, the one discerning soul who found something to admire in Simeon's harsh dealings with himself and the world. Their line of study naturally drew them together, but Stephen admired the man as well as the scholar; the purity of his scientific ambition, the patience with which he bore his poverty—for poverty seemed a serious thing to French, who was a man of independent fortune, and whose connection with the university was a matter of predilection only. With Ponsonby it was bread and butter, and yet he had ventured to marry with nothing but his splendid brain between his wife and absolute want. French stole a glance at Deena, who was looking more beautiful than he had ever seen her, and wondered whether she found her lot satisfactory; whether there were not times when Simeon's absence was precious to her. Without disloyalty to his friend, he hoped so, for he had something to tell her before the day was over that might lead to a temporary separation, and he hated to think of those lovely eyes swimming in tears—all women were not Penelopes.

"She can't care in *that way*," he reflected. "Ponsonby is tremendous in his own line, of course, but no woman could love him."

Perhaps he was mistaken—perhaps Mrs. Ponsonby loved her husband with all the fervor of passion, but she conveyed an impression of emancipation to-day, and of powers of enjoyment hitherto suppressed, that made Stephen doubt. She was like a child bubbling over with happiness, gay as a lark, as unlike her usual self in behavior as her modish appearance was unlike that of Simeon Ponsonby's self-denying wife.

"Of course she won't mind; why should she?" he decided, and yet determined to put off making his announcement till after lunch.

At Wolfshead they stopped at the little inn, found the one o'clock dinner smoking on the table, and sat down with the rest of the hungry company—employees of a branch railroad that had its terminus there; drummers in flashy shop-made clothes, and temporary residents in the little town. This jaunt had given them an appetite, and roast beef and apple tart disappeared at a rate that should have doubled their bill.

After lunch they strolled down to the beach, Deena starting ahead with French, while Polly went with Ben to get cushions from the automobile. The present generation seems to consider comfort the first aim of existence, though the trouble they take to insure it more than counterbalances the results in old-fashioned judgment.

Stephen stopped to light his cigar behind the shelter of a tree, and then came running after Deena, who was walking slowly toward the vast plain of blue water stretching to the east. She turned at the sound of his footsteps and waited for him, wondering what his classes would think if they could see their professor bounding along with his hat under his arm. There was something peculiarly charming in the lighter side of Stephen's nature; a simplicity and boyishness, which was the secret of his popularity far more than his weightier qualities. The women of Harmouth called him handsome, but he had small claims to beauty. A well set-up figure rather above the medium height, dark hair grizzled at the temples, eyes that seemed to laugh because of a slight contraction of the muscles at the outer corners, and a nose decidedly too high and bony. The expression of the mouth was shrewd, almost sarcastic, and possibly a little coarse, but his smile redeemed it and illumined his face like sunshine. What dazzled the ladies of Harmouth was really a certain easy luxury in dress and habits not common in the little town. It is always the exotic we prize in our conservatories.

This summing up of French's outer man was not Deena's estimate, as she watched his approach—she was too familiar with his appearance to receive any especial impression. She accepted his apologies for his cigar and for keeping her waiting with an indifferent air, and turned once more toward the sea.

CHAPTER II.

The beach at Wolfshead was pebbly, with rocks thrown untidily about and ridges of blackened seaweed marking the

various encroachments of the tide. Stephen brushed the top of a low boulder with his handkerchief and invited Deena to sit down.

"You would be more comfortable," he said, "if Ben would come with the cushions."

"I am quite comfortable without them," she answered, "though I cannot but resent the Paul and Virginia attitude of the young Minthrops. One would think a year of married life would have satisfied their greed for *tête-à-têtes*. I wonder whether they would continue sufficient to each other if they really were stranded on a desert island."

"Could you be happy on such an island with the man of your heart, Mrs. Ponsonby?" asked Stephen.

And Deena, feeling that Simeon was perforce the man of her heart, and that he was quite unfitted to live on sea air and love, answered, smiling:

"Not unless there were a perfectly new flora to keep him contented."

Stephen saw his opportunity to make his communication, and said, quickly:

"I suspect you have been reading those articles of Simeon's in the *Scientist* on the vegetation of Tierra del Fuego. They are very able. He ought to go there and verify all he has gleaned by his reading. We fully appreciate we have a remarkable man at Harmouth in our professor of botany."

Deena colored with pleasure.

"Poor Simeon," she said; "his limited means have stood in the way of such personal research, and then, also, the college holidays are too short for extended trips."

"Let him throw over his classes in the cause of science," said Stephen, with excitement. "Why, such a book as Simeon would write after an exploration of—Fuegia, let us say—would place him among the scientists of the world."

The thought that raced across Deena's mind was what dull reading it would be, but she recognized the impropriety of the reflection and said, simply:

"It is too bad we haven't a little more money."

Stephen put his hand in his breast pocket and half drew out a letter, and then let it drop back, and then he walked a little apart from Deena and looked at her thoughtfully, as if trying to readjust his previous ideas of her to the present coquetry of her appearance. The way her thoughts had flown to Simeon when a desert island existence was mooted seemed as if she did care, and Stephen hated to give pain, and yet the letter had to be answered, and the opportunity was not likely to occur again. The thing he had always admired most in his friend's wife was her common sense—to that he trusted.

"Mrs. Ponsonby," he said, boldly, "if Simeon had a chance to do this very thing—free of expense—would you be unhappy at his desertion? Would you feel that the man who sent him to Patagonia was doing you an unkindness you could not forgive?"

"I should rejoice at his good fortune," she answered, calmly. "The fact that I should miss him would not weigh with me for a moment."

French gave a sigh of relief, while his imagination pictured to him a dissolving view of Polly under similar circumstances.

"The Argentine Government is fitting up an expedition," he went on, "to go through the Straits of Magellan and down the east coast of Fuegia with a view of finding out something more exact in regard to the mineral and agricultural resources than has been known hitherto. I happen to have been in active correspondence for some time with the man who virtually set the thing going, and he has asked me to send him a botanist from here. Shall I offer the chance to your husband? He must go at once. It is already spring in that part of the world, and the summer at Cape Horn is short."

Deena's face grew crimson and then paled. She felt an emotion she could not believe—pure, unalloyed joy! But in a second she understood better; it was joy, of course, but joy at Simeon's good luck.

"Could he get leave of absence right in the beginning of the term?" she asked, breathlessly.

And Stephen answered that he had never taken his Sabbatical year, and that some one could be found to do his work, though it might mean forfeiting half his salary.

Here they were joined by Polly and Ben, and as Deena made no reference to the subject they had been discussing, the talk wandered to general topics.

The sun was making long shadows and the hour to start was come. The gayety of the morning deserted Deena as they sped back to Harmouth. Her brain was busy fitting her ideas to this possible change that French had just foreshadowed, and though she was silent, her eyes shone with excitement and her color came and went in response to her unspoken thoughts.

In her mind she saw Tierra del Fuego as it looked on the map at the end of the narrowing continent, and then she remembered a picture of Cape Horn that had been in her geography when she was a child—a bold, rocky promontory jutting into a restless sea, in which three whales were blowing fountains from the tops of their heads. She reflected that it was very far away, and that in going there Simeon might encounter possible dangers and certain discomfort, and she

tried to feel sorry, and all the time a wild excitement blazed in her breast. She felt as if her youth had been atrophied, and that if Simeon went it might revive, and then a great shame shook her to have allowed such thoughts, and a tender pity for the lonely man she had married obliterated self.

Stephen's voice broke in upon her reverie.

"Have I depressed you, Mrs. Ponsonby?"

"No, no," she answered. "I am only considering ways and means. I want him to go. We might rent our house for the winter, and I could go home to live. Count upon my doing everything in my power to make Simeon's going easy, Mr. French."

"You are admirable," said Stephen, with genuine satisfaction. He even half put out his hand to give hers a grasp of approbation, but thought better of it. If she had had her hair parted in the middle, and had been mending Ponsonby's stockings under the drop-light in her parlor, he might have done so, braving the needle's point; but, looking as she did to-day, it seemed safer to refrain.

It was six o'clock when the auto stopped at Deena's door.

"I wish she had shown a little more emotion at his going," was Stephen's reflection as he helped her out, forgetting how he had dreaded any evidence of distress; but he only said:

"May I come back to tea, Mrs. Ponsonby? I should like to talk this over with Simeon to-night."

She acquiesced with an inward misgiving; it was the first time, she had ever given an invitation to her own table, but it was her husband's friend, and she was still excited. As she exchanged good-bys with her sister and Ben, Polly suddenly remembered to tell her something quite unimportant.

"Oh, Deena!" she whispered, bending over the side of the automobile, "when I came to pay for your hat today, I found I hadn't enough money, and I knew you wouldn't like me to explain the circumstances to Ben, so I told them to send the bill to you and we will settle it later."

"I'll settle it!" said Deena. She was a proud woman, and hated favors that savored of cash. "Good-night—I am afraid you will be late in getting to Newbury Hill for your dinner."

"All aboard, French!" shouted Ben—and they were gone.

Deena stood for a moment and watched the retreating machine before she followed the path to the front door. A great deal that was pleasant was disappearing with its puffs—Ben's gay spirits and Polly's ready sympathy, which, if superficial, was very soothing—and the money power that made them what they were, which, in fact, permitted the auto to exist for them at all. It had all come into Deena's life for a few brief hours, and was gone, but something remained—something that had not been there when she got up that morning: the knowledge that she was a very beautiful woman, and more than a suspicion that a crisis was impending in her life.

As she turned to face the house the remembrance of the unpaid hat bill laid a cold clutch on her heart. Until the first of next month she had exactly ten dollars at her credit, and that was Simeon's—not hers—given to her for a specific purpose. She determined to throw herself upon his indulgence, confess her weakness and beg him to pay the bill for her. She had never before asked a personal favor of him, but was she justified in doubting his kindness, because of her own shyness and pride in concealing her needs? She almost persuaded herself he would be gratified at her request. After all, Simeon was not an anchorite; he had his moods like other men, and there were times when a rough passion marked his dealings with his wife; perhaps he had not been very felicitous in his rôle of lover, but the remembrance that there was such a side to his nature gave a fillip to her courage.

For the first time he would see her at her best; might not her prettiness—bah! the thought disgusted her! That she, a typical, housewifely, modest New England woman should be calculating on her beauty to draw money from a man's pocket, even though that man were her husband, seemed to her immoral. She would plainly and directly ask him to pay the money, and there was the end of it. She opened the front door and went in.

The Ponsonby house was two stories high, built of wood and set a little back from the street, with flower beds bordering the path to the gate and neat grass plots on either side. Within, a small parlor and dining room on the right of the hall, and to the left a spacious study; behind that was the kitchen.

The door of the study was half open, and Simeon sat at his desk reading proof; one of his many contributions to a scientific periodical, and, judging by the pile of galley sheets, an important article. He had a way of pursing his lips and glaring through his spectacles when he read that gave him a look of preternatural wisdom. He was never what Deena's cook called "a pretty man."

Mrs. Ponsonby's slim figure slid through the opening without pushing the door wide, and spoke with a kind of reckless gayety.

"Good-evening, Simeon," she said, making a little courtesy; "you see, I have returned safely, 'clothed and in my right mind.'"

He made a marginal note of cabalistic import before he swung round in his chair and looked at her over his spectacles.

"Hardly in your right mind, I should think," he said, coldly.

"Don't you like me in my new clothes?" she asked, twirling slowly round to give him the entire effect of her costume.

He was apt to be irritable when disturbed at his work, and Deena had not attached much importance to his speech.

"I think," he said, curtly, "you look like a woman on a poster, and not a reputable woman at that."

"That is hardly a nice thing to say of one's wife——" she began, when he interrupted her.

"Look here, Deena, I have work to do before tea, and the discussion of your appearance is hardly important enough to keep publishers waiting. Oblige me by taking off that dress before I see you again. Where did you get it—if I may ask?"

"Polly gave it to me," she answered, and was astonished to find a lump in her throat, a sudden desire to burst into tears.

"Then Polly was guilty of an impertinence you should have resented instead of accepting. Ben Minthrop's money may dress his own wife, but not mine. Let it go for this time, but never again subject me to such an indignity."

"But she didn't give me the hat, Simeon," said poor Deena, who knew it was now or never.

"And who furnished you with the hat?" he asked, insultingly.

"I meant to ask you to," she said, and a tear escaped and splashed on the lapel of her new coat, "but never mind, I will find some means to pay for it myself." And she moved toward the door, wounded pride expressed in every line of her retreating figure.

"Come back, if you please," he called. "This is childish folly. How can you pay when you have no money except what I give you? I am responsible for your debts, and as you have taken advantage of that fact, I have no choice but to pay. This must never occur again. How much is it?"

"I—I don't know," faltered Deena, struggling with her emotion.

"You don't know? You buy without even asking the price?" he pursued.

The enormity of the offense crushed his irritation; it struck at the very foundations of his trust in Deena's judgment, at her whole future usefulness to him; he almost felt as if his bank account were not in his own keeping.

She tried to answer, but no words would come; explanations were beyond her powers, and she left the room, shutting the door behind her. A passion of tears would have made the situation bearable, but when you are the lady of the house and unexpected company is coming to tea, and you have but one servant, you have to deny yourself such luxuries.

Deena went for a moment into the open air while she steadied her nerves; she forced herself to think what she could add to the evening meal, and succeeded in burying her mortification in a dish of smoked beef and eggs.

Old Mrs. Ponsonby had never given in to late dinners, and Simeon's digestion was regulated to the more economical plan of a light supper or tea at seven o'clock.

Deena gave the necessary orders and went upstairs to her own room. One blessing was hers—a bedroom to herself. Simeon had given her his mother's room and retained his own, which was directly in the rear. She shut the communicating door, and was glad she had done so when she heard his step in the passage and knew he had come to make the brief toilet he thought necessary for tea. She tore off her finery—hung the pretty costume in her closet, and, as she laid her hat on the shelf, registered a vow that no power on earth should induce her to pay for it with Ponsonby money. Though the clock pointed to ten minutes to seven, she shook down her hair and parted it in the severe style that had won its way to her mother-in-law's heart. At this point Simeon's door opened, and Deena remembered, with regret, that she had omitted to tell him that French was coming to tea. He was already halfway downstairs, but she came out into the passageway and called him. He stopped, gave a weary sigh, and came back.

"I forgot to tell you Mr. French is coming to tea," she said, quite in her usual tone.

"Who asked him?" demanded Simeon, and Deena, too proud to put the responsibility on French, where it belonged, said: "I did."

Simeon was not an ill-tempered man, but he had had an exasperating day, and his wife's conduct had offended his prejudices; he was not in a company frame of mind, and was at small pains to conceal his feelings; he hardly looked at her as he said:

"I do not question your right to ask people to the house, but I should be glad to be consulted. My time is often precious beyond what you can appreciate, and I happen to be exceptionally busy to-night—even French will be an unwelcome interruption."

"I shall remember your wish," Deena said, quietly, and returned to her room.

A moment later she heard Stephen arrive, and the study door shut behind him.

Her toilet was soon made. She knew every idiosyncrasy of the hooks and buttons of her well-worn afternoon frock. It was dark blue, of some clinging material that fell naturally into graceful lines, and was relieved at the throat and wrists by embroidered bands always immaculate. The damp sea breeze had ruffled her hair into rebellion against the sleekness Simeon approved, so that, in spite of her efforts, some effects of the holiday still lingered. Suppressed tears had made violet shadows under her eyes, and her mouth—sweet and sensitive like a child's—drooped a little in recollection of her annoyances, but, all the same, she was a very beautiful young woman, whether sad or merry.

The study door was still shut as she passed downstairs and into the little parlor. Her workbasket was standing by her

chair, piled high with mending that she had neglected for her pleasuring. It was Saturday night, and no good housewife should let the duties of one week overlap the next. Simeon's aphorism, "A day off means a night on," seemed likely to be her experience with darning needle and patches, but it was a quarter past seven, and she deferred beginning her task till after tea.

The servant announced the meal, and by Deena's orders knocked at the study door, but got no response; indeed, the *pièce de résistance*—the smoked beef and eggs—had almost hardened into a solid cake before the friends emerged, arm in arm, and followed Deena to the table. French drew out her chair with that slight exaggeration of courtesy that lent a charm to all he did, and with his hands still on the bar he bent over her and said—smiling the while at Simeon:

"I have been telling your husband of what I hinted to you this afternoon, Mrs. Ponsonby; the expedition to Patagonia and his chance to join it."

Simeon's brow contracted. It was disagreeable to him to have momentous affairs like his own discussed by anticipation with Deena—Deena, who was only a woman, and he now feared a silly one at that.

"It is no secret, then!" said Simeon, contemptuously, and added, turning to his wife: "Be good enough not to speak of this before the servant; I should be sorry to have the faculty hear of such a thing from anyone but me."

She grew scarlet, but managed to murmur a word of acquiescence. Stephen looked amazed; he thought he must be mistaken in the rudeness of his friend's manner, and then began making imaginary excuses for him. Of course, the tea table was not the place for confidences, and, naturally, a man would prefer telling such things privately to his wife, and the rebuke was meant for him, not for Mrs. Ponsonby. How lovely she looked—even prettier than in those smart clothes she had worn in the morning. He wondered whether Ponsonby knew how absolutely perfect she was.

The servant was much in the room, and the talk turned on the progressive spirit of Argentina, its railroads, its great natural resources, its vast agricultural development. It was a dialogue between the men, for Simeon addressed himself exclusively to French—what could a woman know of what goes to make the wealth of nations!—and, as for Stephen, he was still uncomfortable from the failure of his first effort to bring her into the discussion.

When tea was over Simeon pushed back his chair and was about to stalk from the room, when he remembered that French was his guest, and halted to let him go out first, but when French waited beside him to let Deena pass, an expression of impatience crossed her husband's face, as if the precious half seconds he could so ill spare from his work, in order to reach conclusions, were being sacrificed to dancing master ceremonials.

Deena sat sewing till Stephen came to bid her good-night.

"I think it is all arranged," he said, but without the joyousness of his first announcement. He had, perhaps, lost a little of his interest in his friend, Ponsonby, since the incident at the tea table.

Deena, with a woman's instinct, guessed at his feelings, and made no effort to detain him. She was tired and discouraged, and would gladly have gone to bed when their guest departed, except for a suspicion that Simeon would want to talk things over with her, in spite of his seeming indifference. She was not mistaken. In ten minutes he came into the parlor and threw himself wearily on the sofa.

"Deena," he said, and his tone was kind, "if I should go away for six months, do you think you could manage without me?"

"I am sure I could," she answered, cheerfully, "and I want to say to you, now that you have opened the subject, that you must not let my expenses stand in your way. I know, of course, if you give up your college work, part of your salary would naturally pass to the person who, for the time, undertakes your duties, and I have been thinking that a simple plan would be to rent this house."

The idea was not quite agreeable to Simeon—the old house was part of himself; he had been born there; his love for his mother overflowed into every rickety chair; but the common-sense commercial value of the scheme made him regard Deena with revived respect.

"It is hardly practicable," he said. "In the first place, it is too old-fashioned to attract, and, in the second, there is no market for furnished houses at Harmouth."

"Mrs. Barnes would take it, I fancy," said Deena. "She is the mother of the student who was hurt last week in the football match. She is trying everywhere to find a furnished house so that she can take care of him and yet let him stay on here. I think we could rent it, Simeon, and I should need so little—so very little to keep me while you are gone."

He took off his spectacles and sat up.

"It isn't a bad idea," he said, almost gayly. "The rent would pay the taxes and give you a small income besides, and leave me practically free. You have relieved my mind of a serious worry. Thank you, Deena."

"You will see the president to-morrow?" she asked.

He hesitated before admitting that such was his intention; it was one thing for his wife to meet his difficulties with practical suggestions, and quite another for her to put intrusive questions.

"You shall be informed when things take a definite shape," he said, pompously. "Good-night, my dear; I shall be at work on my galley proof till daylight."

"Good-night, Simeon," she said, gently. "I am sorry I displeased you today."

He mumbled something about young people having to make mistakes, but his mumble was pleasant, and then he crossed to her side, and kissed her forehead.

She felt the pucker of his lips like wrinkled leather, but she told herself it was kind in Simeon to kiss her.

As she laid her head on her pillow, she thought:

“He never had the curiosity to ask what I proposed to do with myself when my home and husband were taken from me,” and the tears came at last, unchecked.

CHAPTER III.

Simeon was gone—gone with his clothes packed in the sole leather trunk that his father had used before him, but with an equipment for botanizing as modern and extended as his personal arrangements were meager.

The house was rented to Mrs. Barnes, the mother of the too ardent champion of the football field—but as her son was too suffering to be moved for several weeks to come, Deena had leisure to get the house in order and habituate herself to the idea of being homeless.

Simeon behaved liberally in money matters; that is, he arranged that the rent should be paid to his wife, and he gave her a power of attorney which was to make her free of his bank account should anything delay his return beyond her resources. At the same time the injunctions against spending were so solemn that she understood she was to regard her control of his money as a mere formality—a peradventure—made as one makes his will, anticipating the unlikely.

The faculty made no objection to Simeon’s going; indeed, his researches were thought likely to redound to the high scientific reputation that Harmouth particularly cherished, and Stephen French had taken care to foster this impression.

The day he left was sharp for October; a wood fire crackled on the hearth in the dining room, and Deena, pale and calm, sat behind the breakfast service and made his coffee for the last time in many months. He ate and drank, and filled in the moments with the Harmouth *Morning Herald*, and his wife’s natural courtesy forbade her interrupting him. Without a word he stretched his arm across the table with his cup to have it refilled, and Deena, feeling her insignificance as compared with the morning news, still dared not speak. When finally he pushed back his chair, the little carryall was at the door waiting to take him and his luggage to the train.

“You will write from New York, Simeon, and again by the pilot,” she urged, following him into the hall. “And where is your first port—Rio? Then from Rio, and as often as you can.”

He was stuffing the pockets of his overcoat with papers and pamphlets, but he nodded assent.

She came a step nearer and laid her hand on his arm.

“Be sure *I* shall try to do as you would wish,” she half whispered, and there were tears in her eyes.

“To be sure, to be sure,” said Simeon, with a kind of embarrassment. “Oh, yes, *I* shall write frequently—if not to you, to French, who will keep you informed. Don’t forget to make your weekly contribution to your mother’s housekeeping. *I* cannot allow you to be a burden on them during my absence; and consult Stephen whenever you are in doubt. Good-by, Deena—I am sorry to leave you.”

He puckered his lips into the hard wrinkles that made his kisses so discreet, and gave her a parting embrace. She stood at the open door watching the distribution of his luggage, which he superintended with anxious care, and then he stepped into the one free seat reserved for him, and the driver squeezed himself between a trunk and roll of rugs, and they were off.

Simeon waved his hand, and even leaned far out from the carriage window and smiled pleasantly, and Deena wiped her eyes, and began the awful work of making an old house, bristling with the characteristic accumulations of several generations, impersonal enough to rent. She had plenty to do to keep her loneliness in abeyance, but in the back of her consciousness there was a feeling that she had no abiding place. Her family had urged her to marry Simeon, and he was now throwing her back upon her family, and her dignity was hurt.

At sunset Stephen came to see how she was getting on, and they had a cup of tea beside the dining-room fire, and talked about the voyage and the ports Simeon would touch at; and Stephen, who had the power of visualizing the descriptions he met with in his reading, made her see his word-painted pictures so clearly that she exclaimed:

“When were you in South America, Mr. French?” and he laughed and declared himself a fraud.

They talked on till the firelight alone challenged the darkness, and then French remembered he was dining out, and left her with an imagination aglow with all the wonders Simeon was to see. Lest she should be lonely, he undid a roll of papers, and took out several new magazines which he said would keep her amused till bedtime, and somehow he put new courage into her heart.

Presently she went into the study and lit the Welsbach over the table, and curled herself up in Simeon’s great chair to enjoy her periodicals, and then her eye fell upon a parcel of proof, directed but not sent, and she read the address, weighed and stamped the package, and rang the bell for the servant to post it. As she took up her magazine once more, she noticed on the outside cover the same name of street and building as on Simeon’s direction, and she wondered whether the same publishers lent themselves to fact and fancy.

Her servant brought her something to eat on a tray—women left to themselves always find economy in discomfort—and she nibbled her chicken and read her stories till she felt surfeited with both, and fell to pondering on what made a story effective. Her eye lit upon a short poem at the end of a page; it seemed to her poor to banality—did it please the public or the editor? Her own verses were a thousand times better.

She sat up suddenly with a heightened color and shining eyes, and laughed out loud. She had an inspiration. She, too, would become a contributor to that great publishing output; she would try her luck at making her brains pay her bills. The name “Mrs. Simeon Ponsonby” would carry weight with the magazine she selected, but, while disclosing her identity to the editor, she determined to choose a pen name, fearing her husband’s disapproval.

From childhood Deena had loved to express herself in rhyme, and of late years she had found her rhyming—so she modestly called it—a safety valve to a whole set of repressed feelings which she was too simple to recognize as starved affections, and which she thought was nature calling to her from without. It was nature, but calling from within, thrilling her with the beauty of things sensuous and driving her for sympathy to pen and ink.

Tossing down her book, she ran to her own room, unlocked a drawer, took out an old portfolio and returned to the study. There were, perhaps, twenty poems she had thought worth preserving, and her eye traveled over page after page as she weighed the merits and defects of each before making her choice. A sensitive ear had given her admirable imitative powers in versification, and her father, before dissipation had dulled his intellect, had been a man of rare cultivation and literary taste. Deena, among all his children, was the only one whose education he had personally superintended, and she brought to her passion for poetry some critical acumen.

She finally selected a song of the Gloucester fishermen she had written two years before—a song of toil and death—but with a refrain that effaced the terror with the dance of summer seas. She wrote a formal note to the editor, saying the price was fifteen dollars, that if accepted the signature was to be Gerald Shelton, and the check to be made to her, and she signed her own name. Simeon should know as soon as he came home, but she thought he could have no objection to Geraldine Ponsonby accepting a check for the supposititious Gerald Shelton.

Before all this was accomplished, her servant had gone to bed and Deena, afraid to be left alone downstairs in a house so prone to spooky noises, followed her example, but alas! not to sleep. She tossed on her bed, sacred for many years to the ponderous weight of old Mrs. Ponsonby, till suddenly all she had suffered from the maxims and example of her mother-in-law took form, and she wove a story half humorous, half pathetic, that she longed to commit to paper; but her delicacy forbade. She was even ashamed to have found a passing amusement at the expense of Simeon’s mother, and she tried to make her mind a blank and go to sleep. Toward morning she must have lost consciousness, for she dreamed—or thought she dreamed—that old Mrs. Ponsonby sat in her hard wooden rocking-chair by the window—the chair with the patchwork cushion fastened by three tape bows to the ribs of its back; the chair Simeon had often told her was “mother’s favorite.” The old lady rocked slowly, and her large head and heavy figure were silhouetted against the transparent window shade. A sound of wheels came from the street, and she raised the shade and looked out, leaning back, in order to follow the disappearing object till it was out of range, and then she buried her face in her hands and sobbed the low, hopeless sobs of old-age.

Deena found herself sitting up in bed, the early daylight making “the casement slowly grow a glimmering square.” The impression of her dream was so vivid that the depression weighed upon her like something physical. It was impossible to sleep, and at seven o’clock she got up to dress, having heard the servant go downstairs. On her way to her bath she passed the rocking-chair, and lying directly in her path was a little card, yellow with age. Deena picked it up and read: “From Mother to Simeon.” The coincidence worked so on her imagination that she sank into the nearest chair trembling from head to foot, and then she reflected that she must have pulled the card out of the table drawer when she went to fetch the portfolio the night before, and she called herself a superstitious *silly*, and made her bath a little colder than usual, as a tonic to her nerves. Cold water and hot food work wonders, and after breakfast young Mrs. Ponsonby forgot she had ever had a predecessor.

Her family paid her flying visits during the day, with a freedom unknown in Simeon’s reign, and she worked hard at her preparations for renting, but in the evening, when the house was quiet, she settled herself at the study table and made her first attempt at story writing, this time steering clear of the personal note that had brought such swift reprisal the night before. The occupation was absorbing; she neither desired nor missed companionship. She was not the first person to find life’s stage amply filled by the puppets of her own imagination.

At the end of the week two things had happened. *The Illuminator* had accepted her poem, and her story was finished. She determined to submit it to Stephen, and yet when he looked in at five o’clock, she was ashamed to ask him; what she had thought so well of the night before, in the excitement of work, suddenly seemed to her beneath contempt.

He lingered later than usual, for he mistook her preoccupation for unhappiness, and hated to leave her alone.

“When do you move to your mother’s?” he asked, for he thought anything better than her present desolation; the genteel poverty brought about by Mr. Shelton’s habits, the worldliness of Mrs. Shelton, and the demands upon time and temper made by the younger brothers and sisters, were only the old conditions under which she had grown up.

“Next week,” she said, sadly. “I shall be sorry to leave here.”

“You are not lonely, then, poor little lady?” he said, kindly, while he searched her face to see whether she told the whole truth.

His eyes were so merry, his smile so encouraging, that Deena blurted out her request.

“I haven’t felt lonely,” she said, “because I have been writing a foolish story, and my characters have been my companions. I am sure it is no good, and yet my head is a little turned at having expressed myself on paper. Like Dr. Johnson’s simile of the dog walking on its hind legs, the wonder isn’t to find it ill done, but done at all. I am trying to

screw my courage to the point of asking you——”

“To be sure I will,” he interrupted, eagerly, “and what is a great deal stronger proof of friendship, I’ll tell you what I think, even if my opinion is nihilistic.”

He followed her into the study, and she laid her manuscript on the table and left him without a word.

The story was the usual magazine length, about five thousand words, and Deena’s handwriting was as clear and direct as her character. At the end of half an hour she heard his voice calling her name, and she joined him.

“It is very creditable,” he said. “It fairly glows with vitality. Without minute description, you have conveyed your story in pictures which lodge in the imagination; but in construction it is poor—your presentment of the plot is amateurish, and you have missed making your points tell by too uniform a value to each.”

“I understand you,” said Deena, looking puzzled, “and yet, somehow, fail to apply what you say to what I have written.”

He drew a chair for her beside his own, and began making a rapid synopsis of her story, to which he applied his criticism, showing her what should be accentuated, what only hinted, what descriptions were valuable, what clogged the narrative. She was discouraged but grateful.

“You advise me to destroy it?” she asked.

“I advise you to rewrite it,” he answered. Then, after a pause, he asked: “Why do you want to write?”

“For money,” she answered.

“But Simeon told me,” French remonstrated, “that he had left you the rent of this house as well as part of his salary, and a power of attorney that makes you free of all he possesses. Why add this kind of labor to a life that is sober enough already? Amuse yourself; look the way you did that day at Wolfshead; be young!”

“Simeon is very generous,” she said, loyally, silent as to the restrictions put upon his provisions for her maintenance, as well as the fact that his salary only covered the letter of credit he took with him for such expenses as he might incur outside the expedition. “In spite of his kindness, can’t you understand that I am proud to be a worker? Have you lived so long in the companionship of New England women without appreciating their reserves of energy? I have to make use of mine!”

“Then use it in having ‘a good time.’ I conjure you, in the name, as well as the language, of young America.”

Deena shook her head, and French stood hesitating near the door, wondering what he could do to reawaken the spirit of enjoyment that had danced in her eyes the day at Wolfshead.

“Will you dine with me to-morrow if I can get Mrs. McLean to chaperon us?” he asked.

The phrase “chaperon us” was pleasant to him; it implied they had a common interest in being together, and her companionship meant much to him. He smiled persuasively—waiting, hat in hand, for her answer.

Deena felt an almost irresistible desire to say yes—to follow the suggestions of this overmastering delightful companion who seemed to make her happiness his care, but she managed to refuse.

“Thank you very much,” she murmured, “it is quite impossible.”

It was not at all impossible, as Stephen knew, and he turned away with a short good-night. He wondered whether his friend’s wife were a prude.

Undoubtedly the refusal was prudent, whether Mrs. Ponsonby were a prude or no, but it had its rise in quite a different cause. She had no dress she considered suitable for such an occasion. Her wedding dress still hung in ghostly splendor in a closet all by itself, but that was too grand, and the others of her trousseau had been few in number and plain in make, and would now have been consigned to the rag bag had she seen any means of supplying their place. They were certainly too shabby to grace one of Stephen’s beautiful little dinners, which were the pride of Harmouth.

Deena’s ideas of French in his own *entourage* as opposed to him in hers were amusing. Viewed in the light of Simeon’s friend, voluntarily seeking their companionship and sharing their modest hospitality, they met on terms of perfect equality; but when associated with his own surroundings he seemed transformed into a person of fashion, haughty and aloof. It was quite absurd. Stephen was as simple and straightforward in one relation as the other, but perhaps the truth was that Deena was afraid of his servants.

The house was the most attractive in the town, and stood in the midst of well-kept grounds with smooth lawns and conservatories, and Deena felt oppressed by so much prosperity. On the few occasions when Simeon had taken her there to lunch on Sunday—the only dissipation he allowed himself—she had thought the butler supercilious, and the maid who came to help her off with her wraps, snippy. She had suspected the woman of turning her little coat inside out after it was confided to her care, and sneering at its common lining.

Deena was too superior a woman not to be ashamed of such thoughts, but the repression of her married life had developed a morbid sensitiveness, and she was always trying to adjust the unadjustable—Simeon’s small economies to her own ideas of personal dignity; she hardly realized how much the desire to live fittingly in their position had to do with her wish to earn an income.

While Stephen’s criticisms were still fresh in her mind she rewrote her story, and when she read it again—which was

not till several days had passed—she felt she had made large strides in the art she so coveted.

CHAPTER IV.

When affairs of a family once begin to stir, they seem unable to settle till a flurry takes place quite bewildering to the stagnant ideas of the easy-going. The fact that Deena was coming back to her old quarters in the third story was the first event to excite a flutter of interest in the Shelton home circle; with Mr. Shelton, because she was his favorite child; with Mrs. Shelton, because Deena would both pay and help; with the children, because they could count upon her kindness no matter how outrageous their demands. The next thing that happened, while it hastened her coming, entirely eclipsed it. Fortunately it was delayed until the day before the Ponsonby house was to be handed over to its new tenant, Mrs. Barnes.

Mrs. Shelton was busy clearing a closet for her daughter's use when she heard her husband calling to her from below.

"Mary," he said, "here is a telegram."

They were not of everyday occurrence, and Mrs. Shelton's fears were for Polly, her one absent child, as she joined her husband and stretched out her hand for the yellow envelope.

The magnetic heart of a mother is almost as invariably set to the prosperous daughter as to the good-for-nothing son; there is a subtle philosophy in it, but quite aside from the interest of this story.

The telegram said:

Mrs. Thomas Beck's funeral will take place on Thursday at 11 A. M.

It was dated Chicago, and signed "Herbert Beck."

"Who is Mrs. Beck?" asked Mr. Shelton, crossly; the morning was not his happiest time.

"She is my first cousin, once removed," Mrs. Shelton answered, with painstaking accuracy. "You must remember her, John. She was my bridesmaid, and we corresponded for years after she married and moved to Chicago until"—here Mrs. Shelton's pale face flushed—"I once asked her to lend me some money, and told her how badly things were going with us, and she refused—very unkindly, I thought at the time; but perhaps it was just as well—we might never have paid it back."

It was Mr. Shelton's turn to flush, but he only said, irritably:

"And why the devil should they think you want to go to her funeral?"

Mrs. Shelton professed herself unable to guess, unless the fact that the family was nearly extinct had led her cousin to remember her on her deathbed.

"Well, they might have saved themselves the expense of the telegram," Mr. Shelton grumbled, adding, sarcastically, "unless they would like to pay our expenses to Chicago, and entertain us when we get there!"

It appeared later that was exactly what they hoped to do. A registered letter, written at Mrs. Beck's request, when her death was approaching, arrived within an hour. She begged her cousin's forgiveness for past unkindness, told her that she had left her the savings of her lifetime—though the main part of the estate passed to Mr. Beck's nephew—and besought Mrs. Shelton, as her only relation, to follow her to her grave. Young Mr. Beck, the said nephew, who wrote the letter, added that the house should be kept up for Mrs. Shelton's convenience till after her visit, and that his aunt had expressed a wish that her clothes and jewels should be given to Mrs. Shelton.

"We'll go, Mary!" said Mr. Shelton, blithe as a lark—several things had raised his spirits!—and Mrs. Shelton, with a burst of her old energy, borrowed some mourning, packed her trunk, summoned Deena and caught the train, with five minutes to spare.

And so it happened that when Mr. French called, as was his daily custom, to take his last cup of tea with Mrs. Ponsonby before her flitting, he found the house in the temporary charge of the servant and Master Dicky Shelton, a shrimpish boy of thirteen, whose red hair and absurd profile bore just enough likeness to his sister's beauty to make one feel the caricature an intentional impertinence.

French had got into the drawing room before he understood what the servant was saying. Deena had gone, leaving no message for him! His first feeling of surprise was succeeded by one of chagrin; these afternoon chats by her fireside had become so much to him, so much a part of his daily life, that he hated to think they had no corresponding value to her. He was recalled from these sentimental regrets by the irate voice of Master Shelton in dispute with Bridget.

"She—*said*—there—was cake! Mrs. Ponsonby—*said*—there—was—cake—and—that I—could—have some!" each word very emphatic, judicial and accusative. Then followed a rattling tail to the sentence: "And if you have eaten it all, it was horridly greedy in you, and I hope it will disagree with you—so I do!"

Bridget now came forward and addressed French.

"There ain't so much as a cheese-paring left in the house, Mr. French. Mrs. Ponsonby's gone off at a moment's notice, and I'm off myself to-morrow; and there sits that boy asking for cake! He's been here now the better part of an hour, trackin' mud over the clean carpets till I'm a'most ready to cry."

Dick seized his hat and moved sulkily to the door, hurling back threats as he walked.

"Just you wait! We'll see—you think I won't tell, but I will!"

French perceived that the case was to be carried to the Supreme Court for Deena's decision, and to save her annoyance at a time when he felt sure she was both tired and busy, he made a proposition to the heir of the Sheltons that established his everlasting popularity with that young person.

"Come home with me, Dicky," he said, "and if my people haven't any cake, I can at least give you all the hothouse grapes you can eat, and some to carry home. How does that strike you?"

"Done!" cried Dicky, slipping his hand under Stephen's arm, and, after one horrid grimace at Bridget, he allowed himself to be led away.

The sun had nearly disappeared when they reached French's house, which was a little outside of the town, and he reflected that he must quickly redeem his promise, and dispatch his young companion home before the darkness should make his absence a cause of alarm. He rang the bell by way of summoning a servant, and then, opening the door with his latchkey, he invited Dicky to enter.

It was a most cheerful interior. The staircase, wide and old-fashioned, faced you at the far end of the hall, and on the first landing a high-arched window was glowing with the level rays of the setting sun. A wood fire blazed on the hearth, and on the walls the portraits of all the Frenches, who for two hundred years had made a point of recording their individualities in oil, looked down to welcome each arrival.

Dicky, who wore no overcoat, presented his nether boy to the fire, while he gazed at the portraits with a frown. He thought them extremely plain.

A servant came from some hidden door, took his master's coat and hat and received an order in which such inspiring words as "cakes, or chocolates, or dessert of any kind," gave the earnest of things hoped for.

"And, Charles," Mr. French concluded, "tell Marble to bring the things as quickly as he can to the library, with a good supply of grapes."

Dicky smiled a slow smile. He could even allow his mind to wander to other things, now that his refreshment was drawing nigh.

"I say, Mr. French, who is that old cove over the door, with a frill on his shirt and a ribbon to his eyeglass? He is nearly as ugly as brother Simeon."

Stephen felt genuine alarm; he was unused to children.

"That," he said, "is my great-grandfather. I don't think he is much like your brother-in-law, I must confess."

"He doesn't look quite so musty," said Dicky, reflectively. "Did it ever seem strange to you, Mr. French, that a pretty girl like Deena could marry Mr. Ponsonby?"

"He is a very distinguished man," Stephen replied, in an agony of embarrassment. "You ought to appreciate what an honor it is to be connected by marriage with Professor Ponsonby."

"We ain't intimate," said Dicky, lightly, and his tone betrayed how much Simeon was the loser by a restricted intercourse.

"One of these days when you are a little older you will be very proud of his reputation," Stephen protested.

Dicky walked to the end of the great Persian rug on the blue pattern—it was evidently a point of honor to avoid the red—before he answered:

"Well, I'm blamed glad he's gone away, anyhow." And then, to French's relief, Marble came and announced in his unctuous voice:

"The tray is in the library, sir," and all thought of Simeon was abandoned.

That feast at Stephen's lived in Dicky's memory for years. It supported him through the disappointments of many a dessertless dinner—in the hopeless fancy engendered by seeing sweets pressed to the lips of others; it won for him an easy victory in times of gustatory boasting when at school. He could affirm, with truth, that for once he had had his fill of the very best.

With Stephen also the experience was a revelation. The capacity of his guest caused him amazement mingled with fear.

And still he gazed

And still the wonder grew

That one small boy

Could hold all he could chew.

The chiming of the clock reminded French that it was already dark and high time Dicky was dispatched home.

"Do you want to take these grapes home with you," asked Stephen, "or shall I send you a basket of them tomorrow?"

Dicky looked coy.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I guess I'll take the chocolates, and you can send the grapes to-morrow."

He pulled a very dirty handkerchief from his pocket, in order to provide a wrapping for the chocolates, and, as he spread it on the table, a letter dropped out. He turned his eyes upon French with an expression of sincere regret.

"I say!" he began. "Now, isn't that too bad! And Deena so particular that you should get the note before tea time. I'm awfully sorry, Mr. French—it's all Bridget's fault. Deena said if I got that note to you before five o'clock I should have a piece of cake, and when Bridget wouldn't give it to me it made me so mad I forgot everything. I wanted to kill her."

"I know just how you felt," said Stephen, with irony.

Dicky was tying his chocolates into a hard ball, but with the finishing grimy knot he tossed responsibility to the winds.

"Oh, well," he said, soothingly, "you've got it now, at any rate, so there's no occasion for saying just *when* I gave it to you, unless you want to get a fellow into trouble."

Stephen looked grave; he did want Mrs. Ponsonby to know why he had failed to follow her suggestion of taking tea with her at her mother's house—and also he hated evasion.

"As it happens, that is the exact point I wish your sister to know. I shall not tell her, but I expect you, as a gentleman, to tell of yourself."

"All right," said Dicky, mournfully. "Good-night, Mr. French."

CHAPTER V.

Deena had ample time to get accustomed to the old home life before her parents returned, for she had already been in charge for two weeks and still they tarried.

It was evident that young Mr. Beck wished to carry out his aunt's bequests in the spirit as well as the letter of her instructions, for trunks of linen and silver began to arrive from Chicago which gave some idea of the loot obtained from the dismantling of Mrs. Beck's fine house. The young Sheltons took the keenest interest in unpacking these treasures. Children are naturally communistic. They enjoy possessions held in common almost as much as their individual acquisitions—only in a different way. There is more glorification in the general good luck, but not such far-reaching privilege.

In the midst of these excitements Deena received a letter the possession of which no one seemed inclined to dispute with her. It was from Simeon, posted at Montevideo, and containing the first news of his voyage. His wife read it in the retirement of her own room, but she might have proclaimed it from the rostrum, so impersonal was its nature. He had made an attempt, however, to meet what he conceived to be feminine requirements in a correspondent, for the handwriting was neat, and the facts he recorded of an unscientific nature. He described his cabin in the vessel, also his fellow passengers; not humorously, but with an appreciation of their peculiarities Deena had not anticipated; he introduced her to flying fish, and then to the renowned albatross, and he conducted her up the river Platte to Montevideo, which he described with the ponderous minuteness of a guide book. At the end he made a confidence—namely, that even his summer flannels had proved oppressive in that climate—but the intimacy of his letter went no further, and he omitted to mention any personal feelings in regard to their separation.

It was an admirable family letter, instructive and kind, and rather pleasanter and lighter in tone than his conversation. Deena was glad that no exhortations to economy made it too private to show to French when he called that afternoon. She but anticipated his object in coming. He also had a letter which he had brought for her to read, and they sat on opposite sides of the fire, enjoying their exchanged correspondence.

But what a difference there was in the letters; Deena's had three pages of pretty handwriting; Stephen's six of closely written scrawl. In Deena's the ideas barely flowed to the ink; in Stephen's they flowed so fast they couldn't get themselves written down—he used contractions, he left out whole words; he showed the interest he felt in the work he left behind in endless questions in regard to his department; he thanked Stephen more heartily than he had ever done by word of mouth for suggesting him for the appointment, and finally he gave such an account of his voyage as one intelligent man gives another.

Deena recognized her place in her husband's estimation when she finished his letter to Stephen, and said, with pardonable sarcasm:

"Simeon saves the strong meat of observation for masculine digestion, and I get only the *hors-d'œuvres*; perhaps he has discriminated wisely."

The mere fact of being able to exchange letters with Deena was a revelation to French, and as he walked home from their interview his fancy was busy putting himself in Simeon's place. The paths that lead through another man's kingdom are never very safe for the wandering feet of imagination. It is an old refrain, "If I were king," the song of a usurper, if only in thought.

If he were king of Deena Ponsonby's life, Stephen thought, would he write letters that another chap might read? Would he dwell upon the shape of an albatross, when there must be memories—beautiful, glowing memories—between them to recall? Pen and ink was a wretched medium for love, but the heart of the world has throbbed to its inspiration before now. Why, if a woman like Mrs. Ponsonby shared his hearth, he would let Tierra del Fuego, with its flora and its fauna, sink into the sea and be damned to it, before he'd put the hall door between himself and her. His own front door had

suggested the idea, and he shut it with a bang.

He picked up the letters he found waiting on the hall table, and went directly to his library, passing through a room that would have been a drawing-room had a lady presided there, but to the master served only as a defense against intrusion into the privacy of his sanctum.

The postman had left a pile of bills and advertisements, but there was one letter in Ben Minthrop's familiar writing, and Stephen turned up his light and settled himself to read it. Ben wrote:

Dear French: When I asked you to spend Christmas with us in Boston I had no idea that, like the Prophet Habbacuc, I, with my dinner pail, was to be lifted by the hair of my head, and transported to Babylon—in other words, New York. But so it is! If you know your Apocrypha, this figurative language will seem apt, but in case you should like my end of it explained I will leave the mystifications of Bel and the Dragon and come down to plain speech.

My father has conceived the idea that I am one of the dawning lights in the financial world, and he has decided to open a branch office of our business in New York and to put me at its head. I must confess that the whole thing is very pleasant and flattering, and it has stirred all the decent ambitions I have—that I have any I owe to you, old fellow—and I am rather keen to be off.

We have taken a house not far from the park in East Sixty-fifth Street, where a welcome will always be yours, and where Polly and I hope you will eat your Christmas dinner.

Perhaps you may reflect that it is a serious thing to befriend straying men and dogs; they are apt to regard past kindness as a guarantee of future interest in their welfare. I do not believe, however, that I am making too large a demand upon your friendship in asking for your good wishes in this pleasant turn to my future affairs.

Of course I want one more favor. If you have any influence with Deena Ponsonby, will you urge her to spend the winter with us? Polly is writing to her by this same mail, but I know the New England conscience will suggest to Deena that anything amusing is wrong, and so you might explain that I am nervous about Polly's health, and that I look to her to help me get settled without overstrain to my wife—in short, administer a dose of duty, and she may see her way to coming.

Ever, my dear French, Sincerely yours, Benjamin Minthrop.

Anger gives to the natural man a pedal impulse—in plain language, he wants to kick something. Rage flows from the toes as freely as gunpowder ran out of the great Panjandrum's boots when he played "Catch who catch can" on the immortal occasion of the gardener's wife marrying the barber. Now, Stephen French was a man of habitual self-restraint, and yet upon reading Ben Minthrop's letter he got up and—ignoring the poker and tongs—kicked the fire with a savagery that showed how little the best of us has softened by civilization. And yet the letter was distinctly friendly, even modest and grateful—without one kick-inspiring sentence. Stephen began pacing his library floor, hurling his thoughts broadcast, since there was no one to listen to his words.

Why were people never content to let well enough alone? he demanded. There was old Minthrop, with enough money to spoil his son, laying plans for Ben to muddle away a few millions in New York in the hope of making more; or even if, by some wild chance, the boy were successful and doubled it—still one would think the place for an only son was in the same town with his parents. Of course it was their business, but when it came to dragging Mrs. Ponsonby into their schemes it was a different matter. Simeon would disapprove, he knew, and as her adviser in Simeon's absence, he felt it his duty to tell her to stay at home with *her* parents till her husband returned.

And then common sense asserted itself, and he asked himself what Deena owed to her parents; and why Harmouth was a better place for her than New York; and what possible difference it could make to Simeon? The answer came in plain, bold, horrid words, and he shrank from them. The curse of Nathan was upon him; like David, he had condemned his friend to absence and danger, and had then promptly fallen in love with his wife. But not willingly, he pleaded, in extenuation; it had crept upon him unawares. It was his own secret, he had never betrayed himself, and so help his God, he would trample it down till he gained the mastery. Not for one moment would he tolerate disloyalty to his friend, even in his thoughts. Ben's suggestion was a happy solution of the situation as far as he was concerned; he would urge Deena to go before his folly could be suspected. To have any sentiments for a woman like Mrs. Ponsonby except a chivalrous reverence was an offense against his manhood.

French was a man who had been brought up to respect ceremonial in daily living, and he dressed as scrupulously for his lonely dinner as if a wife presided and expected the courtesy to her toilet. Somebody has wisely said that unconsciously we lay aside our smaller worries with our morning clothes, and come down to dinner refreshed in mind as well as body by the interval of dressing. If Stephen did not exactly hang up his anxiety with his coat, he at least took a more reasonable view of his attachment to his neighbor's wife. He began to think he had exaggerated an extreme admiration into love—that he was an honorable man and a gentleman, and could keep his secret as many another had done before him; and that if Deena went away for the winter it removed the only danger, which was in daily meeting under terms of established intimacy.

There was to be a lecture at the Athenæum that evening on the engineering difficulties incident to building the Panama Canal, and Stephen, who was interested in the subject, made up his mind to start early and stop for a moment at the Sheltons' to carry out Ben's request. He took glory to himself for choosing an hour when Mrs. Ponsonby was likely to be surrounded by a bevy of brothers and sisters; he would never again try to see her alone.

His very footfall sounded heroic when he ran up the steps and rang the bell. As he stood within the shelter of the storm door waiting to be let in, the voices of the young Sheltons reached him, all talking at once in voluble excitement, and

then a hand was laid on the inside knob and advice offered in a shrill treble.

"You had better run, Deena, if you don't want to be caught," and then more giggling, and a quick rush across the hall.

Dicky threw open the hall door, and French, glancing up the stairs, caught sight of a velvet train disappearing round the turn of the first landing. He took the chances of making a blunder and called:

"Come down, Mrs. Ponsonby. It is I—Stephen French—and I have something to say to you."

This was first received in silence, and then in piercing whispers, the little sisters tried to inspire courage:

"Go down, Deena; you don't look a bit *funny*—really."

"'Funny'—ye gods!" thought French, as Deena turned and came slowly down the stairs. He only wished she did look *funny*, or anything, except the intoxicating, maddening contrast to her usual sober self that was descending to him.

She was dressed in black velvet of a fashion evidently copied from a picture, for the waist was prolonged over the hips in Van Dykes, and from the shoulders and sleeves Venetian point turned back, displaying the lovely neck and arms that Polly had so envied. Her hair was loosely knotted at the back, and on her forehead were straying curls which were seldom tolerated in the severity of her usual neatness. She wore a collar of pearls, and her bodice was ornamented with two sunbursts and a star.

French, who had never seen her in evening dress, was amazed. He seemed to forget that he had asked speech with her, and stood gazing as if she were an animated portrait whose exceeding merit left him dumb. He was recalled alike to his senses and his manners by Dicky, who turned a handspring over his sister's long train and then addressed Stephen, when he found himself right-end up.

"I say, Mr. French, mustn't she have been sort of loony to wear a dress like that, and she sixty-five?"

"Who?" asked French, completely mystified.

"Why, mother's cousin, Mrs. Beck. Didn't you know she had died and left us things?" said Dicky, proudly. "A trunk full of clothes and diamond ornaments came to-day, and mother wrote to Deena to unpack it, and we persuaded her to dress up in this. Don't she look queer? That Mrs. Beck must have been a dressy old girl."

Deena ignored the explanation. She appeared to treat her costume as a usual and prosaic affair, and said to Stephen, almost coldly:

"You have something to tell me?"

He wondered whether his eyes had offended her, whether the stupidity of his admiration had hurt her self-respect. She didn't look at him squarely and openly, as usual, but kept her head half turned so that the perfect line of her throat and chin was emphasized, and the tiny curls at the back of her neck set off the creamy whiteness of her skin. To tell the truth, Deena had never before worn a low-necked dress. Prior to her early marriage a simple white muslin, a little curtailed in the sleeves and transparent over the neck, had been sufficient for any college dance she went to, and after Simeon had assumed command, even the white muslin was superfluous, for she never saw company either at home or abroad. Her present costume was sufficiently discreet in sleeves—they came almost to the elbow, but the bodice allowed so liberal a view of neck and shoulders as to cover the wearer with confusion. She felt exactly as you feel in a dream when you flit down the aisle of a crowded car in your night clothes, or inadvertently remove most of your garments in a pew in church, and with Deena self-consciousness always took the form of dignity.

Stephen pulled himself together.

"I have had a letter from Ben," he said, "who seems to think an appeal he has made for your company in New York this winter will be more apt to win a favorable answer if backed up by your *Temporary Adviser*. That describes the position Simeon indicated for me; doesn't it, Mrs. Ponsonby?"

She sank back in her chair and, forgetting herself for a moment, allowed her eyes to meet his with a merry smile.

"This seems to be like a conspiracy to make a hungry man eat!" she answered. "No urging is necessary to persuade me to go to New York—why should you and Ben suppose I do not like to do pleasant things? I shall delight in being with Polly—I shall like the excitement and the fun—I am perfectly mad to go!"

If it had not been for the exaggeration of the last sentence French would have been sure of the genuineness of her wishes, but the force of the expression was so foreign to her usual moderation that he asked himself whether Deena might not also find a separation desirable. The thought sent the blood bounding through his veins. If she cared for him ever so little, it would be easier to let her go—easier if he knew she suffered too! Then he called himself a coxcomb and a self-deceiver, and made a grasp at the good resolutions that had almost escaped him.

"I always knew you possessed that adorable quality, common sense," he remarked. "Ben and I might have guessed you would do the wise thing. When men rush hot-footed into the affairs of women, they are apt to play the fool."

"Is there any reason why I shouldn't go?" she demanded, anxiously.

"On the contrary, every reason why you should; but I feared some mistaken idea about expense or Simeon's approbation might interfere with your taking a holiday, which you will enjoy as much as he enjoys digging up roots in Patagonia."

Deena considered the two points of his answer—expense and Simeon’s approbation—and replied thoughtfully:

“My husband would recognize so simple a duty, and, as far as expense goes, I am a perfectly independent woman. Didn’t you know *our* story—the one you made me rewrite—sold at once, and, besides that, I have placed a number of fugitive poems? So I snap my fingers at expenses till the bank breaks,” and she tapped her forehead to indicate from whence the supply flowed.

“Then make the most of the sensation while it lasts,” he said, with good-natured cynicism, “for expenses have a way of sizing you up—cleaning out your pockets—and going you one better! If you are still snapping your fingers when you come back from New York, then, indeed, you may boast.”

A troubled look came into her face.

“Simeon would like me to go to Polly when she is out of health and needs me,” she said, in a tone she meant to be assertive, but which was only appealing, “and if we are careful about spending, it is because we are proud and do not wish to incur obligations.”

The *we* was a masterpiece of loyalty, and French was suitably impressed by it.

“Dear Mrs. Ponsonby,” he said, “you speak as if *I* were likely to misjudge Simeon, whereas my object in coming here was to prevent *your* misjudging him by allowing your sensitive conscience to forbid pleasures he would be the first to suggest.”

The speech was genuine; in Stephen’s estimation his friend had noble qualities, and in bearing testimony to them he was beginning his chapter of self-discipline. In this interview, at least, he had preserved a conscience void of offense, and he hastened to say goodnight before any temptation should assail his discretion. Perhaps, also—for he was but mortal—the reflection in the parlor mirror of what was passing in the hall may have accelerated his departure.

For the benefit of an admiring gallery at the head of the stairs, Master Shelton was performing jugglers’ tricks with their visitor’s best silk hat. Twice it had turned a somersault in the air, and twice safely alighted well down over Dicky’s ears, but a third time it might miss even such a conspicuous mark and be smashed out of symmetry on the hard floor. French beat a hasty retreat, but he was no match for Dicky in change of tactics; as he came into the hall that young gentleman stood stiffly and solemnly waiting to hand him his hat and open the front door with an air he had copied precisely from Stephen’s own servant the day of the memorable feast. His presumption carried him a little too far, however, for as he closed the door on Stephen he favored his sister with a comment that promptly brought its punishment.

“If I were an old bag of bones like brother Simeon,” he said, grinning, “I shouldn’t care to have good-lookin’ fellows like Mr. French running after you twice in the same day, Deena!”

Deena had always been the tenderest of elder sisters, but at this apparently innocent remark, she first got red as fire, and then, paling with anger, she rushed at her brother and pulled his ruddy locks till he cried for mercy, while she burst into tears.

“Stop it!” roared Dicky, burrowing his head in a sofa cushion. “I tell you, you’re hurting me! And I’d like to know what the mischief *you’re* crying for, anyhow?”

Deena left the room, her face buried in her handkerchief, but she managed to answer brokenly:

“I will—not—allow—you—to call—my husband—‘a bag of bones’!”

CHAPTER VI.

The house the young Minthrops had taken was of a contracted luxury that oppressed Deena, accustomed as she was to space and sunshine at Harmouth. She told Ben that fortunes in New York could be gauged by the amount of light the individual could afford—billionaires had houses standing free, with light on four sides; millionaires had corner houses with light on three sides; while ordinary mortals lived in tunnels more or less magnificent where electric light had often to do duty for the sun. Ben declared that his income only admitted light fore and aft, but that with skillful decoration they could at least travesty the sunshine, and so they tried to reproduce its effects by wall hangings of faint yellow and pale green, by chintz-covered bedrooms that seemed to blossom with roses, and living rooms sweet with fresh flowers. There was no solemn mahogany—no light-absorbing color on door or window; all was delicately bright and gay as the tinting of the spring.

Deena worked hard to get the house ready for Polly, who was still in Boston with her mother-in-law, and seemed quite content to leave the arranging of her new quarters to her sister and husband, who preceded her by several weeks; indeed, she was becoming so accustomed to being waited upon that she considered herself in a fair way of being spoiled. An heir was expected, and an heir seemed a very important thing to the elder Minthrops. They treated Polly as a queen bee, and the rest of the world as slaves to wait upon her. She was behaving in a way to satisfy their requirements in a daughter-in-law, and life was to be smoothed accordingly.

Every day brought a fresh suggestion covered by a check. Ben was invited to select a high-stepping gray horse—a pair of cobs—a tiny brougham—a victoria—a piano—a pianola. Deena shopped till she almost sank exhausted, and yet the requests kept coming. If dear Mrs. Ponsonby didn’t mind the trouble, perhaps Polly might be warmer with sable rugs—perhaps an extra sofa in her room might induce her to lie down oftener—perhaps a few of those charming lace and linen tablecloths might make her feel like giving little dinners at home instead of fatiguing herself by going out to find her amusements.

Deena would have been more than mortal if the image of old Mrs. Ponsonby had not risen before her eyes in forbidding contrast to so much indulgence. She realized that the genus mother-in-law has widely differing species, and yet in her heart she doubted whether Mrs. Minthrop, with money to anticipate every wish of her only son, loved him a whit more than frugal, self-denying Mother Ponsonby had loved her Simeon. Lavishness or thrift, alike they proved a mother's affection.

Deena executed all the commissions without a shadow of covetousness and rejoiced in her sister's good fortune; it was reserved for Polly and Ben, when they took up their life in New York, to show her the depths of her own loneliness by the fullness of their comradeship, and her yearning needs by their mutual devotion.

Polly arrived one bleak December day, the week before Christmas, escorted by Mrs. Minthrop and two maids, and was met at the Grand Central by her husband in a state of boyish excitement. His delight in having his wife with him once more was so genuine that Deena forgave him an amount of fussiness she never before suspected in his easy-going nature. He altered his orders half a dozen times as to which carriage should bring her from the train to the house, and finally ordered both; he repeated half a dozen times the hour at which the Boston express was due, in order that Deena might make no mistake about having tea served to the minute, and when he had shut the front door, on his way to the Grand Central, he came tearing back to ask the menu for dinner, as Polly was apt to be fanciful about her food. Deena remembered the time—not two years ago—when it was quantity rather than quality that balked Polly's appetite, and nearly laughed in his face, but she loved her big brother-in-law for his forethought.

The curtains were drawn and the lights turned up before the bustle of arrival drew Deena to the stairs. First old Mrs. Minthrop came, stopping to commend the house at every step, and then Polly, with her arm linked in her husband's, chattering volubly at the delight everything gave her; and Deena, wedged between the elder lady and the wall in cordial greeting, could not help hearing Ben welcome his wife to her own home with a sentiment she never suspected in him before. Polly flew to her sister and kissed and thanked her for all she had done, and lavished her praises broadcast, and then she insisted upon pouring out the tea at her own fireside, and Ben perched on the arm of her chair; and once, when Deena turned suddenly from handing the toast to Mrs. Minthrop, she saw him kiss Polly's hair.

Her thoughts sped back to her parting with Simeon, with its prosaic formality—the feel of his puckered lips brushing her forehead. What a lack of imagination marked all his dealings with her! She felt rebellious and sad; not that she wanted any of the luxury that surrounded Polly, but she was hungry for love. She saw suddenly what marriage ought to be, and the realization frightened her. How was it she had committed this crime against her own nature? Was it her sin or her parents' that she had been so blind? Not Simeon's—she exonerated him, she knew he had given her as much of himself as he had to spare, and that his conduct was uniform; what it had been at the beginning was now and for all time, and if she had suddenly become a connoisseur in husbands she was not the first woman to whom knowledge brought misery. It was not Simeon's fault that he remained stationary while her views expanded. Fortunately for Deena's peace of mind, it was Ben who figured in these reflections as the exponent of what a husband should be, and she had no suspicion that it was Stephen French who had waked her from her domestic coma.

Poor sleeping beauty, her conscience had long ago been pricked by her mother-in-law's spindle, and her whole moral sense infected with the belief that to keep house wisely was the end and aim of wifely duty. She revered Simeon for his learning and dignity, and felt proud that so simple a person as herself should have been chosen in marriage by a professor of Harmouth. On that she had existed for two years, and now she was waking up to new needs that stirred her like the prince's kiss.

Life in the young Minthrops' dovecote soon settled down into a glorified routine. The elder Mrs. Minthrop returned to Boston, leaving Deena as her lieutenant, and perplexing her with the multiplicity of her charges; apparently Mrs. Ponsonby was to be Providence to her sister, with health and happiness under her control. The situation was paradoxical. Polly was to be denied nothing, but not allowed to have her own way too freely; she was to be kept amused, but most amusements were strictly prohibited—she was not to be encouraged to think herself an invalid, and at the same time her usual occupations were taken from her. Deena was wise enough to listen and make no promises, and when she assumed command she contented herself with trying to stand between her sister and domestic worries.

Christmas came and went without the visit from Stephen, which Ben had hoped for, and invitations were pouring in for the plethora of social functions that mark the season's height. Deena came in for her share, but she felt too much of a stranger to venture alone into the vortex. Polly entertained in a modest way at home—a few people at dinner, a friend or two at lunch—and this Deena greatly enjoyed, and had begun to make herself favorably known to a small circle when a stop was put to this mild dissipation. The great doctor, who had been charged by Mrs. Minthrop never to forget her daughter-in-law's inexperience, issued orders that Polly was to stay in her room. This enforced quiet found an outlet in a desire to send Deena everywhere. She drove her forth to dinners and balls, and the high-stepping gray horse was always at her service, and so the beautiful Mrs. Ponsonby became the fashion. New York does not ask too many questions in these days about the husbands of handsome married women who appear as grass widows in its midst; indeed, the suspicion of a latent romance or scandal gives a flavor to the interest, and Deena suffered not a whit from the rumor that she was a deserted wife, with money.

"Oh, yes, there is a husband," the great Mrs. Star admitted. "She married him for his money, and he has a hobby—fossils, I think it is—and he has gone to collect them at Cape Horn. She bears his absence surprisingly well, doesn't she? Old Mrs. Minthrop's son married the sister, and she begged me to be civil to them. I forget who she said they were, but *Mayflower* people, you know."

In this way Deena was passed on, stamped with the hall-mark of the *Mayflower*. Mrs. Shelton had contributed very generously to her daughter's outfit for the season in New York. The black velvet picture dress was only one of several found suitable for her use in the trunk of finery belonging to the Chicago cousin, and the jewels that had come into the Shelton family from the same source were worthy of Deena's beauty. Her clothes were good, and she wore them like a princess.

One evening late in January, Deena and Ben were dining with a gay young matron, who, without any especial personal charm herself, had the faculty of drawing to her house the best element society had to offer. The engagement had been made for them by Polly, much against her husband's wishes, and his anxiety at leaving her alone could hardly be concealed during dinner. As soon as the ladies left the table he excused himself to his host, and, following the little hostess into the drawing room, he whispered a few words in her ear, nodded to Deena and disappeared.

"Your brother-in-law has gone home to his wife, Mrs. Ponsonby," said the hostess. "I have never seen such devotion." She laughed a trifle enviously; her own infelicities were the talk of the town.

Deena started forward in alarm.

"Was he sent for? Is my sister ill?" she inquired, nervously, and then sank back in her chair, smiling, when she found it was only a phase of young Minthropism.

While her own daylight hours were given to her sister, she was always pleased to be out of the way in the evening—it left the lovers to themselves—though she could not quite free herself from a sense of responsibility to the elder Mrs. Minthrop.

Mrs. Star, who was beside Deena, gave a sniff—if so fine a lady could be suspected of such a plebeian way of marking her disapprobation.

"My dear," she said, "why should your charming sister be treated as a prisoner over whom somebody must perpetually keep watch? I have had six children—they were all healthy and had their full complement of legs and arms—except Bob, who lost an arm in the Spanish war, but that doesn't count—and I never was shut up in my room before I had to be—nor put on a milk diet—nor forbidden reasonable exercise—and I think the modern doctors are full of fads and greed. Their bills! I don't know who is rich enough to be ill nowadays!" Here she shut her eyes and trembled to think of the portion of her own great fortune that might have transferred itself to the doctor's pockets if her nursery had not antedated the present school. "It may not seem very expensive to young Mrs. Minthrop to lie on her sofa and drink milk—but just wait till she comes to pay for it!"

"I don't believe anyone will care about the bill, Mrs. Star," said Deena, "so long as Polly keeps well."

"It is bad enough to have food and exercise taken away from the young mothers," continued Mrs. Star, who was evidently mounted on a hobby, "but when helpless infants are deprived of their natural sustenance and fed from bottles filled in a laboratory and stuffed with cotton, it is time for the Gerry Society to interfere. Cruelty to children is practiced far more by the rich than by the poor, in my opinion, and if you want to see cases of inanition and feeble spines, I'll show you where to look for them, and it won't be in the tenements!"

Deena wanted to laugh, but didn't dare to; the old lady proclaimed her fierce sentiments with such earnest gravity. She managed, however, to say politely:

"You think that science has not improved upon nature in rearing the race, but you must remember that it finds the higher classes existing under unnatural conditions."

"The conditions would do very well if we could banish the doctors," said the old lady, testily. "I am out of patience with their incubators and their weighing machines and their charts and their thermometers—yes, and their baby nurses! What do you suppose I heard a mother say to her own servant the other day: 'Please, nurse, may I take the baby up? He is crying fearfully,' and the nurse, who had reluctantly put down the morning paper, said: 'No, m'am, when he cries in that angry way, he must learn that it is useless!' *His age was six weeks.*"

Deena burst into a hearty laugh.

"My dear Mrs. Star," she said, "I am a convert."

Mrs. Star wagged her head in approbation.

"Just tell your sister what I have said, will you?" she pursued, afraid that so much wisdom might be lost. "And, my dear, since your brother-in-law has gone home, suppose you come along to the opera with me. I sent some tickets to a few stray men, and I must look in before the last act."

At this point they were joined by the gentlemen, and as soon as decency would permit, Mrs. Star made her adieux, followed by Deena. The Minthrop brougham was dismissed, and the ladies whirled away in Mrs. Star's electric carriage. She at once took up her parable, but this time the topic was not the care of infants.

"I think a great deal of the scenic effect of an opera box," she said. "I always dress with respect to the hangings, and I never take a discordant color beside me if I can help it. You happen to please me very much this evening; I like the simplicity of the white dress. Still, it wouldn't be anything if you didn't have such a neck—it gives an air to any low gown."

"It was my wedding dress," said Deena, frankly, "and my sister's maid rearranged it for me. I am glad you like it."

"Your wedding dress," said Mrs. Star, reflectively. "I think I heard you had married a naturalist—prehistoric bones, is it not? Very interesting subject—so inspiring. Milliken"—to the footman, who opened the door on their arrival at the opera house—"you may keep the carriage here. I shall not be more than half an hour."

Half an hour for the enjoyment of a pleasure that cost her, yearly, a moderate fortune!

On their way through the foyer to the box, Deena ventured to disclaim for her husband a peculiar interest in fossils.

"My husband is a botanist," she began, and then desisted when she saw her companion's attention was barely held by a desire to be civil.

"Ah, indeed!" Mrs. Star vaguely responded. "Delightful topic. I went into it myself quite extensively when I was a girl."

Deena was not often malicious, but she couldn't help wishing Simeon could have stood by to hear this announcement of a girlish mastery of his life's work. She tried to think in what dry words he would have rebuked the levity, but before she could arrange a phrase quite in character, they were in the front of the box, and in the obscurity some one took her hand, and Stephen French's voice murmured:

"What a piece of luck that I should see you to-night! I have only been in town a few hours, and obeyed my aunt's summons to the opera as a means of keeping myself from Ben's house till the morning. You can't think how eager I have been to see you again, Mrs. Ponsonby."

There was a strange break in his voice, as if he were trying to restrain the rush of happiness.

All the six mighty artists who made the opera the marvel it was were combining their voices in the closing sextet of the fourth act, and Deena, thrilled by the loveliness of the music and, perhaps, by the surprise of French's presence, felt she was trembling with excitement.

"Fancy meeting you here!" she kept repeating, the stupid phrase concealing the great joy that was puzzling her conscience.

"What is so wonderful in my being in my aunt's opera box?" Stephen demanded. "Cannot a professor of zoology like music, or do you object to a bachelor owning an aunt?"

How pleasant it was to hear his kind voice, with its good-natured raillery! But that was sub-conscious pleasure—her immediate attention was busy with the first part of his speech about his aunt's opera box; she never supposed he had any relations.

"Who is your aunt?" she asked, abruptly.

"Mrs. Star," he answered. "Don't you see the family likeness?"

And oddly enough, in the half light, there was a distinct resemblance in the profile of the bewigged old lady to her handsome young kinsman's. Deena regretted both the likeness and the relationship; it made her uncomfortable to know that Stephen was the nephew of this worldly-minded old lady, with her fictitious standards and her enormous riches; it seemed to place a barrier between them and to lift him out of the simplicity of his college setting.

"Have I become a snob in this Relentless City?" she exclaimed. "I find my whole idea of you changed by this announcement. It depresses me! You seem to me a different person here, with these affiliations of fashion and grandeur, than when I thought of you simply as Simeon's friend."

"Don't think of me simply as Simeon's friend," he pleaded, half in fun, half in sinful earnest.

"I never shall again," she said, sadly. "Your greatest charm is eclipsed by this luxury—I want you to belong to Harmouth only."

Stephen's lips were twitching with suppressed amusement.

"There is a proverb, my dear lady," he said, "of the pot and the kettle, that you may recall. I am not sure but what I may find a word to say to you upon the cruelty of disturbing associations."

"To me!" she said, turning to him with the gentle dignity that was her crowning charm. "Surely there are no surprises in me."

Stephen shook his head in mock disapproval as he allowed his eyes to sweep from the topmost curl of her head to her slipper points, and then he said:

"Go home, Mrs. Ponsonby, and take off that white lace evening dress, and perhaps the wreath of holly might come, too—and that diamond star on your bodice; and put on, instead—let me see—the dark blue frock you wore the evening I told Simeon about the Patagonian expedition, and then you will be in a position to reproach me for any relapse from the simplicity of Harmouth. If you disapprove of me as the nephew of my aunt, how do you suppose I feel about you? And oh! my stars! what would Simeon say?"

"Simeon," she said, faintly. "You are right; Simeon might not understand——" and before French had time to protest that he had only been teasing her, the curtain went down, strange men came flocking into the box, Mrs. Star was introducing a Russian grand duke, and Stephen, surrendering his chair, withdrew to the other side of his aunt.

Deena could not but admire the old lady's admirable manner. She kept up an easy chatter, sometimes in French, sometimes in English, with the Russian and with a Spanish artist; she never allowed Deena to feel out of touch with the conversation, and in the midst of it all she managed to welcome her nephew.

"You are stopping *at* my house, of course, Stephen? No—at the Savoy? That is uncharitable to a lonely old woman. Where did you know that pretty creature, Mrs. Ponsonby?" she asked, seeing that the two foreigners were absorbing the attention of her beautiful protégée. "You should learn to guard the expression of your face, my dear boy. I begin to understand why you cling so obstinately to Harmouth. I see the place has advantages outside the work of the college."

Here she wagged her head in self-congratulation at her own astuteness, and Stephen flushed angrily.

"Hush!" he said. "She will hear you. You have little knowledge of Mrs. Ponsonby if you think she would permit the attentions of any man. She is not in the least that kind of person. She is one of the most dignified, self-respecting, high-minded women I ever knew."

Mrs. Star cut him short with a wave of her fan.

"Spare me the rhapsodies," she laughed. "You merely mark the stage of the disease you have arrived at. The object of your love sits enthroned! If the husband is wise he will throw his fossils into the sea and come back to look after this pretty possession. Flesh and blood is worth more than dry bones."

"Ponsonby is a botanist," Stephen corrected, grimly, while his inward thought was that the dry bones were Simeon's own; and then, ashamed of the disloyal—though unspoken—sneer, he went back to Deena and began talking volubly of his last letter from her husband.

They had both had letters from Simeon, now safely arrived in the Straits of Magellan. He had written to Deena when they first cast anchor off the Fuegian shore. He described to her the visits of the Indians in their great canoes, containing their entire families and possessions, and the never-dying fire of hemlock on a clay hearth in the middle of the boat; how they would sell their only garment—a fur cloak—for tobacco and rum, and how friendly they seemed to be, in spite of all the stories of cannibalism told by early voyagers.

In the midst of this earnest conversation, Mrs. Star rose to go, escorted by the grand duke, and Stephen, following with Deena, was able to let his enthusiasm rise above a whisper when they gained the corridor.

"Didn't he tell you that they were all going guanaco hunting?"

"*Simeon!*" in a tone of incredulity.

"Greatest fun in the world, I am told," pursued French; "something like stag hunting, only more exciting—done with the bolas. You whirl it round your head and let it fly, and it wraps itself round a beast's legs and bowls him over before he knows what hit him."

"Does it kill him?" asked Deena, shrinking from the miseries of the hunted.

"Only knocks him over," explained Stephen. "You finish him with your knife."

"Sport is a cruel thing," she said, shuddering. "I am glad Simeon cannot even ride."

"Can't ride!" repeated Stephen. "Indeed, I can tell you he means to. He says the Indians have offered him the best mount they have. They considered him a medicine man, on account of his root-digging propensities, and treated him as the high cockalorum of the whole ship's company."

"Surely he is joking," she said. "Simeon is making game of you."

"Simeon!" he echoed, mimicking her incredulous tone.

"A joke would be no stranger to him than a horse," she said, smiling.

They had reached the entrance, and Deena stood shaking with suppressed laughter. "Fancy! Simeon!" she repeated.

"And why not Simeon, pray?" asked Stephen, slightly nettled.

A vision of Simeon with his gold-rimmed spectacles and stooped figure mounted on horseback in the midst of a party of Indians, whirling his bolas over his head and shouting, presented itself to Deena's imagination. The carriage was waiting, and, obeying Mrs. Star's motion to get in first, Simeon Ponsonby's wife fell back on the seat and laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks.

Outside, Stephen was entreating to be allowed to visit her the next morning.

"I haven't half finished my story, Mrs. Ponsonby," he protested.

And Deena managed to steady her voice and invite him to lunch the next day.

CHAPTER VII.

French's visit to New York was not the result of any weakening resolution in regard to his neighbor's wife; the object was business. His property was chiefly in real estate, and the distinguished law firm who managed his affairs had summoned him to confer with a tenant who was desirous of becoming a purchaser. Being in the same town with Deena, he decided that he could not well avoid visiting her, to say nothing of Ben. It was his misfortune that every meeting made his self-discipline harder, for, if they lived, he had got to see her under still more trying circumstances—reunited with a husband who misunderstood her.

These thoughts passed through his mind the morning after their encounter at the opera, as he finished his breakfast at the Savoy. He had an appointment at his lawyers' at ten o'clock, and at the Minthrops' for luncheon at half-past one. The first, if properly conducted, might result in a largely increased income; the second in self-repression and a headache; and yet his one idea was to dispatch the business, so that no precious moments of Deena's society should be lost to him.

He was hurrying out of the hotel to go downtown, when a telegram was put into his hand. For the detached bachelor such messages have little interest. Stephen opened this one as casually as most people open an advertisement—may the foul fiend fly away with those curses of our daily mail!—and read:

Buenos Ayres, Jan. 30.

Pedro Lopez to the Hon'ble Professor French, Harmouth University.

Tintoretto on its way home. Ponsonby missing.

Stephen read the dispatch several times before he quite understood its significance. Pedro Lopez was his South American friend, who had set on foot the Fuegian expedition and applied to Harmouth for a botanist; the *Tintoretto* was the vessel furnished by the Argentine Government.

The cable message had gone to Harmouth and been repeated to New York, probably by Stephen's butler.

The first effect of evil tidings is apt to be superficial. We receive a mental impression rather than a shock to the heart. We are for the moment spectators of our own misfortunes, as if the blow had produced a paralysis to the feelings, leaving the intellect clear.

Stephen went back to his own room conscious of no emotion except intense curiosity as to what had become of Simeon, though, perhaps, far back in his mind anxiety was settling down to its work of torture.

He flung himself into a chair near the window which overlooked the entrance to the park and let his eyes gaze blankly at the busy scene. It had snowed during the night, and sleighs were dashing in and out under the leafless arches of the trees. Bells were tinkling, gay plumes of horsehair floating from the front of the Russian sleighs and the turrets of the horses' harness, men and women wrapped in costly furs were being whirled along, laughing and chatting, through the crisp morning air.

Stephen didn't know he was receiving an impression—he thought his mind was at a standstill, but whenever in the future that terrible day came back to his memory, he always saw a picture, as it were, of the brilliant procession dashing into the city's playground, while Saint Gaudens' statue of Sherman stood watching, grim and cold, with the snow on his mantle and his Victory in a winding sheet.

It was not very long before French was able to pull himself together and to face the situation. What did it mean? Had Simeon lost himself in the Patagonian wilds or was he drowned? French felt that he couldn't carry such an uncertain report to Deena, the strain upon her would be too great. It was horrible to have to tell her at all, but he must try to make the news definite—not vague. Gradually he thought out a course of action; he would telegraph to Lopez to send him a detailed account, cabling the answer at his expense, and until this reply came he thought himself justified in concealing the news. Lopez was in constant communication with the expedition, and the letter which had announced Ponsonby's disappearance must have gone into particulars.

After dispatching this cable he kept his appointment in Wall Street, transacting the business with the dull precision of a person in a hypnotic sleep, and then presented himself at the Minthrops' a few minutes before the lunch hour. He had not been prepared to find Deena installed as hostess, and her manner of greeting him and presiding at the lunch table was so assured, so different from the timid hospitality she was wont to offer under Simeon's roof, that her whole personality seemed changed. She more than ever satisfied his admiring affection, but she was so unlike the Mrs. Ponsonby of Harmouth that he felt like confiding to this gracious, sympathetic woman the tragedy that threatened her other self.

Early in the day, before that woeful message came, he had counted the minutes he could spend with her, and now he was timing his visit so as to curtail it to the least possible duration, and taxing his ingenuity as to how best to avoid seeing her alone. It was Saturday, and he trusted to the half holiday for the protection of Ben's presence; his depression of spirits would be less noticeable in general conversation.

He arrived on the stroke of the hour set for lunch, and to his chagrin was shown to the library, where Deena was sitting alone. His trouble deepened, for, after motioning him to a chair beside her, she resumed her embroidery and said, with a quizzical expression:

"You were in the midst of Simeon's last letter when we parted last evening, Mr. French; please go on with it. You may remember you left my unfortunate husband pledged to become a horseman."

Stephen could not respond to her merry mood; his anxiety was to steer the conversation away from Simeon, and he had run against a snag at the start.

"At all events, I left him safely surrounded by friends," he said—more in answer to his own feelings than her banter.

In thinking over any disaster, the mind loves to dwell on the peaceful moments that preceded it. Stephen found comfort in recalling the gay tone of Simeon's letter, his delight in his coming adventure, and the good feeling that evidently existed between him and the ship's company.

Deena took exception to his remark.

"You have strange ideas of safety!" she laughed. "Not content with mounting a confirmed pedestrian on a wild horse of the Pampas, you must needs turn him loose among a horde of savages. The hunt had not taken place when he wrote, had it? It is a pity, for I should like Simeon safely back on shipboard without the loss of spectacles or dignity."

She would like Simeon back! What wouldn't French give to know her husband was still alive!

The butler announced lunch, and Ben came dashing downstairs, delighted to see Stephen and full of excuses at having lingered in his wife's room. He said Polly was feeling rather poorly, and Stephen was glad to see a look of anxiety cross Deena's face; he rightly judged her thoughts had been diverted from Patagonia to Polly's sofa, and he breathed once more.

What a pleasant luncheon it was, in spite of the lurking dread. Deena was wearing the old blue dress he had recommended to her the night before. It could not be from coquetry—she was above coquetry—but perhaps she had put it on to recall associations; to remind him of the close bonds of friendship that existed between them in those pleasant autumn days that followed Simeon's departure. Stephen was not very learned in the make of women's frocks, but he understood color and could appreciate how that steely-blue made her complexion glow warm as ivory and her hair like copper.

They were pretending to quarrel over a dish of salted almonds; Deena declared that French was getting the lion's share, and finally covered the little silver basket that held them with her hand. On the third finger flashed old Mrs. Ponsonby's diamond in its antiquated silver setting, and below it was her wedding ring, the narrow band that symbolized her bondage to Simeon. For the first time since French had received the cable, its possible significance to him took possession of his mind, and he flushed a dull red and fell into a reverie.

In all probability there was no longer any barrier between him and the woman he loved; nothing to prevent his striving to win her, but the period of her mourning—the respect she owed to the memory of a husband who was the palest shadow of a lover, and not even the ghost of a companion. He wondered whether she had ever guessed his feelings—feelings which he had subdued and held under with all the strength of his nature, partly through fear of forfeiting her friendship and partly because her charm was in the simplicity of her goodness. If love had once been named between them, Deena would have been other than herself.

Her voice roused him. She was excusing herself in order to go to her sister, and leave him and Ben to smoke. He held the door open for her to pass with a profound sense of relief—no suspicion of his awful secret had been betrayed. But oh! the comfort of talking it over with Ben, of sharing the burden with another! They discussed the meager announcement till they had exhausted every probability and found nothing to hope and everything to fear.

"I hope to Heaven he is dead!" cried Ben. "Imagine a man physically weak, like Ponsonby, enduring slow starvation in the damp and chill of the Patagonian seacoast. It will be a positive relief if we hear he fell overboard."

"Anything is better than uncertainty," said Stephen, and the speech must have been from the new point of view, the hope of Deena's freedom, for the next moment he was conscious of a wave of shame.

"I ought to get an answer from Lopez before night," he added, rising to go; "and as soon as I hear I will return and let you know."

Ben followed him to the front door, whispering like a conspirator and glancing furtively up the stairs. There was a childish streak in the boy's nature that gloried in a confidence; the joy of the secret nearly made up for the sorrow of the fact. But secrets and sorrows were soon put out of his head, for a crucial moment had come to the young Minthrops—one we anticipate and are never quite prepared for.

As he ran upstairs, after seeing Stephen off, he met Deena, evidently looking for him.

"Oh, Ben," she said, "Polly is ill, and I have telephoned for—"

But she got no further, for her big brother-in-law turned white as a frightened girl, and when he tried to speak no sound came from his lips.

"Goose!" said Deena, laying an affectionate hand on his shoulder. "Shall I get a glass of brandy? Do you suppose no one has ever met with this experience before?"

Ben recovered himself with a fit of irritation, which seems the corollary to being frightened.

"Brandy!" he repeated. "Why in thunder should I want brandy? Really, Deena, for a sensible woman, you are given at times to saying the most foolish things I ever heard."

In the meanwhile, as the afternoon was still early, French was anxious to find some occupation that might distract his thoughts. He decided to visit his aunt, whose conversation was usually startling enough to hold the attention of her hearers in any stress of agitation, and then when he was halfway up her steps repented the intention, on the ground that he needed soothing rather than stimulating; but his retreat was cut off by the good lady coming out of her door and discovering him, and, as she was about to walk round the block for exercise before taking her afternoon drive, she promptly claimed his company for both occasions. The wind blew her dress up to her ankles as she reached the sidewalk, displaying a pair of pointed-toed, high-heeled boots that perforce made walking—even round the block—a torturing task. But Mrs. Star was a brave woman, and walking a matter of conscience, so she tottered along beside her nephew, occasionally laying a hand on his arm when a bit of icy pavement made her footing more than usually uncertain.

"How I hate the late winter in New York!" she exclaimed, when a few minutes later they were seated in her sleigh on their way to the park. "Here we are at the threshold of February, when any self-respecting climate would be making for spring, and we must count on two months more of solid discomfort. Ah, well, this year I do not mean to face it. I have had the yacht put in commission, and she sails next week for the Mediterranean, where I shall overtake her by one of the German boats, and do a little cruising along the African coast. Come with me, Stephen," she said, coaxingly. "Let this silly school-teaching go. You are a rich man—why under the sun do you want to work? If you are holding on to

Harmouth on account of that pretty Mrs. Ponsonby, it can't do you much good when she is in New York. Besides," she added, quite as an afterthought, "it is bad morality, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

He was about to turn and rend her for what he considered an unpardonable meddling with his affairs, when he saw her eyes fixed on him with tenderest affection and his anger melted.

"Dear Stevie," she said, "be good-natured and bear an old woman company—you know you are as dear as my own sons."

She used to call him Stevie when he was a lonely little boy, and she made her house his home; when all he knew of family life was supplied by that good-natured, worldly household—the name touched a chord of memory that softened his irritation.

"I wish I could, Aunt Adelaide," he answered, "but I have managed to tie myself to my work in a way you cannot understand. You will have to take Bob as a companion."

Bob was her only unmarried child, wedded only to his clubs and amateur soldiering, and even less available than Stephen for a cruise.

"Bob!" she said, contemptuously. "He never voluntarily went to a foreign country except Cuba, and I don't believe he knows on which side of the Mediterranean Africa lies! I shall find some one who will be glad to go with me—perhaps your charming friend, Mrs. Ponsonby, might go. She looks as if she would be a pleasant traveling companion."

French's heart tightened as he thought of the horror that stood between Deena and pleasure, and was even debating in his mind whether it would not be better to tell his aunt the truth, when conversation was rendered impossible for the moment by the puffing and tooting of a great automobile advancing toward them down the west drive of the park—its wheels slipping in a crazy manner, that made the coachman of Mrs. Star's sleigh give it a wide berth. Just as it got abreast of them, it became perfectly unmanageable—slewed to the left, made a semicircle which turned it round, and, catching the back of the sleigh on its low front, turned the light vehicle over as easily as if it had been made of pasteboard.

Mrs. Star allowed herself a shrill shriek as the sleigh went over and then lay quite still in a heap by the side of the road, with Stephen across her feet. The automobile seemed to have recovered its serenity, for it now stood still like any well-behaved machine, quiet save for its noisy breathing, while the sleigh was being bumped, on its side, far up the road, at the heels of the outraged horses.

French scrambled to his feet and endeavored to help his aunt, who had raised herself to a sitting posture and was looking white and disheveled, while she cast furious glances at the motor and its owner. She took her nephew's hands and attempted to rise, but fell back, declaring she had broken her knee, as it hurt her excruciatingly when she tried to move it.

The owner of the auto now came forward in great contrition to offer help and apologies. He was a physician, he explained, hastening to a case of great urgency, and he had taken his automobile as the quickest means of covering the distance, though he had known it at times to behave badly on slippery and snowy roads.

The admission was a mistake—it put him in the wrong, and Mrs. Star, who distrusted all modern doctors, felt a consuming rage against this one in particular.

"You must have a strange estimate of a physician's duty if you feel justified in risking many lives to save one!" she said, haughtily. "Not that you are much worse than the fire engines and ambulances. We ought to add a petition to the litany for safety against our safeguards, for they kill more than they rescue."

The gentleman bore her sarcasms with becoming humility, and begged to be allowed to take her home, promising that the machine should execute no more "*Voyages en zigzag*," and she, ashamed of her temper, forced herself to decline, with some graciousness, though she made it very plain that no person on earth could tempt her to get into the automobile.

"At least let him tell you whether your knee is seriously hurt," Stephen whispered, loath to see the medical help departing.

"I'll do nothing of the sort," retorted Mrs. Star. "A nice spectacle you would make of me by the roadside! Besides, I am not going to allow my knee to buy him a new automobile. Thank Heaven, I know how to guard my pocket against the medical profession—I'll not stir from this spot till he takes himself off."

"Don't be so foolish!" urged French. "If your knee is injured it is a very serious thing."

"Well, it isn't seriously injured," she said, perversely. "I have changed my mind, and I mean to have it tied up with witch hazel."

Fortunately her equipage was now seen approaching in the charge of two park policemen, who had stopped the horses about a mile further on, righted the sleigh and now brought it back not much the worse for the misadventure. The coachman and groom were collected from the bushes, and, as they were quite uninjured, Stephen lifted his aunt into the back seat and they turned their faces homeward.

However much the rest of the party may have been inconvenienced, French had certainly attained the object of his solicitude—namely, to have his thoughts distracted from Simeon Ponsonby.

CHAPTER VIII.

The second cable from Lopez arrived soon after dinner; it brought small comfort. Its nineteen words told the story but too conclusively.

Strayed from party while hunting. Weather turned foggy. Search parties persevered for two weeks. Hope abandoned. Expedition homeward bound.

There was no further excuse for concealment; indeed, it was French's plain duty to tell Deena what might be told by the newspapers if he delayed.

It was just nine o'clock, and he walked rapidly to the Minthrops' and rang the bell. Outside an electric cab was waiting, its great lamps casting pathways of light across street and sidewalk. The motorman was inside; an indication that long waiting had driven him to shelter, though the circumstance had no significance to Stephen.

The bell was answered by the butler, who looked portentous and stood resolutely in the doorway.

"Not at 'ome, sir," he said, in response to Stephen's request to see Mrs. Ponsonby.

"Then I must see Mr. Minthrop," French insisted.

The man hesitated and then relaxed his wooden expression.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. French. I did not recognize you, sir. The truth is, we're a bit h'upset h'inside. Mrs. Minthrop is tuk ill, sir—very sudden—and we're expecting the good word every minute. I shall tell Mr. Minthrop you called."

Stephen nodded and turned away—the fates had ordained that he was to carry his secret till the morning. It had been a harassing burden in the daylight hours, but during the night it became maddening; it seemed beyond his resolution to tell Deena that the pleasure trip he had set on foot for her husband's advantage had ended in death.

As early as he thought permissible, the next morning, he presented himself at Ben's door—this time gaining, a cheerful admission—and was shown to the library on the second floor. There he found the young father, radiantly happy, and so self-centered that he had entirely forgotten the misfortune overhanging his sister-in-law.

"Come and see my son," he said, proudly, and in spite of an expression of reluctance on the part of French to intrude into the upper regions of the house, he pushed him ahead of him up the next flight of stairs and knocked softly at the door of a back bedroom.

Deena's voice bade them enter, and French was ushered into a large room fitted out as a nursery, with the newest appliances for baby comfort. There was a bassinette so be-muslined and be-ribboned and be-laced that it looked like a ball dress standing by itself in the middle of the floor; and a bathtub that looked like a hammock; and a weighing machine; and a chart for recording the daily weight; and a large table with a glass top; and a basket containing all the articles for the Lilliputian toilet; while near the fender some doll-like clothes were airing.

Deena was sitting in a low rocking-chair near the fire with her nephew in her arms. She welcomed her visitors with a smile, and turned down a corner of the baby's blanket to display his puckered ugliness to Stephen. She was looking happy, tender, proud, maternally beautiful.

"Hasn't he a beautifully shaped head?" she demanded, passing her hand tenderly over the furry down that served him for hair. "And look at his ears and his hands—was there ever anything so exquisite?"

It was French's first introduction to a young human, and he found it slightly repulsive, but Deena, in her Madonna-like sweetness, made his heart swell.

"He is part of an exquisite picture," he answered.

Ben, who had been for a moment with Polly, now came into the room with his usual noisy bustle, and Deena got up and, surrendering the baby to the nurse, led the way downstairs.

At the library door Stephen paused to whisper to Ben:

"Stay with me while I tell her," in tones of abject fright; but Ben shook his head.

"Look here, old man," he said, in mild remonstrance, "if you had had a baby last night, you wouldn't be casting about for fresh trouble to-day—now, would you?"

Stephen gave him an indignant glance, and, following Deena, he shut the library door. He did it in so pronounced a way that she looked up surprised, and was even more at a loss to account for the gravity of his expression; she wondered whether he had thought her rude yesterday when she had disappeared from the table at lunch and had never returned, but it was not like French to be touchy.

"I left you very unceremoniously yesterday," she began, "but the nurse appeared for a moment at the door, and I did not want to alarm Ben. You were not offended?"

"Believe me, no," French answered, with a sort of shudder; "for the first time in my life I was glad to see you go—your presence was torture to me—I was concealing something from you, Mrs. Ponsonby, and it has got to get itself told."

While he spoke her expression changed rapidly from amazement to alarm, and she got up and came close to him—

waiting—but without a word.

“Simeon is lost,” he said, hoarsely, hurling the bald fact at her before his courage failed. “I tried to tell you yesterday,” he went on, drawing the cables from his pocket, “but I couldn’t; it all seemed so vague at first, and I ventured to wait until I got more news.”

She was standing before him with her hands clasped and her face deadly pale, but with a calm that frightened him.

“Do you mean lost at sea?” she asked, in a steady voice—toneless but perfectly clear.

He shook his head.

“No—on land. He was hunting—it must have been the very hunt we were talking about—and wandered from his party. A fog came on, and they were unable to find him. Lopez telegraphs that they sent out search parties for a fortnight, but could find no trace.”

He longed for a word from her, but none came.

“At last they abandoned hope,” he concluded. “The expedition is now on its way home.”

She had turned her back upon him, and he waited in misery to hear her sob, to see her shoulders shake with her weeping; but, instead, the whole figure seemed to stiffen, and, wheeling round, she faced him with blazing eyes.

“The cowards!” she cried. “To abandon a man to starvation! What are they made of to do such a barbarous thing!”

“We must not judge them unheard,” Stephen ventured. “Their search may have been exhaustive—they may have risked their own lives gladly—and you know,” he added, gently, “that beyond a certain time it would have been useless from the standpoint of saving life.”

“It was inhuman to sail away and leave him,” she went on, beating her hands together in a sort of rage. “How can you defend them! You, who sent him off on this horrible journey—how can you sleep in your bed when you know Simeon is perishing by inches! I should think you would be on your way now—this moment—to search for him! Oh, do something—don’t just accept it in this awful way. Haven’t you any pity?” Unconsciously she laid her hand on his shoulder, as if she would push him from the room.

Stephen bore her reproaches with a meekness that exasperated her.

“Are there no cables to Magellan?” she asked. “There must be somebody there who for money would do your bidding. Don’t waste time,” she answered, stamping her foot.

Stephen kept his temper. Perhaps he was shrewd enough to see that it was pity rather than love that gave the fierceness to her mood. It was the frenzy of a tender-hearted woman at hearing of an act of cruelty rather than the agony of one who suffers a personal bereavement.

“Deena,” he said, not even knowing he had used her name, “do you really want me to go on this hopeless errand? Think of its utter uselessness—the time that has elapsed, the impossibility of penetrating into such a country in the advancing winter. It is the first of February, and I could not get there before March; it would be already their autumn. By this time he has either reached help or he is beyond it.”

At the beginning of his speech Deena’s pale face flushed, but as he went on setting forth the obstacles to his going she seemed to harden in her scorn.

“Oh, yes,” she sneered. “Let him die! It is cold in Patagonia for a gently nurtured person like Mr. French. Simeon is poor in friends—he only had one besides his wife, and that one is a fair-weather friend. But I’ll go—I am not afraid of privation. I’ll entreat the Argentine Government for help—I’ll make friends with the Indians—I’ll—”

“Hush,” he said, “you have said enough—I will go.”

Having gained her point, she burst into tears.

“I am cruel,” she said, “selfishly cruel to you, who have been so good to me—but whom can I turn to except to you? How can we abandon Simeon without raising a finger to save him? Say you forgive me.”

He held out his hand in mute acquiescence. Her sneers had stung him to the quick, but her appeal to his manhood for help in her distress moved him deeply.

“Perhaps,” she went on, half to herself, “perhaps if I had been a better wife—if I had loved him more, I could bear it better—but it is so pitiful. He has always been alone in life, and now he is dying alone.”

Stephen, who was pacing the floor, tried not to listen. He knew she was not thinking of him when she was confessing her shortcomings to her own conscience, but the admission that she felt herself lacking in love to Simeon filled him with a deep joy. He did not dare to linger.

“I am going,” he said, gently. “Good-by, Deena. Will you pray God to send you back the man who loves you?”

She stood staring at him dumb with misery, but as the door shut between them a cry of anguish burst from her very soul.

“Come back!” she cried. “Oh, Stephen, come back! I can’t bear it! I can’t let you go! Don’t you know I love you?—and I

have sent you off to die!”

She knew that he had gone—that her appeal was to the empty air, and she flung herself on the sofa in a frenzy of sobs. But the cry reached Stephen in the hall, where he stood battling with himself against his yearning for one more look, one more word to carry with him, and at the sound his resolution melted like wax in the flame of his passion. With a bound he was back in the room, on his knees beside her, soothing her with tenderest endearments—pouring out the fullness of his love.

“Must I go, Deena?” he pleaded. “Must I leave you when I know you love me? And for what?—a search for the dead!”

At his words her conscience woke with a stab of shame.

“Yes, go!” she said. “Go quickly. A moment ago I sent you in the name of compassion; now I send you in expiation for this one intolerable glimpse of Heaven.”

Stephen, eager to do her bidding, went straight to Mrs. Star’s house to take leave of the only person to whom he owed the obligations of family affection, and found that redoubtable lady on a sofa in her dressing room. In answer to his expressions of regret at this intimation of invalidism, she gave an angry groan.

“Oh, yes!” she said. “Our medical friend has succeeded in providing another doctor with as pretty a case of water-on-the-knee—to say nothing of other complications—as he could desire. My only comfort is, he didn’t get the charge himself.”

“But you have seen a specialist, surely?” exclaimed French, who feared her hatred of physicians might have prevented her calling in proper aid.

“Don’t distress yourself,” she answered. “McTorture has me fast in his clutches; and for how long do you suppose? Two months! He will promise nothing short of two months, and even then objects to my going abroad, and the yacht ready to start this very week! I am waiting for Bob to come into lunch, to get him to send for the sailing master and break the news to him. He’ll be a disappointed man!”

“I will take the yacht off your hands,” said Stephen, casually.

“You!” she exclaimed. “Are you running away *from* or *with* anybody, that you suddenly annex an ocean steamer? You were proying only yesterday afternoon about work and duty, as if nothing could separate you from Harmouth. Is the attraction going to bolt with you, Stevie?”

Stephen could have killed her as she lay there, allowing her tongue free play with his most intimate concerns, but the respect due to an old woman, to say nothing of an aunt, restrained his anger, and he answered, coldly:

“If you want to get rid of the yacht for the rest of the year, say so. My friend, Simeon Ponsonby, is lost in the wilderness of Patagonia, and I am organizing a party to search for him. I shall have to resign my work at Harmouth, but I feel responsible for poor Ponsonby’s fate; I sent him on the expedition.”

“Ah! did you?” she said, laughing wickedly. “Poor Uriah has been disposed of, and now the lady sends you to look for his bones. Don’t look too hard, Stevie, you might find he wasn’t lost, after all!”

“Stop!” cried French, springing to his feet. “How dare you make a jest of other people’s misfortunes? Is there so little decency among your associates that you no longer recognize it when you see it?”

She had the grace to look ashamed.

“Take the yacht, my dear,” she said, kindly, “and if the expense is too great for your income, you can draw on me for what you like. Can’t you stand a little teasing from your old aunt?”

“I will take the yacht, and pay for it,” said French. “As for the teasing, we seem to have different ideas about what is amusing.”

“Then forgive me,” she pleaded, and there were tears in her eyes, “and be careful of yourself, my dear boy, in this dismal expedition. Take plenty of furs, and beware of the cannibals.”

She won a smile from him as he bent over her sofa to kiss her good-by, but she reserved further comments upon his errantry for Bob.

“Quixotic nonsense!” she declared. “Was there ever a man so wise that a woman couldn’t make a fool of him?”

CHAPTER IX.

Could there be a crueller irony of fate than to be absolutely convinced of the widowhood of her you love and to be unable, practically, to establish the fact?

Stephen French had expatriated himself, resigned the work he valued, put the seas between himself and Deena, only to be baffled at every turn. For two months he had used his utmost acumen in prosecuting the search without even finding a clew, and when finally he made his great discovery, it was by yielding to the impulse of the moment rather than the suggestions of reason.

From March to May Mrs. Star’s great ocean-going yacht had steamed along the southeastern shores of Patagonia.

Sometimes within the confines of the Straits, sometimes rounding its headlands into the Atlantic, and dropping anchor wherever the line of coast gave any facility for landing an exploring party, until the hopelessness of the quest was patent to everybody except Stephen.

On his way down he had stopped at Buenos Ayres, where he provided himself with the charts and surveys made by the newly returned expedition, and secured Simeon's personal effects left on the *Tintoretto*, together with his diary, scientific memoranda and specimens, which had been carefully preserved, and were of rare value, from a botanist's point of view.

French was fortunate enough to induce both Lopez and the captain of the *Tintoretto* to accompany him as guests, and they proved invaluable allies, especially the captain, whose topographical knowledge and recent experience were always to be relied upon. From him Stephen learned all the particulars of Simeon's disappearance, though the last home letter dispatched by the poor fellow, on the eve of the guanaco hunt, covered the first part of the story. It appeared that Ponsonby had landed with a surveying party from the ship, one morning in January, on the Patagonian side of the Straits, and set out to botanize while his companions worked. He had climbed a steep bank, in order to secure a particular shrub just in flower, when he saw on the plain beyond a party of Indians gathered by the shore of a small, fresh-water lake. Most of them were watering their horses, but half a dozen were grouped round a man lying on the ground, apparently injured. Their sharp eyes quickly marked Simeon filling his vasculum with the coveted specimens, and, waving their hands in friendly greeting, two of them advanced at a gallop. One spoke fairly good Spanish, and explained that the son of their chief had broken his leg by a fall from his horse, and he begged Simeon—whom he conceived, from his occupation of gathering simples, to be a medicine man—to come to their assistance.

Simeon's own Spanish was too poor to undeceive them, but, thinking he might be of some use, he went back with them, and rigged out a set of splints, that made it possible to carry the young man to their encampment, about a mile away. In gratitude for his services, they accompanied him to the ship on his return, mounting him on one of their horses and forming a bodyguard round him. It was then that they proposed the guanaco hunt to the officers of the ship; their own visit to the Straits being simply in pursuit of game.

The morning of the hunt the captain described as unusually warm for that region, even in January, and not particularly clear; there was a haze that was just not a fog. The Indians met them about a mile back from the shore, bringing a dozen extra horses for their guests. The quietest beast was selected for Ponsonby, but its docility was so questionable, and the rider's inexperience so evident, that the captain persuaded him to give up the chase, and content himself with a ride to the encampment to inquire about his patient. The last ever seen of him he was sitting on horseback watching the departing hunt.

Guanacos in large numbers had been seen on the plains to the northwest, whereas the Indian camp lay to the northeast, and Ponsonby's route was widely divergent to that of the hunters. All that was known is that he never reached the encampment; perhaps he mistook the trail, and, having left his compass in his cabin, had no means of ascertaining his direction—or perhaps his horse became unmanageable and bolted, carrying him far inland; at all events, his chance without a compass was poor, for a tremendous rain came on, which lasted for three days, leadening the sky to an even gray, with no mark of setting or rising sun.

At the end of four days the horse he had ridden came into camp riderless; its saddle had been removed, probably by Simeon, to make a pillow at night, and its whole appearance bespoke long travel. For a fortnight the ship's company and the Indians scoured the country seeking him. They sent up rockets at night, and lighted fires on the hilltops by day; they wearied themselves and the tireless Indians, and at last, knowing the limits of human endurance in a case like Ponsonby's, they gave up in despair.

All these incidents formed the main topics of conversation in the long evenings in the saloon of the yacht. In addition to Señor Lopez and the captain of the *Tintoretto*, Stephen had secured the services of a young physician with a taste for adventure, and his own sailing master was a person of intelligence, so that the little party brought a variety of experience to the councils held on board ship or round the camp fire when their search carried them so far inland that it was impossible to return to the yacht at night. Several times, accompanied by Pecheray guides, they had been gone for ten days at a time, but never found a trace of the lost man. There was the faint possibility that he had been found and cared for by wandering Indians, but what was far more likely was that French might stumble upon the spot where he died. Even in that land of beasts and birds of prey something would be left in evidence.

The daylight hours were now so few that little could be accomplished, and the cold was becoming severe. A violent snowstorm on the fifteenth of May decided French to give up the search and go home. Accordingly, they steamed out of the Straits of Magellan and turned the vessel northward, keeping as near the Patagonian shore as was prudent, in the hope of sighting canoes.

They had been steaming in this direction for about three hours, going slowly and keeping a sharp outlook toward the land, when the captain called French's attention to an opening in the coast line, where the Gallegos River empties into the sea. An impulse—perhaps it might more truly be called an inspiration—induced French to order the yacht brought to anchor in the bay. Although the shore seemed deserted, several canoes filled with Indians immediately put out for the yacht, as was, indeed, their invariable custom. The boats were large, capable of holding six or eight people in the two ends, while in the middle was the inevitable clay hearth, on which smoldered the fire of hemlock. As they approached the yacht, the Indians began begging for rum and tobacco, some by gestures and some in a *patois*, in which Spanish and Indian words were strangely blended; and French, whose policy was always to secure their good will, invited them on board and ordered the steward to bring spirits and tobacco, and also a plentiful supply of ship biscuit and sweets.

The men were of medium size, and not bad looking, and for the most part dressed in loose-fitting mantles of guanaco skins, stained bright red. In spite of the cold, this one garment was their only protection, and even this they would offer in exchange for rum. Knowing their customs, French was astonished to find the first man who stepped on board

wearing the coat of civilization under his mantle, and his astonishment gave way to alarm when he recognized an old checked cutaway of Simeon's, which had done service for many a winter at Harmouth, and was as unmistakable as the features of its lost owner. While Stephen stared—too agitated to find a word of Spanish—the Indian tossed off half a tumbler of raw whisky at a gulp and, drawing from the pocket of poor Simeon's coat a silver flask, he presented it to the steward to be filled with the same genial fluid. The flask was Stephen's parting gift to Simeon, and marked with his name.

The excitement now became intense, for the Indians declared that the owner of the coat was alive, and the one who was wearing it, and who seemed to exercise some authority over the others, began an explanation in signs. He pointed to a cliff that overhung the stony beach at the mouth of the river, and, lifting his hand high above his head; brought it down with a violent gesture, as if to simulate a fall. He next motioned toward the canoes, talking volubly all the while, though his language was unintelligible to anyone except the captain of the *Tintoretto*, who picked out a word here and there.

The tribes of the Straits of Magellan and the adjacent coasts vary greatly in their characteristics; some have the impassive bearing we associate with the Indian, and some are imitative, reproducing sounds and gestures with surprising exactness.

It was not difficult to guess that Simeon had fallen over the cliff and been found by the Indians, who are always skirting the shore in their canoes, and the Spanish captain made out that he was now in one of their boats higher up the river. When the Indian was asked whether he would guide them to the place, he hesitated until bribed by rum and provisions, and then he agreed to go in his own canoe and bring Simeon to the yacht, where the exchange was to be effected. Why he hesitated remained a mystery, unless Ponsonby's knowledge of herbs had made him of value to the tribe.

French immediately ordered the various tins and boxes, containing the supply of food promised, to be placed conspicuously on the deck as an earnest of his honesty in the barter, and when a small keg of rum was added, the satisfaction was complete; four or five Indians followed their leader into his canoe and paddled up the river.

They were gone so long—over three hours—that French began to curse his folly in trusting them, and he was about to follow them up in the launch, when he saw their canoe coming round a bend in the stream. At the first glance it seemed filled with Indians only, and it was not until it was actually alongside that he detected a mummy-like form lying in the stern, which he guessed to be Simeon.

Half a dozen sturdy arms made the transfer, by means of a hammock, from the canoe to the yacht, and Simeon, alive but quite unconscious, was laid on the deck. He had probably been subjected by the removal to more pain than in his enfeebled condition he could bear, and it required long and patient exertion on the part of the doctor before he was revived from his syncope.

His condition was pitiable; from an injury to the spine he was a helpless cripple, while the arm which had been broken in his fall had knit in a way to render it perfectly useless. He was fearfully emaciated, probably from the lack of palatable food, and his expression was vacant.

French gave up his own deck cabin, the most commodious in size, and before another hour had passed Simeon was lying in a comfortable bed, clean, warm, devotedly tended, but apparently dying.

For forty-eight hours they kept the yacht within the shelter of the river, fearing the effect of motion on that feeble flame of life, but the warmth and nourishment soon began to tell, and on the third day he recognized French, and tried to murmur some words of gratitude and pleasure.

That night Stephen called the doctor into his own room and shut the door. He wanted to put a very simple question, one which might have been asked anywhere out of Simeon's hearing, and yet the effort seemed almost beyond his powers.

"Can he live?"

The words came in such a hoarse, unnatural voice that the doctor, a sensitive man, feared to deal the blow of truth. This was a very marvel of friendship; like the love of David and Jonathan, it passed the love of women.

The doctor temporized. Mr. Ponsonby had rallied wonderfully; his constitution was much stronger than he had been given to understand; it was rather soon to give a definite opinion, but—

Here Stephen interrupted him.

"Great God, man! Can't you answer a plain question. Yes or no?"

The doctor drew himself up and, to quote his own language, "let him have it straight."

"If he lives to get home it will be a good deal more than I expect of him."

French nodded toward the door, and turned his back.

That night he relieved the doctor's watch by sitting up with his friend, and, having given him his broth at midnight, was almost dozing in his chair when a whisper from Simeon roused him. The sound was so faint, he held his breath to listen.

"Stephen, I want to see Deena."

French's heart began thumping like the screw of his yacht. How he thanked God that he could look his friend in the face as he answered:

"So you shall, old man; just as quickly as steam can carry you to her."

A look of satisfaction came into the tired eyes.

"It will be a race with death," he said, "but perhaps—thank you, Stephen." And he fell asleep.

CHAPTER X.

With Deena the spring moved drearily. Her position was strangely anomalous; she was neither wife nor widow, without the right to be glad or sad—only dumbly wretched. She could not mourn for a husband who might be living, nor could she ignore the fact that he might be dead, and all the while that parting scene with Stephen burned into her conscience like a brand.

She shut herself up with Polly and the baby, and hardly went out of the house while she remained in New York. Love for the child crept deep into her heart and soothed her into patience when all else failed.

In May the house in Harmouth returned to her keeping, the lease having expired, and she left the Sixty-fifth Street household with reluctance to take up her old life. In the great city she had been but a human atom. Her conduct, her unhappiness, her very existence mattered to no one there, except, perhaps, to Ben and Polly, who were as tender and sympathetic as such vigorous people could be; but in Harmouth every creature was interested in Simeon's fate, and watched Deena with a curiosity she found maddening.

She felt herself the main topic of conversation; she never approached two people talking in the street that they didn't break off in guilty confusion, and comments upon her mode of dressing and daily occupations were continually repeated to her in the form of censure. Her own family were especially out of touch, for their assumption that she mourned her husband as Polly would have done made her feel like an impostor. They did not give her much of their company, for their newly found fortune made them even more self-centered than their misfortunes. Dicky was the exception; perhaps because he had started in life hard as nails, and so couldn't grow any harder. At all events, Deena thought she discerned a reluctant affection in his greeting that was infinitely flattering.

Stephen wrote whenever he could catch the Chilian mail boats on their way through the Straits. His letters were those of a man under the strong hand of restraint; admirable letters, that filled her with respect for him and shame at her own craving for "one word more."

On the twenty-fifth of May she had a cable that changed the face of events. It was from Montevideo.

Have found Simeon. Desperately ill. On our way home.

S. French.

The news spread over the town like wildfire. The local paper issued an extra; a thing it had not done since the assassination of Mr. McKinley. As soon as Harmouth knew Mrs. Ponsonby's exact status it became distinctly friendly. People are helpful by instinct, and offers of neighborly assistance poured in from all sides.

Deena left nothing undone that could, by anticipation, add to Simeon's comfort. His room was ready, a nurse engaged, and all the paraphernalia belonging to the care of the sick collected long before the time due for his arrival. She counted upon seeing him four weeks from the date of the cable. The regular trip of the mail boats between Rio and New York is twenty days; from Montevideo two days more; to that must be added another day to reach Boston, and she was warned that a yacht would go more slowly than a large steamer; she therefore concluded the third week in June would bring them.

The lot of women is to wait, and they do it under a pressure of nervous strain that makes it slow torture. No turn of fortune could have surprised Deena at this crisis, for her imagination had pictured every possibility.

When a summer storm blackened the sky she saw the yacht tempest-tossed and sinking, driven before a tropical cyclone; when the sun shone, she fancied it sailing gayly into port with Simeon restored to health, expecting to find her as he left her—the willing slave, the careful housewife—and she shivered and went pale at the thought; and then in a revulsion of feeling she saw him dying, and she was ready to cast herself at his feet, and tell him all—how she had tried to do right, how she had struggled against her love for Stephen. Perhaps he would have mercy upon her and let her go away, all by herself, to wrestle with her heart.

She couldn't eat; she couldn't sleep. She grew so wan and thin she was like a ghost of her old self.

Her mother said:

"My dear, you must stop fretting. I am sure, under the care of that clever young doctor Mr. French took down, and with the comforts of the yacht, your husband will be quite himself by the time he gets home."

And her father added:

"You must not be so impatient, Deena; it is mighty nasty sailing through West Indian waters, and a boat of that size doesn't carry enough fuel for a prolonged voyage; they will have to stop for coal somewhere on their way up."

She was growing irritable under her dread. Like Elisha, she longed to silence them with the answer:

"I know it; hold ye your peace."

The middle of June had passed, the fourth week of the voyage had begun, and now any day, any hour, might bring news.

Deena's anxiety had made such inroads into her health that her father took alarm and called in her old friend Dr. Hassan, and he, wise man, gave her a sedative and ordered her to bed, though the afternoon was still young.

It was the first long sleep she had had for weeks, and the refreshment came at the time of her direst need, for at daybreak the summons roused her. She waked with a beating heart; wheels stopped in the street, her gate clicked, there were footsteps coming up her path—bold, hurried steps; they reached the veranda—the bell pealed.

She sprang from her bed, huddling her dressing gown round her as she ran, and, slipping back the heavy, old-fashioned bolts of the front door, she stood face to face with Stephen.

If she were pale, he was paler; his blood seemed turned to ice that summer morning.

"The yacht is at Wolfshead," he said. "How soon can you be ready? We must go by rail—I have a special waiting for you."

A glow from the first blush of day caught her as she stood in the frame of the doorway. She was like a mediæval saint, with her hair wound in a crown about her head, her blue gown falling in stately fold, and her bare feet showing under the hem of her nightgown. In spite of her seeming calm, her eyes blazed with excitement.

To French she seemed something holy and apart—as if those bare feet rested on a crescent, and the shadows of the old hall were floating clouds. He had schooled himself during his hurried journey, in order to meet her without emotion, but she was her own protection; to have touched her would have seemed sacrilege. Her lips tried to frame the question that consumed her with its terrors.

"Simeon——" she began, but her voice failed.

Stephen's haggard eyes softened.

"He is dying," he said. "But there is time—perhaps to-day—perhaps to-morrow. His force of will has kept him alive to see you—he has cared more than you knew."

She gave a little sob, and turned toward the staircase. Halfway up she stopped.

"I forgot to ask you to come in," she said, "or whether you want anything I can get you? But it doesn't matter, does it? All that matters is to do Simeon's bidding. I shall be very quick."

In an incredibly short time she was back, fully dressed, and carrying a bag, into which she had thrust what was indispensable to her comfort for another day. She waked the servant, left a message for her father, and then she and Stephen went out into the street, so gay with early sunlight and twittering birds, so bare of human traffic. At first a strange shyness kept her dumb; she longed to ask a thousand things, but the questions that rose to her lips seemed susceptible of misunderstanding, and Stephen's aloofness frightened her. Did he think, she wondered, that she could forget her duty to Simeon at such a moment, that he surrounded himself with this impenetrable reserve? And all the time he was regarding her with a passionate reverence that shamed him into silence.

At the railway station their train was waiting—the locomotive hissing its impatience; they got into the car, for there was but one, and in a moment were flying seaward. A man—the steward of the yacht—was busy at the far end of the car with a cooking apparatus, and the aroma of coffee came intoxicatingly to her nostrils. She remembered she had eaten nothing since her early dinner the day before, and she was exhausted with excitement, and then she despised herself for thinking of her physical needs when Simeon lay dying. It was fortunate that French had taken a saner view of the situation, for the coffee was just what was needed to restore her equipoise.

She began to understand the delicacy of her companion's conduct, and the simplicity of the whole situation when stripped of morbidness. The only thing that behooved her was to soothe her husband's last hours on earth—to give out the tenderness of a pitying heart. As her common sense asserted itself she began plying Stephen with the questions that had seemed so impossible half an hour before—would Simeon know her—could he bear conversation—was he changed in appearance—had he suffered beyond relief? She demanded the whole story of his rescue and of the voyage home. She was gentle, womanly, infinitely sweet. By the time they reached their destination all constraint was gone; they were two comrades absorbed in a common interest, for Simeon occupied their every thought.

There was a narrow pier at Wolfshead, sheltered by a point of rocky shore that made a landing for small boats in good weather, and there the steam launch was waiting with its two trim sailors and its gaudy flag. The yacht was anchored about a mile from shore—her graceful outlines clearly defined against the ocean's blue. If the purity of her white paint had suffered in the long voyage it was not apparent—red and white awnings were stretched over the deck. All looked hospitably gay. Once more Deena shrank into herself, the brilliant scene mocked the tragedy within.

All too quickly they crossed the intervening water; they were on the deck—in the saloon. She was trembling so she could hardly stand, and Stephen put her into a comfortable chair and left her, while he made her coming known. She hardly glanced at the luxurious fittings of the charming room; her eyes were fixed on the door, dreading, yet impatient, for the message.

A small, sensitive-looking man came toward her and introduced himself.

"I am Dr. Miles," he said, "Mr. Ponsonby's physician, and, if you will allow me, I will take you to him now. There is no question of saving his strength, Mrs. Ponsonby. We have been nursing what is left to him for days, in order that he could lavish it in this interview with you. Don't try to curb him; let him have his say."

She followed him to a deck cabin almost under the bridge, and stood for a moment at the threshold, to make sure of her composure. There was a narrow brass bed, a chest of drawers, a washstand, and close to the bed a wicker chair, with

silk cushions, was drawn up, as if in expectation of a guest. The head of the bed was toward her, so that she couldn't see Simeon's face, but he heard the rustle of skirts, and called her name, and she made a step forward and sank on her knees beside him.

"Oh, Simeon," she gasped, "how you have suffered! I am so sorry!"

He moved his hand feebly and patted her shoulder, and she, in a passion of pity, carried it to her lips. For the first time she ventured to look at him. Was this Simeon! She would have passed him in a hospital ward as an utter stranger, so completely was he changed. He had discarded his spectacles, and his eyes were dull and faded; pain had robbed them of that expression of concentrated wisdom she knew so well. He wore a short, curling beard and mustache, and his clothing, supplied from Stephen's wardrobe, was luxurious; it was silk, of a faint color between blue and gray, and the handkerchief, protruding from the pocket, was delicately fine. Extreme neatness was characteristic of Simeon, but he disliked anything florid in dress or appearance, anything opposed to the austere simplicity that marked his manner of living. She wondered whether such things mattered to him now.

He noticed her start of surprise as her eyes met his, and fancied she was shocked by the ravages of illness, for he said, with a touch of his old irritation:

"Didn't they tell you I was dying? Are you afraid to be left alone with me? You used to be a courageous person, Deena."

The querulousness with which he began the sentence melted into a rallying smile.

"Oh, no," she said, "I am not afraid. I am too sorry to be frightened."

"There is a bell, in case you want to summon the doctor," he continued, "but I should rather talk to you alone. I have been very homesick for you, and for the old house—sometimes the longing has been most acute—and then the anxiety of leaving you poorly provided for has been part of my distress. If I could have lived a few years more this would have been obviated, and possibly, even now, my book will add something to your income." He made a visible effort to speak clearly. "Now, in regard to your future support; I have a life insurance of ten thousand dollars, and securities to about the same amount—and then, of course, the house. This is all I have been able to save, though I have cut our living down to bare necessities. You have been of great assistance to me, Deena—without you life would have had little flavor, but sometimes I fear that in the desire to provide for your future I was not considerate enough of your present. I ought to have been more mindful that young people need pleasure. You will have to forgive that and many other mistakes." He looked at her almost wistfully.

Deena's tears came, dripping plentifully over her clasped hands.

"It is I who should ask forgiveness," she said, humbly, remembering how often she had scorned his economies. "The money is more than I shall need—don't think of it again, Simeon. Isn't there anything you want to tell me about your work—your book?"

His face lit up eagerly—the topic was congenial.

"My papers are safe," he said. "All the initial work of classification and description that I did on the *Tintoretto* is in French's keeping, and he and Sinclair—the man who has my place—are going to edit the book. We have had a great deal of talk about it on the way up, whenever I had a fairly quiet day. It is idle to try to put into words what I owe French."

"And he feels nothing but self-reproach for having urged you to go," said Deena, faintly. "Not that anyone could have foreseen the miserable outcome."

"It isn't miserable!" Simeon answered, almost fiercely. "In many respects it is all that I hoped. I have made a name for myself—there will not be a scientific library in the world without my book, when once it is issued. People have died for lesser achievements than that." And then he added, more gently: "Not that it could be considered as an achievement without French's aid."

His mind could not detach itself from its debt of gratitude, for he suddenly broke out in passionate eulogy.

"He has sacrificed everything to me—his ambitions—his time—his comfort—his money, though that is the last thing he would begrudge, but you have no idea what it costs to run one of those large yachts! It must have made an inroad even in his large fortune. He has been a friend indeed!"

Deena turned away her face; it was hard for her to praise Stephen, although her heart echoed her husband's words.

"He has high ideals in friendship as in everything else," she answered, "but you must remember, Simeon, that the thought of your sufferings agonized us at home. Who could have abandoned you to such a fate? It makes me sick to think of it!"

A sort of shiver passed over him, while he said, simply:

"It was all in the day's work. French ran the same risks, only with better luck." Presently he added:

"I feel tired, Deena—and a little oppressed. Perhaps you had better ring the bell—but stay. Will you kiss me before you ring?"

She kissed him with a pity that wrung her heart, and he sighed contentedly and shut his eyes. He only spoke once more, just as the doctor came to his bedside.

"I should have been glad to see the old house before I die, but it is just as well as it is."

He was dying all the afternoon, peacefully and gently, and at sunset the end came.

CHAPTER XI.

Master Richard Shelton sat at the foot of his sister's table dispensing its hospitalities chiefly to himself. Through some law unknown to science, all dishes seemed to gravitate toward the main center of Dicky's trencher, thereby leaving the rest of the table comparatively bare.

For eighteen months Master Shelton had given Mrs. Ponsonby the advantage of his company; not so much through volition—albeit, he was well enough pleased with his quarters—as through submission to paternal authority.

Conventional ideas are apt to wilt under the blight of poverty, and to revive under the fuller harvesting of this world's goods, and Mr. Shelton, Sr., who had, in the days of his leanness, let Polly run wild with all the college boys of Harmouth, became suddenly particular, as his bank account fattened, in regard to the niceties of conduct in his daughters. His scruples even embraced Deena; he said she was too young a widow to live alone, and a blank sight too handsome, and that either she must return to the protection of his roof or else receive her brother under her own. With the docility of the intelligent, she accepted his fiat, but chose the evil represented by a unit rather than by the sum total of family companionship.

So she and Dicky had lived together since the day when Simeon had been laid to rest beside his mother in the churchyard, and Deena had taken up life with such courage as she could muster in the old house. She had started out with a long illness, as the result of overtaxed nerves, and the nurse who had been engaged for Simeon found ample employment with Simeon's widow; but a good constitution and a quiet mind are excellent helps toward recovery, and by September she found herself in admirable health.

Stephen's energies had been absorbed in editing Simeon's book. He had the assistance of the botanical department of Harmouth, and the book was produced in a manner which would have given poor Ponsonby infinite pleasure. French spared no expense, especially in the color drawings from Simeon's photographs and specimens, which were exceptionally valuable. The printing was done in Boston, and Stephen was there much of the time. During Deena's illness he was glad of an excuse to be near enough to get daily reports of her progress, but as she became strong and resumed the routine of living, so that intercourse became unavoidable, he found the strain of silence more than he could bear. He resigned his professorship permanently, and went abroad, making the book his excuse. He wished to see that it was properly heralded by both English and Continental scientific periodicals, and he preferred to attend to it himself. To say that Deena missed him but feebly expresses the void his going made in her life, but, knowing her own heart, and suspecting the state of his, she was glad to be spared his presence in these early days of widowhood, and could not but approve his decision.

Dicky's society was hardly calculated to stifle her longings for higher things, for his conduct called for constant repression. At first he had nearly driven her wild by his prying interest in what did not concern him, his way of unmasking her secret thoughts, his powers of seeing round corners, if not through sealed envelopes, but as time went on she grew fond of his honest boy-nature, and learned to laugh at his precocious acuteness. Perhaps with Stephen's departure there were fewer occasions for her to resent the challenge of his intrusive eye. There were, also, alleviations coincident with the school year, for then she was free from his company from the time he slammed the front door, at five minutes to nine, till he returned at two, ravenous for dinner.

On the particular morning indicated at the beginning of the chapter, the season was the late autumn—the clock was pointing ominously near nine—the lady opposite to Master Shelton looked more beautiful than ever in her widow's weeds. Dicky conveyed half a sausage and a wedge of buttered toast to the sustenance of boyhood before he asked—with some difficulty, if the truth were confessed:

"May I take a bunch of grapes to school, Deena?"

She was about to give a cheerful consent, when he defeated his own ends by adding:

"None of the other boys have hothouse grapes; it makes 'em think a lot of me. I guess they know where they come from, too!"

"In those circumstances, certainly not," she answered, indignantly. "You can eat all you like at home."

"Well, I call that low-down mean," he said, stabbing another sausage, "and you gettin' all the fruit and flowers from Mr. French's place sent to you every day. I wish Polly and Ben were there still—they wouldn't begrudge me a little fruit."

Polly and Ben had taken Stephen's place for the summer, during his protracted absence, and had but recently returned to New York.

"Polly and Ben would despise your snobbishness just as I do; besides, I do not approve of your taking eatables to school," she added, disingenuously, for her objection was to furnishing food for Harmouth gossip—not to Dicky.

"Oh, pshaw!" he exclaimed. "As if I didn't know why you won't let me take 'em! Mr. French will give me anything I ask for when he gets home—that's one comfort. Did you know he may be here any day? The man who brought the flowers told me so yesterday."

Deena's complexion flushed a lively pink, or else it was the reflection from the wood fire, leaping in tongues of flame behind the tall brass fender. She certainly looked singularly girlish as she sat behind the array of Ponsonby breakfast silver, her severe black frock, with the transparent bands of white at throat and wrists, only serving to mark her

youthful freshness. Her beauty was of little consequence to her brother, who was busy considering the advantages that might accrue to himself from Stephen's return.

"When Mr. French went away, he said I could ride his saddle horse, and though I've been there half a dozen times since Ben left, that old beast of a coachman won't let me inside the stable. Will you tell Mr. French when he comes home what an old puddin' head he's got to look after his horses? The man ought to be kicked out!"

"I shall hardly venture to complain to Mr. French about his servants," said Deena.

"You might be good-natured," he urged; "here's the whole autumn gone without my getting any riding, and Mr. French would do anything you asked——"

"It is time for you to go to school," said Deena, shortly.

"No, it isn't; not for three minutes yet," he contradicted. "'Tenny rate, I don't mean to be early this morning—it's jography, and I don't know my lesson; but I do think you might speak about the horse, Deena; I never get a bit of sport worth countin'"—this in a high, grumbling minor. "There was Ben; he had his automobile here the whole summer, and never offered it to me once! The fellows all think it was awfully mean—I had promised to take them out in it, and it made me feel deuced cheap, I can tell you. The idea of using a machine like that just to air a kid every day! I guess it pumped it full of wind, anyhow—that's one comfort."

"If you are going to say disagreeable things about the baby, I won't listen to you," said Deena, crossly, and then, ashamed of her petulance, added: "Run along to school, dear; the sooner you get some knowledge into that little red head of yours, the sooner you can have automobiles and horses of your own."

"Those of my brothers-in-law will suit me just as well," he said, favoring her with a horrid grimace, as he wiped his mouth on a rope of napkin held taut between his outstretched fists. "Perhaps I had better let Mr. French know myself what I expect in the future."

"Perhaps you'll mind your own business!" cried Deena, driven to fury.

He left the room singing in a quavering treble:

I'll pray for you when on the stormy ocean

With love's devotion. That's what I'll do.

It was a song with which a nursemaid of the Shelton children had been wont to rock the reigning baby to sleep, and had lurked in Dicky's memory for many a year.

Poor Deena was thoroughly ruffled. It was maddening to have a love she held as the most sacred secret of her heart vulgarized by a boy's coarse teasing, and, in addition, she was jealous of her own dignity—anxious to pay her dead husband proper respect—distressed at the possibility of Stephen's thoughtful kindness becoming a subject of comment in the town. And yet what difference did it make?

This carefully guarded secret would be public property by her own consent before a week was over, for Dicky's announcement of French's return was no news to Deena—at that very moment her heart was beating against a letter which assured her he was following fast upon its tracks, and when he came he was not likely to prove a patient lover. All through that second summer his letters had been growing more tender, more urgent, till at last he had taken matters into his own hands, and decided that their separation must end. For aught she knew, his vessel might already have reached New York—he might be that blessed moment on his way to Harmouth! The thought sent little thrills of happiness bounding through her veins. She had a shrewd idea he would appear unannounced by letter or telegram, but not to-day—certainly not to-day—she reflected.

There were plenty of small duties waiting for her that morning, but in woman's parlance she "couldn't settle to anything"; there was an excitement in her mood that demanded the freedom of fresh air. She went up to her bedroom and stood for a moment at her window before yielding to the impulse that beckoned her out into the sunshine; and, drawing Stephen's letter from her dress, she read it once more, to make sure she had missed no precious hint as to the time of his sailing. He wrote:

May I come back? You must know all I mean that to imply—to come back, my best beloved, to you—to order my life in accordance to your pleasure—to marry you the day I set foot in Harmouth—or to wait impatiently till you are pleased to give yourself to me. I trust your love too entirely to fear that you will needlessly prolong the time. You are too fair-minded to let mere conventions weigh with you as against my happiness. Between you and me there must be no shams, and yet I would not shock or hurry you for the world.

On second thoughts, I shall not wait for your permission to return—that is not the best way to gain one's desires! No, I shall come before you can stop me, and while you are saying to yourself, "Perhaps he is on the ocean," I may be turning in at your gate.

What did she mean to do? she asked herself, with a smile that was its own answer.

She went into her closet, and, fetching her crape hat from the shelf, began pinning it on before the glass. Its somber ugliness accorded ill with the brightness of her hair, and somehow her hair seemed to turn mourning into a mockery.

She couldn't help recalling an incident that had happened two years before, when she had seen herself in that same glass transformed into sudden prettiness by Polly's skillful fingers, and how her pleasure in her appearance had been turned into humiliation by Simeon's petty tyranny, when she asked him to pay for her hat. And then she was ashamed of

her own thoughts—distressed that she had let the paltry reminiscence force itself into her mind; for great happiness should put us in charity with all. Never again would she allow an unkind remembrance to lodge in her thoughts.

She shut the door of her room and hurried out into the street—there was so much indoors to remind her of what she most wished to forget. When Stephen came for her they would go away from Harmouth—just for a little while, till the memories faded—and, in a future of perfect love, think kindly, gratefully, pitifully, of Simeon.

You see, she was desperately in love, poor child, and at last heart and conscience were in accord.

Her feet fairly danced up the street; she moved so lightly she hardly rustled the carpet of fallen leaves that overspread the pavement. It was a glorious day, the sun was touching all prosaic things with gold, and up in heaven, against the interminable blue, little white clouds sailed in dapples, such as Raphael charged with angel faces, and every face seemed to smile.

Wandering across the campus, under the stately arches of the college elms, she finally reached the open country, and, realizing that even the wings of happiness are mortal, she turned homeward, choosing the avenue that led past French's place. Perhaps she hoped for reassuring signs of his coming—doors and windows thrown open and gardeners at work upon the ground—but before she got beyond the high hedge that cut off her view, a carriage, which she recognized as Stephen's, drove rapidly toward the gate, and in it sat a lady, stately and grand, but so closely veiled as to defy both sun and curiosity. At a sign from her the carriage stopped, and a voice exclaimed:

"I have just been to see you, Mrs. Ponsonby, and was so much disappointed to find you out—and so was some one else, I fancy, who I am sure has been at your house this morning! Pray get in and drive home with me. And I will send you back to town after you have paid me a little visit."

Deena had by this time recognized Mrs. Star, and recovered sufficiently from her surprise to take the offered seat in the carriage, but she was in such a tumult of hope and fear she hardly dared trust herself to do more than greet her old friend. Mrs. Star understood quite well, and gave her time to recover her wits by a characteristic harangue.

"How am I?" she repeated, sardonically. "Lame for life! I have never got over McTorture's treatment, and never shall. Oh, no, it was not the original accident—that was an innocent affair—it is the result of McTorture's nonsense in keeping me chained to my sofa in one position till my leg stiffened. But never mind about doctors; they're all alike—bad's the best! You look handsome and healthy enough to keep out of their clutches; tell me all about yourself."

"There is never anything to tell about me," said Deena. "I am much more concerned to know why you are here."

Mrs. Star's eyes softened.

"Because Stephen wouldn't stop long enough in New York for me to exchange ten words with him, and so I did the next best thing—indeed, the only thing I could do to satisfy my affection—I came with him; and upon my word, I do not think he wanted me! Now, how do you account for that, Mrs. Deena?"

Her expression was so insinuating that Deena might be excused a slight irritation in her tone as she answered:

"I don't account for it."

Here they reached the front door, for the approach was a short one, and Mrs. Star got out laboriously and ushered her guest into the hall.

"Do you know your way to the library?" she asked. "It is on the other side of this barn of a room, and if you will make yourself comfortable there, I will join you in a minute. The truth is, we are not in order, and I must give a message before I can have the conscience to sit down and enjoy a chat."

Deena's eyes were still blinded by the midday glare, but she managed to cross the great drawing room without stumbling over an ottoman, and, pushing aside the heavy curtain that shut off the library, she walked directly into Stephen's arms.

As Mrs. Star saw fit to leave her undisturbed, it would be sheer presumption for a humble person like the writer to disregard that compelling example. Suffice it to say that for one hour Stephen's horses stamped and champed in the stable, and that when finally Mrs. Star did appear, the occupants of the library were under the impression she had been gone barely long enough to take off her wraps.

Perhaps no mortals deserve happiness, and certainly few attain it, but if ever a man and a woman were likely to find satisfaction in each other's companionship, it was the lovers sitting hand in hand before Stephen's fire.

Most women of twenty-four have had some experience of love as a passion; they have known its fullness or its blight, or more often still, they have frittered it away in successive flirtations, but with Deena it had come as a revelation and been consecrated to one. To be sure, she had tried to crush and repress it, but it had persisted because of its inherent force. And with Stephen the passion was at once the delight and glory of his life. His was no boy's love made up of sentiment and vanity; he had brought a man's courage to follow duty to the borders of despair, and all the while he held the image of her he loved unsullied in his heart. At last they were free to take all that life had before withheld of sympathy and friendship and perfect understanding. What wonder that an hour should slip away before they realized the flight of time?

Mrs. Star received her nephew's announcement with suitable effusion, and with an undercurrent of genuine feeling. After kissing Deena, she made a confidence that had a spice of kindly malice.

"My dear child," she said, "I knew so well what was about to happen, that I came all the way from New York in order to

welcome you into the family, and I think I showed great self-restraint not to tell you so in the carriage when you put that very direct question as to what brought me."

Concerning the Heart's Deep Pages

By Sewell Ford

Author of "Horses Nine," Etc.



When Dickie's mother put him in my charge for the summer she said: "Keep him out of as much mischief as you can." This seemed unnecessary, for, really, Dickie was a well-mannered, good-looking young fellow, with broad shoulders, a clear skin and a clean heart. I said as much.

"Oh, you old bachelors!" laughed Dickie's mother, and sailed away to spend her second season of widowhood abroad.

Dickie and I were just taking a look at the country surrounding our summer headquarters when we found Rosie. Balancing herself on a gatepost and eating cherries was Rosie. It must be admitted that she did both of these things with a certain grace, also that the picture she made had its charm. For she was probably sixteen, with all that the age implies.

Of course, one could not expect Dickie to be at all impressed. Certainly I did not.

"Girls!" Here followed an ominous inbreathing, ending in an explosive "Huh!" This was Dickie's expressed attitude toward the sex. For Dickie was nineteen, which is the scornful age, you know. What are girls when a fellow is going to be a soph. in the fall, with the prospect of playing quarterback on the 'varsity eleven?

As we neared the girl on the gatepost Dickie gave her a careless glance. She certainly deserved better. There was the sifting sunshine in her hair and there were her white, rounded arms reaching up to pull down a fruit-laden branch. Perhaps the girl on the gatepost felt the slight of Dickie's unappreciative glance, perhaps not. At any rate, she was unstirred.

"Want one?" she asked, saucily dangling a cherry at us.

Red as the cherry went Dickie's face, and he marched stiffly past without reply. Once we were out of earshot, he remarked, with deep disgust: "What a freshy!"

"Yes, but rather pretty," said I.

"Think so? Now, I don't." This with the air of a connoisseur. "But she did have good eyes."

"Yes," I agreed. "I like brown ones myself."

"Brown?" protested Dickie. "They were blue, dark blue and big—the deep kind."

"Oh, were they?" In my tone must have been that which caused Dickie to suspect that I was teasing him.

"You bet she knows it, too," he added, vindictively. "Conceited beggars, these girls."

"Awfully," I assented. Then, after a pause: "But I thought you were fond of cherries?"

"So I am. If she'd been a boy, I would have tried to buy a quart."

"She seemed to want you to have some," I suggested. "Perhaps she would sell you a few."

Dickie glanced at me suspiciously. "Think so? I've a mind to go back and try. Will you wait?"

I said I would; in fact, it was the only thing to be done, for he was off. So I sat down and watched the scorners of girls disappear eagerly around a bend in the road. At the end of a half hour of waiting I began to speculate. Had Dickie's courage failed him, had he taken to the woods, or was he upbraiding her of the gatepost for the sin of conceit? I would go and see for myself.

All unheeding the rest of the world, they were sitting at the foot of the cherry tree. The "conceited beggar" of the deep blue eyes was trying to toss cherries into Dickie's open mouth. When she missed it became Dickie's turn to toss cherries. The game was a spirited one. Dickie appeared to be well entertained.

"I thought you had forgotten me," said I, mildly. Dickie's laugh broke square in the middle, and he smoothed his face into a bored expression.

"Her name is Rosie," this was the substance of the stammered introduction.

"Indeed!" I replied. "And you were right about her eyes; they *are* blue."

Dickie flushed guiltily and hastily got on his feet.

"Come on," he said; "I guess we'd better be going."

Very frankly Rosie looked her opinion of me as we left. It was interesting to note the elaborate strategy used by Dickie to conceal the fact that he waved his handkerchief to her. There ensued a long silence between us, but of this Dickie seemed unconscious. He broke it by whistling "Bedelia" two notes off the key.

"It's too bad, Dickie," I said, finally, "that you dislike girls so much."

"They're a silly lot," said Dickie, with a brave effort at a tired drawl.

"But Rosie, now——"

"Oh, she's not like the rest of them. She's rather jolly."

"Conceited little beggar, though, I suppose?"

"No, sir; not a bit. She's just the right kind." Then Dickie flushed and the conversation lapsed suddenly.

We were to go sailing on the river next morning, but when the time came Dickie pleaded delay. He had "promised to take a book to a friend." He would be back in a few minutes. Two hours did Dickie take for that errand, and I began to think that perhaps my joking had been unwise.

Dickie now entered upon a chronic state of being "toggled up." He treasured faded flowers, raising hue and cry because the maid threw out a wilted peony which he had enshrined in a vase on his chiffonier. Once he almost fell into the river rescuing an envelope which had slipped from his pocket. The treasure it contained seemed to be a lock of dark hair. His spending money went for fancy chocolates, which I did not see him eat.

Such were the beginnings of this tremendous affair.

Very gentle and serious Dickie became in these days, moods new to him. Also he took to reading poetry. Scott's "Marmion," about the only piece of verse with which he had been on speaking acquaintance, he abandoned for fragments of "Locksley Hall" and "Lucille." His musical taste underwent like change. The rollicking college airs he was accustomed to whistle with more vigor than accuracy gave place to "Tell Me, Pretty Maiden," and "Annie Laurie." These he executed quite as inaccurately, but—and this was some relief—in minor key.

Sitting in the sacred hush of the moonlight, we had long talks on sober subjects not at all related to "revolving wedges" and "guards back formation," on which he had been wont to discourse. With uneasy conscience I meditated on the amazing alchemy, potent in young and tender passion.

One morning a grinning youngster with big blue eyes, like Rosie's, handed me a note. It was rather sticky to the touch, by reason of the candy with which the messenger had been paid. It bore no address. "Darlingest Dearest——" Thus far I read, then folded it promptly and put it in my pocket.

The note was still there the next afternoon when, jibing our sail, we came abruptly on an unexpected scene. In a smart cedar rowboat, such as they have for hire at the summer hotel, an athletic youth wielded a pair of long, spruce oars. Facing him, with her back toward us and leaning comfortably against the chair seat in the stern, was a pretty girl in white.

"Why," said I, with perhaps a suspicion of relief, "I believe that is Rosie."

Dickie, gripping the tiller hard, was staring as one in a trance. My words roused him.

"Rosie? What Rosie?" said he.

"Why, the one who gave you the cherries."

"Is it?" asked Dickie, stoically. Then, with studied carelessness and devilish abandon: "I say, old man, toss me a cigar, will you? I feel like having a smoke."

After dinner I found Dickie in his room. There was a scent of burned paper in the air and fresh ashes were in the grate. The mercury was close to ninety.

"Chilly?" said I.

Dickie laughed unconvincingly. "No, just burning some old trash. Want to take a tramp?"

I did. Was it chance or the immutable workings of fate which took us in time past the house of the cherry tree? In a porch hammock was Rosie, a vision of budding beauty only half clouded in flimsy lawn and lace. Yet with never a turn of the head Dickie swaggered by, talking meanwhile to me in tones meant to carry an idea of much light-heartedness. Over my shoulder I noted that Rosie was standing watching us, a puzzled look on her face.

"Dick!" It was rather a faint call, but loud enough to be heard.

"She's calling you," said I.

"Wait, Dickie!" This time there was an aggrieved, pleading note, against which the stern Dickie was not proof.

"Well," said he, "I suppose I'd better see what she wants. Will you wait?"

"No, I will go on slowly and you can catch up with me. Don't be long, Dickie."

But a full hour later, when I returned, he was just starting. From some distance up the road I could see them. On the veranda Rosie's mother rocked and worked placidly away at something in her lap. Quite sedately they walked down the path until a big hydrangea bush, studded thickly with great clumps of blossoms, screened them from the house. Then something occurred which told me that the boating incident and the unanswered note had either been forgiven or forgotten. I dodged out of sight behind a hedge. When I thought it safe to come out, Dickie was swinging up the road toward me, whistling furiously. Clawing my shoulder, he remarked: "Say, old man, what do you think of her?"

"Think of whom?"

"Why, Rosie."

"Rosie! What Rosie? Oh, you mean the one who gave you the cherries?"

"Yes, of course. Say"—this impulsively in my ear—"she's the sweetest girl alive."

"From what I saw just now," said I, "I should say that you were quite competent to pass on Rosie's flavor. You took at least two tastes."

"I don't care if you did see," said Dickie. "Suppose you can keep a secret? We're en——"

"You young scamp!" I exclaimed. Visions of an ambitious and angry mother came to me with abrupt vividness. "You don't mean to tell me that you two——"

"Yep, we are. But no one is to know of it until I've graduated."

Interesting news for me, wasn't it? Well, by means of discreet deception and the use of such diplomacy as would have settled a dispute between nations, I dragged Dickie far away that very night. Moreover, although it was the most difficult and thankless task I had ever undertaken, I kept him away until I had seen him safely bestowed in a college dormitory. There I left him constructing, in defiance of all the good advice I had given him, an elaborate missive to a person whom he addressed as "My Darling Rosie." Then I knew that I might as well give up. Sorrowfully I recalled the words of a forgotten sentimentalist: "It is on the deep pages of the heart that Youth writes indelibly its salutary to Cupid."

When I met Dickie's mother at the pier in October, I expected to hear that he had written all about my wicked interference in the Rosie affair. He hadn't, though, and I shamelessly accepted her thanks, wondering all the while what she would say when the shocking truth came out. Her Dickie engaged! And to a nameless nobody! It would not be pleasant to face Dickie's mother after she had acquired this knowledge.

So at the end of the term I was on hand to help Dickie pack his trunk, meaning to save him, by hook or crook, from his precocious entanglement. I should try reason first, then ridicule, and, lastly, I would plead with him, as humbly as I might, to forget.

This program I did not carry out. On the mantel in Dickie's room, propped against a tobacco jar, was a photograph of a girl with fluffy hair and pouting lips. Observing that Dickie wrapped the picture carefully in a sweater before tucking it away in his trunk, I asked: "Who is that, Dickie?"

"Met her at the Junior hop," said Dickie. "She's a queen, all right."

"Indeed!" Then I added, anxiously: "And what of Rosie?"

"Rosie?" Could this blankness on Dickie's face be genuine? "What Rosie?"

"Why, the one who gave you the cherries."

"Oh, *that* one!" Dickie laughed lightly. "Why, that's all off long ago, you know."

Right there I abandoned all faith in a sentimental theory having to do with Cupid and certain pages in the heart of Youth.

SONG

I gave to love the fairest rose

That in my garden grew;

And still my heart its fragrance knows—

Does he remember, too?

He laid his dreams upon my day,
His kisses on my mouth,
I woke, to find him flown away
With summer to the south.
Love's vagrant step once more to greet,
My garden blooms in vain;
The roses of the south are sweet—
Love will not come again!
The roses of the south are sweet—
Love will not come again!
Charlotte Becker.

AN EDITORIAL

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS I—XIII OF "THE DELUGE," BY DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS

Matthew Blacklock, the central figure of the story, is essentially a self-made man, who has made himself a power to be reckoned with. He is a man of great natural force, immense egotism, insatiable greed for notoriety and unswerving adherence to his own standards of morality. He has two devouring ambitions: First to become one of the inner circle that controls high finance and second to become one of the elect in society.

The opening chapters explain these ambitions. The magnate of the financial world is Roebuck, who has from time to time made use of Blacklock's peculiar abilities and following. The latter has become impatient and dissatisfied with his role as a mere instrument and demands of Roebuck that he shall be given a place among the "seats of the mighty." Roebuck makes a pretense of yielding to the demand.

Blacklock's social ambition is awakened and stimulated by his meeting with Anita Ellersly, the sister of a young society man who has been the recipient of many financial favors from Blacklock.

The latter finally succeeds in his wish so far as to receive an invitation to dinner at the Ellerslys', which is given for reasons that are obvious. It is made plain to him, however, that his intentions with respect to Anita are extremely distasteful to her, and after an evening spent under a tremendous nervous strain he leaves the house exhausted and depressed.

His first impulse after his visit to the Ellerslys' house is to regard his plans as hopeless, but his vanity comes to his rescue and strengthens his resolution to succeed. For assistance he turns to Monson, the trainer of his racing stable, an Englishman in whom he has discovered unmistakable signs of breeding and refinement. Under Monson's tuition he makes rapid progress in adapting himself to the requirements imposed upon aspirants for social distinction.

His absorption in these pursuits leads to his unconscious neglect of some of the finer points of his financial game. He allows himself to be misled by the smooth appearance of the friendliness of Mowbray Langdon, one of Roebuck's trusted lieutenants, and accumulates a heavy short interest in one of his pet industrial stocks. He visits Roebuck and is deceived by the latter's suavity. He has another invitation to dine at the Ellerslys', but his experience is as discouraging as before.

Nevertheless, having now become hopelessly in love with Anita, he persists in his attentions and finally becomes engaged to her, though it is perfectly understood by both that she does not love him and accepts him only because he is rich and her family is poor.

Meantime, he has to some extent lost his hold upon his affairs in Wall Street and suddenly awakens to the fact that he has been betrayed by Langdon, who, knowing that Blacklock is deeply involved in a short interest in Textile Trust stock, has taken advantage of the latter's preoccupation with Miss Ellersly to boom the price of the stock. With ruin staring him in the face, Blacklock takes energetic measures to save himself.

He makes the startling discovery that Langdon is the person responsible for the rise in Textile, the object being to drive him from the Street. He sees Anita, tells her the situation and frees her, but she refuses to accept her release when she hears of Langdon's duplicity.

With the aid of money loaned to him by a gambler friend, he succeeds the next day, by means of large purchases of Textile Trust, in postponing the catastrophe.

Calling at the house of the Ellerslys', he has a violent scene with Mrs. Ellersly, who attempts to break the engagement between him and Anita, but it ends in his taking her with him from the house.

THE DELUGE

A STORY OF MODERN FINANCE

By David Graham Phillips

[\[FOR SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALLMENTS SEE PRECEDING PAGE\]](#)



As we neared the upper end of the park, I told my chauffeur, through the tube, to enter and go slowly. Whenever a lamp flashed in at us, I had a glimpse of her progress toward composure—now she was drying her eyes with the bit of lace she called a handkerchief; now her bare arms were up, and with graceful fingers she was arranging her hair; now she was straight and still, the soft, fluffy material with which her wrap was edged drawn close about her throat. I shifted to the opposite seat, for my nerves warned me that I could not long control myself, if I stayed on where her garments were touching me.

I looked away from her for the pleasure of looking at her again, of realizing that my overwrought senses were not cheating me. Yes, there she was, in all the luster of that magnetic beauty I cannot think of even now without an up-blazing of the fire which is to the heart what the sun is to the eyes of a blind man dreaming of sight. There she was on my side of the chasm that had separated us—alone with me—mine—mine! And my heart dilated with pride. But a moment later came a sense of humility. Her beauty intoxicated me, but her youth, her fineness, so fragile for such rough hands as mine, awed and humbled me. "I must be very gentle," said I to myself. "I have promised that she shall never regret. God help me to keep my promise! She is mine, but only to preserve and protect." And that idea of *responsibility in possession* was new to me—was to have far-reaching consequences. Now I think it changed the whole course of my life.

She was leaning forward, her elbow on the casement of the open window of the brougham, her cheek against her hand; the moonlight was glistening on her round, firm forearm and on her serious face. "How far, far away from—everything it seems here!" she said, her voice tuned to that soft, clear light, "and how beautiful it is!" Then, addressing the moon and the shadows of the trees rather than me: "I wish I could go on and on—and never return to—to the world."

"I wish we could," said I.

My tone was low, but she started, drew back into the brougham, became an outline in the deep shadow. In another mood that might have angered me. Just then it hurt me so deeply that to remember it to-day is to feel a faint ache in the scar of the long healed wound. My face was not hidden as was hers; so, perhaps, she saw. At any rate, her voice tried to be friendly as she said: "Well—I have crossed the Rubicon. And I don't regret. It was silly of me to cry. I thought I had been through so much that I was beyond such weakness. But you will find me calm from now on, and reasonable."

"Not too reasonable, please," said I, with an attempt at her lightness. "A reasonable woman is as trying as an unreasonable man."

"But we are going to be sensible with each other," she urged, "like two friends. Aren't we?"

"We are going to be what we are going to be," said I. "We'll have to take life as it comes."

That clumsy reminder set her to thinking, stirred her vague uneasiness in those strange circumstances to active alarm. For presently she said, in a tone that was not quite so matter-of-course as she would have liked to make it: "We'll go now to my uncle Frank's. He's a brother of my father. I always used to like him best—and still do. But he married a woman mamma thought—queer—and they hadn't much—and he lives away up on the West Side—One Hundred and Twenty-seventh Street."

"The wise plan, the only wise plan," said I, not so calm as she must have thought me, "is to go to my partner's house and send out for a minister."

"Not to-night," she replied, nervously. "Take me to uncle Frank's, and to-morrow we can discuss what to do and how to do it."

"To-night," I persisted. "We must be married to-night. No more uncertainty and indecision and weakness. Let us begin bravely, Anita!"

"To-morrow," she said. "But not to-night. I must think it over."

"To-night," I repeated. "To-morrow will be full of its own problems. This is to-night's."

She shook her head, and I saw that the struggle between us had begun—the struggle against her timidity and conventionality. "No, not to-night." This in her tone for finality.

To have argued with any woman in such circumstances would have been dangerous; to have argued with her would

have been fatal. To reason with a woman is to flatter her into suspecting you of weakness and herself of strength. I told the chauffeur to turn about and go slowly uptown. She settled back into her corner of the brougham. Neither of us spoke until we were passing Clairmont. Then she started out of her secure confidence in my obedience, and exclaimed: "This is not the way!" And her voice had in it the hasty call-to-arms.

"No," I replied, determined to push the panic into a rout. "As I told you, our future shall be settled to-night." That in *my* tone for finality.

A pause, then: "*It has* been settled," she said, like a child that feels, yet denies, its impotence as it struggles in the compelling arms of its father. "I thought until a few minutes ago that I really intended to marry you. Now I see that I didn't."

"Another reason why we're not going to your uncle's," said I.

She leaned forward so that I could see her face. "I cannot marry you," she said. "I feel humble toward you, for having misled you. But it is better that you—and I—should have found out now than too late."

"It *is* too late—too late to go back."

"Would you wish to marry a woman who does not love you, who loves some one else, and who tells you so and refuses to marry you?" She had tried to concentrate enough scorn into her voice to hide her fear.

"I would," said I. "And I shall. I'll not desert you, Anita, when your courage and strength fail. I will carry you on to safety."

"I tell you I cannot marry you," she cried, between appeal and command. "There are reasons—I may not tell you. But if I might, you would—would take me to my uncle's. I cannot marry you!"

"That is what conventionality bids you say now," I replied. "But what will it bid you say to-morrow morning, as we drive down crowded Fifth Avenue, after a night in this brougham?"

I could not see her, for she drew back into the darkness as sharply as if I had struck her with all my force full in the face. But I could feel the effect of my words upon her. I paused, not because I expected or wished an answer, but because I had to steady myself—myself, not my purpose; my purpose was inflexible. I would put through what we had begun, just as I would have held her and cut off her arm with my pocketknife if we had been cast away alone, and I had had to do it to save her life. She was not competent to decide for herself. Every problem that had ever faced her had been decided by others for her. Who but me could decide for her now? I longed to plead with her, to show her how I was suffering; but I dared not. "She would misunderstand," said I to myself. "She would think you were weakening."

Full fifteen minutes of that frightful silence before she said: "I will go where you wish." And she said it in a tone which makes me wince as I recall it now.

I called my partner's address up through the tube. Again that frightful silence, then she was trying to choke back the sobs. A few words I caught: "They have broken my will—they have broken my will."

Ball lived in a big, graystone house that stood apart and commanded a noble view of the Hudson and the Palisades. It was, in the main, a reproduction of a French chateau, and such changes as the architect had made in his model were not positively disfiguring, though amusing. There should have been trees and shrubbery about it, but—"As Mrs. B. says," Joe had explained to me, "what's the use of sinking a lot of cash in a house people can't see?" So there was not a bush, not a flower. Inside— One day Ball took me on a tour of the art shops. "I've got a dozen corners and other big bare spots to fill," said he. "Mrs. B. hates to give up money, haggles over every article. I'm going to put the job through in business style." I soon discovered that I had been brought along to admire his "business style," not to suggest. After two hours, in which he bought in small lots about a carload of statuary, paintings, vases and rugs, he said, "This is too slow." He pointed his stick at a crowded corner of the shop. "How much for that bunch of stuff?" he demanded. The proprietor gave him a figure. "I'll close," said Joe, "if you'll give fifteen off for cash." The proprietor agreed. "Now we're done," said Joe to me. "Let's go downtown, and maybe I can pick up what I've dropped."

You can imagine that interior. But don't picture it as notably worse than the interior of the average New York palace. It was, if anything, better than those houses, where people who deceive themselves about their lack of taste have taken great pains to prevent anyone else from being deceived. One could hardly move in Joe's big rooms for the litter of gilded and tapestried furniture, and their crowded walls made the eyes ache.

The appearance of the man who opened the door for Anita and me suggested that our ring had roused him from a bed where he had deposited himself without bothering to take off his clothes. At the sound of my voice, Ball peered out of his private smoking room, at the far end of the hall. He started forward; then, seeing how I was accompanied, stopped with mouth ajar. He had on a ragged smoking jacket, a pair of shapeless old Romeo slippers, his ordinary business waistcoat and trousers. He was wearing neither tie nor collar, and a short, black pipe was between his fingers. We had evidently caught the household stripped of "lugs," and sunk in the down-at-the-heel slovenliness which it called "comfort." Joe was crimson with confusion, and was using his free hand to stroke, alternately, his shiny bald head and his heavy brown mustache. He got himself together sufficiently, after a few seconds, to disappear into his den. When he came out again, pipe and ragged jacket were gone, and he rushed for us in a gorgeous gray velvet jacket with dark red facings, and a showy pair of slippers.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Blacklock"—he always addressed every man as Mister in his own house, just as "Mrs. B." always called him "Mister Ball," and he called her "Missus Ball" before "company." "Come right into the front parlor. Billy, turn on the electric lights."

Anita had been standing with her head down. She now looked round with shame and terror in those expressive blue-gray eyes of hers; her delicate nostrils were quivering. I hastened to introduce Ball to her. Her impulse to fly passed; her training in doing the conventional thing asserted itself. She lowered her head again, murmured an inaudible acknowledgment of Joe's greeting.

"Your wife is at home?" said I. If one was at home in the evening, the other always was also, and both were always there, unless they were at some theater—except on Sunday night, when they dined at Sherry's, because many fashionable people did it. They had no friends and few acquaintances. In their humbler and happy days they had had many friends, but had lost them when they moved away from Brooklyn and went to live, like uneasy, out-of-place visitors, in their grand house, pretending to be what they longed to be, longing to be what they pretended to be, and as discontented as they deserved.

"Oh, yes, Mrs. B.'s at home," Joe answered. "I guess she and Alva were—about to go to bed." Alva was their one child. She had been christened Malvina, after Joe's mother; but when the Balls "blossomed out" they renamed her Alva, which they somehow had got the impression was "smarter."

At Joe's blundering confession that the females of the family were in no condition to receive, Anita said to me in a low voice: "Let us go."

I pretended not to hear. "Rout 'em out," said I to Joe. "And then take my electric and bring the nearest parson. There's going to be a wedding—right here." And I looked round the long salon, with everything draped for the summer departure. Joe whisked the cover off one chair, his man off another. "I'll have the women folks down in two minutes," he cried. Then to the man: "Get a move on you, Billy. Stir 'em up in the kitchen. Do the best you can about supper—and put a lot of champagne on the ice. That's the main thing at a wedding."

Anita had seated herself listlessly in one of the uncovered chairs. The wrap slipped back from her shoulders and—how proud I was of her! Joe gazed, took advantage of her not looking up to slap me on the back and to jerk his head in enthusiastic approval. Then he, too, disappeared.

A wait, during which we could hear through the silence excited undertones from the upper floors. The words were indistinct until Joe's heavy voice sent down to us an angry "No damn' nonsense, I tell you. Allie's got to come, too. She's not such a fool as you think. Bad example—bosh!"

Anita started up. "Oh—please—please!" she cried. "Take me away—anywhere! This is dreadful."

It was, indeed, dreadful. If I could have had my way at just that moment, it would have gone hard with "Mrs. B." and "Allie"—and heavy-voiced Joe, too. But I hid my feelings. "There's nowhere else to go," said I, "except the brougham."

She sank helplessly into her chair.

A few minutes more of silence, and there was a rustling on the stairs. She started up, trembling, looked round, as if seeking some way of escape or some place to hide. Joe was in the doorway holding aside one of the curtains. There entered, in a beribboned and beflounced tea gown, a pretty, if rather ordinary, woman of forty, with a petulant baby face. She was trying to look reserved and severe. She hardly glanced at me before fastening sharp, suspicious eyes on Anita.

"Mrs. Ball," said I, "this is Miss Ellersly."

"Miss Ellersly!" she exclaimed, her face changing. And she advanced and took both Anita's hands. "Mr. Ball is so stupid," she went on, with that amusingly affected accent which is the "Sunday clothes" of speech.

"I didn't catch the name, my dear," Joe stammered.

"Be off," said I, aside, to him. "Get the nearest preacher, and hustle him here with his tools."

I had one eye on Anita all the time, and I saw her gaze follow Joe as he hurried out; and her expression made my heart ache. I heard him saying in the hall, "Go in, Allie. It's O. K.;" heard the door slam, knew we should soon have some sort of minister with us.

"Allie" entered the drawing room. I had not seen her in six years. I remembered her unpleasantly as a great, bony, florid child, unable to stand still or to sit still, or to keep her tongue still, full of aimless questions and giggles and silly remarks, which she and her mother thought funny. I saw her now, grown into a handsome young woman, with enough beauty points for an honorable mention, if not for a prize—straight and strong and rounded, with a brow and a keen look out of the eyes which it seemed a pity should be wasted on a woman. Her mother's looks, her father's good sense, a personality got from neither, but all her own, and unusual and interesting.

"From what Mr. Ball said," Mrs. Ball was gushing affectedly to Anita, "I got an idea, that—well, really, I didn't know *what* to think."

Anita looked as if she were about to suffocate. Allie came to the rescue. "Not very complimentary to Mr. Blacklock, mother," said she, good-humoredly. Then to Anita, with a simple friendliness there was no resisting: "Wouldn't you like to come up to my room for a few minutes?"

"Oh, thank you," responded Anita, after a quick but thorough inspection of Alva's face, to make sure she was like her voice. I had not counted on this; I had been assuming that Anita would not be out of my sight until we were married. It was on the tip of my tongue to interfere when she looked at me—for permission to go. "Don't keep her too long," said I to Alva, and they were gone.

"You can't blame me—really you can't, Mr. Blacklock," Mrs. Ball began to plead for herself, as soon as they were safely out of hearing. "After some things—mere hints, you understand—for I'm careful what I permit Mr. Ball to say before *me*. I think married people cannot be too respectful of each other. I *never* tolerate *vulgarity*."

"No doubt, Joe has made me out a very vulgar person," said I, forgetting her lack of sense of humor.

"Oh, not at all, not at all, Mr. Blacklock," she protested, in a panic lest she had done her husband damage with me. "I understand, men will be men, though as a pure-minded woman, I'm sure I can't imagine why they should be."

"How far off is the nearest church?" I cut in.

"Only two blocks—that is, the Methodist church," she replied. "But I know Mr. Ball will bring an Episcopalian."

"Why, I thought you were a devoted Presbyterian," said I, recalling how in their Brooklyn days she used to insist on Joe's going with her twice every Sunday to sleep through long sermons.

She looked uncomfortable. "I was reared Presbyterian," she explained, confusedly, "but you know how it is in New York. And when we came to live here, we got out of the habit of churchgoing. And all Alva's little friends were Episcopalians. So I drifted toward that church. I find the service so satisfying—so—elegant. And—one sees there the people one sees socially."

"How is your culture class?" I inquired, deliberately malicious, in my impatience and nervousness. "And do you still take conversation lessons?"

She was furiously annoyed. "Oh, those old jokes of Joe's," she said, affecting disdainful amusement.

In fact, they were anything but jokes. On Mondays and Thursdays she used to attend a class for women who, like herself, wished to be "up-to-date on culture and all that sort of thing." They hired a teacher to cram them with odds and ends about art and politics and the "latest literature, heavy and light." On Tuesdays and Fridays she had an "indigent gentlewoman," whatever that may be, come to her to teach her how to converse and otherwise conduct herself according to the "standards of polite society." Joe used to give imitations of those conversation lessons that raised roars of laughter round the poker table, the louder because so many of the other men had wives with the same ambitions and the same methods of attaining them.

Mrs. Ball came back to the subject of Anita. "I am glad you are going to settle with such a charming girl. She comes of such a charming family. I have never happened to meet any of them. We are in the West Side set, you know, while they move in the East Side set, and New York is so large that one almost never meets anyone outside one's own set." This smooth snobbishness, said in the affected "society" tone, was as out of place in her as rouge and hair dye in a wholesome, honest old grandmother.

I began to pace the floor. "Can it be," I fretted aloud, "that Joe's racing round looking for an Episcopalian preacher, when there was a Methodist at hand?"

"I'm sure he wouldn't bring anything but a Church of England priest," Mrs. Ball assured me, loftily. "Why, Miss Ellersly wouldn't think she was married, if she hadn't a priest of her own church."

My temper got the bit in its teeth. I stopped before her, and fixed her with an eye that must have had some fire in it. "I'm not marrying a fool, Mrs. Ball," said I. "You mustn't judge her by her bringing up—by her family. Children have a way of bringing themselves up, in spite of damn fool parents."

She weakened so promptly that I was ashamed of myself. My only excuse for getting out of patience with her is that I had seen her seldom in the last few years, had forgotten how matter-of-surface her affectation and snobbery were, and how little they interfered with her being a good mother and a good wife, up to the limits of her brain capacity.

"I'm sure, Mr. Blacklock," she said, plaintively, "I only wished to say what was pleasant and nice about your fiancée. I know she's a lovely girl. I've often admired her at the opera. She goes a great deal in Mrs. Langdon's box, and Mrs. Langdon and I are together on the board of managers of the Magdalene Home, and also on the board of the Hospital for Unfortunate Gentlemen." And so on, and on.

I walked up and down among those wrapped-up, ghostly chairs and tables and cabinets and statues many times before Joe arrived with the minister—and he was a Methodist, McCabe by name. You should have seen Mrs. Ball's look as he advanced his portly form and round face with its shaven upper lip into the drawing room. She tried to be cordial, but she couldn't—her mind was on Anita, and the horror which would fill her when she discovered that she was to be married by a preacher of a sect unknown to fashionable circles.

"All I ask of you," said I, "is that you cut it as short as possible. Miss Ellersly is tired and nervous." This while we were shaking hands after Joe's introduction.

"You can count on me, sir," said McCabe, giving my hand an extra shake before dropping it. "I've no doubt, from what my young neighbor here tells me, that your marriage is already made in your hearts and with all solemnity. The form is an incident—important, but only an incident."

I liked that, and I liked his unaffected way of saying it. His voice had more of the homely, homelike, rural twang in it than I had heard in New York in many a day. I mentally added fifty dollars to the fee I had intended to give him. And now Anita and Alva were coming down the stairway. I was amazed at sight of her. Her evening dress had given place to a pretty blue street suit with a short skirt—white showing at her wrists, at her neck and through slashings in the coat over her bosom; and on her head was a hat to match. I looked at her feet—the slippers had been replaced by boots. "And they're just right for her," said Alva, who was following my glance, "though I'm not so tall as she."

But what amazed me most, and delighted me, was that Anita seemed to be almost in good spirits. It was evident she had formed with Joe's daughter one of those sudden friendships so great and so vivid that they rarely live long after the passing of the heat of the emergency which bred them. Mrs. Ball saw it, also, and was straightway giddied into a sort of ecstasy. You can imagine the visions it conjured. I've no doubt she talked house on the east side of the park to Joe that very night, before she let him sleep. However, Anita's face was serious enough when we took our places before the minister, with his little, black-bound book open. And as he read in a voice that was genuinely impressive those words that no voice could make unimpressive, I watched her, saw her paleness blanch into pallor, saw the dusk creep round her eyes until they were like stars waning somberly before the gray face of dawn. When they closed and her head began to sway, I steadied her with my arm. And so we stood, I with my arm round her, she leaning lightly against my shoulder. Her answers were mere movements of the lips.

At the end, when I kissed her cheek, she said: "Is it over?"

"Yes," McCabe answered—she was looking at him. "And I wish you all happiness, Mrs. Blacklock."

She stared at him with great wondering eyes. Her form relaxed. I carried her to a chair. Joe came with a glass of champagne; she drank some of it, and it brought life back to her face, and some color. With a naturalness that deceived even me for the moment, she smiled up at Joe as she handed him the glass. "Is it bad luck," she asked, "for me to be the first to drink my own health?" And she stood, looking tranquilly at everyone—except me.

I took McCabe into the hall and paid him off. When we came back, I said: "Now we must be going."

"Oh, but surely you'll stay for supper!" cried Joe's wife.

"No," replied I, in a tone which made it impossible to insist. "We appreciate your kindness, but we've imposed on it enough." And I shook hands with her and with Allie and the minister, and, linking Joe's arm in mine, made for the door. I gave the necessary directions to my chauffeur while we were waiting for Anita to come down the steps. Joe's daughter was close beside her, and they kissed each other good-by, Alva on the verge of tears, Anita not suggesting any emotion of any sort. "To-morrow—sure," Anita said to her. And she answered: "Yes, indeed—as soon as you telephone me." And so we were off, a shower of rice rattling on the roof of the brougham—the slatternly manservant had thrown it from the midst of the group of servants.

Neither of us spoke. I watched her face without seeming to do so, and by the light of occasional street lamps saw her studying me furtively. At last she said: "I wish to go to my uncle's now."

"We are going home," said I.

"But the house will be shut up," said she, "and everyone will be in bed. It's nearly midnight. Besides, they might not ——" She came to a full stop.

"We are going home," I repeated. "To the Willoughby."

She gave me a look that was meant to scorch—and it did. But I showed at the surface no sign of how I was wincing and shrinking.

She drew further into her corner, and out of its darkness came, in a low voice: "How I *hate* you!" like the whisper of a bullet.

I kept silent until I had control of myself. Then, as if talking of a matter which had been finally and amicably settled, I began: "The apartment isn't exactly ready for us, but Joe's just about now telephoning my man that we are coming, and telephoning your people to send your maid down there."

"I wish to go to my uncle's," she repeated.

"My wife will go with me," said I, quietly and gently. "I am considerate of her, not of *her* unwise impulses."

A long pause, then from her, in icy calmness: "I am in your power just now, but I warn you that, if you do not take me to my uncle's, you will wish you had never seen me."

"I've wished that many times already," said I, sadly. "I've wished it from the bottom of my heart this whole evening, when step by step fate has been forcing me on to do things that are even more hateful to me than to you. For they not only make me hate myself, but make you hate me, too." I laid my hand on her arm and held it there, though she tried to draw away. "Anita," I said, "I would do anything for you—live for you, die for you. But there's that something inside me—you've felt it—and when it says 'must,' I can't disobey—you know I can't. And, though you might break my heart, you could not break that will. It's as much your master as it is mine."

"We shall see—to-morrow," she said.

"Do not put me to the test," I pleaded. Then I added what I knew to be true: "But you will not. You know it would take some one stronger than your uncle, stronger than your parents, to drive me from what I believe right for you and for me." From the moment that I found the boggy of conventionality potent enough with her to frighten her into keeping her word and marrying me, I had no fear for "to-morrow." The hour when she could defy me had passed.

A long, long silence, the electric speeding southward under the arching trees of the West Drive. I remember it was as we skirted the lower end of the Mall that she said evenly: "You have made me hate you so that it terrifies me. I am afraid of the consequences that must come to you and to me."

"And well you may be," I answered, gently. "For you've seen enough of me to get at least a hint of what I would do, if

you drove me to it. Hate is terrible, Anita, but love can be more terrible."

At the Willoughby she let me help her descend from the electric, waited until I sent it away, walked beside me into the building. My man, Sanders, had evidently been listening for the elevator; the door opened without my ringing, and there he was, bowing low. She acknowledged his welcome with that regard for "appearances" which training had made instinctive. In the center of my—our—drawing-room table was a mass of gorgeous roses. "Where did you get 'em?" I asked him, in an aside.

"The elevator boy's brother, sir," he replied, "works in the florist's shop just across the street, next to the church. He happened to be downstairs when I got your message, sir. So I was able to get a few flowers. I'm sorry, sir, I hadn't a little more time."

"You've done noble," said I, and I shook hands with him warmly.

Anita was greeting those flowers as if they were a friend suddenly appearing in a time of need. She turned now and beamed on Sanders. "Thank you," she said; "thank you." And Sanders was hers.

"Anything I can do—ma'am—sir?" asked Sanders.

"Nothing—except send my maid as soon as she comes," she replied.

"I shan't need you," said I.

"Mr. Monson is still here," he said, lingering. "Shall I send him away, sir, or do you wish to see him?"

"I'll speak to him myself in a moment," I answered.

When Sanders was gone, she seated herself and absently played with the buttons of her glove.

"Shall I bring Monson?" I asked. "You know, he's my—factotum."

"I do not wish to see him," she answered.

"You do not like him?" said I.

After a brief hesitation she answered, "No."

I restrained a strong impulse to ask her why, for instinct told me she had some especial reason that somehow concerned me. I said merely: "Then I shall get rid of him."

"Not on my account," she replied, indifferently. "I care nothing about him one way or the other."

"He goes at the end of his month," said I.

She was now taking off her gloves. "Before your maid comes," I went on, "let me explain about the apartment. This room and the two leading out of it are yours. My own suit is on the other side of our private hall there."

She colored high, paled. I saw that she did not intend to speak.

I stood awkwardly, waiting for something further to come into my own head. "Good-night," said I, finally, bowing as if I were taking leave of a formal acquaintance at the end of a formal call.

She did not answer.

I left the room, closing the door behind me. I paused an instant, heard the key click in the lock. And I burned in a hot flush of shame—shame that she should have thought so basely of me. For I did not then realize how far apart we were, and utterly in the dark, each toward the other. I joined Monson in my little smoking room. "Congratulate you," he began, with his nasty, supercilious grin, which of late had been getting on my nerves severely.

"Thanks," I replied, curtly, paying no attention to his outstretched hand. "I want you to put a notice of the marriage in to-morrow morning's *Herald*."

"Give me the facts—clergyman's name—place, and so on," said he.

"Unnecessary," I answered. "Just our names and the date—that's all. You'd better step lively. It's late, and it'll be too late if you delay."

With an irritating show of deliberation he lit a fresh cigarette before setting out. I heard her maid come. After about an hour I went into the hall—no light showed through the transoms of her suit. I returned to my own part of the flat and went to bed in the spare room to which Sanders had hastily moved my personal belongings. And almost as soon as my head touched the pillow I was asleep. That day which began in disaster—in what a blaze of triumph it had ended! Anita—she was my wife, and under my roof! But stronger than the sense of victory won was a new emotion—a sense of a duty done, of a responsibility begun.

XIV.

Joe got to the office rather later than usual the next morning. They told him I was already there, but he wouldn't believe it until he had come into my private den and with his own eyes had seen me. "Well, I'm jiggered!" said he. "It seems to

have made less impression on you than it did on us. My missus and the little un wouldn't let me go to bed till after two. They sat on and on, questioning me and discussing."

I laughed—partly because I knew that Joe, like most men, was as full of gossip and as eager for it as a convalescent old maid, and that, whoever might have been the first at his house to make the break for bed, he was the last to leave off talking. But the chief reason for my laugh was that, just before he came in on me, I was almost pinching myself to see whether I was dreaming it all, and he had made me feel how vividly true it was.

"Why don't you ease down, Blacklock?" he went on. "Everything's smooth. The business—at least, my end of it, and I suppose your end, too—was never in better shape, never growing so fast. You could go off for a week or two, just as well as not."

And he honestly thought it, so little did I let him know about the larger enterprises of Blacklock & Co. I could have spoken a dozen words, and he would have been floundering like a caught fish in a basket. There are men—a very few—who work more swiftly and more surely when they know they're on the brink of ruin; but not Joe. One glimpse of our real National Coal account, and all my power over him couldn't have kept him from showing the whole Street that Blacklock & Co. was shaky. And whenever the Street begins to think a man is shaky, he must be strong indeed to escape the fate of the wolf that stumbles as it runs with the pack.

"No holiday at present, Joe," was my reply to his suggestion. "Perhaps the second week in July; but our marriage was so sudden that we haven't had the time to get ready for a trip."

"Yes—it *was* sudden, wasn't it?" said Joe, curiosity twitching his nose like a dog's at scent of a rat. "How did it happen?"

"Oh, I'll tell you some time," replied I. "I must go to work now."

And work a-plenty there was. Before me rose a huge sheaf of clamorous telegrams from our out-of-town customers and our agents; and soon my anteroom was crowded with my local following, sore and shorn. I suppose a score or more of the habitual heavy plungers on my tips were ruined and hundreds of others were thousands and tens of thousands out of pocket. "Do you want me to talk to these people?" inquired Joe, with the kindly intention of giving me a chance to shift the unpleasant duty to him.

"Certainly not," said I. "When the place is jammed, let me know. I'll jack 'em up."

It made Joe uneasy for me even to talk of using my "language"—he would have crawled from the Battery to Harlem to keep me from using it on him. So he silently left me alone. My system of dealing face to face with the speculating and investing public had many great advantages over that of all the other big operators—the system of decoying the public from behind cleverly contrived screens and slaughtering it without showing so much as the tip of a gun or nose that could be identified. But to my method there was a disadvantage that made men, who happen to have more hypocrisy and less nerve than I, shrink from it—when one of my tips miscarried, down upon me would swoop the bad losers in a body to give me a turbulent and interesting quarter of an hour.

Toward ten o'clock, my boy came in and said: "Mr. Ball thinks it's about time for you to see some of these people."

I went into the main room, where the tickers and blackboards were. As I approached through my outer office I could hear the noise the crowd was making—as they cursed me. If you want to rile the very inmost soul of the average human being, don't take his reputation or his wife; just cause him to lose money. There were among my customers many with the true, even-tenored sporting instinct. These were bearing their losses with philosophy—none of them was there. Of the perhaps three hundred who had come to ease their anguish by tongue-lashing me, every one was mad through and through—those who had lost a few hundred dollars as infuriated as those whom my misleading tip had cost thousands and tens of thousands; those whom I had helped to win all they had in the world more savage than those new to my following.

I took my stand in the doorway, a step up from the floor of the main room. I looked all round until I had met each pair of angry eyes. They say I can give my face an expression that is anything but agreeable; such talent as I have in that direction I exerted then. The instant I appeared a silence fell; but I waited until the last pair, of claws drew in. Then I said, in the quiet tone the army officer uses when he tells the mob that the machine guns will open up in two minutes by the watch: "Gentlemen, in the effort to counteract my warning to the public, the Textile crowd rocketed the stock yesterday. Those who heeded my warning and sold got excellent prices. Those who did not should sell to-day. Not even the powerful interests behind Textile can long maintain yesterday's prices."

A wave of restlessness passed over the crowd. Many shifted their eyes from me and began to murmur.

I raised my voice slightly as I went on: "The speculators, the gamblers, are the only people who were hurt. Those who sold what they didn't have are paying for their folly. I have no sympathy for them. Blacklock & Co. wishes none such in its following, and seizes every opportunity to weed them out. We are in business only for the bona fide investing public, and we are stronger with that public to-day than we have ever been."

Again I looked from coward to coward of that mob, changed from three hundred strong to three hundred weak. Then I bowed and withdrew, leaving them to mutter and disperse. I felt well content with the trend of events—I who wished to impress the public and the financiers that I had broken with speculation and speculators, could I have had a better than this unexpected opportunity sharply to define my new course? And as Textiles, unsupported, fell toward the close of the day, my content rose toward my normal high spirits. There was no whisper in the Street that I was in trouble; on the contrary, the idea was gaining ground that I had really long ceased to be a stock gambler and deserved a much better reputation than I had. Reputation is a matter of diplomacy rather than of desert. In all my career I was never less entitled to a good reputation than in those June days; yet the disastrous gambling follies, yes, and worse, I then committed, formed the secure foundation of my reputation for conservatism and square dealing. From that time dates

the decline of the habit the newspapers had of speaking of me as "Black Matt" or "Matt" Blacklock. In them, and therefore in the public mind, I began to figure as "Mr. Blacklock" and "the well-known authority on finance."

No doubt, my marriage had something to do with this. Probably one couldn't borrow much money directly in New York on the strength of a fashionable marriage; but, so all-pervading is the snobbishness there, one can get, by making a fashionable marriage, any quantity of that deferential respect from rich people which is, in some circumstances, easily convertible into cash and credit.

I waited with a good deal of anxiety, as you may imagine, for the early editions of the afternoon papers. The first article my eye chanced upon was a mere wordy elaboration of the brief and vague announcement Monson had put in the *Herald*. Later came an interview with old Ellersly. "Not at all mysterious," he had said to the reporters. "Mr. Blacklock found he would have to go abroad on business soon—he didn't know just when. On the spur of the moment they decided to marry." A good enough story, and I confirmed it when I admitted the reporters. I read their estimates of my fortune and of Anita's with rather bitter amusement—she whose father was living from hand to mouth; I who could not have emerged from a forced settlement with enough to enable me to keep a trap. Still, when one is rich, the reputation of being rich is heavily expensive; but when one is poor the reputation of being rich can be made a wealth-giving asset.

Even as I was reading these fables of my millions, there lay on the desk before me a statement of the exact posture of my affairs—a memorandum made by myself for my own eyes, and to be burned as soon as I mastered it. On the face of the figures the balance against me was appalling. My chief asset, indeed my only asset that measured up toward my debts, was my Coal stocks, those bought and those contracted for; and, while their par value far exceeded my liabilities, they had to appear in my memorandum at their actual market value on that day. I looked at the calendar—seventeen days until the reorganization scheme would be announced, only seventeen days!

Less than three business weeks, and I should be out of the storm and sailing safer and smoother seas than I had ever known. "To indulge *hopes* is bad," thought I, "but not to indulge *a hope*, when one has only it between him and the pit." And I proceeded to plan on the not unwarranted assumption that my coal hope was a present reality. Indeed, what alternative had I? To put it among the future's uncertainties was to put myself among the utterly ruined. Using as collateral the Coal stocks I had bought outright, I borrowed more money, and with it went still deeper into the Coal venture.

The morality of these and many of my other doings in those days will no doubt be severely condemned. By no one more severely than by myself—now that the necessities which then compelled me have passed. There is no subject on which men talk, and think, more humbug than on that subject of morality. As a matter of fact, except in those personal relations which are governed by the affections, what is morality but the mandate of policy, and what is policy but the mandate of necessity? My criticism of Roebuck and the other "high financiers" is not upon their morality, but upon their policy, which is shortsighted and stupid and base. The moral difference between me and them is that, while I merely assert and maintain my right to live, they deny the right of any but themselves to live. I say I criticise them; but that does not mean that I sympathize with the public at large in its complainings against them. The public, its stupidity and cupidity, creates the conditions that breed and foster these men. A rotten cheese reviling the maggots it has bred!

In those very hours when I was obeying the great imperative law of self-preservation, was clutching at every log that floated by me regardless of whether it was my property or not so long as it would help me keep my head above water—what was going on all around me? In every office of the downtown district—merchant, banker, broker, lawyer, man of commerce or finance—was not every busy brain plotting not self-preservation but pillage and sack—plotting to increase the cost of living for the masses of men by slipping a little tax here and a little tax there onto the cost of everything by which men live? All along the line between the farm or mine or shop and the market, at every one of the tollgates for the collection of *just* charges, these big financiers, backed up by the big lawyers and the rascally public officials, had an agent in charge to collect on each passing article a little more than was honestly due. A thousand subtle ways of levying, all combining to pour in upon the few the torrents of unjust wealth. I always laugh when I read of laboring men striking for higher wages. Poor, ignorant fools—they almost deserve their fate. They had better be concerning themselves with a huge, universal strike at the polls for lower prices. What will it avail them to get higher wages, so long as their masters control and can and will recoup on, the prices of all the things for which those wages must be spent?

However, as I was saying, I lived in Wall Street, in its atmosphere of the practical morality of "finance." On every side swindling operations, great and small; operations regarded as right through long-established custom, dishonest or doubtful; operations on the way to becoming established by custom as "respectable." No man's title to anything conceded unless he had the brains to defend it. There was a time when it would have been regarded as wildly preposterous and viciously immoral to deny property rights in human beings. There may come a time—who knows?—when "high finance's" denial of a moral right to property of any kind may cease to be regarded as wicked. However, I attempt no excuses for myself; I need them no more than a judge in the Dark Ages needed to apologize for ordering a witch to the stake. I could no more have done differently than a fish could breathe on land or a man under water. I did as all the others did—and I had the justification of necessity. Right of might being the code, when men set upon me with pistols, I meet them with pistols, not with the discarded and antiquated weapons of sermon and prayer and the law.

And I thought extremely well of myself and of my pistols that June afternoon, as I was hurrying uptown the moment the day's settlement on 'Change was finished. I had sent out my daily letter to investors, and its tone of confidence was genuine—I knew that hundreds of customers of a better class would soon be flocking in to take the places of those I had been compelled to teach a lesson in the vicissitudes of gambling. With a light heart and the physical feeling of a football player in training, I sped toward home. Home! For the first time since I was a squat little slip of a shaver the word had a personal meaning for me. Perhaps, if the only other home of mine had been less uninviting, I should not have looked forward with such high beating of the heart to that cold home Anita was making for me. No, I withdraw that. It is fellows like me, to whom kindly looks and unbought attentions are as unfamiliar as flowers to the Arctic—it is men like me that appreciate and treasure and warm up under the faintest show or shadowy suggestion of the sunshine of sentiment. I'd be a little ashamed to say how much money I handed out to servants and beggars and street gamins that

day. I had a home to go to!

As my electric drew up at the Willoughby, a carriage backed to make room for it. I recognized the horses and the driver and the crests. "How long has Mrs. Ellersly been with my wife?" I asked the elevator boy, as he was taking me up.

"About half an hour, sir," he answered. "But Mr. Ellersly—I took up his card before lunch, and he's still there."

Instead of using my key, I rang the bell, and when Sanders opened, I said: "Is Mrs. Blacklock in?" in a voice loud enough to penetrate to the drawing room.

As I had hoped, Anita appeared. Her dress told me that her trunks had come—she had sent for her trunks! "Mother and father are here," said she, without looking at me.

I followed her into the drawing room and, for the benefit of the servants, Mr. and Mrs. Ellersly and I greeted each other courteously, though Mrs. Ellersly's eyes and mine met in a glance like the flash of steel on steel. "We were just going," said she, and then I felt that I had arrived in the midst of a tempest of uncommon fury.

"You must stop and make me a visit," protested I, with elaborate politeness. To myself I was assuming that they had come to "make up and be friends"—and resume their places at the trough.

"I wish we could," she answered, in her best manner. And she was moving toward the door, the old man in her wake. Neither of them offered to shake hands with me; neither made pretense of saying good-by to Anita, standing by the window like a pillar of ice. I had closed the drawing-room door behind me, as I entered. I was about to open it for them when I was restrained by what I saw working in the old woman's face. She had set her will on escaping from my loathed presence without a "scene"; but her rage at having been outgeneraled was too fractious for her will.

"You scoundrel!" she hissed, her whole body shaking and her carefully cultivated appearance of the gracious evening of youth swallowed up in a black cyclone of hate. "You gutter plant! God will punish you for the shame you have brought upon us."

I opened the door and bowed, without a word, without even the desire to return insult for insult—had not Anita again and finally rejected them and chosen me? As they passed into the private hall I rang for Sanders to come and let them out. When I turned back into the drawing room, Anita was seated, was reading a book. I waited until I saw she was not going to speak. Then I said: "What time will you have dinner?" But my face must have been expressing some of the joy and gratitude that filled me. "She has chosen me!" I was saying to myself over and over.

"Whenever you usually have it," she replied, without looking up.

"At seven o'clock, then. You had better tell Sanders." And I rang for him and went into my little smoking room. She had resisted her parents' final appeal to her to return to them. She had cast in her lot with me. "The rest can be left to time," said I to myself. And, reviewing all that had happened, I let a wild hope thrust tenacious roots deep into me—the hope that she did not quite understand her own mind as to me. How often ignorance is a blessing; how often knowledge would make the step falter and the heart quail. Who would have the courage, not to speak of the desire, to live his life, if he knew his own future?

XV.

During dinner I bore the whole burden of conversation—though burden I did not find it. Like most of the most reticent men, I am extremely talkative. Silence sets people to wondering and prying; he hides his secrets best who hides them at the bottom of a river of words. If my spirits are high, I often talk aloud to myself when there is no one convenient. And how could my spirits be anything but high, with her sitting there opposite me, mine, mine for better or for worse, through good and evil report—my wife!

She was only formally responsive, reluctant and brief in answers, volunteering nothing. The servants waiting on us no doubt laid her manner to shyness; I understood it, or thought I did—but I was not troubled. It is as natural for me to hope as to breathe; and with my knowledge of character, how could I take seriously the moods and impulses of one whom I regarded as a childlike girl, trained in false pride and false ideals? "She has chosen to stay with me," said I to myself. "Actions count, not words or manner. A few days or weeks, and she will be herself, and mine." And I went gayly on with my efforts to interest her, to make her smile and forget the rôle she had commanded herself to play. Nor was I wholly unsuccessful. Again and again I thought I saw a gleam of interest in her eyes or the beginnings of a smile about that sweet mouth of hers. I was careful not to overdo my part. As soon as we finished dessert I said: "You loathe cigar smoke, so I'll hide myself in my den. Sanders will bring you the cigarettes." I had myself telephoned for a supply of her kind early in the day.

She made a polite protest for the benefit of the servants; but I was firm, and she was free to think things over alone in the drawing room—"your sitting room," I called it now. I had not finished a small cigar when there came a timid knock at my door. I threw away the cigar and opened. "I thought it was you," said I. "I'm familiar with the knocks of all the others. And this was new—like a summer wind tapping with a flower for admission at a closed window." And I laughed with a little raillery, and she smiled, colored, tried to seem cold and hostile again.

"Shall I go with you to your sitting room?" I went on. "Perhaps the cigar smoke here—"

"No, no," she interrupted; "I don't really mind cigars—and the windows are wide open. Besides, I came for only a moment—just to say—"

As she cast about for words to carry her on, I drew up a chair for her. She looked at it uncertainly, seated herself. "When mamma was here—this afternoon," she went on, "she was urging me to—to do what she wished. And after she

had used several arguments, without changing me—she said something I—I’ve been thinking it over, and it seemed I ought in fairness to tell you.”

I waited.

“She said: ‘In a few days more he’—that meant you—‘he will be ruined. He imagines the worst is over for him, when in fact they’ve only begun.’”

“They!” I repeated. “Who are ‘they’? The Langdons?”

“I think so,” she replied, with an effort. “She did not say—I’ve told you her exact words—as far as I can.”

“Well,” said I, “and why didn’t you go?”

She pressed her lips firmly together. Finally, with a straight look into my eyes, she replied: “I shall not discuss that. You probably misunderstand, but that is your own affair.”

“You believed what she said about me, of course,” said I.

“I neither believed nor disbelieved,” she answered, indifferently, as she rose to go. “It does not interest me.”

“Come here,” said I. And I waited until she reluctantly joined me at the window. I pointed to the steeple of the church across the way. “You could as easily throw down that steeple by pushing against it with your bare hands,” I said to her, “as ‘they,’ whoever they are, could put me down. They might take away my money. But if they did, they would only be giving me a lesson that would teach me how more easily to get it back again. I am not a bundle of stock certificates or a bag of money. I am—here,” and I tapped my forehead.

She forced a faint, scornful smile. She did not wish me to see her belief of what I said.

“You think that is vanity,” I went on. “But you will learn, sooner or later, the difference between boasting and simple statement of fact. You will learn that I do not boast. What I said is no more a boast than for a man with legs to say, ‘I can walk.’ Because you have known only legless men, you exaggerate the difficulty of walking. It’s as easy for me to make money as it is for some people to spend it.”

It is hardly necessary for me to say I was not insinuating anything against her people. But she was just then supersensitive on the subject, though I did not suspect it. She flushed hotly. “You will not have any cause to sneer at my people on that account hereafter,” she said. “I settled *that* to-day.”

“I was not sneering at them,” I protested. “I wasn’t even thinking of them. And—you must know that it’s a favor to me for anybody to ask me to do anything that will please you.”

She made a gesture of impatience. “I see I’d better tell you why—part of the reason why—I did not go with them to-day. I insisted that they give back all they have taken from you. And when they refused, I refused to go.”

“I don’t care why you refused,” said I. “I am content with the fact that you are here.”

“But you misunderstand it,” she said, coldly.

“I don’t understand it, I don’t misunderstand it,” was my reply. “I accept it.”

She looked depressed, discouraged. She turned away from the window, drifted out of the room. While the surface of my mind was taken up with her, I must have been thinking, underneath, of the warning she had brought; for, perhaps half or three-quarters of an hour after she left, I was suddenly whirled out of my reverie at the window by a thought like a pistol thrust into my face. “What if ‘they’ should include Roebuck!” And just as a man begins to defend himself from a sudden danger before he clearly sees what the danger is, so I began to act before I even questioned whether my suspicion was plausible or absurd. I went into the hall, rang the bell, slipped a lightweight coat over my evening dress and put on a hat. When Sanders appeared, I said: “I’m going out for a few minutes—perhaps an hour—if anyone should ask.” A moment later I was in a hansom and on the way to Roebuck’s.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE WINDOW

This is the window where, one day,

I watched him as he came,

When all the world was white with May,

And vibrant with his name.

His eyes to mine, my eyes to his—

Oh lad, how glad were we,

What time I leaned to catch the kiss

Your fingers tossed to me!

This is the window where, one day,

I crouched to see him go,

When all the world with wrath was gray

And desolate with snow.

Oh, this the glass where prophet-wise

My fate I needs must spell;

Through this I looked on Paradise,

Through this I looked on Hell.

Theodosia Garrison.

AMERICANS IN LONDON

By Lady Willshire

The author of the following essay on "Americans in London" is one of the most distinguished of the leaders of English Society. She is the daughter of Sir Sanford Freeling, who was for a time military secretary at Gibraltar. Her husband, Sir Arthur Willshire, was an officer in the Guards. Lady Willshire, in addition to her social activities, is, without ostentation, a woman whose charities occupy a large part of her time. In appearance she is over middle height, rather fragile, with great charm of manner. She is an accomplished musician and linguist. Her favorite recreations are riding, driving and bicycling, and she is looked upon as the best dancer in London Society.



I can well remember the time when I could easily reckon up the whole list of my American acquaintances resident in London on the fingers of one hand, and most of those were the wives of English husbands.

That was certainly not more than ten years ago, and then the majority of Americans that one chanced to meet in England were travelers, who knew very little of, and cared less apparently to see or take part in, the doings of our London society.

In ten years, however, amazing changes can and do take place, especially where the natives of the States are concerned, and nowadays I find that not only does it require a great many leaves in my capacious address book to hold the names of the Americans—and the women most particularly—who live and move and have a large part of their social being in London, but that a very impressive majority of these attractive and prominent ladies are not the life partners of voting, title-holding British subjects at all.

The good work accomplished both ways by the international marriage goes merrily on. At the present moment we can claim not less than twenty-five peeresses of transatlantic birth, while we don't pretend to keep anything like an exact record of the ever-increasing acquisitions, from American sources, to our gentry class; but, for all that, the present big average of American women who come across the ocean to conduct a successful siege of London no longer regard the English husband as a sort of necessary preliminary and essential ally to the business of getting on in our smart metropolitan society.

The fair and welcome invader from the land of the free and the home of the brave can, and does, "arrive" astonishingly well without masculine assistance and encouragement.

She may appear as maid, wife or widow; sometimes as divorcee; but, personally, she conducts her own campaign. Furthermore, she comes fully equipped to carry everything before her—she has wit, wealth and good looks at her command, and she works along approved and sensible lines of action.

If she has a thoroughgoing conquest of London planned out, she does not put up at a fashionable hotel and spread her fine plumage and wait for notice.

She usually begins by taking a house; she furnishes it with original but discreet good taste; she wears startlingly pretty gowns—quite the best, as a rule, that Paris can supply; she gives the most taking sorts of entertainments, and the ordinary result is that in one season she is not only launched and talked about, but securely placed and greatly admired.

And if you want to know why she does this thing, the answer you can get, as I did, from her own mouth; she simply

“likes London and London society.”

As an amiable, broad-minded woman, she does not love her own country so much that she cannot find a place in her heart for London, too, and that which chiefly appeals to her in our elderly, sprawling, sooty, amusing and splendid old capital is the fact that she finds it interesting.

There you have one explanation, at least, of the apparent phenomenon of the ever-growing circle of American women in the very heart of our biggest city. But it becomes a Londoner to confess that another good reason why she is so familiar and conspicuous a figure among us is because we reciprocate her liking with the strongest possible warmth of admiration.

Not only do we regard our American colony with genuine enthusiasm, and take pride and pleasure in the fact that it is the largest of its kind in any European capital, but social London pleasantly feels its influence.

Now, influence is one of those qualities that the American woman carries about with her just as naturally as she carries her pretty airs of independence, or her capacity for easy and amusing speech, and it is a sad mistake for anyone to take it for granted that on her wealth or her pulchritude alone all her claim to success and popularity in England rests.

In no way that I know of has her influence been more sensibly and beneficially felt among us than in the introduction of a quick, vivacious tone to conversation.

Her gift for light, easy, semi-humorous talk, her gay, self-confident way of telling a good story, constitute her a leading and most lasting attraction in English estimation. From her the English woman has learned, first, that which it seems every transatlantic sister is aware by intuition, that one supreme duty of the sex, as it is represented in society, is to know how to talk a little to everybody, to talk always in sprightly fashion, and never to adopt the English woman's depressing method of answering all conversational efforts and overtures with chilling monosyllables.

It is no exaggeration to say that since the tremendous enlargement of the American colony, the whole pace of London drawing-room talk has enormously improved. We British are not by nature a sprightly and speechful race, with the gift of gay gab, but under the American woman's cheerful influence we are enjoying a sort of reformation.

We send our daughters even to a fashionable school in fashionable Kensington, which is kept by a long-headed American woman, who will very nearly guarantee to bid a door post discourse freely and be obeyed. And the women to whom first honors are due for having inspired London with a wholesome respect for what I may justly call the very superior American parts of speech, are Mrs. George Cornwallis-West—perhaps better known on both sides of the ocean as Lady Randolph Churchill—and Consuelo, the Dowager Duchess of Manchester.

It would be a superfluous and ungrateful task to try to recall the number of years that have flown since these two women, unusually attractive as they are, even for Americans, came over to literally take London by storm.

Suffice it to say that, as Shakespeare wrote of Cleopatra, “age cannot wither nor custom stale her infinite variety;” and in spite of the amazing influx of their young and lovely and accomplished countrywomen into London since their day of arrival, these two ladies still stand, as they have stood for years, at the very top of the entire American set abroad.

Both of them, by marriage or through years of long association, have become thoroughly identified with English society, but, unlike Lady Vernon-Harcourt, widow of the great leader of the Liberal party, and daughter of the famous historian Motley, they have never lost their strong American individuality.

Lady Vernon-Harcourt, to sight and hearing, seems almost a typical and thoroughgoing English woman, but Mrs. George Cornwallis-West and the Duchess Consuelo are, to all intents and purposes, as distinctly American as the day on which they were presented as brides and beauties at one of Queen Victoria's drawing-rooms.

Then, as well as now, they were both fair to look upon, but they were also something more—they were the cleverest of talkers, and the beautiful Consuelo, in her soft, Southern voice, possessed a faculty for quaint and witty turns of phrase that made her an instant favorite.

At the time of her début, London had yet to meet the American woman who could not only chatter along cheerfully and intelligently, but who could artfully and unembarrassedly tell an amusing story before the big and critical audience that the average dinner table supplies. Our fair Creole and the fair New Yorker were, however, more than equal to all and any such emergencies and occasions.

It was with their capable tongues, quite as much as with their charming faces, that they scored their social triumphs in England, and it was mainly through their beguiling conversational powers that they both caught the attention of the present king and queen—at that time Prince and Princess of Wales—and aroused royalty's prompt and lasting admiration.

Until that time no American could boast the fact that she was the friend of the queen, prince or princess, but the young duchess and Lady Randolph Churchill changed all that. They were the first of their nation to be asked to the Sandringham house parties, to be included in the lists of guests invited to meet royal folk at dinners, etc., and to inspire in the present king and queen the thoroughgoing liking they now cherish for American things in general and the American woman in particular.

A good deal of brown Thames water has flowed under London Bridge, it is true, since these exponents of two entirely different types of American womanhood came over to astonish even our *blasé* society, but no two of their sex and nation have succeeded in making a more deep and lasting impression upon London than these, or have done more to insure the social success of their countrywomen who followed in their footsteps.

Consuelo, the duchess, is a grandmother to-day, but she is almost as prominent a figure in the gay world as she ever was; unlike Mrs. George Cornwallis-West, she never went in, so to speak, for political prestige. She has cared for social gayety pure and simple, preserved much of her beauty, maintained her reputation as the most delightful house-party guest in England, and is noted nowadays as being, as well, the most skillful, tactful and serenely polite bridge-whist partner in the United Kingdom.

When, a few months ago, a house-party for royalty was given at Chatsworth by the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, it was at the urgent request of both the king and queen that the Dowager Duchess of Manchester came over from Paris to spend a few days under the same roof with their majesties, whose affection for this low-voiced, sweet-tempered, witty American woman has never wavered. Every now and then one hears anew in London drawing rooms of some amusing saying of hers, for she is as gracious and graceful a conversationalist as of yore, and with three young and blooming American duchesses to rival her, still stands well apart from and ahead of them all, at least so far as the homage of our smart and titled society can be accepted as proof of a woman's position.

Of all the three young duchesses, I think her youthful Grace of Marlborough is far and away the most distinctly popular and influential. She has conquered even the most indifferent and the most prejudiced, by an exquisitely charming sweetness of manner that is quite irresistible.

She does not possess what a Frenchman would call the *vif* style of her average countrywomen, and she is not a very vigorous talker, but she is wonderfully sympathetic and attractive of manner; her porcelain fine, aristocratic prettiness makes her a distinguished figure wherever she goes, and from the first she presided at the head of her vast establishment, and took her rightful position in England with a natural dignity and a complete grasp of the situation that literally took the breath away from the rather skeptical British onlooker.

There is a story told, *sub rosa*, of the discomfiture of a high-nosed and rather too helpful aristocratic matron and relative, who, on the arrival of her shy looking, slim young Grace, undertook to set her right and well beforehand on points of etiquette, ducal duty and responsibilities, etc.

Nobody knows to this day just what passed between the fair girl and the stately matron, but the duchess was not very much bothered with unnecessary advice after one short interview with her rather officious social fairy-godmother. And if the duchess was not ready to take advice, it was simply because she did not need it. When she gave her first great house party at Blenheim, it rather outrivalled in splendor anything of the sort done in England in a long time, and her chief guests were royalties; nevertheless, there was not a hitch or a mistake in all the elaborate proceedings; and a critical peer, who enjoyed the magnificent hospitality of the Marlboroughs, was heard to remark afterward that to be born an American millionairess is to apparently know by instinct all that has to be taught from childhood to a native English duchess.

That Her Grace of Marlborough has a natural taste for splendid surroundings is shown by her fondness for big Blenheim and the marvelous luxury she has introduced into every part of that vast mansion; and when her indulgent father offered to buy for her a house in London, she imposed but two guiding conditions on his choice for her of a home in town.

"I want the biggest house on the most fashionable street," she is said to have said. The result was that Mr. Vanderbilt purchased Sunderland House, in Curzon Street, and there the duchess is fittingly installed.

There the most sumptuous decorating and furnishing has been done, and when she entertains, her dinners will be the most splendid and her balls the largest and most luxurious of the season, for whatever the duchess does is done in almost regal style.

Eventually no London hostess can or will outshine her, and yet this first among the American duchesses is not very socially inclined. She prefers the country life and Blenheim to the best that London can give her, and this taste is to a great measure shared by many of our American peeresses and guests.

The Countess of Orford, Lady Monson, the Countess of Donoughmore, Mrs. Spender Clay, Lady Charles Ross and Mrs. Langhorne Shaw, for example, find English country life pre-eminently to their taste, and all but avoid the town, save in the very height of the season.

Lady Orford—who was Miss Corbin—lives at Waborne Hall, her husband's magnificent Georgian place in Norfolk. There she gives shooting parties, from there she goes with her husband and pretty young daughter to fish in Scotland and Norway, and the chief interest that brings her up to London is her taste for music and the opera, which, she declares, is the only pleasure that one cannot gratify out of town.

Next after music, sport—fishing most especially—engages her particular interest. Though she rarely goes out with the guns, her husband declares she is a capital shot, and that she could and would ride to hounds with the most daring of our fox-hunting peeresses, if Norfolk was a hunting shire.

Prominent, however, among the hunting set is the handsome Countess of Donoughmore, whose father, the American millionaire Grace, owns Battle Abbey, and has made England his home for many years. His slender, pretty daughter, who was Miss Eleana Grace before she married an Irish earl, rode to hounds from her days of floating locks and short skirts.

Now, as a fair and fashionable peeress, she hunts Ireland and England both with all the zest and skill of a native-born Irish woman. Her keenest American competitor, in the art of hard cross-country riding, is a young and beautiful Virginian, Mrs. Langhorne-Shaw, who comes over every year to hunt, and for no other purpose.

In spite of all her youth and beauty and charm, this fair sister-in-law of the famous American artist, Charles Dana Gibson, scarcely makes an appearance in London at all. She arrives in England at the season when the scent is best and

the hounds at their briskest, and, American-wise, she takes a house in the very heart of the hunting district.

Sometimes she brings over her own string of horses from her native State, for she is a judge of sound and capable animals; and she has done more than any other one of her sex and race to prove that the American-built riding habit is a capital garment, and that when she is well mounted and in the field there are few in England who can surpass an American woman at hard and intelligent riding.

Lady Monson, though less of a sportswoman than Lady Donoughmore or Mrs. Langhorne-Shaw, is, if anything, more devoted to country life in England than either, for a very great part of every year she spends, by preference, at her husband's beautiful home, "Barton Hall," and there she entertains not only extensively and luxuriously, but chiefly the diplomats, domestic and foreign.

This capacity for gathering about her quite the most interesting among notable men has made her house parties rather famous in an enviable way, and has given Lady Monson a marked reputation as a hostess. Her husband is the nephew of Sir Edmund Monson, the well-known ambassador to France, and Lady Monson is herself a famous beauty. Before her first marriage, to a wealthy New Yorker, she was Miss Romaine Stone, and celebrated in London, Newport and New York for a uniquely delicate loveliness of face and form.

Her beauty was, indeed, as widely talked about and ardently admired in London as was that of Lady Naylor Leyland some years ago, or as we now very enthusiastically discuss the charming features of Mrs. Sam Chauncey or Lady Ross, who are prominent members of the younger American colony.

Both of the last-mentioned fair women hail from the State of Kentucky—Lady Ross was Miss Patricia Ellison, of Louisville, and Mrs. Chauncey belongs to the ever-growing class of American women who have created a deep impression on London society by making the very most of some particular talent or taste or feature.

Society in these days, like the professions of war, law or medicine, is in the hands of the specialists; and I think that the American women who came over to carve out their own social way saw this opportunity at once and have developed it in a quite remarkable fashion.

The arbiters of social place are not handing out any of the big prizes to the women who are just agreeable in a commonplace style. Do the striking thing in London, and do it well, is the rule for success at this time, and the energetic, quickly perceiving American woman loses not a week nor a day after her arrival in proving to us that she is a definite person indeed.

London society is made up of as many as ten different sets, all independent and powerful, each one in its own way, and the skill of the woman from New York or Chicago is displayed by her promptness in deciding on just the set into which she prefers to enter.

Mrs. Bradley Martin, Lady Deerhurst, Lady Bagot; Cora, Lady Strafford—now known by her new married title as Mrs. Kennard—Lady Newborough and a score of others one could mention, are to be included among the Americans who have devoted their talents entirely to the conquering of the smartest of smart sets. Most of these have married titles, it is true, but titles are not essential, after all, where natural social gifts are possessed; Mrs. Sam Chauncey, for instance, is a case in point.

Mrs. Chauncey is an American widow and a beauty, with a most agreeable manner and lively intelligence; she presides in a bewitching bijou of a little house in Hertford Street, and drives one of the smartest miniature victorias that appear in the park. But London's first and most striking impression concerning this delightful acquisition from the States was derived from her wonderful and lovely gowns—her French frocks are, for taste and becomingness, quite paralyzing to even a breath of criticism, and from the first moment of her *début* in London they excited only the most whole-souled enthusiasm in the hearts of all beholders of both sexes.

To say that she is rather particularly famous as the best dressed woman in our great city is, perhaps, to make a pretty strong assertion, in the face of very serious competition offered by women notable for the perfection of their wardrobe, but this claim really stands on good grounds. Even among her compatriots, she seems always astonishingly well gowned, and really, if we are going to honestly give honor where honor is due, we must put natural pride and sentiment aside and agree that the presence of the American woman in London has had a marked and salutary influence on the whole dress problem as English women look at it.

Not to mince matters, we may as well confess that *les Americaines* do gown themselves with superlative taste. Our peeresses and visitors from the States know what to wear and how to wear it; they show so much tact in their choice of colors, they put on their gay gowns and hats with such a completeness of touch, and display so much instinct for style in the choice and use of small etceteras, that it is idle to say we English have not been compelled to notice and admire.

If imitation is truly the sincerest flattery, as some ancient wiseacre said years ago, then there is pretty clear evidence daily afforded to prove that we are complimenting our American sisters by slowly adopting their ideas of dress.

More and more each season does Paris send us the sort of gown and hatpin, belt and handkerchief and hair ornament, that goes to New York, and more and more is the saying, "She dresses quite like an American woman," accepted as a kindly comment, wherever it is offered.

A general impression, also, is prevailing to the effect that one reason why our American cousins wear their fine frocks with such good results is because they hold their heads high and their backs flat and straight. There is even now, in London, a vastly popular *corsetière* who does not hesitate to recommend herself as the only artiste in town who can persuade any form, stout or lean, to assume at once the exact outlines of the admired American figure.

The Duchess of Roxburghe, Mrs. Kennard and the Countess of Suffolk are all very fair examples, in our eyes, of the high

perfection of line to which the feminine form divine can and does attain in America; for all these women hold themselves with the most superlative grace, wear gowns that would make Solomon in all his glory feel envious, and help to maintain the now fixed belief in England that all Americans are tall, straight, slender and born with a capacity for wearing diamond tiaras with as much ease as straw hats.

It would not be fair, though, to lay too much of the social success of King Edward's fair new subjects and visitors wholly at their wardrobe doors, for the two most influential and prominent American women just now in London are neither of them titled, nor do they place too much stress on the gorgeousness of their frocks and frills.

Both Mrs. Arthur Paget—who was Miss Minnie Stevens, of New York—and Mrs. Ronalds are listed everywhere among the most popular of our hostesses, and Mrs. Ronalds, especially, is a distinct power in the musical world. Scarcely a famous artist comes to town but sooner or later he hears, to his advantage, of this wealthy American.

Her red and white music room—by far the most artistic and completely equipped private salon of its kind in London—has sheltered distinguished companies of the very fashionable and intellectual English music lovers; she has made her Sunday afternoons of something more than mere frivolous importance, and won for them, indeed, a decided and enviable celebrity, for Mrs. Ronalds is one of those American women who possess a genius for hospitality.

Mrs. Paget, it is true, takes due rank in the same category, and both these women have all the truly American tastes for featuring their entertainments most delightfully. To continue in the commonplace round of quite conventional functions, as approved by society, is not to be borne by these energetic and novelty-loving ladies, and a dinner, a supper party or a dance at Mrs. Paget's is sure to develop some unexpected and charming phase.

It is to Mrs. Paget, for example, that we are indebted for the introduction of that purely American festivity, "The Ladies' Luncheon." "The Ladies' Luncheon" is now quite acclimatized here; we have accepted it as we have also accepted "The Ladies' Dinner-party," which was wholly unknown previous to the American invasion. Whether Mrs. Paget was instrumental or not in making for the last-mentioned form of entertainment a place among our conservative hostesses is not quite proven, but it is safe to say that this tall, vivacious, energetic lady, who skates as well as she dances, golfs and drives a motor car, carries almost more social power in her small right hand than any other untitled woman in London.

She is heartily admired by our present king and queen, who find in her sparkling talk very much the same mental stimulus that one derives from the Duchess Consuelo's gay epigrams, and, above everything else, the court and its circle of society reverence the charms of the woman whose brain bubbles over with ideas.

If a dance, a dinner, a bazaar or a picnic is on foot, Mrs. Paget can map out and put through the enterprise with amazing skill and readiness, and she shows all the American's shrewd business instinct for profitably pleasing a ticket-purchasing public when a charity fund must be swelled or a hospital assisted.

With her vigor, high spirits and infinite variety of charm, she is enormously sought after and courted and fêted, but it is noticeable, and none the less admirable, in English eyes, that the American woman established in a foreign land rarely or never fails in either her admiration or her affection for her country across the sea.

At the time of the Spanish-American War, this extreme loyalty to their native home and the land of their birth was made evident in not one but a dozen ways that never escaped the notice of English eyes. Expatriated though in a measure she is, the Anglicized American woman scarcely ever loses her sense of pride and profound satisfaction in being an American, after all, and so strong is this feeling in these delightful women that it is accepted quite as a matter of course, both by them and by their English friends, that their sons should frequently go back to the mothers' land in order to find their wives.

Two notable instances of the son's love for his mother's country and his instinctive interest in her countrywomen have been supplied in the marriages of the young Duke of Manchester and the son of Sir William and Lady Vernon-Harcourt.

It seems scarcely more than natural that Mr. Lewis Vernon-Harcourt should marry pretty Miss Burns, of New York, though, through his mother as well as his father, all his interests and sympathies are naturally centered in England.

Yet it is safe to say that when the average Englishman marries an American he does not feel in the least as though he was marrying, so to speak, outside the family circle.

The marvelous adaptability of the American woman robs the situation of any difficulty, and in no way, so far, has the American wife of the Englishman showed more astonishing adaptability than in the cordial interest with which she often identifies herself with her husband's political interests, if he is in Parliament.

Three of the keenest politicians in petticoats that England possesses are American women by birth; and the first and leading spirit among them is the American wife of Mr. Chamberlain.

Mrs. Chamberlain cares little or nothing for society, and beyond the obligatory functions at which she has been obliged to preside or attend, she shows small taste for the frivolities of that special world of men and women where the main task and occupation of every day is to amuse one's self. But in the affairs of state she feels a very burning interest indeed.

She is one of the two women in the British empire who are admitted by men to understand the mysterious and, to the average feminine mind, inexplicable fiscal problem; she knows all about tariff reform; she is her husband's first secretary, confidante and adviser; she is said to be the most discreet lady in speech, where her husband's political interests are concerned, and when he speaks in public Mrs. Chamberlain sits so near to him that, in case of a lapse of memory, she can play the part of stage prompter.

Every one of his speeches she commits to memory, and can, therefore, give him any missing word at any critical

moment, and in this way she is even more helpful than the capable and intellectual Lady Vernon-Harcourt was to her distinguished husband.

There is still a third American woman to whose abilities her English husband is deeply indebted. This is Lady Curzon, who has very clearly defined diplomatic gifts, who is naturally highly ambitious, and who has, in her zeal to help her husband, learned to speak more East Indian dialects and Oriental tongues than any white woman in India.

Fourth, perhaps, of this list should be mentioned Lady Cheylesmore, who was in her girlhood, spent at Newport and New York, so well known and admired, especially for her wonderful red hair, which Whistler loved to paint.

Lady Cheylesmore was Miss Elizabeth French in those days, and now she is proud to be known as the wife of the mayor of Westminster, for her husband has lately been chosen for that very dignified position. As one of London's lady mayoresses, she will dispense delightful hospitality in her handsome house in Upper Grosvenor Street, which is famous for its three wonderful drawing rooms, decorated by the Brothers Adam, and regarded by connoisseurs as one of the most perfect examples of their art and taste.

At her dinner parties Lady Cheylesmore entertains many politicians of note, and in one way or another, by her infinite tact and good sense, does much to aid and abet her husband's well-known aspirations to a brilliant parliamentary place.

She is one of the ardently ambitious American women of whose very real and deserved triumphs we hear so much artistically as well as socially, these days. And let it be said here and now, to London's credit, that there is no city in the world that gives to its resident daughters of Uncle Sam a heartier measure of praise and encouragement in all their accomplishments.

We may, some of us, cherish high tariff principles and believe in restricting the immigration. None of us, however, is ready to vote for any measures that will bar out or discourage one class of fair and accomplished aliens who cross the ocean bent on conquering London, and who in the end are so often conquered in turn by London's charm, and who settle down to form an element in our society that is fast becoming as familiar and as welcome as it is admirable and indispensable.

THE BLOOD OF BLINK BONNY

By Martha McCulloch-Williams



Miss Allys Rhett stood upon the clubhouse lawn, a vision in filmy white, smiling her softest, most enchanting smile. There was a reason for the smile—a reason strictly feminine, yet doubly masculine. She had walked down the steps that led from the *piazza* betwixt Rich Hilary and Jack Adair, the catches of the season, in full view of the Hammond girl, who was left to waste her sweetness upon prosy old Van Ammerer.

The Hammond girl had been rather nasty all summer—she was, moreover, well known to be in hot pursuit of Rich Hilary. Until Allys came on the scene it had seemed the pursuit must be successful. They had gone abroad on the same steamer the year before, dawdled through a London season, and come home simultaneously—he rather bored and languid, she of a demure and downcast, but withal possessive, air. She had said they were not engaged—“oh, dear no, only excellent friends,” but looking all the while a contradiction of the words. Then unwisely she had taken Hilary to that tiresome tea for the little Rhett girl—and behold! the mischief was done.

The little Rhett girl was not little; instead, she was divinely tall, and lithe as a young ash. No child, either. What with inclination and mother-wisdom, her coming out had waited for her to find herself. At nineteen she had found herself—a woman, well poised and charming as she was beautiful. Notwithstanding Hilary had not instantly surrendered—horse, foot and dragoons. Rather he had held out for terms—the full honors of war, as became a man rising thirty, and prospective heir to more millions than he well knew what to do with.

Two or three of the millions had taken shape in the Bay Park, the newest and finest of metropolitan courses. Hilary's father, a power alike on the turf and in the street, had built it, and controlled it absolutely—of course through the figment of an obedient jockey club. A trace of sentiment, conjoined to a deal of pride, had made him revive an old-time stake—the Far and Near. It dated back to that limbo of racing things—“before the war.” Banker Hilary's grandfather, a leader among gentlemen horsemen of that good day, had been of those who instituted it—a fact upon which no turf scribe had failed to dilate when telling the glories of the course. The event was, of course, set down a classic—as well it might be, all things considered. The founders had framed it so liberally as to admit the best in training—hence the name. The refounders made conditions something narrower, but offset that by quadrupling the value.

This was Far and Near day—with a record crowd, and hot, bright summer weather. The track was well known to be lightning fast, and the entry list was so big and puzzling that the Far and Near might well prove anybody's race. There were favorites, of course, also rank outsiders. One heard their names everywhere in the massed throng that had overflowed the big stand, the lawn, the free field, and broken in human waves upon the green velvet of the infield. This

by President Hilary's own order. He had come to the track early, and looked to everything—with a result that there was no trouble anywhere.

The crowd had been gayly demonstrative through the first two races. It had watched the third in tense silence—except that moiety of it ebbing and flowing through the clubhouse. It was the silence of edged patience. Albeit the early races were fair betting propositions, the most of those who watched them had come to lay wagers on some Far and Near candidate—and the Far and Near candidates had been getting their preliminaries.

They numbered just nineteen. Seventeen had been out when Allys and her squires stopped under the shade of a tree. Notwithstanding the shadow, she put up her white parasol, tilting it at just the angle to make it throw her head and shoulders in high relief. Adair glanced at her, caught a hard breath, nipped it, then looked steadily down the course a minute.

Hilary smiled—a smile that got no further than the corners of his red lips—his eyes, indeed, gloomed the more for it—then turned upon Allys with: “Pick the winner for us, won't you? You are so delightful feminine you know nothing of horses, therefore ought to bring us luck. Say, now, what shall we back?”

“It depends,” Allys said, twirling her parasol ever so lightly. “Do you want to lose? Or do you really care to win?”

“To win, please, O oracle, if it's all the same to you,” Hilary said, supplication in his voice, although his eyes danced.

Allys gave him a long look. “Then you must take Heathflower,” she said. “I have the Wickliffe boy's word for it—he wrote me only yesterday: ‘Miss Allys, if you want to get wealthy, bet all your real money on that Heathflower thing.’”

“H'm! Who is the Wickliffe boy? Tell us that before we play his tip,” Adair demanded. Hilary could not speak for laughing.

Allys smiled entrancingly. “The Wickliffe boy—is a knight-errant born out of time,” she said. “I'm wondering if it will last. We came to know him last summer—mother and I—down at Hollymount, my uncle's place in Virginia. The Wickliffe boy, Billy by name, lives at Lyonesse, which is Hollymount's next neighbor. It belongs to Billy's uncle, the dearest old bachelor—maybe that is the reason the boy has such reverence for womankind. I don't know which he comes nearest worshiping—women or horses. Whenever we rode out—he was my steadfast gallant—he managed somehow to pass through or by or around Haw Bush, where the Heathflower thing was bred. Old Major Mediwether, her owner, is Billy's best chum. They match beautifully—though the major is nearly eighty, and Billy just my age—rising nineteen.”

“They must have made it interesting for you. I'm sure you couldn't tell half so much about either of us,” Adair said, with a deeply injured air.

Allys shook her head at him. “They are dears,” she said, emphatically. “And they taught me a lot I should never have known—about horses and men.”

“Anything specific—as about the Heathflower thing?” Hilary asked, affecting to speak with awe.

Allys nodded. “A heap,” she said. “I can hear Billy now, as we watched her on the training track, saying: ‘She hasn't got any looks—but legs are better for winnin'. And she must win; she's bound to—whenever she feels like it, and the track and the weights suit her. She can't help it—she's got eight full crosses of Blink Bonny blood.’”

“Blink Bonny! H'm! Who was he? What did he do?” Hilary asked.

Allys looked at him severely. “‘He' happens to have been ‘she,’” she said. “As for the doing, it was only winning the Derby, with the Oaks right on top of it. Mighty few mares have ever done that—as you would know if you had grown up in Virginia, with time to know everything. Billy does know everything about pedigrees—he can reel them off at least a hundred years back. Remember, now, I'm strictly quoting him: ‘Blink Bonny is really ancient history—she won the year poor old Dick Ten Broek tried so hard to have his American-bred ones carry off the blue ribbon of the turf. He didn't win it—no American did—until one of them had luck enough to try for it with something of Blink Bonny's blood. Iroquois went back to her through his sire, Bonnie Scotland-Iroquois, who wasn't really a great horse, but a good one that happened on a great chance.’”

“Why, Allys darling, I can hardly believe my ears! Here you are talking horse like a veteran, when I always thought you didn't know a fetlock from a wishbone,” the Hammond girl cooed, swimming up behind them on old Van Ammerer's arm. They were headed for the paddock, although it was not quite time for the saddling bell. The Heathflower thing was still invisible—Allys searched the course for her through Hilary's glass, saying the while over her shoulder, with her most infantine smile: “You thought right, Camilla dear. I don't really *know* anything—have only a parrot faculty of repeating what I hear.”

The Hammond girl flushed—that was what she had said of Allys when people laughed over the Rhett *mots*. But before she could counter, Allys cried joyously: “At last! The Heathflower thing! Really, she hasn't any looks—but see her run, will you?”

“She does move like a winner—but it's impossible she can stay,” Hilary said, almost arrogantly. “Pedigree is all very well—until it runs up against performance—”

“Right you are! Quite mighty right, Rich, me boy,” old Van Ammerer interrupted. “But I didn't know they let dark horses run in the Far and Near—”

“Lucky you are young, Van—you have such a lot to learn,” Adair said, brusquely, as they went toward the paddock. It was thronged, but somehow at sight of Hilary the human masses fell respectfully apart—albeit the men and women there had forgotten themselves, even forgotten each other for the time being, in their poignant eagerness over the big

race.

They were hardly through the gate and well established in an eddy when the bell brought the racers pacing or scurrying in. The Heathflower thing came straight off the course, and stood spiritlessly, drooping her head and blinking her eyes. Clear eyes, matching the loose, satiny skin, beneath which whipcord muscles stood out, or played at each least motion, they told the eye initiate that she was in the pink of condition. Like her so-famous ancestors, a bay with black points, neither under nor over size, with a fine, lean head, a long neck, and four splendid legs, it was a marvel that she could so utterly lack any trace of equine comeliness. Her chest was noticeably narrow, her barrel out of proportion to shoulders and quarters. Still, against those patent blemishes, a judge of conformation would have set the splendid sloping shoulders, the reaching forearm, the bunches of massy muscle in the long loin, the quarters well let down into perfect houghs, the fine, clean bone of knees and ankles, the firm, close-grained hoofs spreading faintly from coronet to base.

Clean-limbed throughout, with ears that, if they drooped, had no trace of coarseness and were set wide apart above a basin face, the mare showed race indisputably, notwithstanding the white in her forehead was too smudgy to be called a star, or that, though her muzzle tapered finely, the lower lip habitually protruded a bit. A four-year-old, she was still a maiden—consequently had but a feather on her back in the Far and Near. The handicapper had laughed, half wearily, half compassionately as he allotted it, muttering something about the jockey club robbing the cradle and the grave—that poor old Major Meriwether, it was well known, hadn't any money to spare; what he did have was the gambler's instinct to sit into any game where the stakes were big.

The race was open to three-year-olds and upward, and run over a distance—two miles and a half. The distance kept out the sprinters—it also, now and again, played hob with racing idols. To win a horse must be able to go—also to stay. With twenty thousand of added money, there was sure to be always a long list of entries. The conditions held one curious survival from the original fixture—namely, that, horses brought over three hundred miles to run in it got a three-pound allowance if they reached the course less than a week before the day of the race.

Major Meriwether had chuckled whenever he thought of that. He knew “the weight of a stable key may win or lose a race.” And the Heathflower thing was a splendid traveler, coming out of her padded stall as ready to run as when she went into it. She had got to the Bay Park only two days back, in charge of her rubber, Amos, and Black Tim, her jockey. Tim stood at her head, Amos was giving her lank sides their last polish, as Allys and her train swept down upon them.

Allys nodded to them gayly, as she asked: “Tim, have you come up to break New York? I hear your stable will need a special car to take home its money—after the Far and Near.”

“Yessum, dat's so!” Tim said.

Amos scowled at him, but said to Allys, respectfully: “Please'um, don't ax dat dar fool boy no mo' 'bout de Flower—hit's mighty bad luck sayin' whut you *gwine* do, ontwel you is done done it.”

“Dar come Marse Billy Wickliffe—you kin ax him all you wanten.” Tim giggled, then clapped his hand over his mouth. Tim was lathy—long-legged, long-armed, with an ashy-black complexion and very big eyes. As he stood fondling the Flower's nose, he glared disdain of all the other candidates, or, rather, of the knots of folk gathered admiringly about them.

Allys turned half about—for two breaths at least she had a snobbish impulse to overlook Billy and hurry away. Billy was tall, with a face like a young Greek god—but how greet him there with the Hammond girl to see, in a checked suit, patently ready-made, with the noisiest of shirts, a flowing bright red tie, and a sunburned straw hat? If it were only Adair, she would not mind—Hilary was, she knew, very much more critical. She might have run away, but that she caught the Hammond girl's look—amusement and satisfaction struggled through it, although the young lady tried hard to mask them.

Allys turned wholly, holding out both hands, and saying: “Billy, by all that's delightful! I've just been telling these people about you. Come, show them I kept well within the truth.”

Billy caught the outstretched hands, his heart so openly in his eyes Hilary wanted to strangle him on the spot. The Hammond girl laughed, and turned to whisper in Van Ammerer's ear. Adair, alone of the group, shook hands. Although the others gave him civil, if formal, greeting, Billy felt their hostility intuitively, and flung up his head like a stag at bay.

“You got my note—have you done it yet?” he asked, bending over Allys in a fashion that made Hilary's teeth set hard.

She laughed back at him: “Have you done it yet? Bet your whole fortune on the Heathflower thing at a hundred to one?”

Billy nodded confidently. “That's just what I have done. Unc' Robert was willin'—he thought as I did, such a little bit o' money was better risked than kept.”

“H'm! I hope you kept the price of a return ticket,” Hilary said, trying to speak jocularly. “Really, Mr. Wickliffe, you can't think that ugly brute has a chance to be even in the money.”

“My money's talkin' for me,” Billy said, facing Hilary. “‘Tain't much—only a thousand. Lordy! if I could, wouldn't I burn up these ringsters! You ought to a-heard 'em, Miss Allys, when I went at 'em. ‘The Heathflower thing, did you say?’ the first one asked me. ‘Oh, say! do you want to rob us poor fellows? Couldn't think of layin' you less'n a thousand to one on that proposition.’ But he cut it mighty quick to a hundred to one when I said: ‘I'd take you for a hundred, only I know you couldn't pay.’ Tell you he rubbed his slate in a hurry after I got down fifty. The next one tried to be smart as he was—sang out to some o' the rest: ‘Here's the wild man from Borneo, come to skin us alive!’ Then made out he was skeered to death when I offered him one little pitiful rag of a ten. But when they saw me keep on right down the line, some of 'em shut up and looked a little anxious, some cut the price, and some got sassier than ever. They called me Rube, and Johnny-on-the-spot-of-wealth, and Shekels, and a heap of other things. But I didn't mind. Still, next time I'll send my

money by one of those commissioner fellows. To-day I couldn't risk it."

"What makes you so suddenly avaricious, Billy?" Allys asked. "Last summer you cared less for money than anything. There must be a reason—tell me, does it wear frocks?"

"Not the special reason," Billy said, with an adoring look; then in her ear: "I know you don't care for money any more'n I do. But I'm bound to have some—if there's any chance—it's—it's because of the major. I'll tell you all about it, after the race."

The parade was nearly over when Allys and her three swains came again to the lawn. By some odd chance, the long shots had been well toward the head of it, leaving the two favorites and the three second choices to bring up the rear. The Heathflower thing was immediately in front of them. She had moved so soberly, plodding with low head and sleepy eyes, the watchers had given her an ironic cheer, mingled with cat calls. All the others had got a welcome more or less enthusiastic, but it was only when Aramis, even-money favorite, came through the paddock gate that the crowd got to its feet.

All up and down, and round about, roaring cheers greeted him, followed him—men flung up their hats for him, women in shrill falsetto cried his name. Nobody could fail to understand that he carried the hopes and the fortunes of a great multitude. Nobody could fail to understand either that Aldegonde, who followed right on his heels, would win or lose for as many. The pair were blood-brothers, sons of the great Hamburg, but one out of an imported dam, the other from a mare tracing to Lexington, and richly inbred to that great sire.

Still the line of cleavage was not patriotic nor even international. Folk had picked one or the other to win freakishly—on hunches of all sorts, tips of all manners, pure fancy, or "inside information" of the hollowest sort. As to looks, pedigree, or performance, there was hardly a pin to choose between the pair. Both were three-year-olds, tried in the fire of spring racing; both held able to go the distance and stay the route, in that they had won from everything except from each other.

By some curious chance they had not met before that season—in their two-year-old form they had won and lost to each other.

Thus to many onlookers the Far and Near held out a promise of such an equine duel as would make it the race of the century. And certainly two handsomer or gallanter beasts than the pair of raking chestnuts, long-striding, racelike, with white-starred faces and single white hind feet, never looked through a bridle.

Notwithstanding, the second choices were far from friendless, albeit their greatest support was for the place or to show. The greeting they got was tame compared to that of the favorites, but still a volleying cheer, rising and falling along the quarter-mile of humanity banked and massed either side the course. Shrewd form players and the plainer sort had taken liberal fliers on them—that was evident by the way the shouting mounted in the free field, and the jam in front of the betting ring.

Not a few of the professional layers had turned their slates and were out on watch for the event that would mean thousands in or out of their pockets. Among the second choices Artillery, the black Meddler mare, was held a shade the best. Next to her came Tay Ho, a son of Hastings, five years old, who might have divided honors with the favorites but for being an arrant rogue. To-day he ran in blinkers, and nodded the least bit in his stride, whereas his stable mate, Petrel, the last of the second choices, went as free as ever water ran.

Billy watched the parade, scarcely conscious that Allys clung to his arm. Hilary stood at her other hand, frowning blackly. The finish line was almost in front of them.

Hilary moved back a pace. "We can see better here," he said, trying to draw Allys along with him. She shook her head obstinately, but said nothing; in her heart she was resolved that Billy should have the comfort of her presence in his hour of defeat.

Since she was very far from being a model young person, Hilary's manifest anger was not displeasing. She was going to marry him—but only at her own time, and upon her own conditions. So far, there was no engagement—she had fenced and played with him beautifully all through the last three months. He had no right whatever to be nasty about Billy; of course, if it were some grown-up body, Adair for example, there might be a color of reason for his wrath. He ought to understand that Billy was, in a way, her guest—also a person to whom she owed something in the way of hospitality. What provoked her most was knowing that Hilary was less jealous than ashamed—ashamed to have her thus openly countenance anybody who wore Billy's clothes. She was all the angrier for her own moment of snobbishness—men ought to be above such paltry things, she reasoned; anyway, she was bound to stand by Billy to the inevitably bitter end.

The start was tedious. Again and again the line of rainbow jackets drew taut across the course, only to break and tangle, and at last dissolve into its original gaudy units. Billy sighed as he watched it, then smiled shyly, and drew a long breath, saying in Allys' ear: "I hate to win except right square out."

"I don't understand," Allys returned.

Billy looked at her in surprise.

"Don't you see—the favorites have got so much on their backs, the longer they wheel and turn, the more they take out of themselves?" he asked. "I'll bet they are frettin' like everything, too. See there! One of them chestnut-sorrels—can't tell whether it's Aramis or Aldegonde—is cuttin' up high didoes. And the Heathflower thing standin' like a little lamb —"

"She may be standing there when the race is over," Hilary interrupted.

Billy did not put down his glass, but said over his shoulder: "Oh, I reckon Tim can stop her before she gets that far around. Don't know, though—if she feels like runnin' she's a handful. And this is one of the days—I know, because she looks as though she couldn't beat a funeral."

Allys pressed Billy's arm—it was all she could do to show her enjoyment of the way he had turned things. Hilary bent toward her, saying, with a hard smile: "You seem to be on Mr. Wickliffe's side—I wonder will you back his judgment?"

"Maybe so," Allys said, without turning her head. "That is, if you care to make it anything worth while. I'm not quite sure which I'd like best—a winter in Paris or a pearl necklace—and I know I shan't ever get them at bridge—I have no luck at all."

"Give you millions against—just one word," Hilary whispered; then aloud: "Is it a bet?"

"Say yes, Miss Allys," Billy entreated. "You ain't trustin' to my judgment—remember that—but to the blood of Blink Bonny."

"I take you up," Allys said, nodding to Hilary. As well this way as any other, she thought—besides, she could hold him off as long as she chose. Her father would stand by her loyally—he was in no haste to see her established. Besides, this was what she had always craved—to watch a race with a heartrending wager on its event.

"Here they come!" Billy shouted, dropping his glass, and flinging up his head.

Up course the rainbow line had at last held steady, then, as the tape flew up, bellied out like a sail in gusty wind, and been rent into flecks and tatters. The lightweights, of course, were in the foremost of the flecks and tatters—all, that is, save the Heathflower thing, who came absolutely last. Tim's orange jacket and scarlet sash were dust-dimmed by the time he came to the stand. But right in front of him were Aldegonde's tiger stripes, black and yellow, and the blue and white in the saddle of Aramis.

"Last all the way—eh, Miss Allys?" Adair said, leaning across Billy, who would have given back but that Allys clung to him in silence, her eyes glued to the glass, flushing and paling, her breath coming quicker even thus early in the race.

There were open lengths all along—the lightweights were bent on making it a runaway race. Billy knew they could never do it. A horseman born and made, he marked their stride, and understood even better than their jockeys how much the killing pace was taking out of them. It did not astonish him that in the outstretch, before a mile had been run, three of the first flight chucked it up, falling back, back, till even the Heathflower thing showed them her heels. At the mile there were more counterfeits proven—as the race swept down upon the stand the second time there were but seven of the original contenders really in it. The rest were tailing hopelessly. One or two even pulled up. But the Heathflower thing was among the seven, and keeping place right behind the favorites.

Allys clutched Billy's arm so hard her fingers half buried in it. She was getting the thrills she had pined for with a vengeance, now that her freedom, her future, were to be colored by the issue of the race.

The Heathflower thing could not win, of course; still, it was pure delight to have her so far redeem herself. If she was even near the real contenders at the finish, Billy's faith would be justified. So many, at shorter odds, had already fallen out, there would be distinction in staying all the way.

If the impossible happened, the Heathflower thing won, then she would have Hilary in a very proper frame of mind. Losing always hurt him dreadfully—it would be gall and wormwood to have lost to such a winner. She felt this rather than thought it—connected thought indeed was impossible in view of what was happening out on the course.

In the outstretch, for the second time, Aramis shot forward like the arrow from a bended bow. He had been running under wraps—now thus far from home, his jockey, the most famous of them all, gave him his head, evidently thinking there would be but one horse in the race. All in a breath two open lengths showed between Aramis and the others; then Aldegonde with a mighty burst lapped the leader's flank. Tay Ho was right behind—so close his backers set up a breathless shout. The Flower was still last, but strive, strain, stretch as the flying leaders might, they got no further away from her.

Billy flung up his hat, then clapped his hand over his mouth and said, smotheredly:

"See that, Miss Allys! Let her come into the stretch with just one breath more'n those fine fellows, and it's all over but the cashin' in."

"Billy, you're an angel! I thought we were hopelessly beaten," Allys breathed rather than said.

Hilary's mouth set. Adair, watching him narrowly, saw it also whiten when, at the second mile post, the three leaders swept the turn barely heads apart, with the Heathflower thing right on their heels. More than that, she was running strongly, easily, clearly not distressed, although Aramis, still leading, rolled the least bit.

Could that leggy bay really stay the route? Was there any reason for the Wickliffe boy's unreason? Was there also any chance for him?—there Adair stopped short, smiling a thought grimly to see how all unconsciously, all femininely, Allys drooped to Billy's upright, youthful strength.

Hilary likewise noted it—with a thumping heart that sent the color surging over his face. Habitually he held himself well in hand—it amazed and angered him to find himself thus swept beyond himself. To all of us come moments when instinct masters reason—the primal masculine instinct of possession told him he would win or lose his quicksilver sweetheart on the issue of this race.

Now she had no thought of him—her eyes were only for the course, where four horses ran like a team as never any of

them had run before. All through the first quarter of this fateful last half, they held each other safe, running side by side, stride for stride.

At the furlong pole beyond, Tay Ho's hooded head for the first time showed in front—only to be instantly eclipsed by the white star of Aldegonde. Aramis began to hang—the angry roar of his backers told he was out of it. Simultaneously, the jockeys sat down to ride—there was the cruel swish of catgut, the crueler prodding of steel. In the crowd a great hushed breath, like the sigh of a forest before the storm, told of tense heartstrings.

Almost instantly the sigh changed to a shouted roar as Tay Ho dropped back level with Aramis, leaving Aldegonde and the Heathflower thing half a length to the good. But next breath the falterers came again—together they held their place, their way, four mighty masses of blood and bone, of breath and fire and stay, fighting it out every inch of the way, with a living sea roaring, shouting, cursing, crying encouragement on either hand.

How they lay down to it! How they came up!

Stretch and gather! Stretch and gather, the game and gallant foursome held to it. Now, for the first time, the Heathflower thing showed all that was in her. Even those who stood to lose fortunes felt that her whirlwind rush deserved to win.

A hundred yards from the wire, whips still flying, rowels plowing furrows in satin coats, Aramis staggered, half stumbled, then fell back an open length.

Tim flung away his whip, and leaned far over, lying almost flat upon the Flower's neck to shout in her ear: "You see dat dar Mister Aldergown! Dee calls him bulldawg! Tote yosef, gal! Show 'im you's bulldawg, too." Perhaps the Flower resented the caution. Certainly, she hung a bit in the next stride. Tay Ho and Aldegonde, running either side of her, almost let in daylight between.

The cheers, the roars, mounted in deafening volume. The Heathflower thing answered them by going down, down, till it seemed she lay quite flat on earth. And then she came up, up, with a leap so long, so lancelike, it recovered all she had lost. Again she thrust herself forward—the horses either side of her thrust as far.

Twenty yards from home not one of the three was an inch to the good or the bad. Aldegonde's jockey slashed his mount savagely—somehow, one blow of the whip fell on the Flower's quarter—fell and won the race. With a sweep as of the wind she went away from it, and got her nose across the finish line three inches in front!

A near thing. Anybody must admit that. So near the tumult died to a breathless hush. Hilary half turned about. "I'm going to the judges' stand to see what won," he said. "I saw Aldegonde first."

"I don't know about that—but I reckon you won't go," Billy said, laying his hand upon Hilary's arm.

Hilary was furious. "Why not?" he demanded. He was no weakling, but somehow he could not get free of that impertinent young cub's grip.

"Oh, because you are—your father's son," Billy said, nonchalantly, then steadfastly, the lightness dying from face and voice: "I mean no disrespect, Mr. Hilary, but all of us have got to take account of human nature. We may think we know what won—you and me—but it's the judges' business to say so—and ours to be satisfied with the sayin'. That's only fair —"

"Let go my arm!" Hilary said, in a hoarse whisper, his eyes murderous.

Billy held him fast. "Not until you give me a gentleman's word you won't interfere," he said.

Allys looked at him amazed, enchanted. Here was no boy to be played with, petted and coaxed from his beliefs—rather a man standing for what he held the right with the fire and strength of youth.

Adair caught Hilary on the other side, saying under breath: "Hold still, Rich! You must! The wild man from Borneo is right this time. It would be horribly bad form if you said a questioning word—and, anyway, the judges saw—what we did."

Hilary turned upon Billy a look that made Allys hide her eyes, but nodded shortly, and strode away, not toward the stand. Billy turned to shield Allys, until by the stunned silence falling on the course, he knew the boards were going up—with the Flower's number at the top of them.

Then he took the fence in front at a flying leap, and came to himself only when he had both arms about the Flower's neck, his face pressed to it, and tears raining, as he whispered: "You won, lady! You had to! You wouldn't let Haw Bush be sold over the major's head. Hang the mortgages now—we'll save him, you and I! And you shall never, never run another race!"

As the Flower was led away to receive other flowers, the hideous horseshoe penalty of victory, the crowd was astounded to see in the middle of the course a tall youngster in loud plaids, leaping, shouting, hugging himself, laughing and crying in the same breath.

And this was what he shouted: "The blood of Blink Bonny! Hurrah! hurrah! Beat it if you can! Hurrah for Haw Bush! For Major Meriwether! For Tim! For Blink Bonny! Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

Allys watched him, smiling roguishly. "Billy is ridiculously young," she said to the constant Adair.

Adair looked glum. He knew, and knew she knew, that the boy they had welcomed was of full man's age—quite old

enough, in fact, to be married.

MONOTONY

Love, does my love with weary burden fall
Daily upon thy too accustomed ear
With words so oft repeated that the dear,
Sweet tones of early joy begin to pall?
What gift of loving may I give to call
Again to your deep eyes of brown the tear
Of welling, full delight and love, the clear,
Rose-petaled blush that holds my heart in thrall?
Not all the homage of the bees that wing
Laden with honey through the clover days
Wearies the tiny queen with heavy tune!
Not all the rapture of the birds that fling
Love melodies adrift through leafy ways
Burdens the mothers on their nests in June!
Philip Gerry.

“PLUG” IVORY AND “PLUG” AVERY

By Holman F. Day



It was the queerest turnout that ever invaded Smyrna Corner.

Even the frogs of Smyrna swamp at the edge of the village gulped back their pipings, climbed the bank for a nearer view, and goggled in astonished silence as it passed, groaning, in the soft and early dusk.

’Twas a sort of van—almost a little house on wheels, with an elbow of stove funnel sticking out of one side. An old chaise top was fastened by strings and wire over a seat in front. Dust and mud covered everything with striated coatings, mask eloquent of wanderings over many soils. A cadaverous horse, knee-sprung and wheezy, dragged the van at the gait of a caterpillar.

Under the chaise top was hunched an old man, gaunt but huge of frame, his knees almost to his chin. Long, white hair fluffed over his bent shoulders, and little puffs of white whiskers stood out from his tanned cheeks. A fuzzy beaver hat barely covered the bald spot on his head. The reins were looped around his neck. Between his hands, huge as hams, moaned and sucked and suffled and droned a much-patched accordion. The instrument lamented like a tortured animal as he pulled it out and squatted it together. To its accompaniment, the old man sang over and over some words that he had fitted to the tune of “Old Dog Tray,”

“Plug” Ivory Buck sat outside the door of his “emporium” in Smyrna Corner, his chair tipped back comfortably, ankle roosting across his knee, his fuzzy stovepipe hat on the back of his head.

The end of his cigar, red in the May dusk, was cocked up close to his left eye with the arrogant tilt that signified the general temperament of “Plug” Ivory. For almost fifty years a circus man, he felt a bland and yet contemptuous superiority to those who had passed their lives in Smyrna Corner. However, when his father had died at the ripe age of ninety-three—died in the harness, even while gingerly and thriftily knuckling along a weight into the eighth notch of the bar of the scoop scales—Ivory had come back as sole heir to store, stock and stand, a seventy-two-year-old black sheep bringing a most amazing tail behind him—no less than a band chariot, a half dozen animal cages, a tent loaded on a

great cart, and various impedimenta of "Buck's Leviathan Circus and Menagerie."

He trundled the array through the village's single street, stored the gilded glories in the big barn on the old home place, with the euphemism of circus terminology changed the sign "A. Buck, General Store," to "I. Buck, Commercial Emporium," and there he had lived five years, keeping "bachelor's hall" in the big house adjoining the store.

Sometimes he dropped vague hints that he might start on the road again, displaying as much assurance of long years ahead as though he were twenty-one. It was a general saying in Smyrna Corner that a Buck didn't think he was getting old until after he had turned ninety. The townspeople accepted Ivory as a sort of a wild goose of passage, called him "Plug" on account of his never varying style of headgear, and deferred to him because he had fifty thousand dollars tucked away in the savings bank at the shire.

The May dusk became tawny in the west, and he gazed out into it discontentedly.

"I wish them blamation tadpoles shed their voices along with their tails," he grumbled, with an ear to the frogs in the marsh. "They ain't quite so bad when they get big enough to trill, but that everlasting yipping makes me lonesome. I'm a good mind to toss up this tenpenny nail and salt codfish business and get back to the sawdust once more."

There was a stir in a cage above his head, a parrot waddled down the bars, stood on his beak and yawped hoarsely:

"Crack 'em down, gents! The old army game!"

"If it wasn't for you, Elkanah, I swear I should die of listening to nothing but frogs tuning up and swallows twittering and old fools swapping guff," he went on, sourly, and then he suddenly cocked his ear, for a new note sounded faintly from the marsh.

"I never knew a bullfrog to get his bass as early as this," he mused, and as he listened and peered, the old horse's head came slowly bobbing around the alders at the bend of the road. Above the wailing of the distant accordion he caught a few words as the cart wobbled up the rise on its dished wheels:

Old horse Joe is ever faithful,

O-o-o, o-o-o—ever true.

We've been—o-o-o—wide world over,

O-o-o, o-o-o, toodle-oodle—through.

Then a medley of dronings, and finally these words were lustily trolled with the confidence of one who safely reaches the last line:

A bet-tur friend than old horse Joe.

"Whoa, there! Whup!" screamed the parrot, swinging by one foot.

"Ain't you kind of working a friend to the limit and a little plus?" inquired Buck, sarcastically. The old horse had stopped before the emporium, legs spraddled, head down and sending the dust up in little puffs as he breathed.

"Joachim loves music," replied the stranger, mildly. "He'll travel all day if I'll only play and sing to him."

"Love of music will be the death of friend Joachim, then," commented Buck.

"Is there a hostelry near by?" asked the other, lifting his old hat politely. With satirical courtesy Buck lifted his—and at that psychological moment the only plug hats in the whole town of Smyrna saluted each other.

"There's a hossery down the road a ways, and a mannery, too, all run by old Sam Fyles."

"Crack 'em down, gents," rasped the parrot. "Twenty can play as well as one."

The man under the chaise top pricked up his ears and cast a significant look at the plug hat on the platform. Plug hat on the platform seemed to recognize some affinity in plug hat on the van, and there was an acceleration of mutual interest when the parrot croaked his sentence again.

Buck tipped forward with a clatter of his chair legs and trudged down to the roadside. He walked around the outfit with an inquisitive sniffing of his nose and a crinkling of eyebrows, and at last set himself before the man of the chaise top, his knuckles on his hips.

"Who be I?" he demanded.

The stranger surveyed him for some time, hugging his head down in cowering fashion, so it seemed in the dusk.

"You," he huskily ventured, "are Buck's Leviathan Circus and Menagerie; Ivory Buck, Proprietor."

"And you," declared Buck, "are Brick Avery, inventor of the dancing turkey and captor of the celebrated infant anaconda—side-show graft with me for eight years."

He put up his hand, and the stranger took it for a solemn shake, flinching at the same time.

"How long since?" pursued Buck.

"Thirty years for certain."

"Yes, all of that. Let's see! If I remember right, you threw up your side-show privilege with me pretty sudden, didn't you?" His teeth were set hard into his cigar.

The man on the van scratched a trembling forefinger through a cheek tuft.

"I don't exactly recollect how the—the change came about," he faltered.

"Well, *I* do! You ducked out across country the night of the punkin freshet, when I was mud bound and the elephant was afraid of the bridges. You and your dancin' turkey and infant anaconda and a cage of monkeys that wasn't yours and —*Her!*" He shouted the word. "What become of Her, Brick Avery?"

He seized a spoke of the forewheel and shook the old vehicle angrily. The spoke came away in his hand.

"Never mind it," quavered the man. "We're all coming to pieces, me and the whole caboodle. Don't hit me with it, though!"

He was eying the spoke in Buck's clutch.

"What did you steal her for, Brick Avery?"

"There isn't anything sure about her going away with me," the other protested.

Buck yanked away another spoke in his vehemence.

"Don't you lie to me," he bawled. "There wasn't telegraphs and telephones and railroads handy in them days, so that I could stop you or catch you, but I didn't need any telegraphs to tell me she had gone away with handsome Mounseer Hercules, of the curly hair." He snorted the sobriquet with bitter spite. "A girl I'd took off'n the streets and made the champion lady rider of—and was going to marry, and thought more of, damn yeh, than I did of all the rest of the world! What did ye do with her?"

"Well, she wanted to go along, and so I took her aboard. She seemed to want to get away from your show, near as I could find out." The giant hugged his knees together and blinked appealingly.

"It must be a bang-up living you're giving her," sneered Buck, running his eye over the equipage. In his passion he forgot the lapse of the years and the possibility of changes.

"Seems as if you hadn't heard the latest news," broke in Avery, his face suddenly clearing of the puckers of apprehension. "She never stuck to me no time. She didn't intend to. She just made believe that she was going to marry me so that I would take her along. She run away with the sixteen hundred dollars I had saved up and Signor Dellabunko—or something like that—who was waiting for her on the road, and I haven't seen hide nor hair of 'em since, nor I don't want to, and I've still got the letter that she left me, so that I can prove what I say. She was going to do the same thing to you, she said in it, but she had made up her mind that she couldn't work you so easy. It's all in that letter! Kind of a kick-you-and-run letter!"

In his agitation Buck broke another spoke from the crumbling wheel. The parrot cracked his beak against the cage's bars and yawled:

"It's the old army game, gents!"

"Hadn't you just as soon tear pickets off'n the fence there, or something like that?" wistfully queried Avery. "This is all I've got left, and I haven't any money, and I haven't had very much courage to do anything since she took that sixteen hundred dollars away from me." He scruffed his raspy palms on his upcocked knees. "I didn't really want to run away with her, Ivory, but she bossed me into it. I never was no hand to stand up for my rights. Any one, almost, could talk me 'round. I wish she'd stuck to you and let me alone." His big hands trembled on his knees, and his weak face, with its flabby chaps, had the wistful look one sees on a foxhound's visage. "When did you give up the road?" he asked.

"Haven't given it up!" The tone was curt and the scowl deepened. "I've stored my wagons and the round-top and the seats, but I'm liable to buy an elephant and a lemon and start out again 'most any time."

The eyes of the old men softened with a glint of appreciation as they looked at each other.

"I don't suppose you have to," suggested Avery, with a glance at the store.

"Fifty thousand in the bank and the stand of buildings here," replied Buck, with the careless ease of the "well-fixed." "How do you get your three squares nowadays?"

"Lecture on Lost Arts and Free Love and cure stuttering in one secret lesson, pay in advance," Avery replied, listlessly. "But there ain't the three squares in it. I wish I'd been as sharp as you are, and never let a woman whiffle me into a scrape."

"Nobody ever come it over me," declared Buck, pride slowly replacing his ire, but he added, gloomily; "excepting her, and I've never stopped thinking about it, and I've never seen another woman worth looking at—not for me, even if she did come it over me."

"But she didn't come it over you," insisted Avery. "I'm the one she come it over, and look at me!" He made a despairing gesture that embraced all his pathetic appanage. "You are the one that's come out 'unrivaled, stupendous and

triumphant,' as your full sheeters used to say. If I was any help in steering her away I'm humbly glad of it, for I always liked you, Ivory."

This gradual shifting to the ground of the benefactor, even of the servile sort, was not entirely placating, as Ivory Buck's corrugated brow still hinted, but the constant iteration of admiration for his marvelous shrewdness and good fortune was having its effect. The old grudge and sorrow that had gnawed at his heart during so many years suddenly shooed away. The pain was assuaged. It was like opodeldoc stuffed into an aching tooth. He felt as though he would like to listen to a lot more of that comforting talk.

"Avery," he cried, with a heartiness that surprised even himself, "you're a poor old devil that's been abused, and you seem to be all in." He surveyed the wheezing horse and kicked another spoke from the yawning wheel.

"Crack 'em down, crack 'em down, gents!" squalled the parrot.

"If it wasn't for Elkanah, there, to holler that to me, with an occasional 'Hey, Rube!' I couldn't stay in this Godforsaken place fifteen minutes. There's no one here that can talk about anything except ensilage and new-milk cows. Now what say? Store your old traps along o' mine, squat down and take it comfortable. I reckon that you and me can find a few things to talk about that really amount to something!"

"I should hate to feel I was a burden on you, Ivory," stammered Avery, gasping at the amazing generosity of this invitation. "If there's any stutterers around here I might earn a little something on the side, perhaps."

"Me with fifty thousand in the bank and letting a guest of mine graft for a living? Not by a blame sight!" snorted Buck. "You just climb out and shut up and help me unharness old Pollyponeezus here."

Ten minutes afterward they had the canvas off the chariots and were inspecting them by lantern light, chattering old reminiscences and seeming almost to hear the "roomp-roomp" of the elephant and the snap of the ringmaster's whip.

To the astonishment of Smyrna Corner, two plug hats, around which wreaths of cigar smoke were cozily curling, blossomed on the platform of the emporium next morning, instead of one. The old men had thirty years of mutual confidences to impart, and set busily at it, the parrot waddling the monotonous round of his cage overhead and rasping:

"Crack 'em down, gents! The old army game!"

In two weeks "Plug" Ivory and "Plug" Avery were as much fixtures in the Smyrna scenery as the town pump. Occasionally of an evening the wail of the snuffling accordion wavered out over the village. Buck, his head thrown back and his eyes closed, seemed to get consoling echoes of the past even from this lugubrious assault on Melody, and loungers hovered at a respectful distance. No one dared to ask questions, and in this respect the old men differed from the town pump as features in the scenery.

Before a month had passed the two had so thoroughly renewed their youth that they were discussing the expense of fitting out a "hit-the-grit" circus, and were writing to the big shows for prices on superannuated or "shopworn" animals.

It was voted that the dancing turkey and infant anaconda grafts were no longer feasible. Once on a time the crowds would watch a turkey hopping about on a hot tin to the rig-a-jig of a fiddle and would come out satisfied that they had received their money's worth. A man could even exhibit an angleworm in a bottle and call it the infant anaconda, and escape being lynched. Brick Avery sadly testified to the passing of those glorious days.

However, it was decided that a cage of white leghorn fowls, colored with aniline dyes, could be shown even in these barren times as "Royal South American Witherlicks"; that Joachim could be converted into a passable zebra, and "Plug" Avery still had in his van the celluloid lemon peel as well as the glass cube that created the illusion of ice in the pink lemonade. The village painter was set at work on the new gilding of the chariots in the big barn.

"Even if we don't really get away," explained Buck, "it's a good idea to keep the property from running down."

But the appearance of the new gilt inflamed their showmen's hearts. An irresistible hankering to get a nearer sniff of the sawdust, to mix with the old crowd, induced Buck to send a card to a sporting paper, advertising for correspondence from bareback riders, tumblers, specialty people and privilege speculators, who wanted to join a "one-ring, chase-the-fairs road show—no first-raters." He emphasized the fact that all personal interviews would be arranged later in New York City.

"We don't want anyone tracking down here," he confided to Avery. "That would call the bluff. But we can get some letters that maybe will perk us up a little."

The letters came in bundles—letters long, short, earnest and witty—whiffs from the good old world of the dressing tent. And they were read and discussed on the emporium's platform, and some were answered in non-committal style so as to draw out further correspondence, and all in all it was voted by both "Plugs" that a small amount of money invested in advertising certainly did produce its full worth of entertainment.

But in the midst of these innocent attempts to alleviate *ennui* something else came along beside letters. It was a woman—a slim, wiry, alert woman. She clambered down from the stage one day, advanced trippingly to the platform and courtesied low before the two plug hats, her long, draggly plume bobbing against her rouged cheek. The two plug hats arose and were doffed. Then the three faced each other.

"You don't hold your ages as well as I do, boys," she commented, after her sharp scrutiny.

"It's the old army game, gents!" screamed the parrot, excited by this new arrival, gay with her colors and her ribbons.

"It's Her!" gasped Plug Avery.

"It's Signory Rosy-elly!" choked Plug Avery.

She came up and sat down between them on one of the platform chairs.

"It was the longest time before I could place those names," she chattered. "'Buck & Avery, Consolidated Aggregation,' says I to myself. 'Buck & Avery,' I says. And, thinks I, them two old codgers must have gone to Kingdom Come, for I'm—let's see—I'm twenty, or something like that, years younger than either of you, as I remember." She poked each one jovially with her parasol.

"'Buck & Avery,' says I," she went on, cheerfully oblivious of their grimness. "'It's their boys,' I says, and so I came right along, for I need the job, and I couldn't explain the romantic part in a letter. I was thinking I'd surely be taken on when I told Buck and Avery's sons the romance. But I don't have to tell *you*, boys."

She jocosely poked them again.

"'A little old!' you say?"—they hadn't said anything, by the way, but stood there with gaping, toothless mouths. "Not a bit of it for a jay-town circuit. Of course, it isn't a Forepaugh job for me now or else I wouldn't be down here talking to Buck & Avery. But I'm still good for it all—rings, banners, hurdles, rump-cling gallop and the blazing hoop for the wind-up. You know what I can do, boys. Remember old times. Give me an engagement for old-times' sake." She flashed at them the arch looks of a faded coquette.

Buck, the poignancy of his ancient regret having been modified by his long course of consolation from the lips of Avery, was the first to recover. This faded woman, trying to stay time's ravages by her rouge, displaced the beauteous image he had cherished so long in his memory.

"Ain't you ashamed to face us two?" he demanded. "You that run away and broke your promise to me! You that ruined me!" He patted his breast dramatically and shot a thumb out at Avery.

"My sakes!" she cried. "You ain't so unprofessional as to remember all that silliness against me, are you? I was only a girl, and you couldn't expect me to love you—either of you. I'm a poor widow now," she sighed, "and I need work. And here you have been laying up grudges against me—the two of you—all these years! What would your wives have said?"

"We never got married," replied the two, in mournful duet.

But she wasn't in a consoling mood. "You're lucky!" she snapped. "I married a cheap, worthless renegade, who stole my money and ran away. He fell off a trapeze and broke his neck, and I was glad of it."

The look that passed between Plug Ivory and Plug Avery carried all the pith of the quotation: "The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small."

"So am I," grunted Buck, surlily. "No, I'm sorry he didn't live to torment you. No, the only thing I'm really sorry about is that 'twas Brick Avery's money he got away with."

Avery sighed.

"But I want to say to you, Signory Rosy-elly," continued Buck, with a burst of pride quite excusable, tipping his hat to one side and hooking his thumb into the armhole of his vest, "it wasn't my money you got, and it never will be my money you'll get. You just made the mistake of your life when you run away from me."

"He's got fifty thousand dollars in the bank," hoarsely whispered Avery, vicariously sharing in this pride of prosperity—the prosperity beyond her reach.

"Uh-huh! Correct!" corroborated Buck, surveying her in increasing triumph. This moment was really worth waiting through the years for, he reflected.

"Twenty can play as well as one," croaked the parrot, his beady eye pressed between the bars of his cage.

The signora glanced up at this new speaker, eyed Elkanah with a sage look that he returned, and then, after a moment's reflection, said:

"Thanks for the suggestion, old chap. That is to say, three can play as well as two, when there's fifty thousand in the bank. Buck, you know I'm always outspoken and straight to the point. No underhanded bluff for me. I'm going to sue you for ten thousand."

"Crack 'em down, gents!" remarked Elkanah, grimly.

Buck cast a malevolent look at the bird, and then, his cigar tip-tilted and the corner of his mouth sarcastically askew, suggested with an air as though the idea were the limit of satiric impossibility:

"I want to know! Breach of promise, I per-sume!"

"Good aim! You've rung the bell," rejoined the lady, coolly.

The unconscionable impudence of the bare suggestion fetched a gasp from both men. Plug Ivory's assumption of dignity crumbled immediately. The years rolled back. He felt one of those old-time fits of rage come bristling up the back of his head, the fury of old when he had tried to wither that giddy creature in his spasms of jealousy. But now, as in the past, her calm assurance put him out of countenance and his wild anathemas died away in sputterings.

"I know all that, Ivory Buck," she said, icily. "But how are you going to prove I was married? Where are you going to hunt for witnesses? Professional people are like wild geese—roosting on air and moulting their names like feathers. What proof of anything are you going to find after all these thirty years? While I—I've got your letters, every one—all your promises. Observe how I take my cue! Jury a-listening! I've been hunting the world over for you. You hid here. Here I find you—this poor, deserted woman, whose life has been wrecked by your faithlessness, finds you. Me, with a crape veil, a sniff in my nose, a crushed-creature face make-up, a tremolo in my voice and a smart lawyer such as I know about! What can you two old fools say to a country jury to block my bluff? Why, you can save money by handing me your bank book!"

In his fury Buck grabbed her chair and tipped it forward violently in order to dump her off his sacred platform. She fled out into space with a flutter of skirts, landed lightly as a cat and pirouetted on one toe, crooking her arms in the professional pose that appeals for applause.

"This is the first time Signora Rosyelli, champion bareback rider, ever tried to ride a mule," she chirped, "but you see she can do it and make her graceful dismount to the music of the band."

Several villagers across the road were gaping at the scene. She inquired the way to the tavern, one of them took her valise, and she went down the road, tossing a kiss from her finger tips toward the two plug hats. Plug hats watched her out of sight and then turned toward each other with simultaneous jerk.

"Don't that beat tophet and repeat?" they inquired, in exact unison.

"What are you going to do?" asked Plug Avery.

"Fight her! Fight her clear to the high, consolidated supreme court aggregation of the United States, or whatever they call it!" roared Plug Ivory.

"Nobody has ever beat her yet, except Dellybunko, and we ain't in his class," sighed Avery, despondently.

"You don't think, do you, that I'm going to lap my thumb and finger and peel her off ten thousand dollars?"

"Why don't you and she get married and we'll all live here, happy, hereafter?" wistfully suggested Avery. "If it was in a book it would end off like that—sure pop."

"This ain't no book," replied Buck, elbows on his knees, eyes moodily on the dusty planks.

"So you're bound to go to court?"

"Low court—high court—clear to the ridgepole—clear to the cupoly, and then I'll shin the weather vane with the star spangled banner of justice between my teeth."

"I heard a breach of promise trial once," related Avery, half closing his eyes in reminiscence, "and it was the funniest thing I ever listened to. 'Twas twenty years ago, and I'll bet that the people down there laugh yet when they see that fellow walk along the street. Them letters he wrote was certainly the squashest—why, every one of them seemed to wobble like a tumbler of jelly—sweet and sloppy, as you might say! It being so long ago, when you was having your spell, I don't suppose you remember just what you wrote to her, do you?"

Avery still gazed at the same knothole, but a hot flush was crawling up from under his collar. He took off his plug hat and scuffed his wrist across his steaming forehead.

"I remember that he called her 'Ittikins, Pittikins, Popsy-sweet.' Thought I'd die laughing at that trial! Did you sling in any names like that, Ivory? You being so prominent now and settled down and having money in the bank, them kind of names, if you wrote mushy like that, will certainly tickle folks something tremendous."

A student in physiognomy might have read that memory was playing havoc with Buck's resolution. Avery was knitting his brows in deep reflection, knuckling his forehead.

"Seems as if," he went on, slowly, "she told me you called her something like 'Sweety-tweety,' or 'Tweeny-weeny Girlikins'—something like that. How them newspapers do like to string out things—funny kind of things, when a man is prominent and well known, and has got money in the bank! Folks can't help laughing—they just naturally can't, Ive! You'll be setting there in court, looking ugly as a gibcat and her lawyer reading them things out. Them cussed lawyers have a sassy way of—"

Buck got up, kicked his chair off onto the ground, and in cholera uncontrollable, clacked his fists under Avery's nose and barked:

"Twit me another word—just one other word—and I'll drive that old nose of yours clear up into the roof of your head!"

Then he locked his store door and stumped away across the field to the big barn, where the remains of Buck's Leviathan Circus reposed in isolated state.

No one knows by just what course of agonized reasoning he arrived at his final decision, but at dusk he came back to the store. With the dumb placidity of some ruminant, Avery was sitting in his same place on the platform of the emporium.

"Brick," said Ivory, humbly, "I've been thinking back and remembering what I wrote to her—and it's all of it pretty clear in my mind, 'cause I never wrote love letters to anyone else. And I can't face it. I couldn't sit in court and hear it. I

couldn't sit here on this platform in my own home place and face the people afterward. I couldn't start on the road with a circus and have the face to stand before the big tent after it and bark like I used to. They'd grin me out of business. I'd be backed into the stall. No, I can't do it. Go down and see what she'll compromise on."

Avery came back after two hours and loomed in the dusk before the platform. He fixed his eyes on the plug hat that was still lowered in the attitude of despondency.

"I wrassled with her, Ivory, just the same as if I was handling my own money, and I beat her down to sixty-six hundred. She won't take a cent less."

"I'll tell you what that sounds like to me," snarled Buck, after a moment of meditation. "It sounds as if she was going to get five thousand and you was looking after your little old sixteen hundred."

A couple of tears squeezed out and down over Avery's flabby cheeks.

"This ain't the first time you've misjudged me, when I've been doing you a favor," said he. "And it's all on account of the same mis'able woman that I'm misjudged—and we was living so happy here, me and you. I wish she was in——" His voice broke.

"I ain't responsible for what I'm saying, Avery," pleaded Buck, contritely. "You know what things have happened to stir me up the last few hours—yes, all my life, for that matter. I ain't been comfortable in mind for thirty years till you come here and cheered me up and showed me what's what. I appreciate it and I'll prove that to you before we're done. We'll get along together all right after this. All is, you must see me through."

Then the two plug hats bent together in earnest conference.

The next morning Avery, armed with an order on the savings bank at the shire for six thousand six hundred dollars, and with Buck's bank book in his inside pocket, drove up to the door of Fyles' tavern in Buck's best carriage, and Signora Rosyelli flipped lightly up beside the peace commissioner.

He was to pay over the money on the neutral ground at the shire, receive the letters, put her aboard a train and then come back triumphantly into that interrupted *otium cum dignitate* of Smyrna Corner.

For two days a solitary and bereaved plug hat on the emporium's platform turned its fuzzy gloss toward the bend in the road at the clump of alders. But the sleek black nose of Buck's "reader" did not appear.

On the third day the bank book arrived by mail, its account minus six thousand six hundred dollars, and between its leaves a letter. It was an apologetic letter, and yet it was flavored with a note of complaint. Brick Avery stated that after thinking it all over he felt that, having been misjudged cruelly twice, it might happen again, and being old, he could not endure griefs of that kind. He had supported the first two, but being naturally tender-hearted and easily influenced, the third might be fatal. Moreover, the conscience of Signora Rosyelli had troubled her, so he believed, ever since the affair of the one thousand six hundred dollars. So he had decided that he would quiet her remorse by marrying her and taking entire charge of her improved finances. In fact, so certain was he that she would waste the money—being a woman fickle and vain—that he had insisted on the marriage, and she, realizing her dependence on his aid in cashing in, assented, and now he assured her that as her husband he was entitled to full control of their affairs—all of which, so the letter delicately hinted, was serving as retribution and bringing her into a proper frame of mind to realize her past enormities. The writer hoped that his own personal self-sacrifice in thus becoming the instrument of flagellation would be appreciated by one whom he esteemed highly.

They would be known at the fairs as Moseer and Madame Bottotte, and would do the genteel and compact gift-sale graft from the buggy—having the necessary capital now—and would accept the buggy and horse as a wedding present, knowing that an old friend with forty-three thousand four hundred dollars still left in the bank would not begrudge this small gift to a couple just starting out in life, and with deep regard for him and all inquiring friends, they were, etc.

In the more crucial moments of his life Buck had frequently refrained from anathema as a method of relief. Some situations were made vulgar and matter-of-fact by sulphurous ejaculation. It dulled the edge of rancor brutally, as a rock dulls a razor.

Now he merely turned the paper over, took out a stubby lead pencil, licked it and began to write on the blank side, flattening the paper on his bank book.

FOR SALE—1 Band Wagon, 1 Swan Chariot, 3 Lion Cages.

He paused here in his laborious scrawl and, despite his resolution of silence, muttered:

"It's going to be a clean sale. I don't never in all my life want to hear of a circus, see a circus, talk circus, see a circus man——"

"Crack 'em down, gents!" squalled the parrot. It was the first time for many hours that he had heard his master's voice, and the sound cheered him. He hooked his beak around a wire and rattled away jovially. He seemed to be relieved by the absence of the other plug hat that had been absorbing so much of the familiar, beloved and original plug hat's attention.

Ivory looked up at Elkanah vindictively and then resumed his soliloquy.

"No, sir, never! Half of circusing is a skin game all through—and I've done my share of the skinning. But to be skinned twice—me, I. Buck, proprietor—and the last time the worst, but——"

"Twenty can play it as well as one!" the parrot yelled, cocking his eye over the edge of the cage.

It was an evil scowl that flashed up from under the plug hat, but Elkanah in his new joy was oblivious.

"Me a man that's been all through it from A to Z—my affections trod on, all confidence in females destroyed and nothing ahead of me all the rest of my life! No, sir, I never want to hear of a circus again. Bit by the mouths I fed—and they thumbing their noses at me. That trick——"

"It's the old army game!" squealed the parrot, in nerve-racking rasp.

Ivory Buck arose, yanked the bottom off the cage, caught the squawking bird, wrung his neck, tossed him into the middle of the road, and then, sucking his bleeding finger, went on writing the copy for his advertisement.

SUPPER WITH NATICA

By Robert E. MacAlarney



It isn't at all pleasant to burn one's fingers, but it's worth while burning them now and then, if you have to be scorched to be near a particularly attractive fire; at least I've found it that way. All of which leads me to Natica Drayton—Melsford that was.

I think I'm the only one of the crew she dragged at her heels who hasn't forgot about things and gone off after other game; some of them have been lashed to the burning stake of pretty uncomfortable domesticity, too. As for me—well, I've simply gone on caring, and I think I shall always go on.

Does she know it? Of course she knows it; always has known it, ever since that first summer at Sacandaga. Not that I've been ass enough to say anything after the first time. I'm only an ordinary sort of chap when it comes to intuition, but somehow I've never plucked up the cheek to do any talking about my own miserable self; not since she let me down as gently as she could, while I paddled her back from Birch Point to the canoe house, with Elephant Mountain ragged-backed in the moon-haze. For the life of me I couldn't tell you what it was she said. There was the drip of water from the paddle as I lifted it, stroke after stroke; the tiny hiss of smother at the prow, and twisted through it all, like a gathering string, Natica Melsford's voice, letting me down easy—as easily as she could.

After I had made fast, I remember feeling that somehow the moonlight had turned things extremely cold; and I reached for my sweater that lay in the stern. I also laughed a great deal too much around the logs at the bungalow fire, and then drank a deal more than too much at the clubhouse before turning in. Maybe it was cowardly to sneak back to town a couple of days later, "on business," of course—a shabby excuse for a chap that doesn't dabble in business more than I do. But I honestly needed to go to get back my equilibrium. I got it, though, and I've kept it pretty continuously. And this much is enough for that. Natica Melsford is the only interesting bit about this story, and let's get back to her.

That winter she married Jack Drayton. The afternoon we rehearsed for the wedding I looked at her, before we pranced down the aisle and endured the endless silly giggles of the bridesmaids, and the usher louts who would fall out of step, and grew more peevish by the minute. I looked her over then, and I said to myself: "You feeble paranoiac, imagine that girl tying up with *you*." Well, I couldn't very well imagine it, although I tried. But I was extremely noisy, and I heard two or three of the bridesmaids, to say nothing of the maid of honor and the bridegroom's mamma, tapping their gentle hammers, at my expense, at the breakfast. It was a year afterward that I began to fag regularly for the Drayton establishment.

Jack Drayton, by rights, ought to have been poisoned. He'd be the first to acknowledge it now. Perhaps if he'd married a girl who insisted on having things out the moment they began, the things wouldn't have happened. But Natica Melsford wasn't that sort. She was the kind that simply looked scorn into and clear through you, when she thought you were acting low down. This, with a man strung like Jack was, simply put the fat into the fire. It would have been different with me. I'd—well—I'd have made an abject crawl, to be sure. You see, her knowing this was the thing that must have always queered me with her. A woman prefers a man she can get furious at and who'll stick it out a bit, to one who caves in at the first sign of a frown. But Jack carried things too far.

No, he didn't mind my frequenting the house. He liked me and I liked him. But, all the same, I knew he didn't regard me as a foeman worthy of his steel. And, although the knowledge made me raw now and then, when he's come in with his easy, careless way, still I swallowed the mean feeling because it gave me a chance to see her. And don't imagine I went around hunting for trouble. It was at the club one night—I'd just come from the Draytons, and Jack hadn't been home to dinner—that I heard Rawlins Richardson and Horace Trevano chattering about Maisie Hartopp. The "Jo-Jo" song had made the biggest kind of a hit that winter at the Gaiety, and the hit had been made by the Hartopp singing it to a stage box which the Johnnies scrambled to bid in nightly.

It seemed like small game for Jack Drayton to be trailing along with the ruck—the ruck meaning Tony Criswold and the

rest of that just-out-of-college crew—but I didn't need signed affidavits, after five minutes of club chatter, to know that he was pretty well tied to an avenue window at Cherry's after the show. The Ruinart, too, that kept spouting from the bucket beside it, was a pet vintage of the Hartopp.

There was a lot of that silly chuckle, and I recalled reading somewhere that there was a husband belonging to the Hartopp, a medium good welterweight, who picked up a living flooring easy marks for private clubs at Paterson, N. J., and the like, and occasionally serving as a punching bag for the good uns before a championship mill. What the devil was there to do? I couldn't answer the riddle.

It sounds like old women's chatter, the meddlesome way I scribble this down. It would take a real thing in the line of literature to paint me right, anyway, I fancy. When a third party keeps mixing in with husband and wife, he deserves all the slanging that's coming to him; which same is my last squeal for mercy.

A month went by—two of them. Natica Drayton wasn't the strain that needs spectacles to see through things. Then, too, I guessed the loving friend sympathy racket was being worked by some of the bridge whist aggregation which met up with her every fortnight. She laughed more than she ought to have done. This was a bad sign with her. Once or twice, when the three of us dined together, and she was almost noisy over the benedictine, I could have choked Jack Drayton, for he didn't see. It's not a pretty thing for an outsider to sit *à trois*, and see things in a wife's manner that the husband doesn't or won't see; and worse than that, to know that the wife knows you see it and that he doesn't. Speak to Jack? I wouldn't have done it for worlds. As I said, I'm willing to burn my fingers and even cuddle the hurt; but I don't meddle with giant firecrackers except on the Fourth of July, and that didn't come until afterward.

I was to take her to the opera one night—Drayton had the habit of dropping in for an act or two and then disappearing—but on her own doorstep she tossed off her carriage wrap and sent Martin back to the stables.

"Let's talk, instead," she said, and she made me coffee in the library, with one of those French pots that gurgle conveniently when you don't exactly know what to say. That pot did a heap of gurgling before we began to talk. When she spoke, what she said almost took me off my chair.

"Percy, have you seen the show at the Gaiety?" she asked.

I had seen it more than once, and I said so.

"They tell me there's a song there——" she went on.

"There are a lot of songs," said I.

"There's one in particular."

There wasn't any use in fencing, so I answered: "You mean the 'Jo-Jo' song. It's a silly little ditty, and it's sung by——"

"A girl named Hartopp—Maisie Hartopp." She was speaking as if she were trying to remember where she'd heard the name.

Of course, me for the clumsy speech. "She's a winner," I cut in.

She got up at that, and walked over to the fireplace. "She seems to be," she said, picking at a bit of bronze, a wedding present, I think. Then she came over to where I was sitting and put a hand on my shoulder. I'd have got to my feet if I hadn't been afraid to face her. "Percy——" she began, and I felt the fingers on my shoulder quiver. I don't think the Apaches handed out anything much worse in the torture line than the quiver of a woman's fingers upon your shoulder, when you know that those fingers aren't quivering on your account. Maybe that occurred to her, for a second later she took her hand away. "You once said something foolish to me, Percy," she said.

I nodded my head, my eyes upon an edge of the Royal Bokhara. "It was in a canoe, wasn't it?" I replied. "There was a moon, of course, and the paddle blades went drip, drip."

"You meant what you said then, didn't you?"

My gaze was wavering from the rug by now. Little wonder, was it? "I meant it all right," I got out after a while. "Do you want to hear me say my little speech over again?" Was it possible that, after all, Natica Drayton had really decided to toss Jack over, and take on a fag, warranted kind and gentle, able to be driven by any lady? But I forgot that foolish notion pretty nearly right off.

"There is a husband," she went on, as if taking account of stock.

"There always is," I rejoined. "Some of 'em are good and the others are bad." I chuckled despite me, as I put in my mean little hack.

"I mean the Hartopp's husband," she explained.

"There is," I said. "'Boiler-plate' Hartopp. His given name is James, and he prize-fights fair to middling." All this wasn't quite good billiards, but we'd begun wrong that night, and we might as well keep it up, thought I.

Natica Drayton was tapping her foot upon the fender. "H'm," she mused. "Some of those horrid names sound interesting." Then she turned to me abruptly. "I think, perhaps, you ought to go now," she suggested.

"I think so, too," I agreed, rising very hastily, and taking my leave.

"Have you Friday evening disengaged?" She flung this after me before I had got to the hall.

"Yes," said I, all unthinking.

"Then we'll do it Friday," she said.

"We'll do what?" I asked, coming back to her. For once I felt rebellious, and showed it, whereat she smiled.

"Supper after the theater at Cherry's."

"Oh, well, I don't mind that," I volunteered.

"With 'Boiler-plate' Hartopp," she added.

The searchlight dawned upon me. It swung around the room once or twice, and that was enough. I knew in the flood of sudden illumination that the girl had planned this thing in advance, with the daring of despair—and a wife's despair, a very young wife's despair, is a more desperate thing than the anger of any other woman. Natica had planned it all in advance; had figured it, and the chances of it. And in the balance she had confidently thrown the asset of my assisting her.

The right sort of a man, I suppose, would have become enraged because of her taking things for granted. But I—I had been chained to her chariot too long a time to experience the mild sensation of resentment.

Natica wished to face her husband in a crowded restaurant after the play. More than that, she wished to face him in company with a man not of her sort, even as he—Drayton—was escorting a woman whose lane of living did not rightly cross his. The coincidence of Natica's means-to-an-end being the Hartopp's husband, was simply a gift of fate; an opportunity of administering poetic justice, which could not be denied. Had the Hartopp not possessed a convenient husband, Natica would have arranged for another companion. But even she had not dared to plan her *coup* alone, with her chosen instrument of wifely retaliation. Through it all, she had confidently counted on me, a discreet background, a pliant puppet.

She could not know what Drayton might do, after they had eyed one another from different tables. She did not much care. But she would at least have the painful joy of the Brahmin woman's hope, who trusts by some fresh incantation to secure a blessing, formerly vouchsafed her by the gods, but which now old-time petitions fail to renew. It seemed cold-blooded, the entire arrangement, and yet I knew it was not. She was far braver than I could have been, even to win her caring. But I understood.

I must have been rough as I took her hand. "Look here," I said. "It's a desperate game, Natica. You wouldn't have dared to say that to any other man than me. You've got used to seeing me fag for you. And I'm going to do it this time, too. But if you weaken, by Heaven, you'll deserve to lose for good. It's crazy, it's the act of a pair of paretics, but I'm going to see it through."

She was crying when I left her. "Percy, my dear," she said; then she began to laugh—that after dinner benedictine laugh of hers. "If there weren't Jack, that speech of yours just now might make me want to kiss you."

On the sidewalk I tried to figure out if there had been knockout drops in the coffee Natica had brewed for me. In any one of the forty-eight hours ensuing, I might have rung up the Draytons' on the telephone, and told her that I had come to my senses. But I didn't do anything of the sort. Instead, I hunted up a newspaper chap I knew, and he put me next to "Boiler-plate" Hartopp at the Metropole.

The bruiser wasn't as bad sort as I had fancied him. He was an Englishman all right—a cut below middle class; you could tell that by the way he clipped his initial h's off and on. I tried the ice at first—it's always best when you don't know the exact thickness of your frozen water. The way I tried it was to toss a flower or two at Maisie Hartopp and her "Jo-Jo" song.

He rose sure enough, and it didn't take me a quarter hour to see that the pug was really bowled out by the parcel of stage skirts who wore his name on the Gaiety bills. This made it a warmer game than it might have been otherwise, but I was in for it now, and I made the date.

No, I didn't mention Natica. Even a broken-to-harness shawl carrier has a shred of cautious decency about him. But I gabbled lightly about a certain feminine party who was keen on exemplars of the genuine thing in the line of the manly art. Whereupon "Boilerplate" acquired a pouter-pigeon chest, which fairly bulged over the bar railing, and gave me his word of honor he'd be waiting at Forty-fourth Street about eleven on Friday. He intimated, ere I left, that he'd bring his festive accouterments with him. And he did.

We were a bit late—Natica and I. It must have been a quarter past the hour when we drove up to Cherry's. I felt reasonably certain that if Jack Drayton were guarding a champagne bucket by the corner table that night, he was located then. In the offing, miserably self-conscious, a crush hat on the back of his really fine head, and two or three small locomotive headlights glinting from his broad expanse of evening shirt, was "Boiler-plate" Hartopp. The flunkeys were regarding him curiously, and once a waiter-captain came out and gave him what seemed to be an unsatisfactory report.

I think the man was just about to take the count from sheer nerves, when he made me out in the doorway. Natica winked—actually winked at me—as he floundered over his share of the introduction. Looking at her, and faintly divining her mood that night, I felt sorry for Jack, for "Boiler-plate" and for myself. I left them for a moment and went in to see about my table. Two minutes later I emerged, to face Drayton and the Hartopp unloading from an electric hansom. The under-toned remark of one of the footman came to me: "A bit behind schedule time to-night, eh, Charley?"

There wasn't anything to do then, for they were fair inside. "Boiler-plate" was finishing some elephantine pleasantry to Natica, when he saw what I saw. A foolish grin rippled across his wide face. "Hullo!" he said to the Hartopp, who looked properly peevisish, and then waspish, as she let her glance travel to Natica, who stood perfectly poised and, I fancied, a trifle expectant. Drayton eyed them together and in particular. The color streaked his forehead and faded out. Then he saw me, and, although he never may have murder in his eyes again, it was there at that choice moment. We weren't at all spectacular, you mustn't think that. It was all very quick, and there were a lot of people coming and going.

She was in instant command of the situation. Why shouldn't she have been, having created it? And unexpectedly, suddenly as she had encountered her quarry, equally suddenly she shifted her position, without the time to take me into her confidence.

"Don't bother about our table, Percy," she said. "Now that we've met friends, it will be jollier to dine *en famille*. It will be ever so much nicer than eating in a stuffy restaurant, and the butler won't have gone to bed yet. Run out and get us a theater wagon."

I went out to the carriage man in a trance. The gods, of a deed, were fighting furiously on Natica's side—for she could not have foreseen this vantage, readily as she swung her attack by its aid. Exquisite torture, truly, to flaunt a husband's folly in his own face, over his own mahogany, with the source of that folly looking on. Drayton's bounden civility to his wife, and to the other woman, must make him present himself as a target. He knew it, his wife knew it; as yet the other woman but dimly suspected it—not being over subtle—and it smote me in the face continuously. The puppet always feels the most cut up at times like these. In a way, it is because his vanity is being seared. Mine fairly crackled.

So we rattled off up the avenue. The only comfortable ones among us were Natica and Hartopp. He seemed to think the occurrence a pleasant bit of chance, and he wasn't in the least jealous, not he. I suppose the wife had him schooled to her stage ways of doing things.

Once he turned to Jack with a chuckle and said: "This is a jossy bit of luck, ain't it, each of us out with the other man's better?"

Natica laughed shamelessly. "You've such a keen appreciation of the ridiculous, Mr. Hartopp," she said. And when "Boiler-plate" tried to deny the insinuation, his wife nudged him on the arm and whispered: "Shut up, Jim."

There isn't any use in stringing out the amateur theatricals the five of us indulged in that night. The Drayton servants were too well chosen to show any surprise at being told to put on a champagne supper at midnight, and then go to bed before it was served. We sat at that mahogany table until the candelabra were guttering, and each of us had toyed more than he ought to have done with his glass. Natica acted as if she were entertaining in earnest, and for the time being I actually think she felt that she was. She got the Hartopp to sing her "Jo-Jo" song, and the Hartopp actually did it as if she enjoyed it. Afterward Natica induced "Boiler-plate" to tell about the time he mixed it up with Fitzsimmons for ten rounds.

"It was a lucky punch that put me out," he kept repeating, almost pathetically. "You know Fitz's lucky punch."

I might have seen what was in the wind if I hadn't been thick-headed, what with the champagne and the rattles. "Boiler-plate" once started on the ring, it was an easy transition.

"You've boxing gloves, haven't you, Jack?" asked Natica. "Get them for Mr. Hartopp. Let's see him demonstrate Mr. Fitzsimmons' lucky punch."

Drayton turned without a word, and made as if to go upstairs. At the door he turned. "Come on, Hartopp," he said. "I'll lend you a rowing jersey."

"You clear a place in the drawing room, Percy," said Natica, briskly. "Be sure that the shades are drawn. It would be awful to be raided by the police." And I obediently piled the gilt parlor furniture in corners.

The Hartopp fluttered anxiously around Natica the while. She was a woman, and she was beginning to half understand. "Please," she said, touching Natica's arm. "Jim's been drinking, and he's very rough when he's been drinking. We've all been foolish, but only foolish, remember. Jim and I sail for London next week. Just let us slip away now, and forget all about it."

Natica laughed. Her eyes were on the door. "Remember, we've only been foolish," repeated the Hartopp. "Only foolish, that's all." She went to Natica and shook her arm roughly; there were feet upon the stairs. "You silly," she snapped. "You ought to be glad you're married to a gentleman. He's different from all the others. I can tell you that, and I know. And I tell you that Jim's been drinking. Jack will——"

Natica's pose stiffened, but she did not look around. "Yes, *Jack* will what?" she said, coldly.

The Hartopp flushed. "He'll be hurt," she finished, weakly. Then, as the two from upstairs entered, she whispered: "He'll be hurt worse than you are now."

The "Boiler-plate" looked very foolish in an old Yale rowing shirt, with the "Y" stretched taut across his ponderous chest. He had a pair of arms like a blacksmith. Jack Drayton had taken off his coat and was in his shirt sleeves. He never looked at Natica, nor at the Hartopp; but he tossed me a stopwatch and told me to keep time.

"We'll box five rounds, Percy," he said.

Natica clapped her hands. "What fun!" she cried. "Jack, you're boxing against my champion."

The "Boiler-plate," who had been regarding the work at hand with much gravity, again allowed his countenance to be

relaxed by the old, foolish grin. "Oh, I say," he interposed. "That's all right, but so long as Maisie is in the room I'm fighting for her—she's my wife, you know."

The Hartopp went to Natica with a softened gleam in her eyes; "I saw a telephone in the hall," she said. "I'm going out to call a cab." I heard her at the lever as they began to spar.

I don't believe I could get a job at timekeeping in a real mill. My rounds must have been wonderfully and fearfully made. For I forgot all about the stop-watch now and then, while I learned the truth of the Hartopp's caution that "Boiler-plate" grew rough after he'd been drinking a bit.

I knew that Jack had been a pretty fair boxer at the university, but, after I had called time for the first round, the thing was to all intents and purposes a genuine fight, and he was all in several times over. The "Boiler-plate's" fists made a noise like a woodchopper. Natica stood watching it with a queer, queer smile. But I saw—and I saw it with a sinking at the heart, for I realized that I'd cherished the guilty hope that things were not really going to be straightened out—that with every mark of the "Boiler-plate's" glove, her husband was coming back into his own.

She half sprang toward them when Jack went down with a crash, after I had got them started on the last go. Drayton arose warily, the blood spurting from a nasty cut over the eye, where the heel of the other's glove had scraped. The "Boiler-plate" lumbered dangerously near just then, and Natica, despite her, uttered a cry of warning.

I saw Jack turn away from the mountain in the Yale rowing shirt, and his eyes met Natica's squarely for the first time since Cherry's. Something he read in them made him laugh. This was only for the fraction of a second, however, for a glove, with the *n*th power behind it, lifted him a clear three feet into a stack of gilt chairs near his own corner.

He didn't move, and the "Boilerplate" stared at him stupidly.

"Say, *you* made him look at you," he said to Natica. "I didn't mean to land on him blind."

But she did not heed him. She was among the gilt chairs, with Jack Drayton's head upon her lap. The wheels of a cab stopped outside, and the Hartopp was seizing her dazed lord and master. She had his coat and bediamonded linen in her hands, and she clutched the "Boiler-plate" firmly, leading him to the door.

"Say, Maisie, wait a minute," he protested. "I've got the swell's college shirt on, and I didn't mean to land on him blind."

I opened the door, for she signaled with her eyes. "Come on, Jim, there's a dear," she said. Between us we cajoled him into the coupe. As I shut the door, she leaned to me and whispered: "Tell her for me she's a cat—a cruel cat."

I handed the driver a bill. "You've a very bad memory, cabby, haven't you?" I asked.

"Extremely bad, sir," said he, touching his hat.

"But, Maisie, I've got the swell's college shirt on," I heard "Boiler-plate" insist. Then the wheels moved.

The Draytons were both upon their feet when I stole back into the hall. I needed my hat and coat, or I shouldn't have set foot within the house again that night. Jack, a bit staggered and holding to the back of a chair, mopped the cut on his temple with a handkerchief, his wife's handkerchief, in his free hand. Natica, a smear of red on the front of her frock, stood beside him, with a strangely happy expression in her face and pose. A great many things had been pushed over the precipice which leads to forgetfulness, in the time I had been out on the sidewalk busy with the cabby.

"Good-night, Percy," Jack called out.

"Good-night," said I, going to him to take his hand, for he was too wobbly to have met me halfway.

"It's been a nightmare," said he. "We'll wake up to-morrow morning and know that we've only been asleep."

"Yes," I agreed, but looking at the puffiness in his face, I thought this was coming it a bit strong.

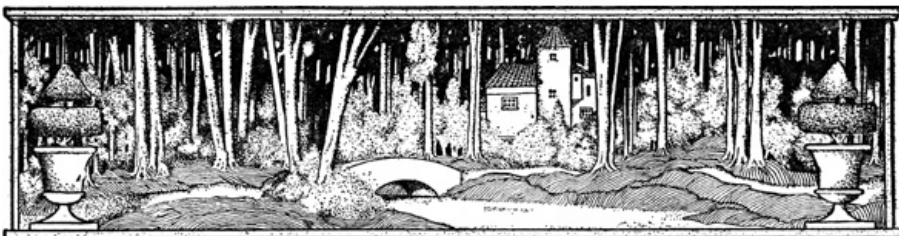
"Good-night, Percy," said Natica. And gently as she spoke the words, it came to me with a sudden rush of conviction that I had ceased fagging for the Drayton establishment for good—now.

"It was coming to me," said Jack. I was fiddling on the threshold uncertainly.

"Hush, you foolish boy," whispered Natica, touching the cut on his forehead, just once, with a very tender finger.

"Yes, it was coming to you," said I. I was glad that they perceived the conviction in my speech.

And that is how I had my last supper with Natica.



BY THE FOUNTAIN

By Margaret Houston



There was nothing in the aspect of the white brick mansion to indicate that a tragedy was going on inside. A woman quietly dressed, her face showing delicately above her dark furs, came lightly down the steps. She paused a half second at the gateway and looked back, but there was no hesitation in the glance.

"Jules," she said to the coachman, "you may drive to the park."

She did not look back as they drove away.

There should be no gossiping among the servants. Everything should be done decently. From the park she could take the suburban and go quietly into town. From there—the world was wide. There was a note on his dresser, he would read it to-night and understand—no, not understand, she had ceased to expect that of him—but he would know—in some dull, stern way he would see—he would see. She caught sight of her face in the little mirror of the brougham and lowered her veil. Ah, it was a bitter, barren thing, this striving, striving, endlessly striving to be understood. She had endured it for four years and she was worn heartsick with the strain. Her soul cried out for warmth, for life, for breathing room; was not one's first duty to one's self after all? She turned suddenly—Jules stood by the open door.

"Jules," she said, summoning a little severity of manner to counterbalance the tremor in her voice, "you need not come back for me. Jules," she added, turning again, "good-by—you have—you have been very faithful."

The man touched his hat gravely and stood like a sentinel till she had passed from sight among the trees.

It was late in November, and the maple boughs were a riot of red and gold. The sky beyond them looked pale and far away, as though a white veil had been drawn across its tender southern blue. She rejoiced now that she had elected to spend this last hour in the frosty outdoor gladness. With a little impulse of relief, she flung back her veil and drew a deep breath. Then she locked her hands inside her muff and began to walk briskly.

At the park's further end there was a bench, inside a sort of roofless summerhouse, where on warm days the fountain played in a rainbow. She knew the place well—she had sat there many times—with him and with another—she would go there now and think her own thoughts. It was hidden from the driveways, and the place was sweet with memories which need not goad and pain her. She remembered the last time she had sat there. It came back to her now with a sudden vividness. It was the day she had refused—the other one. She remembered the dress she wore—a thin little mull, cut low about the throat and strewn with pink rosebuds. And it was on that same bench. She had done it very gently. She had simply shown him her ring, and begged him with a little catch of the breath to be her friend—always. His was the sort of heart a woman might warm herself by all her life. He was tender and impulsive like herself, and he had always understood—always. How could she have forgotten for so long? Friends were rare—and he had promised to be her friend through everything. Her friend! Had he realized how much that meant?

Her step had grown very slow; she quickened it, lifting her head, and reached the little plaza near the fountain, her face flushed with the walk, the dark tendrils of her hair fallen from beneath her floating veil.

It was very sad here now, and very lonely. She had not thought that any place long familiar could look so strange. She paused, almost dreading to enter the old retreat, clothed as it was in the withered vine robes of dead springs. It was so like the rainbow fountain of her own years, checked and desolate and still. A whirlwind of red and yellow leaves swept about her feet. She started nervously, and, opening the little gate, went in.

But the place was not deserted. A man sat on the bench. He rose as she closed the gate, and when she would have withdrawn, he came toward her and held out a hand.

"Oh," she said, feeling as if she were speaking in a dream, "is it—where did you come from?"

"It seems very natural to see you here," he said.

His face was bronzed and he had more beard than formerly, but his eyes were the same when he smiled.

"I did not dream you were anywhere near us," she went on, the wonder deepening in her eyes. "I was—you seem part of my thoughts—I was thinking of you only a moment ago."

"You were always kind," said the man. "Let me spread my overcoat on the bench—the stone is cold. You have been walking, haven't you?"

"Yes. I don't walk much—it tires me easily." She sat down, loosening the furs at her throat, breathing quickly; her eyes searched his face, half dazed, half questioning. "But where have you been?" she asked. "Were you not in Africa?"

"Yes. I have been home only a few days—I don't wonder you are surprised finding me here; people don't often sit in the park at this time—but I find it cozier than the station across the way. I came out on the hill early this noon to look up old friends, and I found I'd an hour to wait."

"Am I not an old friend?" she asked. "Why have you not been to see—us?"

"I hope I may count you such," said the man. "I knew your husband, too, many years ago; but he said that you were ill; I saw him this morning."

"I have been ill," she answered, quickly, and looked away, pushing back her hair with the little movement he knew so well.

"I am sorry for that," he said. "I heard of your loss—I did not lose sight entirely of my friends. Your little boy," he added, his voice softening—"your little boy——"

"My baby died," she said.

"I know—I heard of it—I knew how keenly you could suffer. But I knew, too, how brave you were——"

"Oh!" she said, catching the lace at her throat. "If he—if my baby had lived—I might—I could——"

She checked herself with a sudden biting of the lip, but the tears broke from her eyelids and she bowed her face.

"Ah," said the man, "I know—this is very hard; but it is something, after all, to have felt—to have known. No loss can be so bitter as a lack—a need."

There was a moment's silence between them.

"Tell me of yourself," she said, quietly, at length.

"There is little to tell. My life is very much the same. I have neither wife nor child. Until a man finds those, he's a most indifferent topic."

"You have never married?" she asked.

"No. Your life is, fuller, sweeter, better. Tell me of that. I used to know your husband—did you know?"

"No," she said, "I did not know."

"Yes, we were chaps together, he and I, the same age, though he seemed older—he was a plucky little fellow—you did not know him long, I believe, before you married."

She was looking straight before her at the still fountain. "No," she said, "I did not know him long."

"Ah," mused the man, "I know him well. He is a prince—one of God's own. Somewhat quiet now, I find, but he was always rather reserved, his life made him so; he was such a kid when he began to support them all—the mother and the girls, you know. But he worked along, going to night school—always ready, always courageous. My father used to say he'd give all his four boys for that one. We never worked much, you know. I suppose those who don't know him call him stern, but he has carried a pretty heavy load all his life, and that sobers a man and takes the spring out of him—of course you know, though."

But the woman said nothing. The man paused, regarding her a moment, then he let his gaze follow hers.

"I was thinking of the fountain," she said; "how it once flashed and sang and played—and now——"

"And now," said the man, "it is silent and cold—but the bright water is there still, and when the spring comes back it will leap forth again. It reminds me of my friend of whom we were just speaking—your husband. All the glow and life are still in his heart, and you will waken them. I said when you were married, that he needed just that—a union with a rich, sunny nature like your own, to teach him all that he had missed, and give back to him all that he had lost."

Her, lashes fell slowly, and she stroked her muff with one white hand.

The man spoke on, musingly. "I suppose even you do not realize the good he does—the help he gives to others. He doesn't talk of himself—he never did—even to you, I suppose? No? It is like him, he was always so. It was—it was in the cemetery I saw him this morning. I—when I come home—I always go there—my mother is there, you remember—I found him by—by your little boy. He was talking, with the sexton when I came up. It seems the grass didn't grow about the little fellow's—bed. The man admitted that his own little folks were accustomed to play there—the lot is shady and close to the house—they bring their toys and frolic there till the grass is quite worn away. You should have seen his face when the man told him that. 'Let them come,' he said; 'don't stop them; the grass doesn't matter.' 'The boy won't be so lonely,' said he to me. 'It seems so far away out here—and he all by himself—he was such a little chap—I sort of feel one of us ought to stay with him—at night.'"

The woman raised her eyes to his face. "Ah," she said, softly, "did he—did he say that?"

"Yes—and it goes to show, what you doubtless know better than I, how deep and true and tender he is beneath it all. Shan't I lay this coat more about you? I think the air has grown chillier."

"No, thank you," she said, rising. "Yes, it is chillier."

The man rose also. She stood a moment—her hand on the little gate, her eyes grown dark and deep. He waited at her side.

Her fingers sought the latch absently.

“Let me open it for you,” he said. “Were you going into town, or did you come for the walk?”

“I?” she said. “Oh, I told Jules not to come back for me—it’s a short walk home.” She smiled up at him for the first time with her old-time brightness. “And you,” she said, “you haven’t completed the round of your ‘old friends’ yet—you will come with me.”

BAS BLEU

By Anna A. Rogers

Author of “PEACE AND THE VICIES”



That his wife was keeping something from him had been unpleasantly apparent to Robert Penn for over two months; but what really wore upon his easily disturbed nerves was the equally obvious fact that her secret was the source of an unusual, unnatural, unseemly happiness, which she took no pains to disguise.

Robert was the very much overworked junior partner in the prosperous law firm of Messrs. Flagg, Bentnor & Penn; and the question of his taking a much-needed rest had been gravely discussed by the other two partners more than once during the year; but the mere suggestion of it put him into such a tantrum that they let it drop, trusting to a redistribution of the work of the office to lighten somewhat Penn’s burden. So all the fashionable divorcées—hitherto Bentnor’s specialty—were turned over to the junior partner, as a slight means of professional diversion.

But he threw himself into the cases of his clients, male and female, with the same old unsparing fervor, and Flagg and Bentnor—the latter was Penn’s brother-in-law—raised their eyebrows and shook their heads behind his back.

What first drew Robert’s attention to his wife’s secret was the sudden inexplicable condoning of his own small negligences and ignorances, which had once been brought to book. So accustomed does the happily married husband of the day become to certain domestic requisitions that the withdrawal of them is apt to arouse his suspicions at once.

These jealous doubts, later on, ran the whole gamut from the postman to the rector of Mrs. Penn’s church, but at first all Robert feared was that she had become indifferent to him. That, after five happy years, she should be sweetly serene when he suddenly remembered that he had bought tickets for the theater, just as they had settled down after dinner for a quiet evening, Mrs. Penn looking prettily domestic in a lilac tea gown! Nothing but the established repugnance of a self-made man to wasting four dollars, even to save his pride, made him uncover his delinquency—and he held his

breath till the storm should pass. But no storm followed his confession. Instead of which, she sprang to her feet, laughing:

“Oh, I’m wild to see that play! It has a deep, ethical purpose. Can you give me six minutes to scratch off this gown and bundle myself into another?”

It was so unusual, and she made such a delightful picture standing in the doorway, that he felt that the occasion deserved recognition.

“You may have twelve minutes to dress in, Helen. I’ll call a cab.”

“Oh, Rob, how lovely!” and off she flew.

After a moment spent in the happy digestion of this delightful antenuptial way of exculpating a really outrageous masculine default, it slowly dawned upon him, as he arose and emptied the ash tray into the library fire, that it was most unusual, extraordinary, startling! There was a time when she would have made a scene, and either they would have spent the evening apart at home in silence, or together at the theater in a still more painful silence.

At that instant was born in Robert Penn’s already overwrought brain the thought that his wife no longer loved him!

Robert loathed all theatergoing. The mere physical restraint was torture to so active, high-strung a man, but when it came to a problem play— He not unnaturally considered that it represented the full measure of his devotion to his wife, to spend an evening beside her listening to the same old jumble of human motives, human passions, that had occupied him all day long. Hate, jealousy, revenge, greed, infidelity were the staples of his trade, as it were; the untangling of law, if not always equity, from the seething mass was his *raison d’être*, and moreover paid his coal bills. That Helen was almost morbidly fond of the theater had long been his heaviest cross.

His thin, dark face looked very worn as he hunched himself into his overcoat in the hall, and, looking up, saw Helen running down the stairs, just as she used to do in the dear old sweetheart days, chattering merrily the while:

“Talk of Protean artists! Vaudeville clamor for me some day—you’ll see! I’ll be five characters in twenty-five minutes, and no one of them Helen Penn!”

And then she looked so altogether exactly the way he liked his wife to look, that he whispered something quite absurdly lover-like to her as he put her into the cab. She laughed in an excited, detached way and made no response in kind, and again his mood changed and a chilly fog of vague suspicion closed in upon him.

At the theater he leaned back in his seat and watched Helen with eyes that began to reinventory her personality, seeking to comprehend this strange exhilaration that had recently uplifted her out of all her environment.

Once, between the second and third acts, Helen asked Robert for a pencil and made a note on the margin of her program, which she laughingly refused to let him read. It was all that was needed to crystallize his resentment, and muttering something about “a whiff of tobacco,” he got up and went to the lobby.

It so happened that Mr. Flagg, the dignified senior member of their successful firm, was strolling about alone with a cigarette, and after greetings between the two Flagg said, in a low tone, to Robert:

“It’s all up with your side of the Perry case! The evidence in rebuttal will knock you higher than Haman. I’ve just got hold of it—I’ll explain in the morning. It seems that your pretty client has been hoodwinking *caro sposo* for two years—all the time looking like a Botticello angel, all pure soul and sublimated thought, dressed always in shades of gray—pearl gray, Penn!” laughed Flagg; “a dove with the heart of a— There’s the bell! Come down early to-morrow, there’s work ahead for us all.”

The first thing that Robert did as he sank into his seat was to note the shade of Helen’s gown—it was a dull lead color!

If jealousy is once allowed so much as a finger tip within the portals of a heart, the chances are that within an inconceivably short time he will be in entire possession, sprawled all over the place, yelling for corroboration and drinking it thirstily until madness comes.

Every little unrelated incident in Robert’s home life fell suddenly into place under suspicion’s nimble fingers. Up to that time he had been reasonably sure of the integrity of his hearthstone. Only within those eight weeks had these new symptoms been developing in the conduct of the wife of his bosom, the mother of his little daughter, Betty. Her curiously happy exaltation, her absentmindedness, her long, smiling reveries; the look of flushed excitement on her pretty face, the odd impression of breathlessness; the muttering of strange words in her sleep, followed by bursts of almost ribald laughter. Could it be possible that she was leading a double life, like that other woman?—a life to which he had no latchkey?

What was that devilish thing in “The Cross of Berny”—from Gautier’s pen, if he remembered rightly, among those four royal collaborators—“To call a woman—my wife! What revolting indiscretion! To call children—” But the thought of little Betty hushed even his mad imaginings.

However, it was his business to fathom all this mystery at once. An idealist was a blind ass—look at Perry!

Penn did not rest well that first night after the problem play, nor for many nights to come.

One morning a question of law came up at the office that made it expedient that one of the firm should go at once to Washington to consult a supreme authority, and Robert was sent, that he might have the benefit of even that small change of scene. He rushed home to throw a few things into a bag and kiss his wife and Betty good-by. He opened the

front door with his latchkey as usual, and as usual called out:

"Helen, where are you?"

There was a low cry, the shuffle of feet across a hardwood floor, the bang of a door closed quickly, and then in a voice toned to sudden *insouciance* and overdoing it:

"Here I am, Rob, in the library."

He stood frozen stiff for an instant, as his legal experience whispered to him all the possibilities hidden in those few sounds. The main thing was to keep his head! He went to the library and found Helen sitting alone in his own especial chair, peacefully reading Boswell's "Life of Johnson," as he was quick to notice as he passed behind her.

Although her attitude was one of rather sleepy repose, there were signs of a hasty rearrangement of the *mise en scène*, which corroborated the aural evidence which reached him in the hall. Near the door to the reception room was a piece of paper; he slipped on a round "Carteret" pencil as he went to his desk in a silence that he felt that he could not break, without also breaking a few other things.

Helen sat watching him in surprise—not an altogether genuine surprise, he thought, after one glance—thank Heaven, he was an expert in moral turpitudes and sinuosities—the woman did not live who could deceive him!

"Did you forget something, Rob? Why didn't you telephone? I could have sent it to you," she asked, simply. Ah, that accursed simplicity! Well, she would find that he was not simple, that was one sure thing.

"No, Helen, I forgot nothing—I never do forget anything," he said, with sullen meaning. "Where's Betty?"

"It's a fair day and it's eleven; of course she is out in the park," replied Helen, smiling.

He smiled too, but in such a way that she sat forward in her chair with dilated eyes, into which Robert read a rising fear.

"Dear, what is it? What is wrong?"

"Wrong? Who said wrong? I didn't," he found himself saying, greatly to his disappointment, for suspicions are useless until graduated into—evidence; so he hastened to explain his errand; sorting over some papers at his desk meanwhile. All the time his mind was intent upon one thing only—the possession of that piece of paper lying near the reception-room door.

He walked toward the cabinet in the corner to fill his pockets with cigars; the paper was lying just behind him, and as he turned he would stoop and pick it up.

He heard a slight noise behind him, and, wheeling-swiftly, discovered Helen creeping toward the paper, her hand already outstretched. With one quick movement he snatched it from the floor, and forced himself to hold it aloft and laugh a little. He might have spared himself all that finesse, for she ran to him, clinging to his arm, laughing, coaxing, pouting, begging him to give it to her—unread!

"Rob, you'll break my heart if you read that. Please not now—later perhaps—some day I will explain; please, dear!"

"If the contents of this paper are sufficiently serious to break your heart if I do read it, perhaps mine will be broken if I don't. So, as a measure of self-preservation——" He put the piece of note paper into his pocket. His face was white, his pulse was galloping like mad, and yet he managed a rather ghastly smile into her face, upraised and pleading.

"Face of a Botticello angel!" he thought, and steeled his heart against her.

She sank into a chair half laughing and yet with an introverted expression—"recueillement d'esprit," he thought to himself, bitterly. Brushing her hair in passing lightly with his lips, he left the room and presently the house. When she discovered that he had gone without again seeing her, she flew to the telephone and held a long incoherent talk with some one she not infrequently called "Ben, dear," to whom she confided certain undefined fears about her husband and her future. A suggestion of a trip to Europe from the other end of the telephone met with her unbounded gratitude and enthusiasm. After urging haste, she left the colloquy almost her old smiling self, and went to the library, where she did not continue the reading of Boswell's "Life of Johnson," but went thence directly to the reception room—into which Robert had peered before leaving the house—and, stooping, she drew from under the lounge many sheets of paper, and was soon lost in their perusal.

Robert had been forced to wait until he was settled on the train for Washington before he found time to read the note whose possession had caused Helen such perturbation. It was evidently the middle page of a letter, a single sheet, note size, torn from a pad. The handwriting was unquestionably masculine, entirely unfamiliar to Penn, hurried and full of what Helen would have called—temperament.

After one glance, the blood rushed to his head, and his hot eyes devoured again and again these words:

Since our interview yesterday, and in regard to that irresistible scene of the blue stockings, I am not willing to let it drop.

However, I should like to suggest abbreviation, and I fear I shall have to ask you to change the shade to a dull bluish gray. If you will come to my office in the morning, I feel sure we can soon arrange a climax which shall embody your own wishes and mine. As to the effect—the after-effect—of her husband's death on H. P.'s character, attention will be diverted from that by the previous gossip about——

And there it ended.

The initials, H. P.—Helen Penn—were the tacks that fastened conviction to Robert's consciousness; conviction of an intrigue of long standing and unspeakable familiarities—all these verbal obscurities were only too sickeningly familiar to him, fresh from the Perry letters—but here was more!

Apparently a coolly plotted murder—one ray of light only his eyes clung to—the “climax” was yet *in limine!*

In a well-built city house the insertion of a latchkey and opening of a front door between ten and eleven o'clock at night are noises easily covered by the urban roar of even one of the lateral streets of a great city. Robert entered and closed the door with—he assured himself—no greater minimum of noise than is instinctive toward midnight with even a sober married man. Among all the emotions which had seethed through his mind during the past few hours, a reaction was at that moment in possession of him, in favor of his wife, who had been to him a well of sweet water through all those years. If evil was drawing near to her, why push her toward it? Surely a finer thing would be to warn and protect her, to beat down underfoot his own wounded *ego* and win her back!

The electric light in the hall was burning, and he went directly to the library. Touching an electric button near the door, the room was flooded with light, and there before his weary eyes, hanging over the back of his Morris chair, was—Heaven help him!—a pair of long delft-blue silk stockings! Robert's agony was black upon him, his mind once more full of crawling, writhing suspicions; his mouth and throat were parched, his pulse beats filled the world.

Then into the silence fell Helen's laugh from the floor above, a long peal of mirth that spoke clearly of companionship. He had not made a life study of psychic differentiation for nothing—Helen was not alone! From that instant, all pretenses were abandoned, Robert was a sleuthhound on a keen scent.

With his head well forward, he crept up the carpeted stairway. The upper hall light was burning low; from his wife's “sewing room,” as it was called, came the sound of voices. The door was ajar, and from the crevice a strong light flooded out into the twilight of the hall. Now entirely mad with jealousy, he softly glided toward the crack, but before his eyes could further feed his torture, his ears served up a plenitude, in Helen's voice—that dear, clear, sweet voice that had sung his child to sleep and—

“Mr. Stillingfleet—my dear Mr. Stillingfleet, if I may be allowed the liberty—”

“My dearest creature,” interrupted a deep voice, muffled, almost as if by intent disguised, “if it be a liberty to call me dear, I find myself craving the instant fall of kingdoms.”

“La, sir, you confuse me quite!” There was a rustle of silken skirts and Helen laughed again.

Peering cautiously in, this sight met Robert's bloodshot eyes: Helen—or at least the fantastic figure which had her voice—stood by the mantelpiece. The hair was high-rolled and powdered, in it two nodding white plumes; she wore a yellow brocade gown strangely cut, long black mitts on her hands, which waved a huge fan coquettishly at a man—a creature in the costume of Goldsmith's day—who stood near her, bowing low. On his head was a wig, powdered and in queue, his face a mask of paint and powder and patches. He was clad in a huge waistcoat, long coat, knee breeches and hose—*blue* hose—upon his comely legs! Putting out his hand toward Helen's, he said with sickening affectation, seizing her hand and raising it to his lips:

“It's high time we were off to Montague's, my fair H. P. ‘Time flies, death urges, knells call, heaven invites!’”

For an instant a very ancient and honorable desire to enter that room and violently change the face of several things dominated the listening husband; that he did not mark the high tide of his nervous breakdown. A sudden reaction, common to the neurasthenic, swept over him, and his soul withdrew in anguish from the sickening horror of the discovery. He crept softly down the stairs, seized hat and coat and staggered out into the night.

It was five days before Benjamin Bentnor's best detective work succeeded in finding his brother-in-law in a hall bedroom at an obscure hotel in Washington, for a strong impulse of duty to be performed had landed Robert there, although he had completely lost sight of his mission. When Ben found him, he was seated on the edge of the bed, his head bowed in his hands.

Bentnor's gentleness toward him would have shown a saner man that his condition was serious; but it took a physician to do that in the end, and a year of rest and travel to cure him.

At first, however, all Bentnor could do was to sit about rather helplessly and chatter in an effort to break through Robert's gloom. The second day after he found his brother-in-law, he was at his wits' end to find further subjects for cheerful conversation, until toward evening he had a sudden inspiration!

To be sure it was Helen's secret, but surely she would not object to anything which might serve to arouse her poor husband's interest, however slightly, and bring him to the point of consenting to return to his home.

Bentnor was short, stout, slightly bald, and somehow radiated comfort, even while sitting astride of a cane-bottomed chair, and smoking another man's brand of cigarettes, in a one-windowed room nine feet by ten and a half.

“Helen Bentnor Penn's a great girl, isn't she, Rob?” No response came from the huddled figure on the bed.

“Of course, all the Bentnors have brains—you must have observed that for yourself; but she's the first literary genius among us, although I've always felt that all I needed was leisure—however, that's neither here nor there. Helen has arrived, and shall have the honor. Why, the editor who accepted that clever little *lever de rideau* of hers and brings it out in this month's issue of his magazine, was downright enthusiastic—can you imagine an editor having any enthusiasm left in him, Penn? I can't, for one. Must have a magnificent flow of gastric juice! However that may be, this

chap has taken Helen up *con amore*, and written advice as to some changes, and given her interviews and all that. Most amateurs have to have several ‘fittings,’ I suppose. And then the check he sent her—by Jove, even I was surprised!”

Robert looked up for the first time, and turned a haggard face, blank with wonder, toward his wife’s brother. Ben laughed.

“Well, I suppose it is a bit of a shock to a man to find that his wife’s brains have a market value.” He was greatly encouraged by Penn’s aroused interest and hurried on with his tale:

“It strikes me I oughtn’t to be telling you this, Rob, for it was Helen’s birthday surprise for you. She’s been in an ecstasy over it for about eight weeks. Don’t you tell her I’ve told you! Promise!”

“Trust me,” murmured Penn, and a smile twitched at his face.

“Such plottings and plans and secrecy! I’ve been in it up to the neck from the first. On your birthday—somehow she’s in love with you yet, Penn—Lord, how does a man do that?—for breakfast she was to show you the magazine within whose fold is to be found her first literary lambkin; for luncheon—for you were to spend the day at home—she was going to give you the check! Generous little beggar, Nell! She said she had never been able to really give you anything before—she had only bought with your money and forced upon you things you didn’t want. Then that night after dinner she and I were to act her two-part play—we’ve been at it for weeks, tooth and nail, powder and patches——”

“*You and Helen!*” gasped Robert.

“Great Scott! who on earth else?—the editor?” laughed Bentnor, little dreaming what the few words meant to the distraught man before him. “Perhaps you think I can’t do that sort of thing! It’s in our blood, the love of the buskin. The fact is, I’ve always had my suspicions that in the time of Charles the Second—well, never mind. We had our last final farewell dress rehearsal the night you came on here. I tell you I’m great in it. Helen, to be sure, does fairly well as *Hester Piozzi*, but wait till you see me as *Mr. Stillingfleet*! You know he was the fellow whose grayish-blue stockings gave the name for all time to ‘blue-stocking’ clubs. He and Dr. Johnson were always buzzing around the literary women of that day, the pretty D’Arblay, the dignified Mistress Montague of Portman Square, and the great Piozzi herself—of course, you remember?”

“Yes, I remember,” whispered Robert, his face once more hidden, but a great peace possessing him. “Ben,” he cried, almost joyfully, “what’s the title of Helen’s play?”

“*Bas Bleu*,” said Bentnor, concealing his triumph at his own tactics in the lighting of his twenty-third cigarette.

Robert groaned, and his head again drooped in unspeakable humiliation. And in that moment he made up his mind that no one should ever share his guilty secret. To make a pathetic appeal to Helen, dwelling upon his love, his doubts, his torturing jealousy, was one thing; quite another to tell that hopelessly humorous, refusing-to-be-pathetic story of those ridiculous *bas bleus*—they dangled everywhere from every point of his story; flying, pirouetting, circling and pin-wheeling in a psychic *pas seul*! It was impossible for even a member of the firm of Flagg, Bentnor & Penn to be impressive. Let them call it a nervous breakdown, his lips were forever sealed.

Then the thought of his home came to him like distant music. He saw himself opening his door; he saw a small ball of white coming down the stairs backward in a terrifying fury of speed, the little, fat, half-bare legs and a swirl of tiny skirts all that was visible of his wee daughter coming to greet him. He saw himself catch her off the last step and lift her in his arms, burying his face against the baby’s hot, panting little body, then he heard Helen’s voice and the sound of her scurrying feet!

Robert sprang up, and with a burst of wild laughter, shouted:

“Ben, let’s go home! I believe you’re dead right—I’ve got nervous prostration, and I’ve got it bad!”

THE VAGABOND

Your arms have held me till they seemed my home.

Your heart denies me; and the spells I weave

Are powerless to hold you. You must roam,

And I must, grieving, hide the thing I grieve.

Oh, love that does not love me, will there come

No time when I am all too dear to leave?

Is life so rich without me? Will there be

No ache of loneliness? No sudden sting

Of loss—of longing? Will your memory

Dwell on no passionate, sweet, familiar thing,

Soft touch or whispered word? Are you so free

From any ties but those new days may bring?
So much I miss you that I do not dare
To let my heart turn backward, nor my eyes
Search the wide future that is swept so bare
Of all I coveted. Yet deeper lies
Than any misery of dull despair
The fear that you may some day come to prize
The things I stand for, when I am not there
To fill your needs with all my sympathies.
M. M.

THE DOING OF THE LAMBS

By Susan Sayre Titsworth



Well, so long, fellows," said the Goat, and rose to go.

"Good-night, old man," responded the cheerful chorus of his hosts. As the Goat went out into the hall there was silence in the room he had left, which lasted until after he had opened the hall door and had had time to close it. But instead of closing it, he merely bumped noisily against it, and rattled the knob, and stood listening. As if his departure were a signal, a roar of laughter from within followed his stratagem. One voice rose above the noise.

"By George!" it said. "Isn't he the limit?"

The Goat closed the door silently and mounted the stairs to his own room in the apartment above. His suspicions were confirmed.

They had dragged him in with them as they all came over together from dinner at the Commons, to tell them some more of his wild Western tales. It was not the first time they had done it. They were a select little group of Eastern men, two or three years out of Harvard or Yale, in rather good repute with the faculty of the Law School for the quality of their work, and known among their fellow students as the Lambs, from their somewhat ostentatious habit of flocking together.

The Goat was from the West, a graduate of a prairie college of Moravian foundation, an athletic, good-looking young fellow in badly-fitting clothes, who appeared in no way ashamed to admit that he had never before been east of the Mississippi, and was frankly impressed by New York. His *gaucherie* was not ungraceful; there was an attractive impertinence in his cheerful assertions that his Moravian grandparents had desired him not to smoke or drink until he had completed his education and was earning his own living, and that, consequently, he knew tobacco only by sight and smell, and had contented himself with looking on the wine when it was red. There was one vacant seat at the table, which the Lambs occupied at the Commons; with an eye to future entertainment they had invited the Goat to join them, and in the two months since the term began, the arrangement had given general satisfaction.

They had undertaken the education of the Goat; they set him up to the theater, with supper at the Black Cat or Pabst's afterward, and lay awake nights howling at the recollection of his naïve and shrewd comments; they took him walking to show him the historical landmarks of New York, extemporizing the landmarks and the history as they went along, to the delighted gratitude of the Goat, who lamented that Arizona had no associations. They egged him on to tell stories of his prowess with lasso and lariat, of which he was boyishly proud, and listened with flattering attention to his relations of grizzly hunts and Greaser raids. He usually told these experiences as happening to a friend of his, and blushed and looked sheepish when they accused him of modesty. In return for the pleasure he afforded them, they coached him in first-year law, and gave him pointers about the professors' idiosyncrasies, feeling well repaid by his enthusiastic reports of his good progress, and of the encouraging impression he was making on his instructors.

And, finally, they were teaching him to smoke. After much urging, he had consented to try it, and had accomplished part of a cigar. Then he had suddenly become silent, looked at it intently for a few moments, and then, murmuring an indistinct excuse, had retired with precipitation. He appeared at breakfast the next morning, good-naturedly accepted

all the chaffing he got, and bravely essayed another that evening.

That had been a week or more before. On this particular night he had successfully smoked a whole Chancellor without growing pale or letting it go out, treating them meanwhile to a vivacious narrative of a drunken gambler who had been run out of a little mining camp one stormy winter night, and had taken refuge with a friend of the Goat, also caught out in the blizzard, in a cave which proved to be the domicile of a big hibernating grizzly not thoroughly hibernated; at the close, he had, as usual, protested but not denied when they politely insisted on identifying his friend with himself. Then he had torn himself away to study common-law pleading in the suspicious manner previously described.

There was, however, no sign of resentment or of injured feelings in his face as he lit the gas in his own room. On the contrary, he grinned cheerfully at his reflection in the glass, and, pulling open his top drawer, took from the remote corner an unmistakably sophisticated brier and a package of Yale Mixture, and proceeded to light up. He grinned again as his teeth clamped on the stem, and jerked it into the corner of his mouth with a practiced twist of his tongue. Then he picked up a small and well-thumbed book lying half hidden among his law books and papers, and glanced over a few pages.

"I did that pretty well," he said, approvingly. "Pity those babes don't know their Bret Harte any better. Guess I'll ring in some of Teddy's '97 trip on 'em to-morrow night." And then he sat down to study.

The next day the Lamb from Boston announced that his cousin and her mother, who were passing through town on their way home from three years of wandering abroad, were coming to call on him at four. Therefore, at two, he and his brother Lambs began to prepare his room, and the only other one that was visible from the front door of their apartment, for the fitting reception of his relatives. This preparation consisted largely in moving all presentable articles in all the rooms into these two, and banishing all unpresentable into the most remote of the other rooms, and shutting that door. The Lamb from Brookline inspected the pictures and photographs, straightening the first, retiring some of the second, and adding a few of both borrowed from the other members of the flock, and arranged to suit his own artistic fancy; the Lamb from Philadelphia polished off the cups and saucers with a clean towel; then the Lamb from Boston took the towel and dusted the mantel. After their labors, they attired themselves in their "glad rags," and sat in readiness behind their half-closed doors, while the Boston Lamb laid out two or three law tomes on his couch, and assumed a studious attitude in his Morris chair. Promptly at four appeared the Cousin and the Aunt.

They were courteously impressed by the Lamb's bachelor quarters and the appurtenances thereof, nor was the significance of the "Cases on Quasi-Contracts," which the Lamb ostentatiously hustled away, lost upon them. The Cousin insisted on looking at it, and her comments were of so sprightly a character and so difficult to return in kind, that the Lamb, conscious of the open doors, and not desiring to subject the *esprit de corps* of his friends to a very severe strain, called in his brother Lambs to meet his relatives.

They attended promptly, three personable young men in irreproachable afternoon dress, overjoyed to find the Cousin as pretty as her voice was musical, and as entertaining as her skillful jolly of the Boston Lamb had led them to expect. In ten minutes the flock was hers to command. The Philadelphia Lamb took down from its new position on the Boston Lamb's wall the cherished Whistler of the Brookline Lamb, and presented it to her; the Boston Lamb begged her acceptance of the quaint little Cloisonné cup which she admired as she drank from it, and which was the property of the Philadelphia member; the Albany Lamb, on the plea that everything of value had already been abstracted from him to make the Boston Lamb's room pretty for her, offered her himself, and was in no way cast down when she declined him on the ground that he was too decorative to be truly useful. But in the middle of the recrimination that followed this turning state's evidence on the part of the Albany Lamb, the Cousin inquired:

"You are all law students—do any of you know a man named Freeman who is studying up here?" The flock looked at each other and smiled. Freeman was the Goat's name.

"She doesn't mean the Goat," explained the Boston Lamb, hastily. "We know a first-year man named Freeman," he added, turning to her, "but he's a wild and woolly Westerner, who'd never been off the plains of Arizona till he came here. There may be others, but we're educating only one."

"Oh, no," said the Cousin. "The Mr. Freeman I mean is the son of the consul-general to Japan—he's a San Francisco man, and he's been everywhere. We met him first in Cairo, and then we played together in Yokohama, and came as far as Honolulu together, last spring. He decided to study law in New York, and I know he lives up here somewhere."

"Such a nice young fellow!" contributed the Aunt.

"Don't know him," said the flock.

"We'll ask the Goat about him," suggested the Philadelphia Lamb.

"We've been so engrossed with our own pet Freeman that we haven't had time for any other," volunteered the Brookline Lamb.

"It's rather strange," began the Cousin, and then interrupted herself. "Anyway, I hope you'll all look him up; I am sure he will be very grateful." The flock acknowledged the bouquet by appropriate demonstrations.

"Our acquaintance with his namesake verges on the altruistic, also," ventured the Albany Lamb.

"I should not like, myself, to be the victim of your altruism," said the Cousin, with a slow glance that took them all in. In the midst of the delighted expostulations that greeted this shot, the apartment bell rang sharply. The Brookline Lamb, being nearest, went to open the door, and, having opened it, remarked in a subdued but unmistakably sincere manner:

"Well, I'll be——" A saving recollection of the Cousin and the Aunt brought him to a full stop there, but everybody

looked up, and for a moment the flock was speechless. Not so the Goat, for it was the Goat who stood there, arrayed in the afternoon panoply of advanced civilization, with a cigarette between his fingers and the neatest of sticks under his arm.

"Beg pardon!" he said. "Didn't realize—regret exceedingly—should never have intruded—why, Miss Brewster!" And with an instant combination of high hat, stick and cigarette that showed much practice, he came in to shake hands with the Cousin, who, suddenly displaying a brilliant color, had risen and taken a step toward him.

"What luck! what bully good luck!" he went on. "Mrs. Brewster, how do you do? This is like old Cairo days. Boston, you brute, why didn't you mention this at luncheon?"

The flock choked; this was from the Goat, who had unobtrusively consumed most of the plate of toast at noon while the Lambs were discussing the visit of the Cousin and the Aunt. The Albany Lamb rose to the occasion feebly.

"There seems to have been some mistake," he said. The Goat put his hat on the bust of the young Augustus, and sat down on the divan beside the Cousin.

"Well, now I've happened in, mightn't I have some tea?" he inquired, genially. "No lemon, if you please," and he pointed a suggestive finger at the rum. In dazed silence the Brookline Lamb hastened to serve him, while the Cousin said, with a peculiar little smile tightening the corners of her mouth:

"I thought it was strange that you didn't know Mr. Freeman."

"We really don't," said the Boston Lamb, making a late recover. "I'm not at all sure that he is a fit person for you to associate with—all we know of him is what he has told us himself."

"That's all right," said the Goat, impudently. "And, anyway, I didn't come to see you this time, old man."

"What has he told you?" demanded the Cousin, as the Boston Lamb gasped with impotent rage.

"A series of Munchausen adventures," returned the Philadelphia Lamb, vindictively. "Six Apaches and three and a half Sioux with one throw of the lasso."

"Won out in a hugging match with a ten-foot grizzly," added the Albany Lamb.

"Nonsense!" said the Cousin, interrupting the Brookline Lamb's sarcasm in regard to nerve cures. "Hasn't he told you about the mob at Valladolid? Or about San Juan?" The flock gazed with unutterable reproach at the Goat, who sipped his tea with a critical frown, and observed, pleasantly:

"That happened to a friend of mine."

The Lambs surrendered at discretion, and roared. The Cousin glanced at the Aunt, and they rose.

"We have had the most attractive time," said the Cousin, prettily, as, suddenly sobered by this calamity, the Lambs protested in a body against her going. "It has been charming—and I am so interested in your experiment in altruism." The Lambs collapsed under the *ex cathedra* nature of the smile she bestowed upon them, as she turned and held out a frank hand to the Goat. "I am glad you happened in," she said. "I mailed a note to you this morning—you will doubtless get it to-night. Come and see us."

"The Holland, isn't it?" said the Goat, holding her hand, and then he made a short speech to her that sounded to the paralyzed Lambs like a Chinese laundry bill, but which evidently carried meaning to the Cousin, for she flushed and nodded. Then she turned back to the flock, who by this time, with touching unanimity, were showering devoted attentions on the Aunt. At the elevator they were all graciously dismissed except the Boston Lamb, who alone went down to put his relatives into their cab.

"Come and see us, all of you," called the Cousin, cordially, as the car began to descend.

"How soon?" begged the Albany Lamb, anxiously.

"Any time, after to-night," returned the Cousin, and was lowered from their sight.

Then with one accord they fell upon the Goat, and bore him into the apartment for condign punishment, regardless of his indignant assertions of his right as a citizen to a trial by a jury of his peers. When the Boston Lamb came leaping up the stairs to add his weight to the balancing of accounts, he found a riotous crowd.

"Just because my luggage was derailed and burned up out in the Kansas deserts," the Goat was saying, "and I struck New York in a suit of hobo clothes from Topeka—oh, you fellows are easy marks!"

"Where are your Moravian grandparents?" demanded the Albany Lamb.

"Don't know," said the Goat, unfilially. "They died before I was born. They weren't Moravians, anyway."

"See here!" The Boston Lamb jerked him to his feet with one hand and assaulted him with the other. "What was that stuff you were reeling off to my cousin? As her nearest male relative, geographically speaking, I insist on an explanation."

"That was Japanese," said the Goat, with a grin, and immediately favored the crowd with several more doubtfully emphatic remarks in the same tongue.

"I pass!" said the Boston Lamb, meekly. "But one thing more. Are you engaged to my cousin?"

"How very impertinent!" returned the Goat. "Why didn't you ask her?"

The Boston Lamb inserted four determined fingers between the Goat's collar and the back of his neck, and in view of the attitude of mind and body of the other Lambs, the Goat saw fit to yield.

"Not exactly, as yet," he admitted. "But to-night—I hope——"

"After which we are invited to call—oh, you brute!" groaned the Albany Lamb, and started for him. But the Goat had pulled himself loose, and gained the door. He stopped, however, to pull an oblong package from his coat pocket.

"Here," he said, tossing it toward the crowd. "The smokes are on me tonight. Sorry I can't be here to assist, for they're a distinct advance on your husky old Chancellors. Also, there's a case of fairly good booze downstairs that the janitor is taking care of until you call for it. So long, fellows!" And with a wave of his hat the Goat departed.



THE UNATTAINED

A gem apart

In the unreached heart

Of a shy and secret place;

Swift-winged in flight

As a meteor's light

In the far-off field of space.

More sweet and clear

To the spirit's ear

Than a wave-song on the beach;

Like the baffling blue

Of a mountain view,

Or a dream just out of reach.

Like light withdrawn

By a rain-swept dawn,

When the clouds are wild and gray;

Like a wind that blows

Through the orchard close

Ever and ever away.

William Hamilton Hayne.

THE FLATTERER

By George Hibbard



Miss Miriam Whiting languidly descended the broad terrace steps. If her slow progress suggested bodily weariness, her whole bearing was not less indicative of spiritual lassitude. She allowed her hand to stray indolently along the balustrade, as with the other she held the lace-covered sunshade at a careless angle over her shoulder.

On the lawn the guests from outside were gathered. Collected in groups or wandering in pairs, they dotted the grounds. As one of those staying in the house, she appeared as a semi-official hostess with a modified duty of seeing that all went as well as possible. Her head ached slightly, as she began to discover. Even the light of the late afternoon was trying. The dress which she expected to wear had proved too dilapidated, and she had been obliged to put on one she wished to save for more important occasions. The invitation which she needed for the satisfactory conduct of her modish itineracy from country house to country house had not come in the early mail as she expected.

The band, hidden in a small, thick bosage of the wide gardens, broke into a mockingly cheerful air. At intervals some distant laugh taunted her. She was late, she knew. The shadows had begun to lengthen across the open spaces by the fountain, and she could almost see Mrs. Gunnison's tart and ominous frown of displeasure. Why was she there, except to be seen; so that the world should know that one who had just come from the Kingsmills' place on the Hudson had paused beneath the broad roofs of "Highlands" before, presumably, going to the Van Velsors, in Newport?

As with pinched lips she reflected, she quickened her pace carefully.

"Ah, senator!" she cried, as she held out her hand with regulated effusion. "I am so charmed. I did not know that you were to be here. You great ones of the earth are so busy and so much in demand——"

Senator Grayson bowed and beamed. He shifted in uneasy gratification from one foot to the other, and a rosier red showed in his round face.

"I did not think that you young ladies noticed us old politicians——"

"Every one should be given the benefit of a doubt. Of course, in our silly lives there is not very much chance to know about anything really worth while, but when a thing is really great even we cannot help hearing about it. Your last speech—the broad, far-reaching views——"

The senator stood in agreeable embarrassment.

"I read it," Miriam continued. "I could not go to sleep, because I wanted to finish it. Of course, I could not understand all, but I was entranced. Even I could feel the force and eloquence. I have heard of nothing else."

"Really?" cried the enchanted statesman. "Do you know I thought it had fallen flat? You are good to tell me. These sidelights are of the utmost value, and, indeed, I esteem your opinion. Would you let me get out a cup of tea? And—and—Mrs. Grayson was only saying the other day that she wanted to ask you to come to Washington for a visit this winter."

As the senator stumbled away, Miss Whiting felt a light touch at her elbow.

"In your most popular and successful manner, Miriam," said a slight, slim woman, whom she found standing beside her.

"He's a dear, if he is an old goose," said Miriam, defiantly. "And, of course, any shading would be lost on him."

"I know," continued the other, the sharp brown eyes in her lean brown face regarding the girl critically. "There are degrees of flattery even in your flattering. You have reduced it—or elevated it—to the proud position of an exact science."

Before Miriam could reply, a young man who had discovered her from afar advanced with what was evidently an unusual degree of precipitancy.

"Miss Whiting, I am delighted," he puffed. "I have been looking for you everywhere. I was in town, and I went to that bric-a-brac shop. The fan is undoubtedly a real Jacques Callot."

"I was sure," she murmured, "with your knowledge and taste, that you could decide at once. Of course, I did not know."

"And—and——" hesitated the youth, "I hope that you will not be offended. I told them to send it to you here. If you will accept it?"

"How terrible—and how kind of you!" Miriam cried, holding out both hands, as if led by an irresistible impulse. "But you are so generous. All your friends have discovered that. I always think of St. Francis sharing his cloak with the blind beggar."

"So good of you," he stuttered. "It's nothing. You must be tired. Can't I bring a chair for you? I am going to get one."

As the young man turned hurriedly away, Miriam grasped her companion's arm.

"I never thought that he would give it to me. Never, Janet—honestly," she exclaimed, with earnestness.

"The way of the transgressor is likely to be strewn—with surprises."

"I only thought of saying something pleasant at a dinner."

"I'd taken Bengy Wade's opinion without a moment's hesitation on the length of a fox terrier's tail, but a fan——"

"He wants to be considered artistic," pleaded Miriam.

"And the last touch about St. Francis, wasn't that a trifle overdone? Somewhat too thickly laid on? What used to be called by painters in a pre-impressionistic age—too great *impasto*. I am afraid that you are a little deteriorating."

"Miriam!"

Both turned, and found a tall lady calling with as great animation as a due regard for the requirements of a statuesque pose permitted.

"I want to speak to you," she exclaimed, as soon as words were possible. "I want you to come to my house to-morrow morning. I am going to have a little music. Emmeline is going to sing."

"Oh!" cried Miriam.

"Don't you like her singing?" the other inquired, earnestly.

"Oh, *very* much," assured Miriam. "Only—the truth is, I once heard her sing Brunnhilde's 'Awakening,' and she murdered it so horribly."

"Emmeline is often too ambitious," the other commented, with visible content.

"Lighter things she can do charmingly, and she should hold to them," Miriam announced, with decision.

"I arranged the program," said the lady, "and, for her own sake, I shall not let her attempt anything to which she is unequal. Of course, I shall not sing myself."

"Oh, Mrs. Ogden!"

"You know I never sing anything but Wagner, and then only when there are a few—when my hearers are in full sympathy. You will be sure to come," she added, as she turned to give another invitation. "By the way, you will be at Westbrook this autumn. I want you to ride Persiflage in the hunt as often as you like."

"Much better," commented Miriam's companion, as they strayed on. "Of course, nothing would please her—as a bitter rival—more than to hear her sister-in-law's singing abused. That touch about lighter things was masterly when she herself only sings Wagner for a few. But how do you manage with Emmeline?"

"I tell her that no one can conduct, an automobile as she does."

"My dear!"

"It's an amusing game," the girl answered.

"But is it a safe one?"

"Why not?" she exclaimed, challengingly.

The two advanced toward the spreading marquee which appeared to be the center of the mild social maelstrom. A greater ebullition perceptibly marked the spot. The conflict of voices arose more audibly. Many were constantly drawn inward, while by some counter-current others were, frequently cast outward to continue in drifting circles until again brought back to the gently agitated center. On the very edge of this vortex—the heart of which was the long table beneath the tent—sat a goodly sized lady. Her appearance might have been offered by a necromancer as the proof of a successfully accomplished trick, for the small camp stool on which she rested was so thoroughly concealed from sight that she might have been considered to rest upon air. Catching sight of Miriam, she beckoned to her with a vigor that threatened disruption of her gloves.

"Where have you been?" she cried, as Miriam and her friend approached. "I have been waiting for you. So many have been asking for you. I expected you to be here."

"My dear Mrs. Gunnison," cooed the girl, "you must forgive me. Absolutely, I could not help myself. I was all ready on time—but I have been admiring again your wonderful house. And I have been wondering at the perfect way in which it is kept up—the faultless manner in which everything is managed. I can only think of Lord Wantham's place. Though, of course, there is not the brilliancy there——"

"I like to have things nice about me," said Mrs. Gunnison, complacently. "Sit down here, my dear. I want to have you near me. And you, too, Mrs. Brough."

"I may be a little to blame for keeping Miriam," said the elder woman. "I have been so much interested in what she was saying."

"Every one is," responded Mrs. Gunnison, warmly. "Miriam is so popular—quite celebrated, for it. Indeed, there are numbers of people here who want to meet her. One young man in particular—Mr. Leeds——"

"Did he say he wished to know me?" the girl asked, quickly.

"Well, no," admitted Mrs. Gunnison, "But then I want you to know each other. I'm quite bent on it. Nothing could be better. I'd like to see it come out the way I'd have it. You know how rich he is. And they say he is going to be somebody. Mr. Leeds! Mr. Leeds!"

A tall young man looked and advanced. While his gait did not indicate reluctance, there was nothing that seemed to reveal eagerness. He came forward deliberately and stopped before the party.

"I don't think, Mr. Leeds, that you know Miss Whiting," Mrs. Gunnison announced. "A dear friend of mine—and a dear. Mrs. Brough and you are old friends. You see her so often that I feel that I can take her away. Come, I want to show you something."

With her customary smile of unconcerned intelligence, Mrs. Brough allowed herself to be drawn off. The young man slowly settled himself in the chair which Mrs. Gunnison had left.

"Oh, you shall not escape," declared Miriam. "Mr. Leeds, I am so glad to be able to speak to you at last. I have so much to say to you. They told me that you would be here this afternoon. I wondered if I should see you."

Leeds had not spoken, but looked at the girl with a steadiness which for a moment caused her to cast down her animated eyes.

"I missed you everywhere last winter," she went on, more slowly. "And, of course, heard of you always."

Leeds continued to inspect the girl with amusement in his glance.

"Oh, how splendid accomplishing something must be—standing for something!"

"Don't you think that you are rather overvaluing my modest achievements?"

"Of course, you speak that way, but others do not," she hurried on. "You are known from one end of the country to the other."

"Really——" he began.

"To be such an inspiring influence in local politics——"

"Because," he laughed, "having a minor public position—because, by a fluke, having found myself in the place of a common councilman, I have got some things done and kept others from being done."

"Public life has always been so absorbing for me. I can think of nothing nobler for a man."

"Than being a common councilman," he interrupted.

"You laugh," she said. "But I grew so interested, I followed in the newspapers, from day to day, what you were doing."

"You were very good," he answered, gravely. "Or you are very good to say so."

"Don't you believe me?" she asked, suddenly arrested by his tone.

"I have heard a good deal of you, Miss Whiting."

Miriam flushed slightly, but she looked at him steadily.

"What have you heard?"

"I have heard that you have ways of making the worse appear the better reason—that you flatter."

The glow deepened in her face and her eyes flashed.

"And," he went on, lightly, "why should not one try to make the world pleasanter by making it more satisfied with itself? Isn't that the part of a public benefactor?"

"You are laughing at me," she cried. "You—are—despising me."

"No, indeed," he answered, with real earnestness. "You misunderstand me. Isn't it only fair to give back in pleasant speeches the admiration and adulation that the world gives you? There would be a certain dishonesty in taking all and giving nothing."

"You—you—are mocking me," she gasped, rising, as if to fly, and then sinking back.

"No," he answered, "only I object to being mocked myself. I'd rather not be included with all the others to be given pleasant words, as you can so easily give them out of a large supply. I'd prefer to have you think better of me than to believe that I am to be treated in that way."

"Mr. Leeds, you are abominable and rude—and I cannot listen to you."

"I am sorry. Honestly, when you began to make such—civil speeches to me I was disappointed. It was so exactly what I had been told to expect."

Miriam bit her lips—and her hand trembled a little on the handle of the sunshade.

“I may have lost my temper a little,” he said, “which one should never do—but I can’t take anything back.”

That afternoon Miss Whiting was strangely silent. Held at the opening of the tent by her hostess, people passed before her unseen. What she said she hardly knew. What her words meant she could not have told. She was only aware that her voice sounded unnatural, and that her laugh—when laugh she must—struck discordantly and strangely on her ears. She felt that the time would never come when she could be alone—to think.

II.

Mrs. Gunnison’s dinners, like all else of the establishment, were always large. The classic limits authoritatively imposed she would have scorned—if she had ever heard of them. If she could have timed it, the greater the number of minutes required by the procession to the dining room in passing a given point, the better she would have been satisfied. She only felt that she “entertained” when she beheld serried ranks of guests stretching away from her on either hand. Therefore, when Miriam turned and discovered Leeds at her right, they found themselves in such semi-isolation as only exists at a very large dinner table.

“I am sorry,” he said, pleadingly.

“So am I,” she answered. “Very—oh, you think I mean that to be pleasant in that way, too——”

She hastily averted her face, and engaged vigorously in conversation with the man on the other side. Leeds stared moodily before him. During the passing of the many courses which Mrs. Gunnison’s idea of fitting ceremony demanded, the lady whom he had taken in found him neither communicative nor responsive. The dinner dragged on. Miss Whiting’s soft right shoulder remained constantly turned on him. Her discourses, which he could not help hearing, continued actively and unceasingly. At last Mrs. Gunnison darted restless glances about. She had already begun to stir uneasily in her chair.

Miriam suddenly veered round upon him.

“I want to tell you something,” she almost whispered. “What I said—what I tried to say this afternoon was true.”

He looked at her with fixed earnestness.

“Oh!” she cried, passionately. “I can’t bear to have you study me as if I were a specimen of something—of mendacity, you think. But no matter about that. You must believe me. Don’t you?”

“How can I,” he answered, slowly, “with——”

“With my reputation,” she caught up, quickly, as he paused. “Do not try to spare me—now. Can’t you hear—can’t you see, now, that I am speaking the truth?”

He gazed at her without answering.

“Oh, I can read in your eyes that you do not. I want you to believe me. Can’t you believe—even that?”

He shook his head half smilingly.

“You do not know all that I have heard,” he answered.

“Who can have been so unfair—so cruel? I—I never wanted to be believed so before. Oh, you think that is only a part of it; that the habit is so strong with me—that I am only flattering.”

“If I have been—warned,” Leeds continued.

“As if I were a peril—an evil——”

“Perhaps you might be,” he muttered.

“I will not bear it. You *shall* believe me. I am not flattering.”

“At least, that you should have been willing to take the trouble to try was in itself a distinction.”

“You are hard on me.”

“I must protect myself.”

Mrs. Gunnison had arisen, and a rustling stir was spreading down the table.

“I am not a harpy,” she cried.

“A siren was a bird more beautiful, but not less dangerous,” he said.

She rose straightly and swiftly.

“You feel that you can speak to me like that because you believe I am what you think. Very well. There may be satisfaction for you to know it. I am, then, everything that you have implied. More—more than you have said. I am false. I do flatter people—cajole them—deceive. I do it for my own interest. Now are you satisfied? Could anything be worse? I

confess, even, that I have deserved the way you have treated me.”

“Believe me——” he began, hastily.

But she had swept from him, and, amid the group of retreating women, he found no chance to finish the sentence.

III.

Miriam Whiting said “good-night” very early. A greater accuracy might demand the statement that the time at which she had “gone upstairs” was relatively not late—for the hours of the house were expansive, and not only had morning a way of extending into afternoon, but midnight into morning. As a general thing, she had only disappeared with her hostess, but on this particular evening she pleaded weariness—sleepiness—had even hinted at a headache, which no one had ever known her to have. Thereupon she departed, followed by the reproaches of the rest. Once in her room, she hurried her maid, and, finally, abruptly dismissed her. When she was alone, she went to the window and threw wide both the shutters. She leaned with her elbows on the sill, gazing out at the moonlit country.

Perfectly round, with a burnished sky about it, such as may sometimes be seen when the circle is absolutely full, the white disk hung in the heavens. Below, about the quiet edges of the fountain, the light lay with silken sheen. Only, where the drops fell tremulously, the water was broken into glittering sparks. All was very still. Far off a dog barked fitfully. That was the one sound which broke the silence, with the exception of the occasional distant laughter of some men on the terrace at the end of the spreading wing. With her fingers buried in her thick hair, carefully gathered for the night, she looked straight before her, although she was wholly unconscious of the scene.

A light knock at the door was repeated twice before she heard it and spoke.

“It’s I,” the voice said, insistently. “May I come in?”

“Of course,” Miriam answered, without moving.

The door opened quickly, and a small figure darted into the room.

“There was some one coming,” said Mrs. Brough, as she glanced down at the voluminous silken folds in which her little body was lost. “I am not in a condition to be seen—generally.”

She came forward slowly.

“My room is near yours. I saw your light. I thought that you had not gone to sleep. I wanted to come to speak to you.” She put her hands on Miriam’s shoulder. “You have been crying.”

“Yes,” said Miriam, quietly.

“I saw at dinner that you were not yourself—and I am troubled, too. I have a confession to make.”

Miriam looked at her curiously.

“You know that I am your friend—now,” the other went on. “Since we have been here together, we have come to know each other as I never thought that we should. There was a time before, though, when I did not understand so well. I had watched you, and I did not like you. I distrusted you—or, rather, did not trust you——”

“I understand. You were clever enough to see through me——”

“I thought that with your—insincerities that you were all false. I should have been wise enough to know differently. But what will you?—to assume evil is easy, and always gives one a proud sense of superior perspicacity. I condemned you, Miriam, without a hearing, and I told Arthur Leeds.”

“You did it?” the girl murmured, dully.

“Yes, I warned him.”

“Why?”

“Because I like him and admire him, and I thought you—dangerous.”

“That is why he has said the things he has.”

“He has said something?”

“He has told me that I am not worthy of regard or consideration or respect.”

“Impossible!”

“Perhaps not directly—but he has implied that and more—by word and action. And—and—I love him.”

Mrs. Brough sat down quickly in the chair which she had drawn up, and took Miriam’s hands.

“I know you so well now,” she said, “that at dinner I saw something was wrong. I did not realize that it was as bad as that.”

“I think I loved him even last winter, when I only saw him—heard who he was—and did not know him. I admired and

respected and revered him. But he seemed different to me. And to-day when I met him I wanted to tell him a little—as much as I could—of what I thought. I wanted him to know something of the feeling that I had. I wanted to please him. I wanted him to be nice to me—because I pleased him. What I said to him was true—true.”

She sprang to her feet, and spoke in deep, tragic tones.

“True!” she repeated. “And I have lost the power of being thought true. My words can only be considered so many counterfeits. I have so often debased the true metal of sincerity that anything I say must ring false—that anything I may give cannot be taken. What I said sounded fraudulently in my own ears. I could not forget the many, many times when I had spoken so nearly in the same way without meaning or belief, and each speech seemed to me a mockery. Though I longed with all of me to speak simply and sincerely—knowing that I spoke the truth—I hardly seemed to myself to be doing it. All appeared a part, but a repetition of the many times before when I had played a part—when what I did was a comedy—a farce—a tragedy!”

She broke off with a sob.

“You have cried wolf pretty often,” avowed Mrs. Brough.

“I am a Cassandra,” said the girl, instantly. “When I wish to be believed I cannot. When all that is most precious and dearest to me depends on it I cannot be trusted. I may speak, but I shall not be heard—when all my life is in being heard—I know it.”

“You see,” said Mrs. Brough, “when I told him I thought of you as you seemed——”

“As I was. I don’t blame you,” Miriam cried, bitterly. “What I had become! Let me tell you.” She sat down again, and, with her elbows on her knees and her chin on her hands, gazed fixedly at the other. “I think I began innocently enough. I wanted to be liked—and I fell into the way of saying pleasant little things. I tried to make everybody contented and pleased with me. That was when I came out. Indeed, I may say for myself that I had a sympathetic nature. I could not bear to see anyone uncomfortable or doubtful about themselves or anything, without trying to help them. Surely that was not bad?”

“No,” said Mrs. Brough, slowly.

“I really wished to help every one,” she continued. “And the best way that I found to do it was to say pleasant things. It was easy—too fatally easy. When I discovered how popular this made me I kept on. I continued for myself what I had really begun for others. Insensibly I acquired skill. I was not stupid. I had rather a gift for character—and could say exactly the thing to each one to flatter them the most. I found that I took pleasure in the exercise of such cleverness. There was a feeling of power in it—playing with the foibles and weaknesses of men and women. I did not see that I was often trafficking in unworthiness and baseness.”

“I’ve no doubt you did harm,” concluded Mrs. Brough. “People are only too willing to be encouraged in their vanities. I don’t think, Miriam, that you were really very good for a person’s character.”

“I was not very good for my own,” Miriam went on, grimly. “I retrograded. I can see it now. In playing on the follies and faults of others, I grew less careful—less critical myself. Then the family lost its money. Oh, I haven’t the poor excuse that I was in want—that what I did was done from any lack of anything essential for myself or others. Ours was just a commonplace, undramatic loss—with only need for saving and retrenchment. Without the deprivation of a single necessity, or comfort, even. Merely the absence of the luxuries. The luxuries, though, in a way, had become necessities to me—and—I found, by exercising my power, I could get much that I wished. I flattered and cajoled to please people, so that they would do things for me, give me things. That is ended——”

She pointed dramatically to a table.

“There is the fan from Bengy Wade in a package. To-morrow it goes back to him. There is a note to Mrs. Grayson, declining her invitation. If I go to Westbrook I shall not ride Persiflage. I have turned over a new leaf. But the degradation of thinking of the record on the old ones! If I could only tear them out instead of trying to fold them down. I see it all now. He has made me see it all. He has made me despise myself until I see the way I look in his eyes; until I seem the same in my own. Janet, what can I do?”

The girl’s head bent on the arm of the chair, as her body was shaken with sobs. The other put out her hand and gently stroked her heavy hair.

“Don’t you exaggerate?”

“Did you,” Miriam panted, “when you said what you did to Mr. Leeds? Did you make my blackness less black than it should be—did you concede to me any saving light?”

“I did not know. If I can do anything now——”

“You must not speak to him,” Miriam cried, sitting up abruptly. “There would be no use. When the seeds of distrust have been sown they will grow, even if the weeds crowd out everything else.”

“But weeds can be dug up.”

“That must be my part,” Miriam answered, more calmly. “Only one course is left. It’s funny,” she smiled, swiftly, through her tears. “There is poetic justice in it. I can do only one thing. It is my retribution.”

IV.

The announcement which Mrs. Gunnison made on the following morning came as a surprise to Miriam. She had some difficulty in not displaying an undue excitement. The habit of containment, which had come with worldly experience, however, did not fail her. She heard her hostess state that Arthur Leeds was coming to stay in the house without any exhibition of visible emotion. Mrs. Gunnison said that, as the Barlows had other people coming, he was going to transfer himself to "Highlands," and that he would arrive in time for luncheon. Any fears which Miriam experienced were wholly offset by a devout thankfulness. The event offered such an occasion for the carrying out of her plan as she had not hoped to have given her. In the promise of such an admirable opportunity for the execution of her purpose, she found a melancholy satisfaction. If, as she thought to herself, the iron was to enter her soul, the sooner the affair was accomplished the better. The process of self-sacrifice was not pleasant in the execution, however glorious it might appear in the conception. Self-immolation might be a duty, but, as every martyrdom, it was more satisfactory as an ideal than as a fact.

The first opportunity which came to execute what she had laboriously planned was during the aimless inoccupation of after luncheon idleness. The arrangements for the afternoon had not yet been concluded, but were in the careless making. Who should ride; who should drive; who should walk; who should go and who should stay; the what and whither had not been settled: Leeds strolled to her side.

"I have been trying to speak to you, but you have avoided me."

"Yes," she said.

"Why?" he asked; "I am going to tell you the truth, now——" she paused, and looked at him.

"Why?" he repeated.

"Because I think that you are the most detestable man I ever saw," she answered, gazing squarely at him.

He started slightly—glanced at her in surprise, and abruptly sat down on the divan beside her.

"You have really come to that conclusion?" he asked.

"I have always believed it," she answered, firmly.

"But you said——"

"You told me that I was a flatterer. I shall not be with *you* any longer. You wish the truth. You shall have it."

"That is what you thought from the first?" he said, slowly.

"Yes," she answered, less clearly. "I have always understood that you were most absurdly self-satisfied. That you are deluded by a pose as to which you are so weak as to deceive yourself. That you take yourself with a seriousness which leads you to believe that you are preaching a crusade when you are only blowing a penny whistle. That you assume that you have made for yourself a position and a reputation which were made for you."

"What do you mean?" he asked, quietly.

"You have an old name and a large fortune which rendered you conspicuous and made everything easy. The newspapers have talked of you only as they would anyway. Indeed, they would have given more space to you if you had a liking for conducting an automobile painted like a barber's pole than they have because you went into politics. They would have preferred the striped automobile, but they had to be content with the 'reform politics' as the freak of one in your place."

"Then you think I am—nothing?"

"You are a rich young man of assured position—spoiled by the world."

"I thought I had, at least, ordinary common sense."

"Probably—but still you have unduly lost your head. You would not know if people were laughing at you——"

Leeds flushed slightly. Miriam caught her breath sharply, and reached forward to take up a fan which lay within her reach.

"I am altogether a monster?"

"No," she replied, calmly. "A very ordinary young man, I should say."

"I'd be kind to dumb animals and not kick a baby——"

"I am quite serious," she answered. "You objected to any little pleasantness on my part because what I said might not be altogether sincere. Now we are going to have facts. Indeed, you are the type of man I dislike."

"At least, we know where we are now," he responded.

"Yes. And as we are staying in the same house it may be as well."

Miriam rose slowly. She walked decidedly across the room, and ostentatiously placed herself beside Mrs. Gunnison. Leeds, deserted, did not move. He sat staring at the floor, as he softly drummed with his fingers on the couch's leather arm.

As well as in certain other particulars, the life of a country house is microcosmical in this—escape from the requirements of human relationship is impossible. Indeed, the demands are made greater, the bonds more firmly fixed. In fact, the condition of all may be more fitly described as the condition of two united in matrimony—they take each other for better or worse. Constantly through the day they must meet. The terms on which they are thrown together impose intimacy. If latent antipathy exists with the revealing conditions of constant companionship it must be discovered. If inherent sympathy is to be found the two gravitate toward each other with inevitable certainty. As the birthplace of aversion quickly reaching a maturity of detestation and hate; as the hothouse of interest growing speedily into full bloom of liking and love, there is no place like a country house. All existence there, in its condensed form, is a forcing process. Without any awkwardly abrupt transition or disconnecting jolts, those who begin to talk about mutual friends in the morning may easily reach a discussion of their own souls in the afternoon, and be far on the broad and easy path of sentiment by evening. Like or dislike, more or less strong, must surely and quickly follow. There is in the social chemistry a certainty of repulsion or attraction, out of which the most unexpected combinations result—of a surprisingly lasting nature.

In the daily routine Miriam saw Leeds constantly. Though she might come down late for breakfast, she always found him. Even if she breakfasted in her room, when she descended he was always smoking in the hall.

“I did not expect to stay so long,” he explained to her on one occasion, rising as she paused at the foot of the stairs.

“Then why do you?” she asked, coldly.

“Don’t you know?” he demanded. “Should you feel it pleasanter if I went away?”

“Really—as I have undertaken to be perfectly frank with you—how can your going or staying make the least difference in the world to me?”

“Still,” he said, looking at her curiously, “there must be something tiresome in having to be scorning somebody all the time.”

“I think,” she said, briefly, “I hear voices in the billiard room. I am going in there.”

If at dinner Leeds found himself next to her he discovered that she spoke to him no more than the strict letter of the law governing the conduct of guests in the same house demanded. What she said was of the most indifferent nature. If he sought to reach a more personal basis he found himself checked.

“Miss Whiting,” he said, suddenly, on the third evening, “I am going away to-morrow morning.”

Miriam swung about swiftly.

“To-morrow!” she exclaimed, with a catch in her voice.

“Yes, I think I had better go, though there is something I want to tell you before I do. I have thought of all that you have said. I have profited by the new light that you have thrown upon myself—my actions—my life.”

“What do you mean?” she murmured.

“I have realized that very likely I am a prig. I understand the futility of what I am trying to do. I see that I have been mistaken in my power. I’m going to give up.”

“Give up?” she replied.

“You have shown that I was attempting more than I was able to do. The Donaldsons have asked me to go in their yacht round the world. The *Vierna* starts on Thursday. I am going away to be lazy and careless, and live the life for which you think I’m fitted.”

“You are going to give up everything?” she exclaimed.

“Yes,” he answered. “It is your doing. You must take the responsibility of it.”

“But what I say—what I think, can make no difference,” she almost entreated. “I am not of enough importance to you—you cannot consider me enough—”

“All that is something of which you know nothing,” he answered, gravely. “Something of which I have told you nothing. I am going away—with the Donaldsons.”

“People like that!” she interrupted.

“People like that. I am going with them to lead their life—to be gone for a year, unless one thing happens. As I said, you are responsible.”

“But I can’t be,” she implored. “It isn’t possible. I can’t count for anything.”

“Let me assure you that you do.”

“Then I can’t take the responsibility. I won’t.”

“Unless one thing happens I am going,” he went on, inflexibly. “There are some, I think, who believe in me—who will think I am making a mistake.”

"But your future—your career," she began, and paused abashed, as she saw the way he watched her.

"I thought we were to have no—insincerities—no flatteries. Since I know what you really think, such civil implications can mean nothing."

She bit her lips, pale as her cheeks were white.

"Oh!" she cried, "how horrible!"

Through all of dinner she hardly spoke. If she said nothing to Leeds, neither would she address the man on her other side, only giving such monosyllable answers as were necessary. The evening dragged slowly. Leeds did not approach her. Once or twice she looked toward him, but he did not appear to notice her. Indeed, he only came late from the smoking room and returned after a brief appearance in the big hall.

"When," she asked once, in a timid voice, of Mrs. Gunnison, "does Mr. Leeds go?"

"The early train," the lady answered. "I believe he leaves the house before seven, or at some equally unearthly hour."

The fresh sunlight of the early morning was flooding through the open hall door as Leeds came down the wide, main stairs. He saw, under the *porte-cochère*, the trap ready to take him to the station, and into which the second man, with the help of the groom, was lifting his trunk. Here and there a housemaid was busy with duster and cloth. The machinery of the establishment was being set in running condition, and there was the accompanying disorder. The place seemed strange and unfamiliar.

"Your keys, sir," the butler said, holding out the bunch.

"Yes," he answered, "I'm ready."

As he spoke he started. Clearly in the stillness of the morning he heard a few soft notes struck on the piano. At that hour the sound was most unusual. He listened. The Flower Music of "Parsifal." With a swiftness that left the astonished butler staring after him, he darted toward a door. In a moment he had torn the portière aside and had crossed the polished floor of the music room. Miriam was seated at the piano, her fingers resting on the keys.

"You are down!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," she answered, neither turning round nor looking up.

"You are very early."

"Yes," she assented. Then she whirled about on the music stool. "I came down to see you."

"Why?"

Both spoke with a simple directness—with the manner of those dealing in ultimate moments with the unmistakable facts.

"You told me last night that you were doing as you do because of what I have said. I cannot take the responsibility. I'd rather that you thought even worse of me than you do. Oh!" she cried, bending her head down on her hands, which clasped the rack of the piano. "I am, false—false! I cannot be true even in my falsity. All that I have been telling you is not the truth."

"Yes?" he interrupted, eagerly.

"When you judged me—when you told me—or showed me what you thought of me—I recognized what I was doing—what I was. I saw I was false. My pride drove me to do something else. It was a punishment for myself—a price I must pay. As falsely as you thought I tried to please you—as falsely, *really*, I made myself hateful to you. I told you every untrue, miserable thing of which I could think. It seems as if any little remnant of dignity which I had demanded it. But to have you say that you were influenced by my lies—were going to give up so much that was splendid and great—because of them! Oh, you must believe me now. I could not bear it."

"Then you don't think I am altogether contemptible?"

"I think you are the finest and best and strongest man I know," she said, bravely.

On one knee, beside her, he had his arm about her.

"Bless you, darling," he cried. "Then I can tell the truth, too. I think that you are the dearest and sweetest woman, and I love you—love you!"

"I—I don't deserve it," she sobbed.

"I would not," he said, "let myself believe what you told me at first, but then I would not let myself believe what you said afterward. I hoped——"

"Oh, it was so hard for me. Can't you understand? There was expiation in it. Don't you think it enough?"

"I think we have both been mistaken and unhappy."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Since the first I have changed. It taught me a lesson. I am different—really."

"We'll have everything all right now, and that is all."

"But you are going away," she exclaimed.

"I said I was going away unless one thing happened."

"Yes," she said, eagerly.

"Very well—it has happened."

The sound of the brush striking sharply and with metallic distinctness on a dustpan came from the room beyond.

"Perhaps we had better go on the terrace," he laughed. "Really, you know, we ought to have moonlight and mystery, but——"

Together they went out through the open door into the fresh, soft morning air. The warm scent of the garden blew up to them. A large, yellow butterfly fluttered peacefully by. The dew still lay on leaf and flower, glittering in a thousand sparkles.

"The night is the time for romance," he said. "Any well managed proposal should be made under the stars."

"But the morning, such a morning," she exclaimed, softly, and clasping her hands in ecstasy. "And as this is going to be a beginning for me, I like the morning better."

THE MIRACLE OF DAWN

By Madison Cawein

What it would mean for you and me

If dawn should come no more!

Think of its gold along the sea,

Its rose above the shore!

That rose of awful mystery,

Our souls bow down before.

What wonder that the Inca kneeled,

The Aztec prayed and pled

And sacrificed to it, and sealed,

With rites that long are dead,

The marvels that it once revealed

To them it comforted!

What wonder, yea! what awe, behold!

What rapture and what tears

Were ours, if wild its rivered gold—

That now each day appears—

Burst on the world, in darkness rolled,

Once every thousand years!

Think what it means to me and you

To see it even as God

Evolved it when the world was new!

When Light rose, earthquake shod,

And slow its gradual splendor grew

O'er deeps the whirlwind trod.

What shoutings then and cymbalings
Arose from depth and height!
What worship-solemn trumpetings,
And thunders, burning white,
Of winds and waves, and anthemings
Of Earth received the Light!
Think what it means to see the dawn!
The dawn, that comes each day!
What if the East should ne'er grow wan,
Should never more grow gray!
That line of rose no more be drawn
Above the ocean's spray!

THE SONG OF BROADWAY

By Robert Stewart



A certain club of good fellows of both sexes, journalists, authors, illustrators, actors, men of pleasure, and Bohemians generally, used to gather on Sunday evenings, a merry decade ago, round the hospitable table of an Italian lady who had acquired her culinary accomplishments under the distinguished eye of M. Martin—late chef to M. de Lesseps, and present proprietor of Martin's Restaurant—before she attempted to practice on her own account, so to speak, in the basement of a dingy brick house in West Twelfth Street.

Signora Maria was a trusting soul in those days, and many a hungry poor devil has hung up his hat, coat and dinner there, and blessed his kind hostess as he quaffed her red ink. We didn't say claret; we called out: "Where's my red ink bottle, Maria?" And Maria would put down the soup tureen she was going from table to table with, and fetch us a pint of her *ordinaire*. It was sour stuff certainly, which even Maria's radiant smile couldn't sweeten, but budding genius is careless of the morrow, and on Sunday evenings, especially, when Maria held her salon in the boarded back room, built out over the yard, vast quantities of it were gayly consumed, along with cigarettes, and coffee, and flaming *pousse-café*s.

In one sense, at least, our function was appropriate to the night. Everybody "came prepared"—women and men both—like a country Experience Meeting. Jokes cracked like lightning through the tobacco clouds; songs of love and war trembled and roared above our heads; humor and pathos, those twin slaves of the lamp, sported and wept at our bidding; in a word, no end of youthful bombast, and kind laughter, and harmless, gratified vanity, was exhibited there. It was really more like a Montmartre *cabaret* than any place I ever saw in New York. Only, with humblest apologies for disparaging their worldliness, the ladies were so evidently good, sincere, faithful friends, wives, mothers, sweethearts, that some of us watched their happy gayety with grateful, pleased eyes.

A Judas came to that kindly board, and betrayed to a newspaper these merry, honest folk at their simple feast. Stupid, prosperous commercial persons pushed their way in and stared at them. They fled away, scared at last, to more inaccessible haunts.

But on one particularly jolly evening, to return to a text memories of tried friends and happy hours have beguiled me from, among a number of notable guests one who "favored," Mr. Wilton Lackaye, then appearing as that white-eyed, hairy, awful *Svengali* everybody so loathed and applauded, dramatically recited a remarkable and original poem called the "Song of Broadway." Many a time since have I remembered the scene, the song, the company; the long, wine-stained tables, the eddying cigarette smoke, the acute, lively faces. In one way or another, everyone there was a trained observer, and knew his Broadway.

It is rather a bold thing to say you know your Broadway. As I, too, sing my song about it, if I sound a note once or twice you have never heard, oh, thank Heaven, and turn away! With us, I trust, it will be but a minor chord. So every stroller there recognized the world he lives in, and the child, the mother, the cabby, gambler, pickpocket, doctor, parson, each carries off his or her own bundle of impressions.

Leaving it, then, to graver historians to trace the financial, commercial and social evolution of this tremendous street, which was a forest trail once, within whose sylvan solitudes red men roamed and wild beasts prowled, let us from our humble station, as men of the world and social philosophers, describe merely that stretch of it which begins at Madison Square and ends at Forty-fifth Street; where it is high noon at eight o'clock at night, and bedtime when the gray dawn comes shivering cold and ghastly into hotel corridors where the washerwomen are scrubbing the marble floors. "Little old Broadway," as it is affectionately toasted in the vernacular of its *habitués*, wherever rye whisky is drunk, and faithful homesick hearts recall its lights, its pleasures and its crowds.

Broadway, I say, at eight o'clock at night, is the most fascinating street on earth. It is *en fête* every evening; and you have only to walk that mile often enough, and the whole town will display itself at leisure and at its ease, perfectly unconscious and natural and selfish. It is not the lights; it is not the brilliant hotels, and theaters, and restaurants, and shops, and tramcars, and hurrying cabs; it is not the music that floats out to you on the rippling surface of the town's deep voice; it is not that voice itself, vibrating as it is with every emotion of the human heart, of pleasure, excitement, careless gayety, shame that has ceased to care, lust whispering its appeal, modesty's shocked sigh, innocence's happy prattle, kind laughter, friendly chat, unexpected hearty greetings; it is the vast, shifting, jostling, loitering, idle crowd, the multitude of a huge cosmopolitan city that is the spectacle, and that to a man who knows his town is more dramatic, and humorous, and pathetic, and fascinating than all the plays to which young ladies, and their papas, too, are hurrying, to thrill, and laugh, and cry over.

Think of a mile of street, brilliant like a drawing room almost, and swarming with all kinds of men and women from all over the world, each seeking his or her particular amusement and finding it. Pleasure is the commodity on sale here, and one can obtain it at any of those glittering signs blazing out over the crush, or traffic in it with the venders of the pavement.

Isn't it marvelous? Isn't it wonderful? as the conjurer says when he cuts your watch out of an onion. Mr. Conjurer returns your watch in safety, but it retains that delicate perfume which only the time it chronicles can wear away. Many an ingenious traveler has stepped out of his hotel to watch this magic spectacle for a little, and brought back with him bitter remembrances that all the tears shed secretly won't ever wash out.

Tant pis! You are not a preacher, monsieur. There is only one church on your Broadway, and that is dark and shut and sold to a syndicate. The only religion one gets here is the Bibles in the hotel bedrooms, and at Jerry McAuley's Cremorne Mission, round the corner in Thirty-second Street. What, then? Nobody claims Broadway to be a domestic scene, and children and nursemaids don't constitute its charm.

Look north, from where we have turned into it, after lighting our cigars at Van Valkenburg's, under the Albemarle Hotel, and those dazzling signs will tell you what most people come here for: Martin's, Weber's Music Hall, the Imperial Hotel, the Knickerbocker Theater, with Mr. Sothern in "Hamlet," Hoster's, Kid McCoy's Café, Brown's Chop House, Grand Opera, Rector's Restaurant—to dine, to drink, to smoke, to stroll, to see the play, to watch each other. Did you ever see so much light, so much life? Halt where sedate business halts, too, at the St. James Building, frowning darkly down on gay, hoydenish Martin's, whose roguish, Parisian eyes twinkle mischievously up at it, as if they know the tall, somber old hypocrite has a score of wicked theatrical agencies hidden away in its locked heart, and just *see!*

Straight ahead of you, within ten minutes' brisk walk, are twenty theaters, sixteen hotels, six expensive restaurants, two huge department stores, the *Herald* newspaper palace, with the elevated road cutting across its face, several tall apartment houses thrusting up their lighted windows into the night, telegraph offices, bars, apothecaries, florists, confectioners, tobacconists, jewelry shops galore, all signed with electricity, and producing that wonderful glitter and glare that is both so bizarre and so enchanting. A street, do we call this? It is a scene, most theatrical and gorgeous, and set for the great human comedy which is even now being displayed upon it.

In this theater you perceive audience and actor alike occupy the stage, as they used to do in the old London playhouses; and poor little flower girls are pushing their way through our throng, also offering the roses that fade so fast after they are plucked. Anything makes an interest, an excitement; a fire engine tearing across Thirty-sixth Street, a policeman marching a thief to the precinct house, an ambulance clanging down Sixth Avenue, a newsboy asleep on the Dime Savings Bank steps, the bronze hammers striking nine on the *Herald* clock, a Corean embassy driving up to Wallack's Theater in their soft felt hats and gorgeous robes.

Never were a lot of people more easy to be amused, more eager to laugh or sympathize. A gentleman's hat blows up in the air; hoots of laughter explode after it. It rolls under an express van; a dozen citizens spring to its rescue. Nerves are on edge. Stimulants are exciting keen brains. It is a trifle savage, this crowd. Look! See them hustle that masher! His hat's smashed already. The poor child he was persecuting is crying with fright. A woman, not given to such a pure embrace, has her arm about her; a big "plain-clothes man" is drying her eyes with his handkerchief; a couple of young stock brokers are bargaining with cabby on his box to drive her home. Ah, that is a pretty sight! I think Mr. Addison would have liked to see it, and Dick Steele, I know, would have slipped a bank note into her hand. Oh, burst of sunshine in the darkness! Oh, chivalry and kindness beaming out on fast Broadway! Oh, reckless, hardened sinners loving innocence and kneeling to it!

But come; this is still Broadway. A block off they know nothing of all this. Above us Daly's is closing and its fashionable audience pouring out on the pavement. In Twenty-ninth Street, the Cairo, the Alhambra, the Bohemia, are just as brilliant and fascinating as usual.

I remember, one evening, as I was passing the ladies' entrance to the Gilsey House, on my way home from the club, out comes a visiting family party—*monsieur et madame et sa fille*. Monsieur stops, buttoning up that "good frock coat," the uniform of the American senator, which has proclaimed Squedunk through every capital in Europe. He stands, the oracle of the post office, the rich man of the county, the benignant elder of the Congregational church, gazing across the way at all the flaring signs toward Sixth Avenue.

"Ah," says he, smiling reminiscently, "the Midway. Let's go and look at 'em, my dears."

I had a wicked impulse to go, too, and see what happened. But I repressed it, and took the liberty to inform Mr. Smallville that those places were not especially recommended for ladies. I think miss was mortally offended with me for upsetting the program.

Are other people secretly disappointed, too, because they can't get a peep behind those closed doors? It was Madam Eve, I believe, who first tasted the apple; it was Pandora who lifted the lid of the box of troubles; propose a slumming party, and be sure it is the ladies who will applaud loudest. Well, then—those places, dear Miss Smallville are—very much like the zenanas the foreign missionaryess told you about last autumn in the church parlors. Now you know all about it. Ask your brother Tom if I'm not correct. I wager he can tell you if he chooses.

It is a curious fact, by the way, that all the places which make Broadway notorious are in the side streets. Just as it is a curious misnomer to call the toughest section of it the Tenderloin. Broadway has no slums. Laboring people, even, never make any distinguishable element in its populace. This is, of course, owing to its geographical position. But there is one fact which is immensely to its credit, and is perhaps due to the Irish who govern it, if they do prefer Fifth Avenue to parade in. For when Brian Boru—from whom every loyal Irishman is descended—was king, didn't a beauteous damsel, with a ring of price, stroll unprotected and in safety over his kingdom? Beauteous damsels with rings of price certainly stroll unprotected over Broadway, but this is not the fact I emphasize. It is, seriously, that it is quite possible for young ladies to walk this fastest mile in the United States, with their papas and mammas, every evening, and write home to Kate that "it is just like Saturday night on Main Street, only bigger." No sensible girl could promenade the Strand or the Bois after theater hours, no matter how chaperoned, and then make such a comparison. Huzza! I say. Huzza! It is America's compliment to her women.

Still, however decorously Broadway subdues its hilarity before the ladies, like a fast young man at a tea party, we all know it is not in the least like Saturday night on Main Street. Let us saunter along, like two men of the world, perfectly competent to recognize vice, but infinitely preferring to smile at honest gayety, and find out what this crowd really is that is again packing the pavement as the theaters turn out their audiences.

Principally, so much in the majority as to characterize it, men of affairs, country merchants, out-of-town visitors, with and without their womenkind, the New York audience to whom actor and clergyman alike make their appeal; while circling about in it, embroidered so to speak on its surface, is that other crowd—high fashion, artists, actors, distinguished visitors, wardmen, Bohemians, sporting people, thieves and confidence men—which also produces its effect, and lends its coloring and vivacity to the picture. The side streets, looking east at least, are respectable, but they are not brilliant. Fashion, Bohemia and fast life are, after all, what we have come to watch. And as fashion mostly cuts Broadway—where it used to live and promenade when Mr. N. P. Willis' natty boots pattered about Fourteenth Street—at the first crossing, it is Bohemia and the "wise push" we will sup with.

In Broadway parlance, Bohemia means newspaper and theatrical people. And I venture to remind the ladies and gentlemen of the drama in presenting them in such a company, that I am painting a city nocturne, and may properly introduce Mr. Morgan, Mr. Beerbohm Tree, Father Ducey, dear man, in his cape overcoat, Al Smith leaning against the Gilsey House railing, or any other characteristic and familiar figure natural to the composition. No picture of Broadway would be complete, they will acknowledge, without them, and to use a metaphor I have before employed, they are certainly accustomed to occupy "the center of the stage" with dignity and elegance.

Anyway, they all come here, and I should think they would all love it. This part of Broadway is nicknamed the Rialto. Nowhere else are they taken so cordially and frankly by the hand. They lounge about it by day and win fame and fortune in its theaters at night. Nat Goodwin and his wife, Hackett and Mary Mannering—when they can meet—Sir Henry Irving, De Wolf Hopper, Miss Annie Russell, bowing to Charles Richman out of a cab, Amelia Bingham, Joseph Jefferson, whose only fault is that he isn't immortal, and funny, rollicking Fay Templeton, humming a new coon song—old favorites and new ones, you may see them going to supper at the Lambs' Club, the Players, the Waldorf, Delmonico's, Sherry's, any evening they are in town.

Broadway is darker. The theater lights are out. Only bars and apothecaries, shops and hotels, are brilliant. The opera is over, and carriages are whirling away toward Fifth Avenue, and tramcars crawling along in procession, packed to the platforms with gayly dressed passengers. Across the way from Macy's huge dark store, the *Herald* presses are rushing off the biography of the day in sight of everybody, and no philosopher moralizes on that awful, tremendous record of four-and-twenty hours of a whole world's work, play, crime, suffering, heroism, love, faith.

Our fast friends must tremble as they pass those windows, and remember the relentless, watchful eyes forever fixed on them. The ladies and gentlemen of this society dine at Shanley's and Rector's, and call supper *lunch*. Except that they are more painstakingly dressed, they don't look very different from others. I have often thought that such a congregation might gather in Trinity Chapel, say, and be preached to by an innocent clergyman with a weary sense of the futility of trying to make such evidently virtuous persons penitent.

Should you like to really know them? They are thick about you on every hand. Drama and tragedy and pathos are in rehearsal now; and that old comedy of "A Fool and His Money." Walk a few blocks with the night clerk of Wilson's chemist shop. Get to know the bookmaker coming out of George Considine's Metropole bar, chat with our acquaintance, the plainclothes man. Join that man-about-town, on his way to the Astoria Club. Masks will be torn off then, every actor will be seen as he is. That family coachman is a burglar just out of Auburn. That thin, alert gentleman in evening clothes is a gambler, getting a breath of air before taking his place behind Daly's wheel. That pale-faced student is a reporter on his way to "hit the pipe." That sweet-faced girl will be screaming drunk by two o'clock—the pale little man in mourning is the most notorious divekeeper in America. The one with the beautiful silver beard is a race-track owner over in New Jersey, and they call the red-headed Jew talking to "Honest John Kelly" the king of the gold-brick men. This well-dressed gentleman with the large hands is Corbett, the pugilist; that kindly-faced, handsome one, going into Tom O'Rourke's, is a famous all-round sport. Notice that beautifully gowned, superbly handsome

brunette who is getting out of a hansom at Martin's Restaurant. She had a yataghan in her flat she brought from Paris with her, and she caught it up one night and drove it into her lover's neck, and was acquitted on the ground that it was done in self-defense.

Do you want more detailed biographies, or is your acquaintance sufficiently extended? The owls on the *Herald* building are staring knowingly at the moon, who is coquettishly hiding her face behind a cloud. Mr. Greeley has fallen asleep in his chair, facing Mr. Dodge, after listening to that eternal long temperance speech which is never ended. I don't think Broadway is amusing after midnight.

Let's go to Brown's and have some deviled kidneys and a mug of Bass.



GREEN DEVILS AND OLD MAIDS

By Emerson G. Taylor



Miss Herron guided the fat horses into the byroad with the manner of a navigating officer on the bridge of a liner. Not even after they were straightened out, and dropped their quickened gait to the usual comfortable trot, did she uncloset her lips or take her gray eyes from her course.

"Is anything coming behind us, Lucy?" This to the young girl beside her.

"No, Cousin Agatha. He kept straight on."

"You're sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Well, that's a mercy." For the first time she leaned back a little. "But I wonder that John Arnold so much as dreamed of trying to pass me."

"You drive so splendidly," replied the girl, drooping her pretty head so that the big white hat quite shaded her face. "The way you beat Mr. Arnold was fine. He looked so silly when we passed him. You're so brave and—and skillful. It makes one feel so safe to be with you."

"Of course I've driven all my life," Miss Herron admitted. "Your grand-uncle, the judge, my dear, always insisted that driving was part of a gentlewoman's education, like household management or a knowledge of English history. A bit of a race is only amusing, but what with these automobiles, there's no pleasure in horses at all nowadays."

"They certainly *are* dangerous."

"Dangerous! They should not be allowed on the roads at all. Any more than—than drunken men. The comparison somehow pleases me, Lucy. Did you observe it?"

"Yes, yes, Cousin Agatha." The girl turned to the older lady a face very young and fair and eyes that shone. "I was laughing at it all the time."

It was a great pleasure, so Miss Herron assured all her friends, to feel sure that her little cousin was for a few months at least to be brought under the influence which had shaped the lives of her New England forebears. For the child to live in Herron House, to grow in knowledge of her race, so splendidly patriotic, so consistently rich and cultivated from the days when Barham was part of a colony, seemed to the proud old lady a real necessity for Lucy. She must never forget that she was a New England gentlewoman; she must learn the traditions, stiffen with the pride of her race. And because these things might grow dim or be clean forgotten, did she spend all her days in the noisy, extravagant city or the lazy places abroad.

Miss Herron rejoiced when Lucy's father laughed, and replied to her request by sending the child to her for a whole long summer.

"She is very dear to me," he had whispered, looking across the room to where Lucy was chattering as she poured tea. "And very lovely, Agatha."

"She has the Herron look," she had answered, complacently.

"You'll take ever so good care, of her?"

"I may be trusted, I think, not to abuse any member of my family."

Quiet, sunny days followed. There were hours in the glowing garden, murmurous with bees, heavy with delicate perfume of box and verbena and mignonette; hours in the great old house, with its family treasures of plate and china and mahogany, where ancient Chloe and Sylvester still served as in the days when they had followed North that kindly Yankee major they had found helpless after the doings in the Shenandoah Valley. There were company at dinner, less formal gatherings on the piazza of a moonlight evening, when accredited youngsters from the summer colony amused and sometimes scandalized Miss Herron with their laughter and singing. And now and then Lucy would be carried off to other houses of Barham; whence she would return to render a supposedly exact account of all she did and said. Only twice since the first of June did Miss Herron fail in her promise to Lucy's father and to herself. And these occasions had been within the last ten days, when her old neuralgia had laid her low. What her charge was up to at those times, Miss Herron did not care to inquire. It was ordered that not even Lucy should come near when cousin Agatha was in pain, and therefore uncertain in temper as well as a bit careless as to costume.

"Tell me," the old lady asked, after they had driven some distance along the shady road, "are you really enjoying your stay here?"

"Yes, indeed. I think Barham's just lovely."

"And what's most lovable in it?"

Lucy stole a look from under her broad hat brim, then retreated. "I don't believe I know," she said, simply. "It's all——"

"Charming. Of course. I'm glad you think so. We could dispense with the strangers, however. They don't belong here. They are vulgarly rich and *parvenu*."

"Some of them are nice, Cousin Agatha," the child protested, deferentially.

"Who, for instance?"

"All those who come to the house."

"A pack of rascals!" the old lady replied, crisply. "Laughing like—hyenas, if that's the animal. It's a mercy that the boys and girls are sent to good schools. They learn some decent behavior, though of course they haven't had your advantages, my dear. But I dislike their mothers. They are rich, but they have no poise. Poise, my dear, and the marks of long descent. But the children may develop. All but one of them."

Lucy's face grew gently mutinous. "Which is that, cousin?"

"That yellow-haired boy of——" She checked her reply abruptly to listen. The horses were reined in. "My dear," she asked, resignedly, "what was that noise I heard?"

There was no mistaking that honk of the goose many times strengthened, and, following this, the low, steady sputter of a gasoline engine. The nigh horse's ears pricked up, then were laid back; his honest mate stopped short to await developments.

"I'm afraid," ventured Lucy, "that it's an automobile."

"The wretches, to choose this road! Are they coming? Go along, there!" cried Miss Herron to the horses, who sprang forward as she laid the whip on their fat flanks. "If we can get just beyond the woods I can turn out for it. But—oh, the *wretches!*"

"Honk-honk!" close behind now.

"Oh!" cried Lucy. She knelt up in the carriage seat, looking back along the road.

"Wave to him, my child." Miss Herron leaned back on the reins. Her thin cheeks flushed up, and her gray eyes were like coal fires. "Signal the creature to slow up."

"I am, Cousin Agatha. I am waving as hard as I can." She was standing now, meeting with a lithe motion of supple knees and slender hips each plunge of the hurrying carriage, one little hand on the back of the seat. And with the other, Lucy, who looked at cousin Agatha and then laughed—just a little—signaled gayly if vaguely to the driver of the coming car. This was a young man, whose hair—for he wore no hat—shone in the sun like crisp gold wire.

"Honk!" spoke the horn, "honk!" and then three times more in quicker succession.

Lucy laughed aloud. "Isn't he silly?" And then waved once more.

"Honk!"

"Whoa!" commanded Miss Herron, drawing her steeds to the side of the road. "Stand still, and don't be so foolish. It's only"—she hesitated, then pronounced the word as though it profaned her speech—"an automobile."

"May I pass you?" came the driver's voice from behind. The choking reek of the gas drifted down and enveloped them.

"It's all right," caroled Lucy. "Come ahead!" Then she dropped down to her seat beside her companion, light as a sparrow.

"Is it coming?"

The horses snorted, swerved, and plunged heavily. There swept by a vision of dark green and shining brass, the chuck-chuck-chuck of machinery.

"Oh, do be careful, Arch!" cried Lucy, for the ponderous machine ground through the soft bank that hemmed in the road on that side, and canted dangerously for a second or two. Then it whirled up the road, with the dust thick in its trail, and through the haze the driver's yellow head shining. The fat horses shivered, and stood fast.

"The wretch! I *knew* it was young Fraser."

"It wasn't like him," Lucy murmured, and a hint of a smile crossed her lips, "to have driven by us so fast."

"I'd not expect it of him, certainly."

"Nor I." And Lucy sighed in spite of herself. She was not very old.

"Ha!" Miss Herron bestowed a lightning glance on her unconscious little passenger, and found it her turn to smile, but with a kind of grimness. "Indeed!" she remarked, and added, under her breath after a queer pause: "How *very* extraordinary!"

They drove along quietly after that for some minutes, for Miss Herron requested silence that she might compose herself the more readily after her fright. The road led them up a gentle incline, then turned sharp to the right, and a couple of hundred yards forked to lead around both sides of a hill. It was not till the horses approached this point that their driver opened her lips. She had worn, all the time that she was quieting her nerves, a look of anxiety into the midst of which would break every now and then the kindest and briefest of whimsical smiles.

"Which direction shall we take?"

Lucy started from her reverie. She, too, had said no word. "This is Steven's Forks, isn't it? Shall we go to the right?"

"Toward home, then?"

"Yes," said Lucy, eagerly, "toward home. To the right, please."

The talk brightened then. And Lucy in particular chattered away at desperate speed, exclaiming over the rolling landscape, telling her old hostess how much she had enjoyed Barham.

"That is very pleasant to hear," replied Miss Herron, graciously enough. "I am only sorry that my indisposition last week prevented our——"

"Please don't think of it, Cousin Agatha."

"No? My dear, have you ever been visited by neuralgia?"

"I mean," explained the child, eagerly and shyly together, "that it didn't interfere with my good times at all."

"I understand. Silly girl, why don't they teach you to say things properly! But I know exactly what you mean."

"Not *really!*" A quick dismay chased away the arch gayety.

"And I'm very glad if you had what you would call a good time."

"Oh, I did! It's all been delightful," Lucy contrived to stammer, and then fell to scanning the road, which stretched away for a long half mile ahead of them, white and level.

"A good road for those wretched machines," observed Miss Herron. "I see one has been along it." And she pointed to the track of broad tires they were following.

"Wouldn't a farm wagon leave those marks?"

"Possibly, but——" She rose slightly in her seat, and peered ahead. She laughed aloud as she gathered up her reins and touched the horses into a brisk trot. "This may be the workings of Providence, my dear."

"Perhaps, Cousin Agatha."

"Is that thing yonder green?"

"There's only one person in it, and—and he's getting out now. It's stopped."

"Anything more?"

"Oh!" cried Lucy, and now it was hers to stand, "I think——"

"Indeed!" remarked Miss Herron. "I fancied I saw that yellow head of his."

"The workings of Providence!" Lucy sighed.

"How perfectly absurd! Don't be irreverent, miss."

As they approached the machine, young Fraser was quite invisible; but when at last Miss Herron had coaxed her horses up to it, and made them stand, he crawled out from beneath it somewhere, red-faced, dusty and with black grease on his hands.

"The penalty of recklessness!" observed the old lady, surveying the boy as though he was inanimate stone. "Broken down."

"How d'ye do, Miss Herron?" said Fraser, apparently much embarrassed. "Lucy——"

"Is that machine really broken?" The joyful hope in Miss Agatha's voice was quite unconcealed. "Smashed?"

"There's something wrong, certainly," the boy confessed, ruefully. His regard sought Lucy's. "But just what's amiss I can't see."

The old lady shook her head warningly. Some outward manifestation she had to make in order to conceal the joy which, like a warm cordial, penetrated every fiber of her being as a certain plan shaped itself in her mind. This was the automobile which had frightened her horses and set her nerves twittering; and now it reposed by the roadside helpless. This was the reckless, handsome boy who had set her guests laughing on an occasion requiring a measure of decorum, since the bishop honored her house with his presence; who now, with every appearance of impotent anger, was tinkering with the vitals of a hot engine, dirty and perspiring. Miss Herron admired the idea which grew before her imagination as she would have admired a beautiful, unfolding flower.

"It ought to go now," the boy announced, after some further bungling examination. What his testing and poking was supposed to accomplish did not appear. He spoke with an odd ruefulness, and seemed to try to deepen the impression his tone conveyed by another look at Lucy eloquent of regret.

"Try it," said Miss Herron.

The boy threw over the balance wheel; there came forth a clank and some faint clicks from the engine's interior; then cold silence settled upon it again.

"No go," reported Archibald, and proceeded to explain what by rights should have come to pass. "But none of these engines are perfected," he added.

"So there you must—remain? Two miles from any assistance?"

"Yes, Miss Herron."

"I rather question the willingness of any of our Barham folk to aid a shipwrecked automobile. You drive them so heedlessly, young gentleman. I confess," she continued, judiciously, "that I rather enjoy your plight."

The boy grinned delightfully. "So do I. It isn't often"—how express the light mockery that danced on his lips!—"that my accidents are so charmingly compensated as this is."

"I am quite serious, Mr. Fraser."

"I am equally so, Miss Herron."

A moment they regarded one another in silence. "I am inclined to offer you some assistance, I think," the old lady announced, deliberately. "Merely out of common humanity. I have read that the drivers of automobiles often depend on friendly or highly paid wagoners to—to tow them. Now——"

Archibald drowned the rest in thankful protestations. And——

"It would be awfully kind of you, Cousin Agatha," said little Lucy, suddenly finding her voice. "I'm sure that Archie——"

"Eh?"

"It would be very nice indeed," the child contrived to say, and tried to look unconscious.

"If you could help me a little," explained Archibald, and his own cheeks flamed, though his eyes faltered not a bit. "The break isn't very serious, I guess."

A second time Miss Herron considered in silence. She turned deliberately and looked at Lucy, who returned her questioning glance with a stare of babylike innocence; her gray eyes interrogated the boy.

"If you can assure me that your machine can't go," said Miss Herron, "I'll tow you."

For a brief second Archibald hesitated. Then he fumbled among the levers; raised the hood again; returned to the driver's seat, and fingered at something the ladies could not see. "She can't be moved," the boy reported.

From the fence along the roadside a loosened rail was wrenched; an honest cow, picketed at pasture, had her tether shortened a dozen feet in two strokes of the boy's knife. In five minutes more, amid many warnings from Miss Herron against scratching the varnish, one end of the rail was made fast to the rear axle of the carriage, and the other to the automobile.

"Now jump in," ordered Lucy, radiant with smiles; and she pointed to the back seat.

"Mr. Fraser," her cousin amended, calmly, "will continue in his automobile. To—to steer, if necessary."

"But——"

"I should prefer it, if you please." The horses strained forward, the wheels turned; the triumphal procession was under way. "My dear," said Miss Herron, "will you be good enough to hold your parasol over me? The sun is very uncomfortable."

All the way home, the length of Barham Street, where the people stared and laughed, young Fraser repeated all the maledictions he could remember or invent. For the dust choked him, and the view of Lucy's back as she sat holding the parasol over her cousin did not cheer.

"I'll get even—oh, more than even!—with you, dear lady," he promised, releasing his tiller to shake his fist at Miss Herron's unconscious and unbending figure, "if it takes all summer. I wonder if she could have guessed. And it was planned so perfectly."

Barham laughed over the story, laughed again when at the Richmonds' dance Lucy came back into the glare of the lights with the Fraser boy, dazzled and bright-cheeked, after half an hour's absence in the darkness of the great garden. And how many of the gossips would have given their ears to have heard the long talk between Miss Agatha and Lucy's father on the night of his arrival? So the slow summer drifted by.

If the Revolutionary Daughters had not arranged their September meeting on the day that a freight wreck made the trains from Barham westward very late and irregular; if Miss Herron had not been waiting a fretful half hour in the dusty station for the means of reaching the meeting before it was over, when Archie Fraser drove his car thither in a search for an express package, the latter part of this story would have been very different. But as the boy stopped his panting, throbbing machine at the edge of the platform, Miss Herron looked out the window.

"I am waiting for a train," she remarked, on the heels of her stiff little greeting, "for Oldport."

Archie glanced at the old lady's delicate dress and at the badge of gold and enamel she wore on her breast. "The R. D.'s?" he asked, respectfully.

"Exactly. I am one of the charter members, as you probably are aware. And to miss the meeting is distinctly vexatious."

"I'm so sorry." He turned to the station agent. "How late's the train?"

"Half an hour or so. She won't make up much comin' this far. And she's got to let the express pass her."

Out by the platform the car murmured its steady, quiet song of power, and quivered with its singing. Archibald started, stung by a sudden hope. If only——

"That will bring you to Oldport very late, I'm afraid," he ventured, feeling his way toward a compassing of his plan. The express package could wait. "I'm very sorry. I wish——" Here he broke off his speech to gaze pensively at the automobile.

"It's very annoying," said Miss Herron.

The station agent winced, as though she had laid a lash across his shoulders, and in his awkward fashion endeavored to apologize for his road's remissness. Like a tradesman reproved by his best customer, he promised Miss Herron that "it shouldn't happen again." It was quite in keeping with her character that she was graciously pleased to accept the man's excuses. And then the agent, fired into an expansive cheerfulness by her kindness, said that which won him the mysterious present he received the following Christmas.

"Why can't *you* take Miss Herron over, Mr. Fraser—hey? I guess that there automobile——"

"That——"

"Automobile," repeated the agent, sturdily. "She'll beat most o' the trains on *this* road."

"The very thing!" He made a mental promise never to forget this man's kindness and tact. "Oldport! It wouldn't take us an hour; and it's the best piece of road in the State."

"The idea!" exclaimed Miss Herron, gently scornful. "In an—automobile!"

"Please come," he begged. "It would be such an honor, and a pleasure, too."

"I should *prefer* the train." But the very fact that she let a note of argument and protest come into her voice gave Archibald instant encouragement.

The station agent, warned by a furious wink, came nobly to the fore. "I'm afraid the train ain't goin' to do ye much good, ma'am. Not for some time, anyway. I never see such a road's this."

"I'll go very carefully," Archie went on, recklessly promising.

"Of course, you know, I dislike those machines, but," Miss Herron confessed, with a fair show of sincerity, "I am rather eager to be present at this meeting." She surveyed with critical eye the deep-cushioned seats, the heavy springs, then the tiller and the various start-and-stop levers. "You think there'll be no danger?"

"Not the least. I'm sure you'd not be afraid, Miss Herron."

"I am afraid," she replied, tartly, "of nothing that man can devise. Be so good as to lend me your arm, Mr. Fraser."

He charmed her by his deferential escort across the platform; he protected the rustling silk of her skirt from any possible fleck of dirt as she mounted to her place; he was solicitous, as a gentleman should be, concerning the dust cloth, and deft as a footman in arranging it. Clearly, as Miss Herron perceived, the boy appreciated the honor she was doing him, and so far earned her approval. Nor were his manners wholly uncouth.

Archie drew on his gauntlets and settled himself, hands on tiller and throttle. "Are you quite ready?" He could not hide his smile. A sweet hour was to follow.

"I am waiting," she answered.

"Go, then."

The ponderous machine leaped forward as if released from a spring, gathering power and speed each half second. Miss Herron laid her hand on the driver's arm.

"Not too fast—all at once," she said. "I——"

"She'll do better when we strike the good road," the driver replied. "This sand checks her badly."

It was so lovely a revenge that lay now in his hand to inflict. This old lady had towed him home once, the laughingstock of the village; she had brought to naught at the same time the scheme which had cost Lucy and himself such a deal of planning. The machine was to be abandoned, they had arranged in that runaway afternoon when Miss Herron kept her room; the carriage was to overtake him in his distress; he was to drive home with the two ladies, holding Lucy's hand on the back seat, and convincing Miss Herron of his superior qualifications to marry into her family. But all this had in the sequel come to less than nothing. It was Miss Herron also who, Archie was convinced, had been at the bottom of his father's sudden determination to attach him to the Paris branch of the Fraser business, and so banish him from all that was dearest and best in the world.

Now, by blessed good luck, Miss Herron was quite in his power to frighten soundly and to land at the gathering of the elect, blown, dusty and disheveled. If he had been more than twenty, he would have thought and acted otherwise than he did; but the likely outcome of his plan never troubled the boy, if indeed it entered his honest head at all. "I'll scare her," remarked Archie, grinning silently, "good and hard."

But, even as he plotted, he wooed her with his politest phrases; laughed, but not too loudly, at the little sparkles of wit, accepted with naïve delight her comments on the skill in driving that a boy of his age could show. For five minutes or so they ran quietly and steadily along a featureless road through barren pastures. There was time enough for his plan to blossom, for Oldport was nearly thirty miles away, and there intervened a village through which to drive at illegal speed.

But by slow degrees, without at all perceiving how it came about, Archie found that somehow his passenger was a very delightful old lady. What had become of the absurd starchiness, which before had so maddened him, of the stiff pride, which had condescended to him as though Fraser & Co. were creatures far beneath the regard of a New England old maid? She asked him questions, she was as interested as could be in his father's plans for him.

"Where will you live in Paris?" asked Miss Herron.

"Oh, over in the Quarter, I hope. It'd be more fun there than in the other house."

"The other house?"

"Ours, you know. Father likes to have his own place when he's over."

"Indeed?"

"We only lease it," Archie explained, ingenuously. "It's up near the Arch."

"Indeed! That should be extremely pleasant."

"I hate the idea of going," the boy blurted out. He looked straight ahead; a slow flush darkened his fair skin.

"Yes?"

"Unless," he murmured, suddenly inspired to madness, "unless——"

Miss Herron readjusted the dust cloth. The boy felt a quick irritation at her apparent inattention; but the purpose, born of her apparent readiness to hear and approve him, held. "I want Lucy to go, too, Miss Herron," he announced, bluntly enough.

"Indeed!"

"Lucy!" he cried. "I do love her so! Please say that I can have her. Please say——"

"Do I understand," she asked, and the boy could not comprehend why her old voice shook so, "that you are making a formal proposal for the hand of Miss Lucy Herron?"

"Yes," he cried, jubilantly. "Oh, say I may ask her."

"If you had intended so far to honor us," the old lady replied, icily, "I should have thought that you would have approached the subject with *some* degree of formality."

"Miss Herron!"

"To speak of such matters in an—automobile is to treat them very unbecomingly. It is not," she continued, and all her unbending rigidity of demeanor was behind her words, "dignified."

"Being dignified," cried Archie, hotly, "hasn't anything to do with being in love." Was it a smile that lighted up her craggy features, like sunshine on granite. "You don't understand."

"Apparently not. I am quite unused to the ways of modern youth. The world's moved very fast in recent years. In an—automobile—as it were."

"But Lucy——"

"Well, Mr. Fraser?"

"I——"

"Let us not refer to her, I beg."

"Not ever again?" he asked, but with no hint of disappointment.

"I am surprised that you so much as dreamed of it under the present circumstances," she replied, tartly.

Archie laughed shortly. "Please forget that I so far forgot myself," he begged. "It *was* wrong, under the present circumstances." All the boy's sunny malice shone from his clear eyes. "I ought to have remembered my real duty and pleasure."

"And that," Miss Herron asked, for once caught unawares, as it appeared, "is what?"

"Watch!" said Archie, briefly.

They had come by now to the beginning of the solid macadam road that runs across the county, to the joy of the chauffeur as to the corresponding dismay of the truck farmers for whom it was constructed. There was nothing ahead to break the long, hard track. Archie reached down beside him, though his eyes never left his course or one hand the steering wheel, and set his hand to some lever. The song of the great machine was for a second broken; then a new song of the road began, louder and fiercer than the first and in quicker measure. Miss Herron felt as she did the first time she descended in the express elevator of a high office building. She was conscious that her hat was tugging at its pins. She settled herself back deeper in the seat and braced her feet stiffly, only to bounce up as they ran over some stick.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Ahem!"

"Sit tight," counseled Archie, suavely. "We'll get there in time, all right, if nothing happens."

"If anything breaks," she remarked, "you can usually get somebody to tow the machine home."

"People are very charitable. Yes, Miss Herron."

"Up to a point."

And to that Archie had no rejoinder. It was perhaps as well that he did not see the smile that his passenger wore. It might have taken the edge off his revenge.

The houses commenced to appear at more frequent intervals now, and took on a character a little different from the old weather-grayed dwellings of the open country. There showed a white, slim church spire above the trees.

"Scarborough," said Archie, and made the horn speak.

"You'll be careful?" she asked. "Through the village——"

"Honk! honk!" This for a couple of children, who, starting to run across the road, doubled back like rabbits. Miss Herron caught just a glimpse of their white faces, and the end of their father's torrent of imprecation. Now it was the horse of a baker's wagon that climbed the bank by the roadside in two leaps and pranced shiveringly. Some boys cheered and then flung stones.

"Dear me!" ejaculated Miss Herron. "I rather hope we'll meet nobody I know."

"The sheriff himself couldn't stop us now."

“But——”

“Honk! honk!”

“Oh, Mr. Fraser!” They missed by a foot a carriage that was beginning slowly to turn around, and was nearly straight across the road when Archie twitched the automobile aside as if it was a polo pony.

“The stupid creatures!” cried Miss Herron, indignantly, when her heart commenced to beat again, “to block the way!”

“That *was* a close shave,” commented Archie.

“Not too recklessly, Mr. Fraser.”

“I must get you to the meeting, ma’am.”

“But the risk——”

“If I can’t have Lucy,” the boy declared, sullenly, “*I don’t* care what happens.”

“Assure me,” demanded his passenger, after a brief moment, during which with no slackening of speed the great machine tore down Scarborough’s main street like a green tornado, “that you retain entire control of the thing.”

“Oh, yes.”

Another pause. “I suggested that you make no mention of Miss Lucy.”

“I can’t have her?”

“How fast *can* the automobile go?” asked Miss Herron, ignoring the boy’s question.

“Some faster than this. But Lucy can——”

“Let us not discuss the matter, please.”

“I can’t have her?”

“I beg, Mr. Fraser, I *beg* you to center your attention on driving your machine.”

“Well, I will, then. I’ll drive her,” said the boy, grimly, “good and fast.” They came again to the open, but the road continued hard and broad, with only long curves around the base of a hill now and then. The wind blew the old lady’s hair into disarray, her dress was gray with dust, her eyes smarted terribly; she gave from time to time a little gasp—or was it a laugh?—and clutched at Archie’s arm, which held so rigid and strong to the tiller wheel. “This’ll be her finish, all right,” he thought. “Cross old cat. Scared?” he asked of her.

“I beg pardon?”

“You’re not scared, I suppose?” he said, mockingly.

“I have been accustomed to fast driving, Mr. Fraser, all my life.”

It was because she made that reply that Archie, quite desperate by now, dared what finally did occur. And this was occasioned by his spying in the distance another big car headed as he was, but moving less rapidly. In a minute he was alongside, and jammed on the brakes. The other driver, who was heavily mustached, red-faced and had three airy young damsels stowed in the tonneau, looked up in surprise.

“Hello, Isidore!”

“Hello! Hello, Mr. Fraser!”

“I’ll race you to the bridge.”

“Go on, now! Watcher think I got here?” But the girls chorused delightedly, and teased their driver—all but one, and she leaned forward to whisper confidingly, with her arms around his fat neck. Miss Herron surveyed the landscape.

“‘Fraid cat!” giggled the girl. “You’re afraid, Mr. Mayer.”

“I ain’t, only——”

“One!” cried Archie, releasing his steed again. “Two!”

“Leggo, May!” grunted the other.

“And——”

“Three!” yelled Mayer. “To the bridge!”

By mere good luck the highway was empty, for to think that any cart or carriage could be passed was absurd. Side by side the huge machines, scarlet, green, alive with shining brass, tore along with the roar of express trains between the ditch and the bank. The slightest swerve at such speed meant death. The chatter of the careless girls dwindled, the faces of the rival drivers grew pale and tense.

"Oh, be careful!" murmured Miss Herron. "It's very dangerous."

"Very," replied Archie. "Promise me Lucy and I'll slow up."

A sudden little shriek of joy and some handclapping from Mayer's tonneau interrupted what the old lady might have answered. Glancing over, Miss Herron perceived that their rival had drawn ahead a yard or more, that the girls were crying taunts at her. Not far away now there showed a gleam of the river. And then Archie encountered the greatest surprise of his life.

"Saucy things!" remarked his passenger, and fell silent again.

"Come on!" called the prettiest of the three, through her hollowed hands. "Old freight car!"

"Archie!"

"Yes, Miss Herron?"

"Can't you— Oh!"

"What, ma'am?" From the tail of his eye he was aware that Miss Agatha was wringing her hands.

"Archie, they *mustn't* beat us!"

"I guess I'll crowd him."

"Oh!"

The time was ripe, he thought. "Give me Lucy," he repeated, doggedly, "or I'll foul him."

He had expected to frighten her. He had told himself what fun it would be to hear her give her agitated assent, with the fear of death on her if she refused. It was to be a fine revenge. But Miss Herron only raised a warning forefinger.

"Archie Fraser," she said, in trembling tones, "if—if you take the dust from those common young women and that vulgar man, I'll never forgive you."

"Great heavens, Miss Herron! I—I—"

"*Beat 'em!*" she ordered truculently.

He stuck blindly to his point: "Lucy?"

"*Beat 'em!* Show me," she declaimed, in trumpet tones, "that the man who wants to marry a Herron has some courage in him. Now!"

The road narrowed just ahead, where it led through a cut in the hill and then down to the bridge. On either side the banks rose eight or ten feet, and very steep, and beyond was a sharp curve. Archie made his horn speak angrily, as once more he came abreast of his rival, favored by the fact that Mayer had struck a strip of newly repaired and soft roadway some yards long. A second later he was leading.

"Pull up!" he bellowed hoarsely, crouching forward over his tiller still lower. He dropped his hand to the emergency brake. The cut was not six rods off. Once more the girls cried out, but this time in shrill fear. Miss Herron remained calm as the Sphinx.

"Honk!" from Mayer, and the click of levers. His machine slid along in a cloud of dust. "You win!"

It was ten minutes before the victors exchanged a single word. They rattled over the long bridge, steered up the streets of Oldport to the place where the Daughters were in session. Then Archie lay back with a sigh.

"You weren't scared a bit!" he exclaimed, frankly doleful.

The old lady straightened her hat, lightly brushed off the top layer of dust from the front of her dress, then gave the briefest of queer little laughs. "It is one of the traits of my family," she said, "never to be surprised at anything. And another," she added, descending majestically from the automobile, "is to make the best of circumstances which appear to be inevitable."

The boy blinked. "I don't understand," he stammered.

Miss Herron touched him on the arm. "I trust, then, that Lucy will express herself to you more clearly. In case—if you should venture to ask her a question."

And with that the old lady minced her way up the steps of the house to disappear within doors.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Archie, as the light began to break.

TWO SORROWS

Before Love came my eyes were dim with tears,

Because I had not known her gentle face;
Softly I said: "But when across the years
Her smile illumines the darkness of my place,
All grief from my poor heart she will efface."
Now Love is mine—she walks with me for aye
Down paths of primrose and blue violet;
But on my heart at every close of day
A grief more keen than my old grief is set,—
I weep for those who have not found Love yet!
Charles Hanson Towne.

LOVE AND MUSHROOMS

By Frances Wilson



Van Mater, out on the coast for the melancholy purpose of witnessing what he conceived to be Corny Graham's crowning indiscretion—that is to say, his marriage—found himself lingering for the purpose of basking in California's smiles. The writing instinct, which in the little old town on Manhattan would keep his hand traveling back and forth across the paper for days at a stretch, here languished and drowsed like some heavy-eyed, faintly smiling lotus eater.

He had, to be sure—in a spurt of energy that subsided almost as quickly as it came—begun a song to that sybaritic state, in which it was represented as a lady around whose neck hung

A chain ablaze with diamond days

All on the seasons strung,

which he thought sounded rather well.

Then, unfortunately, the rains set in and the result was a mental washout that carried the last vestige of his poetical idea out into the vasty deep where individual ideas become world-thought, though there was a moment when he had an inspiration—something about keeping Lent, which should typify the rains. But this, too, drifted off like a chip on an ocean, and the song became mere literary junk.

Probably the law of compensation is responsible for the fact that, while the coast's dazzling summer is flawed by trade winds, its rainy season is tempered by mushrooms. At least, so thought Van Mater. Connoisseur that he was in the joys of living, he confessed to a new sensation when, for the first time, he found himself plodding over the seared, round-shouldered hills, spongy with the supererogatory wetness of a three days' downpour. The rain had ceased temporarily, but the sky wore a look of ineffable gloom, and the feathery mist trailed along the earth like an uneasy ghost.

Some swarthy, dark-eyed Portuguese children, met on the road the day before, had proffered him their pail of spoil, and as he examined its contents he understood, for the first time, what a mushroom really ought to be. Their dank odor—the odor of germinating things—seemed to come from down in the earth where the gnomes are supposed to foregather; and Van Mater's thoughts reverted with withering scorn to certain wooden, tan objects that had been foisted upon him from time to time as mushrooms—always, he now triumphantly recalled, to his own inward amazement.

Why, when and where mushrooms had won their vogue with epicures, he had often dumbly wondered, though he had remained silent lest he expose a too abysmal ignorance. Now he chuckled hilariously. It was his acceptance of those frauds—those mere shells from which the souls had fled—that displayed ignorance! In future he would know better, and he tossed the children a quarter and went his way, in a pleasant anticipation of the manner in which he would carelessly throw off to certain admiring friends:

"But I never eat mushrooms, save they come straight to the table from the soil, picked within an hour of the time when the rain ceases. Those things? Why, my dear fellow, you might as well eat so much gristle. Talk about the bouquet of wine! Why, the bouquet of the mushroom is as delicate and elusive as—as——" The simile failed to materialize, but he went on eloquently: "You can no more preserve it than you can the dew upon a plum." All of which sounded so well that he speculated anxiously upon the probability of any of the said fellows divining how very little he knew about the

matter, after all. They were so deuced knowing, some of them; but it seemed a pity to let an idea like that, what had actually leaped from his brain full-fledged, go to waste. Decidedly, it was worth the risk.

His mind again reverted to the subject with pleasant anticipation when, the next afternoon, clad in knickers and a Norfolk, with a cap pulled rakishly over his eyes, he trudged over the hills to which the children had directed him. Soon, however, everything was blotted from his consciousness save a section of brown hill, over which his eyes roved eagerly in search of the small, Japanese-looking fungi.

"Mushroom or toadstool?" was his stern inward query, as the pert little parasols became more and more numerous; and he did not realize that he had spoken aloud until a gush of laughter caused him to raise his eyes hastily.

She was not three steps away, and from the trim leather leggings, above which her kilted skirt swirled, to the thick sweater and Tam that she wore, she seemed to Van Mater the most dashingly correct damsel he had ever seen. The foggy air had brought a delicious color to her cheeks and brightness to her eye which made her seem a very creature of the out-of-doors, and Van Mater stared, charmed and arrested.

"Evidently you don't recognize me," she suggested. "I was the third bridesmaid—the one in pink—the homely one, you know."

She eyed him with a wicked satisfaction while the color rose to his face. He had a disagreeable recollection, since she identified herself so minutely, that he had rather passed that particular bridesmaid over with scant attention, amazing as it now seemed. Then he recovered himself, and with that gallant movement of the arm which seems the perfect expression of deference, removed his soft cap and bowed low, as he said:

"Of course—I remember you perfectly now, Miss—ah."

He tried, as he took her extended hand, to mumble something unintelligible enough to pass for her name, looking at her with an admiration purposely open in the hope of distracting her attention, but the ruse was of no avail. She only smiled into his face with impish delight.

"You people from the East are so dreadfully disingenuous," she complained. "Why not confess frankly that, so far as you are concerned, I belong to the 'no name' series?"

Her eyes were dancing, and suddenly Van Mater felt as if he had known her always—eons before he had known himself in his present incarnation.

"To think that I shouldn't have recognized you in the pink gown," he murmured, with well-feigned surprise. "And to think that I'm no more surprised than I am to have you suddenly bob up here in the wet, after your wanderings of perhaps a hundred lifetimes! I can't seem to recall the date and planet upon which we last met," he continued, apologetically, "but I fancy that we picked mushrooms in those old times—that the earth and air were all sopping, just as they are now."

"You write books—you know you do!"

"Well—it's a decent enough occupation!"

"Yes," uncertainly. "Still, writers aren't usually very sincere; they don't mean what they say. They spin copy as a spider does a web!"

"Writers not sincere—don't mean what they say!" he echoed. "Why, my dear young lady, you're all wrong. They usually mean so much that they can't begin to say it—and as for sincerity, they're the sincerest people in the world!"

"That is, while it lasts!" he added to himself, but his listener, who had stooped to the ground and was now holding up a particularly large and luscious mushroom, was all unconscious of his reservation.

"Look out! You're stepping on them!" she cried, excitedly, and for the next ten minutes they wandered about with eyes bent on the earth in fascinated absorption. Van Mater at last straightened up with such a thrill of satisfaction as he had not experienced since boyhood.

"My pail's full," he called, seating himself on one of the projecting boulders. "So come and show me where to pick the beefsteaks."

She pointed upward. Where the hill humped itself against the sky the blurred figure of a cow was visible. Van Mater tried again.

"You might come and rest," he coaxed, pointing to another boulder that cropped out in friendly nearness to his own. With a last lingering scrutiny of the ground about, she came, seating herself beside him. Then, with her chin resting on her hands, she surveyed him with a sort of boyish *sang-froid*.

"We're right cozy for acquaintances of a half hour's standing," she remarked, at last. "But, then, I've heard about you for so long. You see, Corny told Beth, and she has—well—mentioned you to me."

"Pooh—that's nothing! I tell you, I've known you for centuries. I remember that when I heard of one of those theosophist fellows marrying a girl he'd known for a thousand years or so, I roared. Now I understand it!" (Very solemnly.)

She did not speak, and he began again with increased seriousness:

"Really, I'm in earnest, you know. I've the most curious sense of—well, of companionship with you—as if we'd known each other indefinitely, as if—"

She interrupted rather hastily.

"Honestly?"

Tersely—"Upon my soul."

She rose somewhat hurriedly. "It's going to rain!"

"Never mind. I have a conundrum. Why is love like a mushroom?"

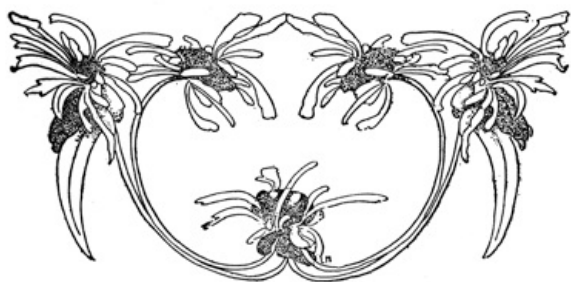
She wrinkled her brow. "Because it's easily crushed, I suppose, and you're never quite sure of it."

"Wrong. Because it springs up in a night—that is, in an hour," he answered, impressively.

The drops began to fall softly, swiftly, easily, as if they would never more be stanch'd.

"Come," she said, but her cheeks were more richly colored than before.

"Isn't this heavenly?" he murmured, as they vanished down the road in a blur of rain. She did not answer, but her eyes were shining.



SOME FEMININE STARS

By Alan Dale

Advertised personalities. Enormous sums squandered on theatrical impossibilities. Amelia Bingham's pluck and restlessness. "Nancy Stair" rather tiresome. Lesser lights in star-dom.



Three thin, anæmic, bedraggled plays, each with a heralded, exultant feminine "star" skewered to its bloodless pulp, dropped into this metropolis just ahead of the reluctant crocus. Three highly advertised "personalities" tried to weather out a veritable emaciation of drama, and the result was, of course, a foregone conclusion. Slowly but surely is knowledge being forced upon the deluded manager, and he is learning to appreciate the vital truth of the much battered Shakespearian quotation, "The play's the thing." No trumped-up interest in one particular puppet will take the place of the drama itself. This is a pity. It is easier to create a marionette than it is to construct a play.

The three highly advertised "personalities" that reached us at crocus time were owned and engineered by Miss Amelia Bingham, Miss Mary Mannering and Miss Virginia Harned. I mention them in the order in which they appeared, which is not necessarily that of superior merit. They came in at the fag end of a tired season, dragging a load of pitiful dramatic bones. Hope ran high, but fell in sheer despondency. In spite of the fact that the poet prefers to picture hope as springing, I think that in this case it may be better portrayed as running. There is a sensation of panic in the race.

Miss Bingham came to town with a very swollen "comedy-drama," called "Mademoiselle Marni," from the pen of a "monsoor," programmed as Henri Dumay—said to be an American "monsoor" at that. This actress affects French plays for reasons that have never been explained, and that certainly do not appear. As a "star," she is of course entitled to treat herself to any luxury that may seem to tempt her histrionic appetite, and the Gallic siren evidently appeals to her. It is not likely that there will be international complications, although the provocation must at times be keen.

"Mademoiselle Marni" was one of those impossible chromos that might have been designed for the mere purpose of giving one's sense of humor a chance to ventilate itself. In the serious theater-goer—and one is bound to consider him—it awoke amazement. How is it that at rehearsal a dozen presumably sane people can "pass" such an effort, he must have asked himself? Why is it that in a theatrical venture that costs a great deal of money, there are no misgivings? The serious theater-goer is never able to answer these questions.

It is almost proverbial that the most hopeless sort of theatrical enterprise—if conventional—never languishes for lack of funds. Try and start a solid business scheme, in which you can calculate results in black and white, and the difficulties and discouragements will be almost insuperable. Endeavor to obtain money for an invention or innovation that has success written across it in luminous letters, and you will “strike a snag,” as the rude phrase goes, with marvelous celerity. But a bad play—one that to the unsophisticated theater-usher or to the manager’s scrubwoman must perforce appear as such—experiences no such fate. This is one of the marvels of theaterdom.

In the case of “Mademoiselle Marni” Miss Bingham herself must have spent an enormous sum that she would probably have hesitated to invest in some enterprise sane or possible. The play was a turgid coagulation of illogical episodes lacking in all plausibility. This particular actress is generally happy when she can select for herself a character that is beloved by all the masculine members of the cast. Apparently, she “sees” herself in this rôle. She likes to appear as the personification of all the virtues, self-sacrificing and otherwise, and this idiosyncrasy is, of course, frequently fatal to sustained interest. We do not care for these sensational paragons.

In “Mademoiselle Marni” Miss Bingham played the part of a very beautiful French actress, of whom everybody said: “Oh, what a woman!” (Perhaps the audience also echoed that phrase, but with quite a different significance.) She was exquisitely in love with *Comte Raoul de Saverne*, who was engaged to another, and was “ordered” away from her by the father of that other. This parent was a very wicked baron, and just as *Mlle. Marni* in an ecstasy of rage was about to strike him, somebody called out: “Do not hit him; he is your father.”

We discovered that *Mlle. Marni* was the wicked baron’s illegitimate child. As he had been saying extremely pretty things to her—for she was so bee-yoo-ti-ful!—you will readily perceive that fastidious people might find this “situation” what some critics love to call “unpleasant.” Wicked barons, viewed in the process of admiring their own daughters, are not exactly long-felt wants upon the New York stage. However, this episode was scarcely offensive, for it was so exuberantly silly that nobody could take it seriously.

Later on, *Mlle. Marni* gambled on the stock exchange, and made two million dollars in a few minutes, so that she could get even with the wicked baron, and force him to recall *Raoul*. In this act the actress wore black velvet, and looked every inch French—Bleecker Street French. It was the “big” scene, and was considered very strenuous by those acting in it. To those in the audience, it merely accentuated the cheap vulgarity of the play, that had no redeeming point, either literary or dramatic. It was, in fact, a forlorn hope.

Perhaps if Miss Amelia Bingham would not select her own plays, she would fare better. She is by no means lacking in histrionic ability. She has done many good things in her day. But the temptation of the self-made “star” to see nothing but her own part in the drama that she buys, is very acute. A satisfactory *ensemble*, a logical story, a set of plausible characters and a motive are all overlooked. Her own “personality” is her sole anxiety, and—well, it is not enough. Miss Bingham was assisted by Frederic de Belleville, Frazer Coulter and others less known to fortune and to fame, but “Mademoiselle Marni” was not accepted. It was staged “regardless,” but even that fact did not count in its favor. Miss Bingham’s pluck and recklessness were alone in evidence.

Scarcely more felicitous was Miss Mary Mannerling with “Nancy Stair.” Miss Mannerling is not as good an actress as Miss Bingham. She is one of the “be-stars-quickly.” A year or two more in some good company would have been of inestimable advantage to her, but the lower rungs of the ladder are not in great demand to-day. That ladder is top-heavy. The upper rungs are worn by the futile grasp of the too ambitious; the lower ones are neglected.

It was Paul M. Potter who tapped on the book cover of Elinor Macartney Lane’s novel, with his not very magic wand, and tried to coax forth a play. Exactly why he did this was not made clear, for the day of the book play is over, and there was nothing in “Nancy Stair” that overtopped the gently commonplace. Mr. Potter’s play was by no means lacking in interest, but we are exceedingly tired of the ubiquitous heroine of tawdry “romance” who does unsubtle things, in an unsubtle way, to help out certain unsubtle “complications.” If I mistake not, these very novels are beginning to pall, as such stupid, meaningless vaporings should do. One cannot resist the belief that one-half of them are written with an eye upon the gullible playwright, for a play means larger remuneration than any novel could ever hope to secure.

It is not necessary to rehearse the story of “Nancy Stair.” I can assume that you have read it, though if you are like me, you haven’t. I look upon Mr. Julius Cahn’s “Official Theatrical Guide” as rich and racy literature compared with these fatiguing attempts to invent impossible people, and drag them through a jungle of impossible happenings—simply because Mr. Anthony Hope, a few years ago, achieved success by similar means, which at that time had a semblance of novelty. I may be “prejudiced,” but then I have at least the courage of my own prejudices. In “Nancy Stair” Mr. Potter even seemed to belittle opportunities that might have raised his play from the dull level of conventionality.

One episode in which *Nancy*, afraid that her lover has murdered the *Duke of Borthwicke*, enters the presence of the corpse, and there forges a letter in the interests of *Danvers*, might have been made into something strongly emotional, creepy and Sarah Bernhardtian. This incident in itself was so striking, and it seemed to be so new—though I believe that Mr. Potter himself repudiates the notion that there can be anything new in the drama—that it was almost criminal to slight it. Nothing was made of it. It almost escaped attention. Instead, we got a crew of comic opera Scotchmen singing songs, and an absurd picture of *Robert Burns*, who was injected pell-mell into the “romance.” It was disheartening.

Those who had read the book complained bitterly of the “liberties” that Mr. Potter had taken with it. Those who had not read the book complained equally bitterly that Mr. Potter had not taken more of those “liberties” and made it better worth his while. To me, the book drama is a conundrum. It always has been, and now that it has nearly died out, I am still unable to solve it. When you read a book, you form mental pictures of its characters, and are generally discontented with those that confront you on the stage. And when you don’t read a book, the play made therefrom lacks lucidity, and you experience the need of a “key.” I should imagine that the dramatization of a novel killed its sale. Who, after viewing “Nancy Stair” as a play, would tackle it as a novel? Of course, when a book is dramatized after it has had a stupendous sale, the author cannot complain. He has no excuse for protesting. This is a somewhat interesting topic.

Miss Mannering coped with *Nancy* as she would cope with *Camille* or *Juliet*, or any character quite outside of her range of ability. In light comedy episodes, she is quite acceptable. She is a very pretty, graceful, distinguished young woman, but her "emotion" is absurd. Her dramatic fervor is such an exceedingly stereotyped affair that you can watch it in a detached mood. You can pursue your own thoughts while she is "fervoring," and she will not interrupt them. Miss Mannering is emotional in a conventional stage way, and she knows a few tricks. But the subtlety that comes from experience, the quality that nothing but a long and arduous apprenticeship can produce, are leagues beyond her ken. It is a pity, but the "be-stars-quickly" all suffer in this identical way and there is no remedy.

Robert Loraine as the "hero" gave a far better performance. It was theatrical, but satisfactory. The late *Robert Burns* was played by T. D. Frawley in a deliciously Hibernian way. Poor Bobbie would have had a fit if he could have seen his nationality juggled with in this manner. If Mr. Frawley had warbled "The Wearing o' the Green" the illusion would have been complete. Mr. Andrew Mack could have done nothing better—for Ireland.

"The Lady Shore" was the title of Miss Virginia Harned's massive production at the Hudson Theater. Jane Shore was dragged, willy-nilly, from history almost as though she were the heroine of a so-called popular novel, and two ladies, Mrs. Vance Thompson and Lena R. Smith, propelled her toward 1905. While, on moral grounds, we may inveigh against the courtesan, when we meet her in everyday life, the fact remains that for the stage there is no character in greater demand by "star" actresses and "romantic" playwrights. They seem to find a peculiar interest in a woman who has "lived"—no matter how. If, in ransacking history, they are lucky enough to discover a courtesan who can be billed as a "king's favorite," they appear to smack their lips exultantly. One is almost inclined to believe that dead-and-gone kings must have chosen "favorites" merely for the sake of to-day's stage.

As soon as the playwright has excavated a courtesan, he begins to think of the best way of whitewashing her. For she must be offered up as more sinned against than sinning. Of course. The playwright wastes his substance thinking up excuses for her. He is quite willing—nay, anxious—that she shall go wrong, but he prefers that she shall be driven to it by untoward circumstances. He is desirous that we shall sympathize with her, to the point of tears, in the last act. It is very kind of him to do such charitable deeds in history's name, and we realize how exceedingly unselfish he is. Just the same, this mania for resurrecting defunct courtesans seems a trifle neurasthenic. It appears to indicate a hysterical sympathy, on the part of the playwright, with dead characters whom, in life, he would hesitate at asking to dinner *en famille*.

The two women who built up "The Lady Shore" smashed history into smithereens in their rabid and frenzied effort to make her an exquisite impersonation of nearly all the virtues. It was, in fact, grotesque and ludicrous. With any old history book staring them in the face, they treated Jane Shore precisely as though she were the heroine of a dime novel. They had no qualms. They lopped great wads from her past, and huge excrescences from her present, and by the time that she had reached the last act, the audience sat dazed at the delicate beauty of her character. No masculine playwright could have done as much. Possibly if the purifiers of Lady Jane Shore elected to dramatize the career of Messalina, they would make of her a combination of Joan of Arc and Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall.

The *Jane Shore* at the Hudson Theater was married to a brute of a husband, but she left him simply because she was driven to it, poor girl! She became the mistress of *Edward IV.*, apparently because she yearned to be a mother to his children. She was always rescuing the little princes from the *Duke of Gloucester*. She sat beside *Edward IV.*, in the council chamber of Westminster Palace, so that she could beseech him to pardon delinquents who were brought before him in a procession of fifteenth century "drunk and disorderly."

There never was a more perfect lady. The playwrights unfortunately omitted to picture her teaching a Sunday school, and I can only imagine that they must have forgotten to do so. *Jane Shore's* love for *Edward IV.* was depicted in such lily tints that you simply hated the memory of your history book that said such rude things about her life after the sovereign's death. The historical "penance" that on the stage seemed so effective was, as we know, really unavailing. Dramatic license is a great thing, and it is pardonable when it is used with discrimination. But made to do duty as a daub, it is unjustifiable. What is the use of going down into history as one thing, if you are to be bobbed up on the stage, after the passage of centuries, as another? To the feminine playwright, the line that separates saints from sinners is an invisible boundary.

As a play, "The Lady Shore" was mere melodrama, of a somewhat incoherent nature. Perhaps if the central character had been imaginary—and it was nearly that—the melodrama would have been all the better for it. Why not invent a good new character, instead of revamping a bad old one? Why not exercise the imagination upon some original creation, instead of straining it around a type that lurks in the libraries? The authors of "The Lady Shore" might have used their labors more advantageously. It is always a futile task to rewrite history. History is cold, and unbudgingly accurate. Why trifle with it?

Miss Virginia Harned, however, escaped from her play. She is an emotional actress of considerable force, as she showed us in her production of "The Lady of the Camelias." She has the power of repression. She is artistic, sincere and graceful. Her work in this diffuse play proved that beyond the peradventure of a doubt, so that her engagement at the Hudson Theater need not be unduly deplored. The *Gloucester* of John Blair was extremely amusing. Such a *Richard*, the most imaginative imaginer could never have dreamed of! He played the part as though the *Duke of Gloucester* were an Ibsen gentleman, battling with a dark green matinée. Mr. Loraine came from "Nancy Stair" to "The Lady Shore," and was *Edward IV.* It would be interesting to know which "heroine" he really preferred. The little princes in the tower seemed to deserve their fate. They were arguments in favor of race suicide.

Two other celestial bodies of the feminine gender, fixed for one brief week apiece on the theatrical "concave," moved quickly in the direction of "the road." These more or less heavenly lights were Miss Odette Tyler and Miss Eugenie Blair, who appeared at those kaleidoscopic theaters called "combination houses." Miss Tyler used to be something of a Broadway "favorite"—a term that has lost a good deal of its significance. She appeared in the little Yorkville Theater on the highroad to One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, in a play of her own, called "The Red Carnation."

No purpose would be served in analyzing this uncanny, chaotic mass, even were it possible to do so. Miss Tyler placed herself amid French revolutionary surroundings, and was seen as a remarkable “romantic” French woman, with a strong American accent and an emphatic New York manner. She fluttered through Paris in 1793, evidently convinced that it was just as “easy” as New York in 1905. She had a caramel demeanor and ice-cream allurements. She kittened and frivoleed through the Reign of Terror with an archness that was commendable, though somewhat misplaced, and she let loose a lay figure labeled *Marie Antoinette* that was designed to frame her own accomplishments.

Familiar as we are with the French revolution, used as a stage motive, “The Red Carnation” threw such a new light upon it all, that we were a trifle dumfounded. Miss Tyler gracefully revised it for us, and made it appear as a somewhat gay and frolicsome time. Moreover, it had all the modern improvements. It seemed to be steam-heated and electric-lighted, and although *Marie Antoinette* did not make her entrance in an automobile, you felt that it was waiting outside. Historians, interested in the French revolution, might get some valuable sidelights from Miss Odette Tyler’s idea of it. The actress herself has an agreeable personality and considerable ability.

The other “star” to whom I have fitfully alluded—Miss Eugenie Blair—has much vogue outside of New York. She came to the Murray Hill Theater with a version of Wilkie Collins’ much-abused “New Magdalen,” which was called “Her Second Life.” This being her life number two, you felt a distinct sensation of relief that you were spared a glimpse at lives numbers one and three. It was such a very crude performance that I should not have dragged it into this record had it not been for the fact that Miss Blair was part of the singular display of celestial bodies that I have tried to indicate in this article. She is a weighty actress corporeally, if not artistically, and poor *Mercy Merrick* fared rather badly. This Wilkie Collins heroine has been neglected of late, in favor of such base subterfuges as figures of the *Nancy Stair* caliber, but certain signs point to revivals of “The New Magdalen,” which as an emotional story has seldom been surpassed. Compared with the pitiful puppet “romances” of to-day, this genuine piece of throbbing fiction seems to be in distinctly another class.

Mr. Frank Keenan, with whose praiseworthy effort to emulate the tactics of M. Antoine in Paris my readers are familiar, gave up the Berkeley Lyceum ghost, unable to weather the storm and stress of experiment. While admiring Mr. Keenan’s energy, and appreciating the little one-act bills that he offered with such rapid-transit celerity, it is impossible to avoid deprecating the lack of logical foresight that he manifested.

He trifled with our young affections, aroused our enthusiasm and inspired in us the belief that a permanent institution was inevitable, and then—quietly dropped out. In other walks of life, people who make experiments have generally supplied themselves with the wherewithal to wait while their schemes approach fruition. Rome was not built in a day, but if the builders thereof had been actors, Rome never would have been built at all! The actor, who is usually a singularly unbalanced person, looks for immediate success, and can endure nothing else.

Why Mr. Keenan should have expected to jump into a whirlwind of instantaneous applause is an enigma. Nothing that is out of the conventional rut succeeds at the start. There must be patience, perseverance and a struggle. Otherwise life would be very easy, which it is not. The rosy little scheme at the Berkeley Lyceum had attracted considerable attention. Critics paid homage to every change of bill, anxious to chronicle success, and looking with glad eyes at the possible advent of a new impetus to the jaded theatrical machine. They had worked themselves into the most appreciative state of mind. Lo, and behold! After a few weeks, M. Antoine’s American imitator evaporated. Lack of funds!

What a dismal lack of those funds there must have been when the enterprise started! Who but an actor would embark upon a scheme, and project such radiant promises in the interests of those who are tired of wallowing in the trough of vulgar “popularity,” when it was apparent that, without that popularity, the thing couldn’t last more than a month? Mr. Keenan should apologize to M. Antoine, of Paris. He took his name in vain. People with new ideas, opposed to the conventionality of the old ones, expect naturally to bide their time before the public unhesitatingly accepts them. If Mr. Keenan had engaged in his alluring pursuit, willing and even anxious to “lose money” before he made it, a very different story would have been told.

People ask why dramatic chroniclers grow cynical. The answer is simple. They feel that they are persistently “jollied” along, and they assuredly are. It was so in the case of the Berkeley Lyceum plan that fell through simply because money failed to pour into the box office, and M. Antoine, of Paris, lacked the vitality of Barnum & Bailey’s circus! It was so last year when Mr. Sydney Rosenfeld tried to “elevate” the stage with the Century Players. This is an age of get-rich-quickly, and there is no other object. Actors talk of art, and of unconventionality; they inveigh against commercialism and pose most picturesquely. But they are in such a hurry to spear the florid, bloated body of easy success that they cannot wait. Mr. Frank Keenan went direct from M. Antoine’s Parisian plan to vaudeville!

The little play upon which he relied to turn the tide of dollars in his direction was called “A Passion in a Suburb,” and was described as “a psychological study of madness,” by Algernon Boyesen. It was horror for the sake of horror, which is always distressing, and it was a failure. It was food neither for the elect nor for the mob. Both classes demand a plausible excuse for stage happenings. The picture of an insane husband strangling his wife and child might be accepted as the logical sequence of some startling train of events. But to enter a playhouse and watch a couple of murders for no other reason than that the murderer was a madman, is not enlivening. It is ghoulish.

I have devoted much space to Mr. Frank Keenan and his plan. I was sorry for him until I thought it all over. Then I couldn’t help feeling a bit sore. It was all very foolish. The bubble was pricked so quickly! It is a consolation to reflect that the New York critics did everything in their power to push along a project that would have been of great value to this metropolis. It was foredoomed to failure, because it depended upon the iniquity known as “quick returns.” *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.* (I think I have, though!)

That a one-act play is fully able to create a veritable sensation, as keen as any that a five-act drama might evoke, was instanced at the Manhattan Theater, when Mrs. Fiske produced a little drama, written by herself, and called “A Light from St. Agnes.” I think I may say that it was the finest and most artistic one-act play that I have ever seen—and I’ve seen a few in my day. It aroused a matinée audience, on a warm afternoon, to an ecstasy of enthusiastic approval,

because it appealed directly to the artistic fiber.

It was not a case for cold analytic judgment. It was not an occasion when long-haired critics could draw a diagram, and prate learnedly of “technique” and other topics that often make critics such insensate bores. “A Light from St. Agnes” was recognized intuitively as great. The soul of an audience never makes a mistake, though the brain frequently errs. A brain might perhaps prove that this play was artistically admirable, but the soul reached that conclusion instantly and unreasoningly. The effect was marvelous.

I wonder if you quite grasp my meaning. You know there are some things that refuse to be reduced to diagram form. They decline to answer to the call of a, b and c. They won't be x'd and y'd algebraically. Very material people of course rebel at this. They want everything cut and dried. They would dissect the soul with a scalpel, and reduce psychic effects to the medium of pounds and ounces. That is what certain reviewers tried to do with “A Light from St. Agnes.”

Their material eyes saw that the end of the little play was murder; that its motive was a sacrilegious robbery—the theft of a diamond cross from the body of a woman lying dead in a church; that the man was a drink-besotted ruffian; that the woman was his illicit partner; that the atmosphere was assuredly brutal. Material eyes saw all this. Material senses reasoned that, given all these qualities, such a play must be horrible, and unduly strenuous. But intuition set all this reasoning awry. You see, intuition doesn't reason; it *knows*. It is better to know than to reason. Get a dozen people to prove to you that “A Light from St. Agnes” was a dismal and unnecessary tragedy. Oh, they might be able to do it. Then go and see it, and you will understand precisely what I am driving at.

Plays that appeal to intuition are the most wonderful offerings that the theater can make. Nothing can stay their effect; nobody can successfully argue against them. Rare indeed they are. When some playwright, as the result of a genuine emotion, makes a drama, in the sheer delight of that emotion, and with a disregard for conventionality, and no hope of box-office approval—then you get a work of art. Incidentally, I may remark that such a work of art is so irresistible that it literally forces the box office to tinkle. It would be a pity if it didn't.

The scene of “A Light from St. Agnes” is laid in a Louisiana village called Bon Hilaire. *Michel* and *Toinette* occupy a rude hut, in the vicinity of St. Agnes' Church. The light from the church sometimes irradiates the sordid, loathsome room. In fact, *Toinette* places her couch in such a position that the light may shine upon her eyes, and awaken her in time to call *Michel*, her befuddled partner.

A woman who has tried to reform the lawless life of this section of Louisiana has died. Her body lies in the church. *Toinette* and *Michel* have both been cynically amused, in their reckless way, at her efforts, unavailing, to reform them. And she is dead! *Father Bertrand* visits *Toinette*, and tells her this. The peasant laughs. The priest gives her a crucifix that the woman left for her, and its influence—though the playwright is far too subtle even to suggest this—is the “moral” of the little play for those who want their i's dotted and their t's crossed.

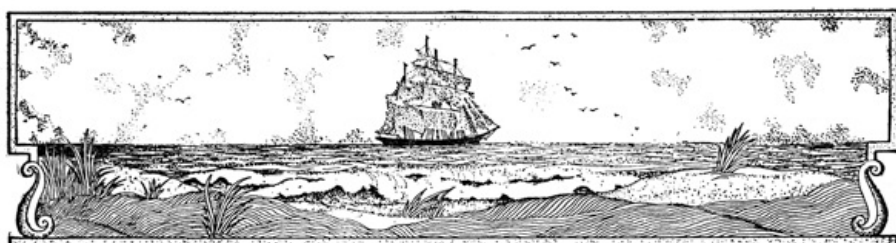
The drama moves quickly. The drama is tragedy. *Michel* returns, more hopelessly intoxicated than ever. She lies on the rude couch, seeking sleep. He talks, as he plies himself with drink. The subject is the dead woman in the church of St. Agnes. Some one had placed a lily in her hand. He hopes that nobody will ever dare to place a lily in his! There are long silences; significant pauses. Through the open window he looks into the church. He sees the dead woman, laid out on a gold-embroidered cloth. On her breast is a cross of diamonds.

More long silences; more significant pauses. He must possess that diamond cross. Why not? He hated the dead woman. He would steal into the church and rob the body; nay, more, he would hurl insults at it. *Toinette* has the crucifix. Perhaps it is that; perhaps it is the awakening of some forgotten instinct within her. The horror of the man's intention convulses her. There is a terrible conflict between the two. It is the very intensity of drama. The audience, wrought up, holds its breath. Then *Toinette*, by a ruse, escapes from the man, and, rushing from the dwelling, gives an alarm. The bells ring, in wildest chime. *Michel* realizes that he is trapped; that the woman has undone him. He goes after her, finds her, brings her back. He wrestles with her, forces her back upon the rude couch, and plunges his knife into her throat.

The stage is in darkness. Yet you can dimly see him hovering over the body; you watch him in a sort of fascination, as he washes the blood from his hands, and then furtively, in the silence, steals away. *Toinette* lies, extended on the couch, motionless—dead. From the window the light from St. Agnes creeps into the room. It is cast tenderly over *Toinette's* body, which it irradiates strangely as the curtain falls slowly.

One must “describe” plays, even when in so doing one runs the risk of doing them an injustice. My recital of the story of “A Light from St. Agnes” sounds bald, as I recall the effect that the play produced. I insist that never for one moment was it “morbid” or unnecessarily horrible. It rang true, without one hysterical intonation. It was sincere, dignified, artistic, beautiful. It was admirably staged; it was acted by John Mason, William B. Mack and Fernanda Eliscu with exquisite appeal.

Mrs. Fiske scored heavily as a playwright. There were two other one-act dramas from her pen—“The Rose” and “The Eyes of the Heart.” The latter made an excellent impression, but it was in “A Light from St. Agnes” that she stamped herself indelibly upon the season.



FOR BOOK LOVERS

By Archibald Lowery Sessions

Practical purposes served by stories of trade and commerce. Something more than entertainment. Among the interesting new books are "The Common Lot," by Robert Herrick; "The Master Word," by L. H. Hammond; "The Plum Tree," by David Graham Phillips.



Spring has brought with it a multitude of gay volumes. American bookbinding has at last reached such a point that, whatever the nature of its contents, a novel may at least make an impression by its good clothes.

Trade stories almost overcrowd this brilliant assemblage. Of course, it is what might be expected of American commercialism, that our literature should open its doors to all phases of business and manufacture. Most of us feel particularly at home and in our element, as it were, when finding amusement for a leisure hour among mills or stock markets.

And these tales, like the Rollo books, impart much valuable information to the uninitiated. We can remember feeling a slight degree of impatience some years ago, when Mr. Hopkinson Smith gave us his careful demonstration of the building of stone piers in the pages of "Caleb West." But in the end we recognized thriftily that he had given us, for the small price of the book, enough points to be available for carrying on an intelligent conversation with a stone mason; a decided addition to one's accomplishments in those days of social misunderstanding.

That book came with the first advances of the tide. Now hundreds of such volumes are washed up at our feet, out of which we may accumulate regular trade libraries if we like, from which a young student can learn the ins and outs of all professions and commercial ventures, their temptations or advantages, and their relation, as well, to the mysterious workings of love. What a possession for a would-be-well-equipped worldling!

The only difficulty is, what are we going to do when these resources are used up?

However, there is no real need to worry. We can still encourage the unsuccessful author, who has been befogged by romance and idealism, to peg away for a year or two at some, if possible, unique form of manufacture, going into it from the bottom and learning its tricks and its manners. He will have at least the opportunity of becoming a good mechanic, and probably some chance of getting up a paying novel in the hereafter—with a seductive cover.

There can be no doubt that "The Common Lot," by Robert Herrick, Macmillan Company, is among the strongest of this year's books, and one which should take high rank as a thoroughly representative American novel.

From beginning to end it absorbs attention, is virile in the depiction of character, and most of all notable in its absolute fidelity to human nature and the modern point of view, even where it points an overwhelming moral. The story of Jackson Powers' career, his promising beginning, the natural temptation to overlook a bit of dishonesty, and his equally natural response to it, followed by his deterioration as an architect who sacrifices his ideals to commercial interests, is a fine piece of work; so is the portrait of his strong wife, and her slow but crushing realization of his weakness.

The delightful little doctor in the slums, and the defiant product of conventionality, Venetia Phillips, supply plenty of humor, and for sensation, one need not look further than the thrilling description of the Glenmore fire, which, in its awful tragedy, reveals Powers to himself as a criminal.

Not the least powerful scene is that in which his confession and attempts to atone are received by the contemptuous man of the world, who sees in them only weakness and cowardice, despite his scorn of the crime.

No reader will put down the book without having experienced some stirrings of heart and some reminders of personal experience, or without a keen interest in the story.

As "The Cost" dealt with finance on a big scale, so David Graham Phillips' latest book, "The Plum Tree," Bobbs-Merrill Company, deals with politics on a big scale.

In these two stories, Mr. Phillips depends for the success of his narrative rather upon theme and plot than upon style and characterization; not that these two elements are slighted, or that they are not skillfully and masterfully handled, but that one feels that they are purposely subordinated to the subject-matter and to interest in the development of the tale.

That it is an intensely interesting book cannot be denied; it is so because it is near enough to the facts of politics to make the stirring and dramatic episodes it describes seem like the account of a phase of vital human life.

The story is that of young Saylor's development from a green, inexperienced and impecunious young lawyer, to the seasoned man who controls the politics of the country through his unerring manipulation of both party machines; the maker of Presidents, the master of Congress, the terror of the financial world. The methods by which he achieves these results make up the action of the story; they are such as we are all familiar with, except, perhaps, in the combination which Mr. Phillips makes of them.

The love element is of minor importance, and doubtless, to some minds, it will be considered unattractive. But no one can deny that the story, as a whole, is one of more than ordinary power.

The Harpers publish another new story by Warwick Deeping, "The Slanderers." It is a novel which, in style, so suggests George Meredith as to make one suspect that the author is a pupil of the older writer.

A pair of idealists, quite realistic, nevertheless, in their introduction to one another, and in the attachment which follows, are the chief actors in the plot. Gabriel Strong, the dreamy son of a prosperous English squire, falls in love with Joan Gildersledge, the equally dreamy daughter of a bestial and intemperate miser. Gabriel marries an unsatisfactory young woman in the vicinity, Ophelia Gusset, and retains Joan as his consoler and friend in a virtuous but high-strung companionship, out of which the country gossips, who hear of it through a spying servant, develop a slander.

Gabriel's wife, meantime, is amusing herself with a military man at a watering place. The clearing up of this situation, and the pairing off of congenial couples with various striking episodes, among them the death of Zeus Gildersledge, and his denunciation of his daughter, and the final reconciliation of Gabriel with his father, by whom he has been disinherited, make up a tale in which interest is sustained to the very end. The book is full of dainty descriptions of landscape, and the few leading personalities are well and strongly drawn.

"The Master Word," by L. H. Hammond, Macmillan, is described upon the title-page as "a story of the South of to-day." Its background is placed in the phosphate region of Tennessee, and the author assures us that many of the incidents described, "especially those more or less sensational in their nature," actually occurred within her own experience. The purpose of the story, she says, furthermore, is "in full accord with Southern thoughts and hopes."

It is hardly necessary to say that it would not be a story of the South if it did not deal in some way with the race question; but it would be premature to conclude from this that it is essentially a problem novel.

The opening chapters introduce this question, growing out of the distressing circumstances of a wife's discovery of her husband's infidelity, and the problem is interwoven closely with the plot in the presence of the latter's illegitimate mulatto daughter. Her career and end are the more unpleasant to the reader because of the conviction that they are detailed with facts as they exist in the South. The pathetic interest of Viry's story, though properly subordinate to the main plot, forces itself on the reader's attention.

In other respects, also, the truth of the conditions described is impressed upon one, even though he may be unfamiliar with the facts.

It is a very strong tale, full of color, with a consistently developed plot, constructed with a fine sense of proportion and vivid characterization, except in one respect, which constitutes the weak point of the story—that is to say, the character of Dick Lawton, who is somewhat priggish and altogether disappointing.

Miss Geraldine Bonner has very wisely selected a theme for her story, "The Pioneer," Bobbs-Merrill Company, with which she is thoroughly at home. Its subtitle is "A Tale of Two States"—viz.: California and Nevada, and, therefore, as may be correctly inferred, it is a mining story, or at least a story in which this element plays an important part.

The action takes place during the years almost immediately following the Civil War, and leads up to the period of the Bonanza discoveries in Nevada, in the early seventies. With such material as this afforded, it is easy to see that an extremely interesting tale can be constructed by so experienced an author as Miss Bonner.

The story involves, of course, the consecutive gain and loss of fortunes many times repeated; it pictures the social life of San Francisco and the rough life of Nevada mining camps, and gives attractive glimpses of the valleys of California, all with a degree of descriptive power that is a little unexpected.

The character of the old pioneer, Colonel Parrish, and the two sisters, June and Rosamund Allen, and the reciprocal affection of the three, furnish the large element of human interest in the story, for they are very attractive and lovable people. The relations of the two girls with "Uncle Jim" arrest the attention and stimulate the sympathies of the reader even more than the love affairs of the former.

The narrative flows on pretty evenly, with no strikingly dramatic situations and no overwhelming climax, but interest is held tenaciously all through.

Another of the late Guy Wetmore Carryl's posthumous books is "Far From the Maddening Girls," published by McClure, Phillips & Co.

It is altogether a delicious piece of nonsense, serious neither in style nor intention, filled with puns so atrocious as to make the reader admire the author's audacity, the recklessness of which adds much to his entertainment.

A bachelor, hopelessly cynical, as he thinks, on the subject of women, who deludes himself into the conviction that he can successfully and permanently escape from them, is not only a fair mark for any sort of ridicule, but also a fruitful

theme for a farce. The particular bachelor who figures in this narrative devised a means of effecting this end by building himself a country house—of all things! The result is, of course, obvious; as, indeed, the result of a farce ought to be.

Doubtless some critical souls will call the story flat, but to such people we can only say that there is a lot of harmless fun in the book that will act as an efficient corrective for jaundiced views of life.

A very charming story is "The Princess Passes," by C. N. and A. M. Williamson, the authors of "The Lightning Conductor," which will be recalled with a great deal of pleasure by a multitude of novel readers. The new book is published by Henry Holt & Co.

Like "The Lightning Conductor," the new book has for its theme a European tour, partly by automobile and partly on foot, undertaken by the hero, Lord Montagu Lane, at the urgent solicitation of his friends, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Winston, to cure a serious case of disappointed love.

That he should find ample consolation for the loss of Helen Blantock, and in the end lose interest in her and her titled grocery man, will not surprise the reader. The manner in which it is effected, however, involves some rather unconventional details, worked out, of course, through the agency of a delightful American girl. Anyone who has read "The Heavenly Twins" will doubtless find something to stir reminiscence in the intercourse between Lord Lane and the Boy. In this the chief interest in the plot centers.

It is altogether a charming narrative, full of pretty descriptive passages, and colored by the evident satisfaction the authors took in writing it.

"The Secret Woman," by Eden Phillpotts, Macmillan Company, is a little tale of English farm life, with a picturesque setting, great intensity of action and passion, and some indefiniteness as to what code of morals the rather unpleasant performances of its characters should be judged by.

As adultery, usury, murder and suicide are among these little eccentricities, offset against superstition, religion and rationalism, the reader may take his choice of theories. Interest is sustained without question, and the two women—an older and a younger one—who as heroines and wrongdoers enlist our sympathy, are attractive and painted in clearer colors than the men. One or two minor personalities, however, are clearly drawn, and the dramatic element forcefully developed.

It would be difficult to hit upon a novelist who shows wider divergences in his work than Booth Tarkington, not because he gives in it any special evidence of versatility—a word which implies something like genius, or at least talent. This peculiarity is due rather to an arbitrary method in the choice of themes.

In his latest book, "In the Arena," published by McClure, Phillips & Co., he has given a striking demonstration of this. It is a collection of six short stories, dealing with the subject of State and municipal politics. The question of cause and effect here is comparatively unimportant; whether Mr. Tarkington went to the Indiana legislature to get material for short stories, or whether he has written these because of his experience as an assemblyman, is not a matter of literary interest.

The narrations are not particularly convincing. Those who are familiar with the practical politician, and his followers and their modern methods, will find few parallels in the characters and descriptions in these tales. Political bosses nowadays seldom resort to the crude device of ballot-box stuffing and threatened blackmail to defeat reformers, and reformers are unlikely to be so easily frightened as Farwell was. The game is much more complex than it used to be, principally because the reformers have learned to play it more intelligently, and those who fail to give them credit for astuteness know little about the rules; the politicians themselves have ceased to make the mistake of underrating their antagonists.

The female lobbyist is a character that "once-upon-a-time" flourished at the national and in State capitals, but modern methods have made her, to a large degree, superfluous, and now the high-priced lawyer, representing the Trust, deals directly with the party boss instead of the individual lawmaker. It is cheaper and quicker.

Mr. Tarkington's friends, Boss Gorgett and Mrs. Protheroe, belong to a species that is extinct—at any rate, outside of Indiana.

"The Chronicles of Don Q," by K. and Hesketh Prichard, J. B. Lippincott Company, is a picturesque tale of adventure, told, however, with a restraint that lends dignity and a fair degree of plausibility.

Being the story of a Spanish bandit, there is, of course, an abundance of murder and sudden deaths; but as the right persons survive, and a majority of the villains die, with more or less violence, the sensibilities of the reader are not much shocked.

In spite of Don Q's profession and associates, and a temperament somewhat pessimistic for a highwayman, he is not really a bad sort of fellow. His idiosyncrasies are due, doubtless, to an early disappointment in love, on account of which allowances are to be made, particularly as he retains his courtly manners, a careful regard for the misfortunes of others, so far as his occupation permits, a very efficient sympathy with the weak and a devotion to the Church manifested in many practical ways—his piety being of the kind imitated, with more or less success in America, by persons said to belong to the same class as Don Q.

Though apparently absolutely isolated from the rest of the world in his mountain retreat in southern Spain, he keeps in touch with affairs outside so far as they affect him, and is able, in mysterious ways, to anticipate, and so defeat, all attempts to ensnare him. Surprise is impossible for him, as it was for Sherlock Holmes.

If his portrait, by Stanley Wood, is a faithful likeness, the influence of his presence is not to be wondered at.

“Constance Trescott,” by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, Century Company, stands out among the stronger books of the season. He takes for his heroine a not unfamiliar type of woman, reared by an old uncle whose antipathy to religion has made her, as she describes it: “Neither religious nor non-religious—open-minded.”

She is, however, docile because of her deep love for her husband, under the latter’s attempts to interest her in the faith which he holds dear. Trescott, who compels admiration by his fine, straightforward course, takes his wife to a small Missouri town, where Southern prejudice is still rife and laws are lax, and where feeling is bitter against the uncle of Constance, the absentee landowner, who has sent Trescott to represent him in enforcing evictions from a tract of land to which he claims ownership.

Greyhurst is Trescott’s opponent in a consequent lawsuit, a picturesque and passionate character, with a mixture of Creole and Indian blood. While he admires Constance, he hates her husband, whom he labors unscrupulously to defeat.

The court scene, where Constance is called to give certain testimony, and does it to the confusion of Greyhurst, is interesting; and still more dramatic is the murder of Trescott by Greyhurst, after the decision against the latter.

The rest of the book turns upon the revenge which Constance, undisciplined as she is by nobler inspirations, devotes her life and fortune to wreaking upon Greyhurst, and its sensational consummation. The story is one of Dr. Mitchell’s most characteristic efforts, and, like all he writes, is well worth reading.

Transcriber’s Notes

- The Contents list was added.
- Changes to the text are noted below, and are shown in the text with a dotted underline.
 - Cold changed to Could
 - Dena changed to Deena
 - guano changed to guanaco
 - Gibralter changed to Gibraltar
 - notaable changed to notable
 - Wickcliffe changed to Wickliffe
 - divorçees changed to divorcées
 - luscious changed to luscious

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AINSLEE'S, VOL. 15, NO. 5, JUNE 1905 ***

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