The Project Gutenberg eBook of Ainslee's, Vol. 15, No. 6, July 1905

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Ainslee's, Vol. 15, No. 6, July 1905

Author: Various

Release date: January 25, 2009 [eBook #27885]
Most recently updated: January 4, 2021

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Barbara Tozier, Bill Tozier and the Online
Distributed Proofreading Team at https://www.pgdp.net

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AINSLEE'S, VOL. 15, NO. 6, JULY 1905 ***

AINSLEE'S

VOL. XV.

JULY, 1905.

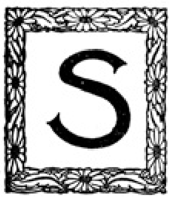
No. 6.

Contents

- A Gentleman of the Highways Kathryn Jarboe
- From Gardens Over Seas Thomas Walsh
- Synopsis of Chapters I-XV of "The Deluge" Editorial
- The Deluge (Continued) David Graham Phillips
- A Little Child Shall Lead Them Francis Metcalfe
- Song Charlotte Becker
- The Despot Johnson Morton
- Wall Street Robert Stewart
- The Wind's Word Arthur Ketchum
- The Boy Man Baroness Von Hutten
- A Present-Day Creed W. Wilfred Campbell
- Between the Lines M. H. Vorse
- The Baby's Curls Margaret Houston
- Brown Betty Grace S. Richmond
- R. H.—A Portrait Allan Munier
- The Future Mrs. Thornton Sarah Guernsey Bradley
- The Lady & the Car Churchill Williams
- The Gifts of Gold Theodosia Garrison
- On Love Tokens Frank S. Arnett
- Timon Cruz Augusta Davies Ogden
- At Her Window Frank Dempster Sherman
- The Late Blossoming of Elvira Harriet Whitney Durbin
- The Neighbor's Dog Una Hudson
- Love and Youth John Vance Cheney
- The Dramatic Season's Last Moment Alan Dale
- A Sea Shell Clinton Scollard
- For Book Lovers Archibald Lowery Sessions

A GENTLEMAN OF THE HIGHWAYS

By Kathryn Jarboe



Since early morning nothing but sunshine had entered the hospitable doorway of The Jolly Grig, a tavern not a dozen miles from the outer edge of London town. Across the white, sanded floor golden patches of light had moved with measured tread, and merry motes had danced in the golden beams, but nothing else had stirred. On the deep hearth were piled huge logs, ready to spring into a flashing evanescent life at the whim of some chance guest, for October was drawing in his breath preparatory to blowing it out over the land.

In front of the logs, sunk deep in his chair, dozed old Marmaduke Bass, the landlord of The Jolly Grig, granting himself the joy of serving drams to dream guests, since guests in the flesh would not come to him. Round-bellied as one of his own wine casks, he slept heavily, nor was he disturbed when a slight figure was framed for a second in the doorway. A slender, girlish figure it was, and the shadow of a heavily plumed riding hat danced with the motes in the sunbeams while the young woman stood, warily, peering into the room. Empty she knew it was, for she had been full ten minutes reconnoitering to discover the fact.

How sound did old Marmaduke sleep, was the question she was asking herself. She could see that the large hands folded across his stomach rose and fell with steady rhythmic ease. Then she saw a fly—a huge, buzzing, bluebottle fly—settle for a moment on the round, bald pate of the innkeeper, and still the sleeper did not stir. Surely if a fly could not waken him, she would not.

Hurriedly, stealthily, lightly, she scurried across the floor, her lifted riding skirt displaying quite needlessly the heavy boots she wore. The skirts were held to her side by her elbows, for she had need of both her hands. In one of them she held a long silken scarf, and not until this had been dexterously twisted and tied over old Marmaduke's eyes did that worthy awake.

"Help! Murder!" he sputtered through the gauntleted fingers that covered his mouth, struggling in vain to free himself from the detaining hands.

"Quiet, quiet now, good Marmaduke," cried the young woman, in a deep, full, contralto voice. "You know well enough who I am."

"Ay, sir, now you speak, I do know you," the innkeeper answered, settling back into his chair once more; "but it's what mischief you're up to that I'd *like* to know."

"No mischief this time, Marmaduke. On my honor as a gentleman in his majesty's service, I swear it." Laughter was bubbling out of the girl's eyes, but her voice was deeper, gruffer, even than before. "But it happens to be my whim of the moment that you should sit there just as you are for five full minutes. I want you not to touch the scarf that's about your eyes for that long time. Promise me that, Mr. Tavern-keeper, and promise me, too, not to shout again for help. I want a room for the night. And I'll have a cup of wine with you. Ah! not so quick, good Marmaduke. At the end of the five minutes, I mean. And yet I'm thirsting, too. You'll not believe it, but I've not tasted wine for a fortnight or more. It matters not which room I take, I suppose?"

"Ay, matter it does, sir," answered Marmaduke. "In fact, it's but poor accommodation I can give you. Lord Farquhart has the whole house engaged for the night. He's stopping here with a party of friends to meet his lady, who's coming in from the north somewheres. I've only the small closet back of the wine room for my own use."

"Then the small closet back of the wine room will have to serve me," she answered, "and you'll have to spend the night in this chair ruminating on this Lord What's-his-name's greediness in claiming the whole house. Or, perchance, I'll go when these young lords arrive, and leave you your room to yourself. Now, remember, your life or mine is forfeit if you raise that silken band ere I return. And I'm watching you every minute; mind that, too."

She backed away from him, keeping a wary eye on him, but there was, in reality, no need for this. He sat quite still, his hands peacefully crossed on his stomach. Through the small doorway she slipped, her trailing skirts still held high, but her heavy boots now seemed to swagger across the wooden floor.

"And who may this Lord Farquhart be that he should require a whole house and an empty house?" she asked, from the threshold, and even as she spoke she was hurriedly removing the heavily plumed riding hat and replacing it with a jaunty cap fringed with black, curling locks of hair.

"Why, Lord Farquhart is—why, he's just the new Lord Farquhart that was Mr. Percy Gordon not so long ago, before he came into a title that carried no wealth with it," the innkeeper's fat voice answered. "You've surely not been deaf to the gossip that's going about! How my Lord Farquhart's going to marry his cousin, old Gordon's daughter, the Lady Barbara Gordon, and with her, old Gordon's gold. The whole of London's ringing with it."

"Ay, perhaps, my good Marmaduke, but I'm not in London much of the time, so London's stalest gossip is news to me." The end of this sentence was muffled in the folds of her riding skirt that she was drawing off over her head, and the landlord of The Jolly Grig took occasion to soliloquize:

"Indeed, if it's not mischief the lad's bent on, it's nothing good, I'll be bound. Whatever he swears, he's good for naught save mischief. And I'll swear, too, that it's less than a fortnight since he was drinking wine here, in this very place. Though, I must say, to his credit, he's a temperate fellow, and drinks less than any man of his size that comes here."

“That’s just it! It’s a man of my own size that I’m after.”

Marmaduke’s guest, now a youth in riding coat and breeches, was seated in the deep chair that faced his host. “A man of my own size, and that’s not so far under six feet high, and with a good girth about the chest, and but small paunch under it, and muscles like iron, as you’ve occasion to know; a man of my own size, to drink with me and sup with me and love with me and fight with me, if we happen to love the same girl. Put off your blindman’s kerchief and fetch the wine I spoke for. What’s the best your house affords, my jolly grig? What wine will you offer this Lord Farquhart? What wine have you fit to serve to his lady?”

“I’ faith, I know not my Lord Farquhart’s taste,” answered Marmaduke. “But I’ve a royal port, lately brought over from France. I’ve a Canary Malmsey that his majesty himself’d find hard to despise. And then, why, I’ve a few bottles of Geldino’s sherris that—that I’ll not open save on the rarest occasion. I’ll bring you the port, if you say so, though, to my seeming, port is a heady wine for a lad like you.”

“Well, then, the port let it be,” answered the youth. “I judge my wines by the taste, not by the name.” When the wine was brought, he raised his cup with a swaggering laugh. “To the girls you *have* loved. To the girls I *will* love.” He emptied the cup at a single draught. “There are two times when a long throat is a good throat; when you’re wetting it, and when you’re cutting it. I’d have another, but I’m—I’m sleepy, Marmaduke. I’ll—I’ll—I guess I’ll sleep on that one. By your leave, I’ll sleep here until my lord—was it Lord Farquhart—you said was coming?”

The stranger’s booted feet were stretched far in front of him; his relaxed hands lay under the folds of his riding coat, and his head was nodding now this way, now that, in search of a resting place.

“Yes, my Lord Farquhart,” answered Marmaduke. “But, sir, you told me, the last time you were here, that you’d tell me your own name soon, that I’d know your name before so very long.”

“Ah, in that last you are doubtless right. You’ll know it some day, but I’m not so sure that I’ll do the telling, and, God on my side, that day’ll not be near.” The last words drooled out in a sleepy undertone. Then the voice roused once more. “But who comes with Lord Farquhart? He’s surely not taken the whole house for himself, has he? And he waits here, you say, for the Lady Barbara Gordon, his cousin and his sweetheart?”

“She’s his cousin, right enough,” answered the old gossip. “But if she’s his sweetheart, she knows more of that than the rest of the world. They’re going to be married, though, in less than a fortnight, and—and—— But you asked who comes with Lord Farquhart? Well, Mr. Clarence Treadway, for one. They’re never twenty-four hours apart, so London says. Then there is Mr. Ashley, an old suitor of the Lady Barbara, to whom her father forced her to give a refusal willy-nilly. London knows all about that. And—and there’s one other. I’ve forgotten his name. It matters not. And the gentlemen travel with a servant apiece. Oh, the other’s Mr. Lindley, Mr. Cecil Lindley. Why, lad, what’s the matter with you?”

This query was in response to a sharp “*Aie, aie,*” that had shot from the stranger’s lips.

“I—I was dreaming that I was caught in a trap, a—a mousetrap, I think it was. Your—your voice is most soothing, Marmaduke. Wake me in time for me to retire to my own room before my Lord Farquhart arrives with his company.” The weary head had finally lopped to rest. The sleepy voice had trailed off into silence.

“Ay, ay, I’ll wake you, never fear!” old Marmaduke answered the lad, standing over him. Then he murmured: “He’s a pretty boy! I’ll warrant I’d be earning the thanks of some worthy family by ferreting out his name and telling tales on him. But I’ll not. Not just yet, anyway.”

The lad’s short, black curls fell over the upper part of his face, and as he sat, slouched deep in the big chair, he seemed quite lost in its shadows.

II.

It was not ten minutes thereafter that the kindly innkeeper was thrown into such a flutter by the arrival of his expected guests, that he quite forgot to rouse the stranger sleeping in the deep chair by the hearth.

“We’ve the house to ourselves, as I commanded, good Marmaduke?” demanded Lord Farquhart.

“Quite to ourselves, your honor,” answered Marmaduke, “save, oh, bless my heart! save for this idler asleep by the chimney. I meant to send him about his business ere you came!”

“Send him now, then,” said Farquhart, indifferently, “and, gentlemen, I can welcome you as to my own house.”

“Why waken the lad if he sleeps?” demanded young Lindley, who had seated himself astride of the arm of the chair that the innkeeper had deserted. The young man’s Irish blue eyes rested carelessly on the sleeping lad. “Why throw him out, Percy? Is he only a chance patron or a friend, Marmaduke?”

“A friend,” answered that worthy—“leastwise a friend of a year’s standing, and he’s slept like that since his last draught of wine.”

“Why not let him sleep, Percy?” It was still young Lindley who was interceding in the boy’s behalf. “Only two things can induce sleep like that—one’s good wine, the other’s a good conscience. Why interfere with either? Sure, we’re lacking in both ourselves.”

“Well, let him sleep for aught of me,” answered Farquhart, nonchalantly. “In truth, it’s so long since I’ve even seen sleep like that, that it rests me somewhat to be in the room with it.”

“If Marmaduke’ll vouch for the wine the boy’s had, I’ll vouch for the conscience,” asserted Lindley, again taking sides with the unknown. He laid a careless hand on the boy’s head. “He’s a likely lad, and it seems to me that neither wine alone nor conscience alone could induce sleep so deep. What’s his name?”

“That’s what I wish I could tell you, gentlemen,” Marmaduke answered, with some hesitation. “As I said, I’ve known him for a year or more, and he’s always promising me that next time, or some time, he’ll tell me who he is. But he’s only a lad, and I was thinking just before your honors came that perhaps I was doing wrong to let him drink away his fortunes here—that I ought to be telling his family, if I could but find out where and what it is.”

“But does he drink so heavily, then?” demanded Ashley, crossing over and looking down upon the lad. “A boy of his age and girth could not carry much, I should say.”

“No, not much, sir,” Marmaduke answered, hastily; “leastwise not here, but——”

“Oh, don’t bother your conscience with a thing like that, my good man,” cried Treadway. “Bring us another round of wine, and charge me up a cup or two for the lad when he wakes. Then his bibulous fortune will not be all on your head. And”—he turned to Farquhart—“if the roads to Camberwell be as good—God save the mark!—as the roads from London here, Mistress Babs will not be calling for our escort until midnight. Gad! I never traversed such mire. I thought my horse was down a dozen times.”

“And, of course, the Lady Barbara’s coach must move more heavily than we did,” agreed Lindley. “As I remember them, the old Gordon hackneys move as deliberately as old Gordon himself—that is, if horse flesh can move as slowly as human flesh. Has your lady a large escort from Camberwell, Percy?”

“Only her servants, I believe.” Percy Farquhart’s tone was quite lacking in a lover’s interest. “Her father has no faith in the Black Devil who has haunted our London roads for the past six months, and he declared that he’d not insult the peace of his majesty’s kingdom by sending an armed escort with his daughter when she entered his majesty’s town. That was why he asked me to meet her here.”

“Oh, oh!” rallied his companions, and one of them added: “So, it’s at the father’s request that you meet the Lady Barbara. Ah, Percy, Percy, can’t you pretend affection, even if you have it not, for Lord Gordon’s daughter and her golden charms?”

“I’d pretend it to her if she’d let me,” answered Farquhart, still indifferently. “And I’d pretend it about her if it were worth while. But I’m afraid that my friends know me too well to suffer such pretense. I’m with friends to-night”—he glanced only at Treadway and at Lindley—“so why taint tone or manner with lies? The Lady Barbara Gordon knows as well as I know that it’s her lands that are to be wed to mine, that her gold must gild my title, that her heirs and my heirs must be the same. Old Gordon holds us both with a grip like iron, and we are both puppets in his hands. She knows it, and I know it. She is as resentful of pretended affection as she would be of love—from me. But come, let us forget the Lady Barbara while we may—after we have drunk a measure of wine to her safe conduct from Camberwell to The Jolly Grig. From here to London her safety will depend on our swords. To the Lady Barbara, I say, to her daffodil hair, to her violet eyes, to her poppy lips, to her lily cheeks! Is that lover-like enough? Eh, Clarence? And I’ll add, to the icicle that incloses her heart. May her peace be unbroken on the road from Camberwell to London.”

He raised his wine cup high, glancing frankly at Lindley and at Treadway, but passing hurriedly over Ashley’s scornful lips and hostile eyes. For Dame Rumor had been right once in a way, and The Jolly Grig tavern was not the only stronghold that she had invaded with the assertion that young Ashley had found favor in the Lady Barbara’s eyes; that he had possessed her heart. And an onlooker might have seen that Ashley’s nervous fingers had played an accompaniment upon his sword-hilt while the lady’s name had been on the lips of her affianced lover and his friends. But not only had the Lady Barbara commanded Farquhart to have Ashley much in his company, but she had also commanded Ashley to accept whatever courtesies were offered him by Lord Farquhart. Each was obeying strictly the lady’s commands, one for the sake of policy, the other for the sake of love.

A short silence fell after the toast had been drunk. The men had ridden hard and were tired.

“I’m sorry we did not meet the Black Devil, or one of his imps, ourselves,” observed Treadway, yawning and stretching his arms above his head. “We’re not in fashion if we can’t report a hold up by this representative of his Satanic majesty.”

“But he’d hardly attack a party as large as ours,” cried Lindley. “Eight against one would be too unequal a fight, even if the one were the devil himself.”

“Have a care, my good Cecil,” laughed Farquhart. “You mention the enemy’s name somewhat freely, seeing that we are to escort a lady through his haunts.”

“Ay, but my fingers are crossed, you see, and that closes the devil’s ears. If it really is the devil, we’ll have nothing to fear from him.”

“The last report is that he held up the bishop’s carriage, mounted escort and all,” interrupted Treadway.

“No, no,” corrected Lindley; “the fellow merely stopped the bishop’s carriage, escort and all. Then he begged for alms, and the episcopal blessing! Then he drew the ring from the hand that bestowed the alms and blessing, and slipped away before the ponderous escort perceived that the bishop had fainted with terror.”

“They say he returned the ring the following day,” added Treadway, “doubling the alms bestowed by the bishop, requesting that the gold be used for the good of the church!”

“A devilish good joke, I call that,” laughed Lord Farquhart. “And they say, too, that the poor old bishop is actually afraid to use the money for fear it—why, I really believe he is afraid that his Satanic majesty did have some part in the prank.”

“And old Grimsby swears he saw the fellow’s tail and cloven hoof when he was waylaid by him,” commented Lindley.

“I’d not heard that Lord Grimsby had been attacked by this highwayman.” This was Ashley’s first entrance into the conversation.

“Attacked!” the three men cried in chorus.

“Why, he was held up in his own garden,” explained Treadway. “It was just after it had been noised abroad that he had disinherited Jack. Poor Jack was bemoaning his luck and his debts in prison, and they say that Lord Grimsby spent all his time pacing the walks of his garden cursing Jack and those selfsame debts. That is to say, that is what he did before the episode of the highwayman. Then the man—or devil, whatever he is—appeared quite close behind Lord Grimsby, gagged him and blindfolded him, and would not release him until he had signed a promise to reinstate Jack, pay all his debts and present him with money enough to live like a prince of the blood for a year. Hard as it is to believe, old Grimsby signed it, and afterward he was afraid to go back on his signature, for fear—why, simply for fear that the devil would come for him if he did. Jack, of course, is all for worshiping the devil now, and swears if this gentlemanly highwayman proves to be human, and ever comes near the gallows, he’ll save him or become highwayman himself. So, in reality, old Grimsby will have to use his power to save this thief, if ever he’s caught, to keep his own son and heir off the road.”

“And Lord Grimsby’s power is absolute, is it not?” asked Ashley.

“As absolute as his majesty’s command,” agreed Treadway.

“Has it not been whispered in certain circles that this highwayman is some well-known London gallant, merely amusing himself with the excitement and danger of the game of the road?” asked Lindley.

“Somewhat too dangerous an amusement, in spite of its profits,” sneered Ashley.

“Ah, but that’s the most curious part of it!” cried Treadway. “The fellow never keeps anything that he takes. There are some two-score robberies laid to his account, and in each and every case some poor fellow down on his luck for want of funds has received, most mysteriously, the stolen wealth.”

“He fights like a fiend, they say,” commented Lord Farquhart, “whether he is a gentleman or not. And yet he has seriously wounded no one. Sir Henry Willoughby confessed to me that the fellow had pinked him twenty times in a moonlit, roadside attack, then disarmed him with a careless laugh and walked off, taking nothing with him. Sir Henry himself, mind you! The most noted duelist in London!”

“Why not drink to the fiend and a speedy meeting with him?” laughed Lindley. “I promise you that if I meet him I’ll unmask him and see if he be man or devil. To the Black Devil himself!” he cried, lifting high his wine cup. “To this most honorable and fearless gentleman of the highways!”

The four voices rose in chorus to the brown rafters of the inn.

“To this most honorable and fearless gentleman of the highways! To the Black Devil himself!”

III.

Many a round of wine had been served to the young revelers, and, under its influence, each one was revealing a little more of his real self. They had all laid aside their muddy riding boots and heavy riding coats, and were lounging in picturesque undress. Lord Farquhart, who was easily the leader of the four, had thrown aside the cynical veneer that had for some time marred the dark, Oriental beauty of his face, and was humming a love song. Lindley’s comely Irish face was slightly flushed, and he was keeping time on the white table with the tip of his sword to the ditty that floated from Lord Farquhart’s lips. Treadway, London’s dapperest beau, was smirking at his own reflection in a small hand mirror he carried, while Ashley, who had drunk more heavily than any of the others, permitted a definite scowl to contract his brows and droop his lips.

“I’m trying—I’m trying,” murmured Lord Farquhart, “to change that last song I wrote for Sylvia into a song for Barbara! The rhyme and the rhythm go the same, I think.” He stood up and sang the words out loud, repeating the verses several times, inserting sometimes Sylvia’s name and sometimes Barbara’s.

Lips that vie with the poppy’s hue,

Eyes that shame the violet’s blue,

Hearts that beat with love so true,

Sylvia, sweet, I come to you!

Barb’ra, sweet, I come to you!

His eyes questioned Treadway.

“Is it not quite the same? Does it not go to one name as well as to the other? To me it seems I’ve no need to write a new verse for my new love.”

“How will the fair Sylvia take her *congé* in a fortnight’s time?” demanded Ashley, in an undertone, of Lindley.

And it was in the same tone that Lindley answered: “Let’s wonder, rather, if the fair Sylvia’ll be given her *congé* in a fortnight’s time!” But the sneer in Lindley’s voice was for Ashley, who had asked the impertinent question, not for Farquhart, whose honor he, apparently, doubted. “Lord Farquhart’s not to blame, as you know well enough. The mess is of Lord Gordon’s making, for Lord Gordon holds in trust even the barren lands that came to Percy with his title.”

Ashley’s resentment of Lindley’s tone was apparent on his face, and his fingers were again on his sword. He was under no promise to his lady not to fight with Lindley, and his blood cried out for a fight with some one. But at that instant there was a loud clamor in the courtyard. A horse’s hoofs on the flags, a fretted whinny, the oaths of stable boys, all combined into an uproar.

“Can it be the Lady Barbara?” cried Percy Farquhart, sobered suddenly, and reaching for his plumed hat.

“Nay, my lord, ’tis but one horse,” answered Marmaduke, hurrying to the door. “’Tis a riderless horse,” he added, in a second.

“A riderless horse!” echoed all of the young men in chorus, springing to their feet.

“Ay, a riderless horse,” called Marmaduke, from the darkness without; “’tis a woman’s horse, too; a woman’s cushioned seat.”

The guests were crowding about the door, all save the lad who had been slumbering so deeply. He, roused by the sudden clamor, and apparently frightened by the sudden realization that he had unwittingly trespassed upon Lord Farquhart’s privacy, slipped softly up the stairs.

“A woman’s horse!” cried Lindley. “Is it possible that some woman has fallen victim to the Black Devil? Here, almost within earshot of our revelings? To the rescue!”

“Nay, we must think first of the Lady Barbara’s safety,” interrupted Ashley, holding back and barring the doorway with a peremptory arm. “We must not risk the Lady Barbara for the sake of some chance damsel. Rather let us mount and ride to meet the Gordon coach.”

“There is no sign whatsoever of foul play,” reported Marmaduke, coming in from the yard. “The lines are knotted loosely, and a tethering strap is broken. The beast has doubtless but strayed from some neighboring house.”

“If ’tis from some neighboring house, good Marmaduke, would you not know the horse and trappings?” queried Treadway. “Is there nothing to show the lady’s name or rank?”

“There’s no mark of any kind,” answered Marmaduke. “’Tis a white horse with a black star between the eyes, and the trappings are of scarlet. That is all I can tell you, your honor. In all likelihood some stable boy’ll be along shortly to claim the creature.”

The young men were again sitting about the table, and Ashley called for another round of wine.

“I, for one, have had wine enough and to spare,” declared Treadway. “The Lady Barbara must be here soon, and, to my thinking, ten minutes of sleep would not be amiss. You, too, my lord, could you not meet the lady with a better grace after at least forty winks?” He linked his arm in Lord Farquhart’s and led him toward a door at the side of the room. “Come to my room and we’ll pretend to imitate the lad with the good conscience and the good wine atop of it. Why, the lad’s gone! Slipped away like a frightened shadow, doubtless, when he found the company he’d waked into. Unless the Lady Barbara comes, give us fifteen minutes, Marmaduke. Not a second more, on your life. Fifteen minutes will unfuddle a brain that’s—that’s not as clear as it might be, but more than that will make it dull.”

Together the two men entered Treadway’s room, caroling aloud the love song that had been writ to Sylvia and changed to Barbara.

Ashley and Lindley, left alone over the table, sat for a moment in silence. Then the latter, forgetting his resentment toward Ashley as easily as it had been roused, spoke in a laughing, rallying voice.

“Cheer up, Hal! A fortnight’s a goodly time in which a slip may come between unwilling lips and a lagging cup. It seems to me that for a lover’s heart, yours is a faint heart. The Lady Barbara is unwon yet—by Percy, I mean.” The last words were added with a laugh at Ashley’s gloomy countenance.

“Yes, the lips are unwilling enough,” Ashley agreed, in a grudging voice, “and the cup lags, undoubtedly, but there’ll be no slip; old Gordon will force the lips, and old Gordon holds the handle of the cup. Mistress Barbara is but wax in her father’s hands, and as for Farquhart—well, unless he marries the Lady Barbara, Lord Gordon will ruin him. The old man has sworn that he will have his way, and have it he will, or I’m much mistaken.”

“But,” remonstrated Lindley, “wax can be molded by any hand that holds it. If the lady is wax in her father’s hands through fear, ’twould seem to me that—why, that love is hotter than fear, that love might mold as well, if not better, than fear.”

“Ay, if love had a chance to mold,” answered Ashley, with more animation, but the mask of reserve fell quickly over his features. “Enough of me and my affairs, though. How is it with you? Have you won the lady of your own heart’s desire? When last I saw you, you were lamenting, the obduracy of some fair one, if I remember right.”

“Alas and alack, no, I’ve not won her,” mourned Lindley, his Irish eyes and his Irish lips losing their laughter. “I’m in a fair way never to win her, I think. In my case, though, it’s the father that’s wax in the daughter’s hands. ’Tis a long time

since he gave his consent to my wooing the maid, but the maid will not be wooed. She knows how to have her own way, and has always known it and always had it, too. She tyrannized over me when she was a lass of six and I was a lad of ten. Now she will not even meet me. When I visit at her house, she locks herself in her own chamber, and even I lose heart when it comes to wooing a maid through a wooden door. Ay, I tried it once, and only once. To my last letter, a hot, impassioned love letter, her only reply was to ask whether I still would turn white at a cock fight. The minx remembers well enough that I did turn white at a fight between two gamecocks, which she, mind you, had arranged in her father's barnyard at that same time, when she was six and I was ten."

"Well, I wish you luck," answered Ashley, who had given little heed to Lindley's words. "But to my mind such a maid would not be worth the wooing. 'Tis to be hoped that Treadway has cleared Farquhart's addled wits as well as he has cleared his voice," he added, after a moment's silence.

Floating down from Lord Farquhart's room came the last words of the song to Sylvia.

> Hearts that beat with love so true!
>
> Sylvia, sweet, I come to you!

Yet at that very instant, in young Treadway's room, Lord Farquhart was snoring in unison with young Treadway. Lord Farquhart's head was pillowed next to the head of young Treadway. And, stranger yet, at that very instant, too, there sprang from Lord Farquhart's window a figure strangely resembling Lord Farquhart himself, decked out in Lord Farquhart's riding clothes, that had been cast aside after the miry ride from London town, and tucked away in one corner of Lord Farquhart's room were the dark riding coat and breeches of the youth who had slumbered before the hearth of The Jolly Grig.

About the figure, as it sped along the road, was a long black cloak, over its head was drawn a wide French cap, and over the face was a black mask, but on the lips, under the mask, were the words of Lord Farquhart's song to Sylvia, the song wherein the name of Sylvia had so lately given place to Barbara.

> Hearts that beat with love so true!
>
> Barb'ra, sweet, I come to you!

IV.

The exchange of confidences between the two young men lasted for a few moments more. Then Ashley, examining the fastenings of his sword belt, exclaimed:

"Assuredly the Lady Barbara must arrive soon, whatever the state of the roads may be. I will go and look to the men and horses. Doubtless the former are as mad as their masters, and, doubtless, too, they have consumed as much of Marmaduke's heady wine."

Lindley, left to himself, drew a letter from some place not far distant from his heart and read it.

It was written in a clerkly hand, and was, for the first part, clearly a dictation.

> I regret to say, my dear Cecil, that I can give you no better word from my daughter, Judith. She declares roundly that she will have nothing to do with you, that she will not listen to your suit, and she commands me to advise you to put her out of your head for all time. I cannot, as you know, say aught against my girl.

"I should not let him if he would."

> In her duty to me she is all that I could ask, but in every other respect her madcap moods seem but to grow upon her. She spends much of her time shut up in her own room, and I have discovered quite recently that she rides much alone—through our own forests only, however. I would not for the world convey to you the idea that Judith is indiscreet. She has stripped from the trappings of her horse every sign of our name and station—or so the stable boys have reported to me. And not ten days since one of the maids ran to me in a great pother and told me that Mistress Judith was stamping about her chamber, behind locked doors, conversing at the top of her voice with herself or with the empty air. When I took her to task on the subject she explained that she was merely rehearsing to join some play actors she had seen performing on the common. Neither locks nor bars will hold her, for I have tried both. I would not dare to coerce her in any smallest degree, for I know not what might happen. So I hope you will see, my dear Cecil, that it would be indeed wise if you could take her advice and put her out of your mind. I fear that, as she says, she has given me all the love of which she is capable.

From this point the letter ran on in the same hand, but in another vein.

> So far, dear coz, I've written according to my revered father's words. You know I'm the only scholar in the family. The pen fits his hand but sadly, while every implement of love and war rests easily in mine. With the foils I—— But, alas and alack, you care not for tales of that sort. I hear you say: "Fie, fie, Ju! Why play with a man's toys?" To return to the subject in hand. Will you put me quite out of your mind and thoughts? Can you? If so, I pray you do so. For I love you not at all. 'Tis so absurd of you to want to marry the little red-haired termagant you used to play with. And believe me, I'm naught now save a big red-haired termagant. And I love you not one whit more than I did in the old days when I used to hate you. Perhaps 'twould be folly to say that I never will love you. I might meet you somewhere, at some odd chance, and find that you were the man for my inmost heart. And at that same meeting you might find that you loved me not at all. You think, doubtless, that I know nothing of love, and yet I do know that it lies all in the chance of meeting. If I might meet you in my

mood of to-day I'd hate you, whereas to-morrow I might love you. To defend myself against my father's charges I'll not try. Yet why should I not ride alone? And am I alone with my beloved Star? Ay, even though it is only a black star between two starry eyes blacker than night? Why should I not have stripped my father's name and rank from my horse's trappings when I go abroad? Suppose I should join the play actors—and they do tempt me sorely—why should my father's name and rank be known and defamed? And, truly, I grant you, I'm as likely to join the play actors as to enter a nunnery, the one as the other and the other as the one. Both draw me strangely, and I'm likelier to do either than to marry you. Here's my hand and seal on that, or, rather, here's my hand and a kiss, for a kiss is more binding than a seal. And now for the last word—will you put me out of your mind? Or will you wait for that chance meeting?

Judith, your Cousin. Also, Judith, dutiful daughter of James Ogilvie.

Lindley's lips had touched the paper more than once, and half a dozen sighs had crossed them, when suddenly he sprang to his feet.

A black star! Judith's horse, then, had a black star on its forehead! And the horse with the black star that had but now strayed into the stable yard! Could that be Judith's horse? Was Judith in danger or distress? In another instant Lindley was out through the door, calling aloud for the white horse with the black star between its eyes.

"But, my master," gasped a stable lad, "a squire from Master Ogilvie's led the beast away not ten minutes ago. 'Twas Mistress Ogilvie's horse, he said, strayed from the woods where the lady had been gathering wild flowers."

And it was then at that moment that the Lady Barbara's mud-bespattered outriders dashed into the courtyard, crying out that their lady's coach was but a short distance behind them.

V.

The Lady Barbara's coach was wobbling slowly along the moonlit road that led to The Jolly Grig. Fast enough it traveled, however, according to Lady Barbara's way of thinking, in spite of the fact that, at the tavern, she would find a lover and love awaiting her; the lover, Lord Percy Farquhart, to whom she was betrothed, to whom she would, indeed, be married in a fortnight's time, and love in the person of Harry Ashley, who had loved her long, and whom she thought she loved. Under her gauntlet Lord Percy's betrothal ring chafed her finger. On her breast lay the red rose she wore always, for no other reason than that Ashley had asked her so to do.

Querulous to the ancient dame who traveled with her she had been from the start, and more than querulous to the two black-eyed maids whose sole apparent duties were to divine my lady's wishes before they could be expressed in words.

"Absurd; I say it is absurd that I should be dragged up to London in all this mire," Lady Barbara cried, in a petulant, plaintive voice. "What do I want with the latest fallals and fripperies to catch my Lord Farquhart's fancy when he never so much as looks at me? I know full as well as he that his Mistress Sylvia in rags would be more to him than I would be if I were decked in the gayest gauds the town could offer."

"Sylvia!" gasped her attendant dame.

"Ay, Sylvia, I said," answered the Lady Barbara. "Don't think that I'm deaf to London gossip, and don't imagine that I'm the unsophisticated child my father thinks me, merely because I acquiesce in this brutal plan to marry me to a man I hate. I know how my Lord Farquhart entertains himself. Not that I'd have his love, either. I'd hate him offering love more than I hate him denying it."

The petulant voice ran on and on, its only vehemence induced by the muddy ruts in the road. Mistress Benton, using every force to keep awake, interjected monosyllabic exclamations and questions. The two maids, exerting all their powers to fall asleep, gave little heed to their mistress' railings.

The outriders, lured onward by an imagined maltiness in the air, had permitted an ever-increasing distance between themselves and their lady's coach. It was certainly some several moments after they had passed a moon-shadowed corner that the lumbering coach horses stumbled, wavered and stopped short. Sleepy Drennins recovered his seat with difficulty, the sleepy coach boys sprang to the horses' heads, Mistress Benton squawked, and the young maids squeaked with terror. Only the Lady Barbara was quite calm. But it must be remembered that the Lady Barbara would welcome delay in any form. But even she drew back in some alarm from the masked face that appeared at the coach door.

"Aaaaay! God help us!" screamed Mistress Benton. "'Tis the Black Devil himself."

The two maids clung to each other and scurried into an anguished unconsciousness.

The mask had opened the coach door, and his face was close to the Lady Barbara's.

"A word in your ear, sweet cousin Babs," he whispered. "But first order your men, on pain of death, to stand each where they are."

The Lady Barbara recognized dimly a familiar tone in the voice. She saw Lord Farquhart's coat.

"Lord Farquhart! Percy!" The cry was faint enough in itself, but it was muffled, too, by the gauntleted hand of the highwayman.

"Only for *your* eyes, my cousin," he answered. "Only for *your* ears."

"What prank is this?" she demanded, haughtily, and yet she had, indeed, given her orders to her men to stand each in

his place on pain of death.

“A lover’s prank, perhaps, my sweetheart,” the mask answered. “A prank to have a word alone with you. Come, step down upon my cloak and walk with me out into the moonlight. I would see by it your daffodil hair, your violet eyes, your poppy lips, your lily cheeks.”

A mocking, rippling laugh crossed the Lady Barbara’s lips. At once she gave her hand to her strange cavalier.

“I thought my eyes and ears were not mistaken,” she said. “Now I know in very truth that you are my cousin Percy, for that is the only lover-like speech that ever came from his lips to me. You believe in repetition, it seems.”

In spite of old Mistress Benton’s commands and prayers, the Lady Barbara had stepped from the coach and the stranger had slammed the door upon the gibbering dame.

“Ripening corn in a wanton breeze, I should call the hair to-night,” he said. “Bits of heaven’s own blue, the eyes; roses red and white, the cheeks, and ripe pomegranate the lips. Does that suit you better, Lady Babs?”

The Lady Barbara’s laughter rang back to Mistress Benton’s frenzied ears.

“The moonlight seems to infuse your love with warmth, my cousin.” The lady leaned with coquettish heaviness upon the arm that supported her hand.

“The icicle that holds your heart has chilled my love till now, my sweet,” the mask answered.

“But why did you stop me in this fashion?” The Lady Barbara had drawn back from the ardor in her escort’s voice. “What means this silly masquerade? What words would you speak to me here? In this fashion?”

“’Tis but a lover’s prank, as you said,” he answered, lightly. Then, singing softly Lord Farquhart’s song to Sylvia, he swung her lightly from him, and bowed low before her as though she were his partner in a dance.

Hearts that beat with love so true!

Barb’ra, sweet, I come to you!

She, falling in with his humor, dropped him an answering courtesy, and, drawing off her gauntlet, gave him her bare hand. He fell on his knee before her, and lightly touched the hand with his lips.

“Give me the glove, sweetheart,” he cried, “and the rose you wear on your heart and—and all these rings that mar your sweet, white hand with their gaudy reds and blues. Leave only mine to prove that you are only mine.”

He drew the jewels from her hand, and, suddenly, she started from him.

“Take off your mask, Percy, and lift your hat,” she cried, impulsively.

“You ask too much, sweet cousin.” Still he answered lightly. He was still on his knees before her. “My mask and my hat proclaim my trade, if not to you, at least to your servants.”

The roses in her cheeks faded, then blossomed once again. Again she laughed, but this time the rippling music held a tremor. Her hand caught her heart.

“For an instant,” she gasped—“oh! for an instant I thought—I was afraid that you might indeed be——”

“And for once you thought the truth, sweet cousin. But you’ve naught to fear.” The mask’s voice had grown serious. He was on his feet and holding both her hands in his. “I am he; I am he in dread of whom all London shivers, and it was to tell you that—that I stopped you, Barbara. To tell you and to test, if not your love, at least your good intentions as my wife. The world tells me that I cannot win your love, that it has been given irretrievably to another. But your fidelity I must prove before you wear my name. I am placing my life, my safety, my honor, in the sweet jeopardy of your hands. My life is forfeit, as you know. My life is henceforth in your hands.” She was shrinking away from him, but he held her fast. “My friends—your lover—await us at The Jolly Grig. I shall be with them before you arrive. You will face them and me in ten minutes or less. If you intend to keep faith with me as my wife, you will meet me as your betrothed. You will give no sign of this new knowledge of me.”

“But—but——” she stammered.

“There are no buts, sweet cousin, sweetheart.” Already he was leading her back to the coach. “You may cry out, if you will, when you see us, that you were held up by the black highwayman. In truth, there will be no need for you to tell the tale. Your servants will save you the trouble. In proof of the story, the fellow has stolen your rose and your glove and your rings. In ransom of your life, you swore that he should not be followed. We’ll hurry you on to town. We’ll give the alarm, and the constables and their men will have a mad and a merry chase. But from now on, this is our secret. We are one in that already.”

Courteously and slowly he drew her to the coach, pressing her forward as she held reluctantly back. Denying her all chance to answer, he handed her into the coach and disappeared.

VI.

The Jolly Grig was empty. The guests, all in the courtyard, were mounting to meet the Lady Barbara. A shadowy figure clambered to Lord Farquhart’s window, a figure strangely like Lord Farquhart. A moment later, a shadowy figure,

resembling, this time, the lad who had slept by the hearth, slipped down the stairs into the small room at the back of the inn. Here it stopped for an instant’s reverie.

“’Tis curious how jests grow,” the red lips murmured. “At first I but thought of frightening that haughty cousin of mine, the Lady Barbara Gordon. And now—heigh-ho! I hope I’ve not stored up trouble for Lord Farquhart. ’Twould be a sad pity to vex so fine a gentleman!”

Then the figure hurriedly caught up the bundle of woman’s toggery that had enswathed its entrance to the inn, and through the dancing motes, over the sun-flecked floor, the same slim shadow, the shadow that resembled the lad who had slept by the hearth, the shadow that had slipped down the curving stairs, crept through another window, was off and away, lost in the other shadows of the night.

VII.

Into the torch-filled courtyard rolled the Lady Barbara’s coach. There was little need for the lady to tell her own story. Mistress Benton’s shrieks were filling the air. The maids were squealing and praying Heaven to save them. Drennins and the shamed coach boys were cursing roundly.

“Thieves! Murder! Robbery!” screamed Mistress Benton. “We are killed!”

Even the Lady Barbara’s white hand could not quell the tumult, and, all the time, her frightened eyes rested tremulously everywhere save on Lord Farquhart’s face.

“Here, here, not a hundred paces from the inn,” screamed Mistress Benton. “He robbed us. He stole our all. Oh, just Heaven! We are all murdered.”

Here the Lady Barbara’s hand did produce silence in one quarter by clasping Mistress Benton’s mouth with its long, slim fingers.

But from one and another the story was soon out. They had, indeed, been stopped at the points of a dozen pistols! This version was told by one of the coach boys.

“A dozen, man!” scoffed Barbara. Even her voice was slightly tremulous. “There was one lone highwayman, a single highwayman in black mask and coat and hat!”

“’Twas the Black Devil himself!” cried the chorus of men, who had watched calmly at the inn while the outrage was occurring.

“One man! And the horses’ legs knotted in a haze of ropes strung over the road!” cried Drennins, determined to maintain the number to which he had been willing to yield his own and his lady’s life. “One man! God’s truth! There must have been at least a dozen!”

“Ay, but ’twas Barbara’s own fault!” Mistress Benton cried, but again Barbara’s hand silenced her in the same way, and now Barbara’s own voice rang out clear and decisive.

“Why do we dally here?” she demanded. “The story’s all told, and I’ve given my word that the fellow should go free. There’s little loss—a few jewels and an old glove. Nay, nay, Lord Percy. My word is given. You shall neither go yourself nor send your servants after the fellow. He is absolutely safe from molestation from me and mine.” Her eyes now rested with curious insistence on Lord Farquhart’s face, but he could not read the riddle in them. “And now”—the lady leaned back wearily—“if this clamor might all cease! I am desperately weary. Get me to my aunt’s house with as much speed as possible.”

There was a short conference among the men, and then the little group separated. But the lady had only closed her eyes. Her ears were eager. She sat suddenly erect.

“No, Mr. Ashley,” she cried, summarily; “a woman’s word is as weighty as a man’s. Mine has been given. I desire that you should all of you—all, every one—ride with me to London.”

In spite of her peremptory commands, there was still further parley before the coach was once more in progress, but the Lady Barbara, held in converse by Mr. Ashley, did not hear it, nor did she see that one of her escorting cavaliers remained behind when the coach moved on.

“I’ve reasons of my own for knowing whether the fellow still lingers in this vicinity,” Cecil Lindley had declared. “I’ll promise not to harm him, not to hold him; but I’ll search the spot where Lady Barbara’s coach was stopped.”

“But not single-handed!” Lord Farquhart had cried. “If you must stay, if you must go on your fool’s errand, at least take one or more of the men with you.”

“Nay, I’ve no fear for myself, but—but——” Lindley had hesitated. “Our gentleman highwayman knows the standing of his victims too well for me to have fear for my own safety. But I’ll go alone, for I’ll pass the night at my cousin Ogilvie’s. His place is near at hand, and I’d not care to quarter men on him at this unseemly hour. Good luck to you,” he had cried; “and good luck to me,” he had added, as he separated himself from them and rode away.

VIII.

The night was so far advanced that the moon was now directly overhead, and it was not very long before Lindley saw, not a hundred yards ahead of him, a white horse, ridden negligently by a somewhat slovenly lad—hooded, cloaked and

doubled up in the saddle, as though riding were a newly acquired accomplishment. The road was lonely enough to instill an eerie feeling in the stoutest heart, and yet the lad seemed quite unmoved when Lindley, after one or two vocal appeals, laid a heavy hand on his horse's bridle.

"Are ye stone deaf, my lad, or asleep, or merely mooning over some kitchen wench?" demanded Lindley, with asperity.

"Neither, my master," answered the lad, in the cracking voice that leaps unbidden from piping youth to manly depths. "I'm uncommonly good of hearing. I'd sure fall off my horse if I were asleep, and the wench who's most in my mind would be sadly out of place in a kitchen."

"Didn't you hear me calling, then?" Lindley was reining in his own steed to keep pace with the white horse.

"Surely I heard your halloo"—the boy's hand drew his hood closer about his face—"but I did not know that it was addressed to me."

"You're servant to Master James Ogilvie, are you not?" Lindley's tone implied a statement rather than a question, but the lad denied him.

"No, you're wrong. I'm no servant of Master James Ogilvie's."

"But it's Mistress Judith Ogilvie's horse you ride!" Again Lindley made an assertion.

"Ay, you're right there," answered the boy. "Once wrong, once right. Try again, my master."

"It's you who'll be tried, I'm thinking," said Lindley, once again laying his hand on the scarlet bridle of the white horse. "What do you with Mistress Judith's horse at this hour of the night, if you're not Master Ogilvie's servant?"

"I might be servant to Mistress Judith," hazarded the lad.

"No insolence, boy," quoth Lindley, working himself into a fine rage. "Mistress Judith has no servants that are not of her father's household."

"Ah, that proves that you've not seen Mistress Judith Ogilvie." A faint ripple, that might have been laughter, shook the boy's words. "All men are servants to Mistress Ogilvie, all men who have laid eyes on the lady."

"And so you're serving Mistress Judith by riding her horse from The Jolly Grig to the Ogilvie stables?" The sneer in Lindley's voice was evident, and he tried again to take possession of the scarlet bridle that had slipped or had been withdrawn from his fingers.

"Ay, my master, the horse had strayed while Mistress Judith was gathering wild flowers in the Ogilvie woods. And since you may have reason for your curiosity, I'll add that the maid was afraid her father would deprive her of the horse if he knew of this mischance, and she dared not trust one of the stable boys to search for it, so she came to me."

"And thanking you for so much courtesy, add but one more favor," scoffed Lindley. "Who and what may you be that Mistress Judith should come to you for aid?"

Lindley could see the careless shrug of the lad's shoulders as he answered:

"Why, as I told you to-night, I'm servant to Miss Judith Ogilvie, servant and lover of Mistress Judith Ogilvie."

"Lover!" The word halted at Lindley's teeth, and his eyes rested superciliously on the slouched figure beside him.

"Ay, lover," answered the lad, ignoring Lindley's tone, unconscious of his look. "As the brook loves the moon, as the brook holds the moon in its heart and cherishes her there, so hold I Mistress Judith in my heart."

"I like not your manner, boy, neither your manner nor your conversation." Lindley's anger expressed itself in his voice.

"Alas! I cannot change my manner so readily, my lord. But the conversation? It is of your own seeking. It is yours to end when you please. I am in no hurry, and the road lies ahead of you." The lad halted his horse, but Lindley also drew rein.

"Answer straight who and what you are," he cried. "I am cousin to Master James Ogilvie, and I have a right to demand an answer to those questions."

"Ah! A straight question always merits an answer, Master—Master——But I know not your name," said the boy. "I'm called Johan, and I'm bonded for a term of years to a man who has many names, and who plays many parts."

"You are one of the play actors, then!" burst from Lindley's lips.

"Yes, one of the play actors." The lad's words were simple, yet something in his tone gave new offense.

"I'll have my cousin whip you from his lands before the morning's an hour old," spluttered Lindley.

The boy's laughter rang through the woods.

"Master Ogilvie had already made that threat, but Mistress Judith sent him word that the day we were whipped from the common, that day would she whip herself from his house. Mistress Judith is, I think, only too ready to sign a bond with my master. She loves——She'd make a good actor, would Mistress Judith."

There was a long silence. The two horses were again pacing with well matched steps through the miry road. Twice,

when the moonlight shone full upon them, Lindley tried to see the lad's face, but each time only the pointed hood of the slouchy cape rewarded his curiosity. From his voice he judged his companion to be not more than fourteen or fifteen years old, although his words would have proved him older.

Suddenly the lad spoke.

"If you are cousin to Master James Ogilvie, as you say, why you are, then, cousin, too, to my Mistress Judith. You have seen her lately? Possibly she has confessed her plans, her ambitions, to you!"

"Nay, I've not seen the girl since we were children," admitted Lindley, almost against his will.

"Well, she has—why, she has grown up since then. You would care to hear what she is like? I see her constantly, you know. Her face is as familiar as my own—almost. She's over tall for a woman and over slight, to my way of thinking. But with the foils—at the butts—ay, and with the pistols, she's better than any man I know. She's afraid of naught, too—save stupidity."

"She was afraid of naught when she was a child," agreed Lindley, his interest in his cousin permitting his interest in the lad's words. "It's to be hoped that her temper has improved," he added, to himself. "But red hair begets temper, and, if I am right, my cousin's hair is red."

Again the boy's laughter startled the woods.

"Ay, red it is. Red as a fox, and her eyes are red, too; red with glints of yellow, save when she's angry, and then they're black as night. She's no beauty, this Mistress Judith. Her skin's too white, and her mouth's too small, and, as I said, she's over tall and over slight, but no man can look at her without loving her, and she—why, she cares nothing for any man. She gives no man a chance to woo her, and declares she never will."

A plan was forming itself immaturely in Lindley's mind, and he had given small heed to the boy's description of his lady. Now he spoke shortly.

"I want your help, boy. I intend to marry Mistress Judith, with or without her consent. And I want all the assistance you can give me. She trusts you, it seems. Therefore I will trust you. I would know more of Mistress Judith than I do. You see her daily, you say. Then you can meet me here each night and report to me what Mistress Judith does and says. The day she marries me, a hundred English crowns will be yours."

"Ah, you go too fast, my lord," cried the lad. "I know full well that Mistress Judith will never marry you. That I can promise you, and if I agreed to this proposition of yours I would be on a fool's errand as well as you."

"But I'll pay you well for your trouble if I fail, never fear. And I know that I'll not fail," boasted Lindley. "But the day I speak first to Mistress Judith, I'll give you a quarter of the sum. The day she consents to be my wife, I'll double that, and on our wedding day I'll double it once more. So *your* errand will not be a fool's errand, whatever mine may be."

The boy seemed to hesitate.

"And I'm to meet you here, each night, at the edge of the Ogilvie woods?" he questioned.

"Ay, each night for a fortnight, or a month, however long my wooing may take."

"And I'm to spy on Mistress Judith and tell you all her goings and her comings and all?"

"No, not to spy," retorted Lindley; "merely to let me know her passing moods and caprices, her whimsies, her desires."

"But if you should be detained, my lord; if you cannot come, must I send word to—to——"

"Ay, to Cecil Lindley, at——"

"Oh, my master, my master!" interrupted the boy, his elfish laughter ringing through the woods. "Had you told me your name at first, we had been spared all this foolish dickering. Why, Lindley's the man she detests; the man whose very name throws her into a frenzy of temper. There's naught that *you* can do to win Mistress Judith. Why, man, she despises you. Nay, she told her father only to-day—I was standing near the tree where they sat, mind you—that if ever again your name was mentioned to her, she would leave her home or—or even kill herself—anything to rid her ears forever of the hateful sound. How can *you* hope to win Mistress Judith?"

"Win her I will, boy," answered Lindley. "I'm not afraid of her temper, either. For you, your part is to do as you're told. Leave the rest to me. But you need go no further now. This road leads to the stables. I'll deliver Mistress Judith's horse with mine. A bargain's a bargain when it's sealed with gold." He flung a sovereign onto the road in front of him.

The two horses stood side by side, and the lad sat contemplating the gold where it shone in the moonlight.

"As you will, Master Lindley," he said. "And I'll wager it would speed your cause could I tell Mistress Judith that you defy her will and her temper. That, in itself, would go far toward winning her. As for the horses, best let me take the two of them. There are none of the boys awake at this hour. It must be near three. With your good leave, I'll stable yours when I put Mistress Judith's nag in its stall."

Lindley, standing in the moonlight on his cousin's steps, watched the young play actor as he walked somewhat unsteadily away between the two horses. He wished that he had seen the lad's face, and, curiously enough, it was this wish, and the young play actor himself, who filled the last thoughts in Cecil Lindley's brain before he fell asleep, in his cousin's house—the play actor who was to be the go-between in his wooing of Mistress Judith Ogilvie.

IX.

The following morning Judith Ogilvie awoke later than was her usual custom. She yawned as though she were not fully refreshed by her night’s sleep. She rubbed her eyes, then stretched her arms high above her head. Then she drew one hand back and looked long and somewhat lovingly at a round piece of gold that the hand held. Then she kissed the gold and blushed rosy red in the empty solitude of her own room. At last, nestling down again among the bed covers, she laughed—and a gurgling, rippling melody it was.

“So he’ll win me in spite of my hatred,” she murmured. “And yet—and yet, methinks if any man could win me, without much wooing either, ’twould be no other than my cousin, Master Cecil Lindley. Heigh-ho! He’s a taking way with him, and who knows?—perhaps—yes, perhaps, he’ll take even me, after I’ve had out my play acting with him.”

Doubtless, then, she drowsed again, for she was awakened once more by a voice and a vehement pair of knuckles on her door.

“Master Ogilvie desires that you should descend at once to speak with your cousin, Mr. Lindley,” said the voice, when Judith had sleepily ordered the knuckles to be silent.

“My cousin, Mr. Lindley?” questioned Judith. Even to the maid she feigned surprise. “How and when came my cousin, Mr. Lindley?”

“In the night, some time, I believe,” the voice answered. “He must return to London in an hour’s time, and he desires to see you and speak with you.”

“Say to Mr. Lindley that both he and Master Ogilvie, my father, know well enough that Mistress Judith Ogilvie will hold no communication whatsoever with Mr. Lindley. Furthermore say that—can you remember all this, Marget?—say that if Mr. Lindley is unable to read the letter lately written him by Mistress Judith Ogilvie, doubtless he will find some clerk in London more versed in scholarly arts than he, who will read it to him.” The footsteps retreated slowly from the door. “And, Marget, Marget,” Judith called again, “when Mr. Lindley has departed you may waken me again.”

On that selfsame morning, the Lady Barbara Gordon also awoke late in the house of her aunt, the wife of Timothy Ogilvie. She also seemed little refreshed by her night’s sleep. She also yawned and rubbed her eyes and stretched her arms above her head. She also laughed, but there was no rippling melody in the sound. Then she, too, held out one hand and looked at it curiously, looked curiously at all the ringless fingers, looked at the one finger that held Lord Farquhart’s betrothal ring.

The Lady Barbara had been seriously considering the new aspect of the situation. Indeed, the situation looked serious, and yet Lady Barbara doubted if it could in reality be as serious as it seemed. Was it possible, she asked herself, that Lord Farquhart had been only jesting the night before, when he had declared himself to be the highwayman of whom all London stood in dread? But jesting had hitherto held no place in her intercourse with Lord Farquhart. If he were indeed this highwayman, why had he jeopardized his life and honor by revealing the secret to her? It was absurd for him to say that he desired to test her loyalty before he gave her his name and title. Did he suppose for a moment that she would betray him? And yet by betraying him she could escape this hateful marriage! But—was he trying to frighten her so that she would refuse to marry him—so that she alone would incur old Gordon’s wrath—so that he would still be free to love and have his Sylvia?

Here she clinched her small fists and declared that, highwayman or not, she’d marry him! She would show him that he could not disdain her for any Sylvia. And then a tiny imp with immature horns and a budding tail whispered something in her ear, and she laughed again, and again there was no melody in the sound.

“Ay, I’ll show him,” she said aloud. “It will not be so hard to marry him now. I fancy he will find it difficult to make objections to my comings and goings.”

All this, perhaps, will prove that the Lady Barbara knew more of London life than its gossip. Also it might prove that there were other ingredients in the Lady Barbara’s character than dutiful submission to her father’s commands. Undoubtedly, it shows that the devil’s children are as subtle as the devil himself.

And yet, when the Lady Barbara called for her maid and while she waited for her, she looked at the hand the highwayman had kissed so often the night before. She blushed faintly and smiled slightly. But that only shows that every lover has a chance to win, that Lord Farquhart, offering love, might have wooed successfully. But to the maid, the lady said only:

“When Mr. Ashley comes, I will see him. To anyone else say that I desire to be left to myself.”

Lord Farquhart’s awakening on that same morning was the most curious, the most unpleasant, of them all. It occurred even later in the day than the others, and there was no laughter of any kind on his lips. Rather were they framing curses. Another day and night of freedom were gone. His marriage to the Lady Barbara Gordon was a day nearer. How could he laugh? Why should he not curse?

Suddenly his eyes fell on a tabouret that stood near his bed. On it lay a withered rose and half a dozen jeweled rings. The rose he had never seen before. The rings he was almost sure he had seen on Lady Barbara’s hands.

Hurriedly summoning a servant, he demanded an explanation of how the articles had come there.

The man, also unrefreshed by his night’s sleep, admitted that he had found the flower and the jewels in Lord

Farquhart's coat, that he had placed them on the tabouret himself.

"In my coat? In what coat?" demanded Lord Farquhart.

"In your lordship's riding coat," stammered the servant. "In the coat that you wore yesterday when we rode to The Jolly Grig. It seemed safer to me to place the jewels near your lordship's bed than to leave them in the coat."

And now it was Lord Farquhart's turn to rub his eyes. He wondered if he was indeed awake. And then the curses that had shaped his lips passed the threshold and poured forth in volumes upon the head of the luckless servant, who was in no wise to blame, and finally upon the Lady Barbara herself. For to Lord Farquhart's mind came no other solution of the mystery than that the Lady Barbara had met with no highwayman at all, that the whole story of the hold up had been but a silly country girl's joke gotten up by herself and her servants. Doubtless it was a joke on him that she had planned, and he had been too dull to see its point. The upshot of his thoughts and the end of his ravings were a command to the servant to return the articles forthwith to the Lady Barbara Gordon, to the lady herself, in person, and to say to her that Lord Farquhart would wait upon her late that afternoon.

X.

The Lady Barbara, in the midst of her interview with Mr. Ashley, was disturbed by Lord Farquhart's servant bearing her rings and the rose that had been stolen the night before. Her confusion expressed itself in deep damask roses on the cheeks that had, indeed, been lily white before.

"Lord Farquhart returns these to me?" she cried in her amazement.

"Yes, my lady, he said that they were to pass into no other hands than yours, that you would understand."

"That I would understand?" she questioned, and the damask roses had already flown.

"How came they into Lord Farquhart's hands?" asked Ashley, but he was vouchsafed no answer.

"That you would understand, my lady, and that he would be with you himself this afternoon."

The servant was looking at the lady respectfully enough, but behind the respect lurked curiosity, for even a servant may question the drolleries and vagaries of his masters. And here, indeed, was a most droll mass of absurdities.

But the lady was not looking at the servant at all. Rather was she looking at Mr. Ashley, and something that she read in his narrowing eyes, in the smile that curved but one corner of his lips, caused her cheeks to blossom once again into damask roses—nay, not in damask roses; rather were they peonies and poppies that dyed her cheeks. She spoke no word at all, and only with a gesture of her hand did she dismiss the servant, a gesture of the hand that held the withered rose and the jeweled rings.

There was a long silence in the boudoir. My Lady Barbara was playing nervously with the rings Lord Farquhart's servant had returned to her. Mr. Ashley was watching the girl.

"So my Lord Farquhart masqueraded as our gentleman of the highways?" Mr. Ashley's voice was full of scorn.

A quick gleam shone in Barbara's eyes. Her breath fluttered.

"Masqueraded!" she whispered.

There was another silence, and then Mr. Ashley spoke again, his voice, too, but little above a whisper.

"You mean, Barbara, that Lord Farquhart *is* this gentleman of the highways?"

"Oh, why, why do you say so?" she stammered.

"Ah, Barbara, Barbara, why do you not deny it if it is deniable?" His voice rang with triumph.

But he was answered only by the Lady Barbara's changing color, by her quivering lips.

"Why do you not admit it, then?" he asked again.

"Why should I admit it or deny it?" she asked, faintly. "What do I know of Lord Farquhart's movements, save that I am to marry him in less than a fortnight's time?"

"To marry Lord Farquhart!" Mr. Ashley laughed aloud. "To marry a highwayman whose life is forfeit to the crown! Say rather that you are free for all time from Lord Farquhart! Say rather, sweetheart, that *we* are free!"

"But why do you take it so easily for granted that my cousin is this highwayman?" asked Barbara.

"Why, it has long been whispered that this highwayman was some one of London's gallants seeking a new amusement. Surely it is easy to fit that surmise to Lord Farquhart. 'Twould be easy with even less assistance than Lord Farquhart has given us."

"But what would it profit us to be rid of Lord Farquhart—granting that he is this—this gentleman of the highways?" The Lady Barbara's eyes were still on her rings. She did not lift them to the man who stood so near her.

"Profit us!" he cried. "It would give you to me. It would permit you to marry me—if Lord Farquhart were out of the way.

What else stands between us?”

“No,” she murmured, in a low, faint voice, her eyes still on the jewels in her hands. “’Tis not my Lord Farquhart stands between us, but your poverty and my father’s will. How can we marry when you have nothing, when I would have less than nothing if I defied my father? No, I intend to marry Lord Farquhart, whatever he may be.”

Ashley’s eyes questioned her, but his lips did not move. And she, although she did not raise her eyes to his, knew what his asked. And yet, for several moments, she did not answer. Then, flinging the rings from her, she sprang to her feet.

“Why not take this chance that’s flung to us, Hal?” she cried. “Can’t you see what we have won? Why, Lord Farquhart’s life is forfeit to *us* so long as we hold his secret. A pretty dance we can lead him at the end of our own rope, and we’ll have but to twitch a finger to show him that we’ll transfer the end to the proper authority if he dares to interfere with our pleasures!”

“But, Barbara!” The man was, indeed, as shaken as his voice. He had found it hard enough to credit the evidence of ears and eyes that proved to him that Lord Farquhart was the Black Devil of the London highways, but harder yet was it to believe that Barbara, the unsophisticated country girl, was versed in all the knowledge and diplomacy of a London *mondaine*.

“Don’t ‘but Barbara’ me,” she cried, impatiently. “I’ll not be tied down any longer. I must be free, free, free! All my life long I’ve been in bondage to my father’s will. Now, in a fortnight’s time I can be free—controlled by no will but my own. Can you not see how this act of Lord Farquhart’s throws him into my power? How it gives me my freedom forever?”

“But you’d consent to marry this common highwayman?” Incredulity held each of Ashley’s words.

“Ay, I’d marry a common highwayman for the same gain.” The Lady Barbara’s violet eyes were black with excitement. “But Lord Farquhart’s not a common highwayman, as you call him. You know well enough that this Black Devil has never once stolen aught for himself. My Lord Farquhart, if he is, in reality, this gentleman highwayman, doubtless loves the excitement of the chase. ’Tis merely a new divertisement—a hunt, as it were, for men instead of beasts. In truth, it almost makes me love Lord Farquhart to find he has such courage, such audacity, such wit and spirit!”

“But what if he is caught?” demanded Ashley. “Think of the disgrace if he is caught.”

“Ah, but he won’t be caught,” she answered, gayly. “’Tis only your laggards and cowards that are caught, and Lord Farquhart has proved himself no coward. What can you ask of fortune if you’ll not trust the jade? How can you look for luck when you’re blind to everything save ill luck? Trust fortune! Trust to luck! And trust to me, to Lady Barbara Farquhart that’ll be in less than a fortnight!” She swept him a low curtsey and lifted laughing lips to his, but he still held back. “Trust me because I love you,” she cried, still daring him on. “Though I think you’ll make me a willing bride to Farquhart if you show the white feather now.”

“But you can see, can you not, that it’s because I love you that I fear for you?” Ashley’s tone was still grave.

“Well, but then there are two loves to back luck in the game,” she cried. Then she echoed the gravity in his voice. “What else can we do, Hal? Have you aught else to offer? Can you marry me? Can I marry you? There’s naught to fear, anyway. Lord Farquhart’ll tire of the game. What has he ever pursued for any length of time? And he’s been at this for six months or more. Nay, we can stop him, if we will. Is he not absolutely in our power?”

For a lady to win a lover to her way of thinking is easy, even though her way be diametrically opposed to his. Love blinds the eyes and dulls the ears; it lulls the conscience to all save its words. And Ashley yielded slowly, with little grace at first, wholly and absolutely at last, accepting his reward from the Lady Barbara’s pomegranate lips.

XI.

To the Lady Barbara, the game that she had planned seemed easy, and yet, in her first interview with her fiancé, certain difficulties appeared. Lord Farquhart presented himself, as in duty bound, late that first afternoon. Lady Barbara received him with chilly finger tips, offering him her oval cheek instead of her lips. He, ignoring the substitute, merely kissed the tapering fingers.

“I am glad to see that you are none the worse for last night’s encounter,” he said.

Wondering why his voice rang strangely, she answered, gayly:

“Rather the better for it, I find myself, thank you.”

“You told your tale of highway robbery so well that it deceived even my ears.” Lord Farquhart spoke somewhat stiffly. “I had not realized that you were so accomplished an actor.”

“Ay, did I not tell it well?” Her agreement with him held but a faint note of interrogation.

“I failed to catch your meaning, though, if meaning there was,” he said. And now his tone was so indifferent that the Lady Barbara might have been forgiven for thinking that he cared not to understand her meaning.

“I think I expressed my meaning fairly well last night,” she answered, her indifference matching his.

“Shall we let it pass at that, then?” he asked. “At that and nothing more?” If the Lady Barbara did not care to explain her joke, why should he force her?

“Ay, let us call it a jest,” she answered, “unless the point be driven in too far. A too pointed jest is sometimes a blunt

weapon, my Lord Farquhart."

Lord Farquhart heard the words that seemed so simple. He realized, also, that the tone was not so simple, but, as he told himself, the time would come soon enough when he would have to understand the Lady Barbara's tones and manners. He would not begin until necessity compelled him. He had quite convinced himself that the story of the robbery, and the rings and rose in his coat, were naught save some silly joke of the unsophisticated schoolgirl he supposed his cousin to be. He moved restlessly in his chair. It was hard to find a simple subject to discuss with a simple country girl.

"You received the rings in safety?" he asked, merely to fill in the silence.

"Quite," she answered, "quite in safety, my Lord Farquhart." She was consuming herself with a rage that even she could not wholly understand. Her intended victim's indifference angered her beyond endurance, and yet she dared not lose the hold she had not fully gained. A jest, indeed! He chose to call the whole thing a jest! A sorry jest he'd find it, then! And yet, surely, now was not the time for her to prove her power. Tapping her foot impatiently, she added in a thin, restrained voice: "Suppose we let the rings close the incident for the moment, my cousin!"

Again Lord Farquhart questioned the tone and manner, but he answered both with a shrug. The Lady Barbara was even more tiresome than he had feared. He would have to teach her that snapping eyes and quarrelsome speech were out of place in a *mariage de convenance* such as they were making. Doubtless he had failed to please her in some way. How he knew not. But how could he please a lady to whom he was quite indifferent, who was quite indifferent to him, and yet a lady to whom he was to be married in less than a fortnight, a whole day less than a fortnight. Lord Farquhart sighed far more deeply than was courteous to the lady.

"If I can do aught to please you, Barbara, during your stay——" he began, with perfunctory deference, but she interrupted him hotly.

"Barbara!" she had been fuming inwardly. And only the night before it had been "Babs" and "sweetheart" and "sweet cousin"! Her wrath rose quite beyond control and her voice broke forth impetuously.

"I beg of you not to give me your time before it is necessary, my Lord Farquhart. And—and I beg you will excuse me now. I go to-night to Mistress Barry's ball, and I—I—would rest after last night's fatigues."

She flounced from the room without further leave-taking, and as she fled on to her own chamber her anger escaped its bounds.

"He talks to me of jests," she cried, with angry vehemence. "A sorry jest he'll find it, on my word. *Aie!* I hate his insolent indifference. One would think I was a simple country fool to hear him talk. He—he—when I can have him hung just when it suits my good convenience! I'll not marry him at all! Ay, but I will, though. I'll make it worse for him by marrying him. And then I'll show him! Just wait, my lord, until I'm Lady Farquhart and you'll dance to a different tune, I'm thinking. Oh, I hate him, I hate him! I suppose he goes now to his Sylvia, or—or, perchance, out onto the road again." The Lady Barbara's tantrum had carried her into her own room and she had slammed the door. Now she found herself stopped by the opposite wall, and suddenly her tone changed. It grew quite soft, almost tender. "I wonder if his Sylvia is fairer than I am," she said. "I wonder if he might not come to look upon me as worthy of something more than that sidewise glance."

As for Lord Farquhart, left alone in the boudoir, he was still indifferent and still somewhat insolent, for, as he sauntered out from the room, he muttered:

"May the devil take all women save the one you happen to be in love with! And yet she's a pretty minx, too, if she hadn't such a vixenish temper!"

And then he hummed the last line of his song to Sylvia.

XII.

Five times had Johan, the player's boy, met young Lindley at the edge of the Ogilvie woods. Five times he had reported nothing of any interest concerning Mistress Judith Ogilvie, or, rather, the sum of the five reports had amounted to naught. Once he said that Mistress Judith was, if anything, quieter than usual. Again he told that her maids had said that she had been in a fine rage when Master Lindley had braved her wrath by appearing at her home and demanding an interview with her. But when her father had taxed her with her rudeness in refusing to descend and speak with her cousin, she had merely shrugged her shoulders and said that Master Lindley was of too little consequence even to discuss. She had been little with the players. Johan himself had had much trouble in gaining any interviews with her. She had spent more time than usual sewing with the maids. She had spent more time with her father, giving as an excuse that she could not ride abroad because her horse was lame. But Johan averred that he had seen one of the stable lads exercising Star and there had been nothing wrong with the horse.

On the sixth night Johan, peering up at Lindley from under his black curls, asked if any inference could be gathered from aught that he had reported and Lindley was obliged to confess that he saw none. The shadows of the trees fell all about them.

"If Mistress Judith knew that I was watching her to make report to you," hazarded the lad, "it might almost seem as though she were playing some part for your benefit, so different is all this from her former ways, but——"

"But she does not know," Lindley concluded the sentence.

"Nay, how could she know?" the lad asked. "If she knew she would but include me in her hatred of you. She would deny

me all access to her, and that I could not bear. 'Tis all of no use, my master. Mistress Judith is quite outside of all chance of your winning her. So little have I done that I'll gladly release you from your bargain if you'll but give up all hope of winning her."

"I've no faint heart, boy," answered Lindley. "Your Mistress Judith will come to my call yet, you'll see."

"I'm not so sure I'd like to see that day, my master," answered the lad, in a whimsical tone. "But, in all honesty, I should tell you—I mean I'm thinking——" He hesitated.

"Well, boy, you're thinking what?" questioned Lindley, impatiently. "Though I offered not to pay you for your thoughts."

"No, I give you my thoughts for no pay whatsoever." Johan's voice was still full of a restrained mirth. "And you must remember, too, that I told you at the first that I myself was a lover of Mistress Judith Ogilvie. That, perhaps, gives me better understanding of the maid. That, perhaps, makes my thoughts of value."

"Well, and what do you think?" demanded Lindley.

"I—I was going to say"—the boy spoke slowly—"it seems to me that—that Mistress Judith may already be in love."

"In love!" echoed Lindley. "And with whom, pray you, might Mistress Judith be in love? Whom has she seen to fall in love with? Where has she been to fall in love? It was only last week that you told me that Mistress Judith had sworn that she would never be in love with any man—that she would never be won by any man."

"Ay, but maids—some maids—change their minds as easily as their ribbons, my master," quoth the boy, somewhat sententiously.

"What reason have you for your opinion that Mistress Judith may be in love?" Lindley's question broke a short silence, and he bit his lip over the obnoxious word.

"I—why, it seems to me that her docility might prove it, might it not? I—it's a lover's heart that speaks to you, remember—a heart that loves mightily, a heart that yearns mightily. But is not docility on a maid's part a sign of love? Might it not be? It seems to me that if I were a maid and I'd fallen desperately and woefully in love, I'd be all for gentleness and quiet, I'd sew with my maids and dream of love, I'd give all of my time to my father from whom love was so soon to take me. That's what I should think a maid would do, and that is what Mistress Judith has done for a week past. And then to-day, as I hung about outside her windows, I heard her rating her maids. Mistress Judith's voice can be quite high and shrill when she is annoyed, you may remember; and the one complete sentence that I heard was this: 'Am I always to be buried in a country house, think ye, and what would town folk think of stitches such as those if they could see them? But see them they'll not, for you'll have to do some tedious ripping here, my girls, and some better stitches.' Now"—the boy's lips curled dolorously—"does not that sound to you as though Mistress Judith were contemplating some change in her estate, as though she had already given her heart to some town gallant?"

Lindley's brows were black and his lips, too, were curled. But curses were the rods that twisted them.

"What devil's work is the girl up to now?" he demanded, savagely. "She's doubtless met some ne'er-do-well unbeknown to Master Ogilvie. I must see Mistress Judith at once, on the very instant, and have it out with her."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Johan, the player's boy. "You'll but drive her on in any prank she's bent on."

"Then it's Master Ogilvie I'll see," declared Lindley. "Where have all your eyes been that the girl could have met a lover; that she could have seen anyone with whom to fall in love? She must not fall in love with anyone save me. Do you hear, boy? I love her. I love her."

"Ah, then it is your heart that's engaged in this matter," commented Johan. "I thought, perhaps—why, perhaps it was merely Mistress Judith's defiance of her father's wishes that led you on to wish to marry her. You—you really do love Mistress Judith, for herself? Really love her as a lover ought to love?"

"You're over curious, my lad," growled Lindley. "And yet 'tis my own fault, I suppose. I've given you my confidence."

"But how know you that you love Mistress Judith?" persisted the boy.

"I love her—I love her because I've loved her always," answered Lindley, passionately. "I loved her when I was ten, when she was six, when her golden head was no higher than my heart."

"'Tis somewhat higher now, I think." The boy's words were very low. "More like her heart would match to yours. Her eyes are as high above the ground as your own. Her lips would not be raised to meet your lips."

Lindley's face had grown scarlet.

"Be silent, boy," he cried. "You speak over freely of sacred things."

The lad, backing away from under Lindley's upraised arm, still murmured, echoing Lindley's words: "Sacred things!" and added: "Mistress Judith's heart! Her eyes! Her lips!"

What Lindley's answer might have been from lips and hand the lad never knew. It was checked by a sudden onslaught from behind. Out from the low bushes that hedged the woods sprang two figures in hoods and cloaks. The foremost was tall and burly, though agile enough. The second seemed but a clumsy follower. In an instant Lindley's sword was engaged with that of the leader. For only an instant Johan hesitated. Drawing a short sword from under his cloak, he sprang upon the second of the highwaymen. Their battle was short, for the fellow's clumsiness made him an easy victim

for the slender youth. Pinked but slightly in the arm, he gave vent to an unearthly howl and, turning away, he fled through the dark aisles of the woods, his diminishing shrieks denoting the speed and length of his flight.

But Johan's victory came not a second too soon, for just at that moment Lindley's sword dropped from his hand, the blood spurting from a deep wound in his shoulder. With a low snarl of victory, the highwayman drew back his arm to plunge his sword into his victim's breast, but Johan, springing forward and picking Lindley's weapon from the ground, hurled himself upon their assailant.

"Not so fast, my friend," he cried, and in another second blades were again flashing. Lindley, who for a moment had been overwhelmed by the shock of his wound, raised a useless voice in protest. Johan's own voice drowned every sound as he drove his antagonist now this way, now that, quite at his own will.

The moon, in its last quarter, was just rising above the trees, and the narrow glade was lighted with its weird, fantastic glow. From one side of the road to the other, the shadowy figures moved, the steel blades flashing in the glinting light, Johan's short, sharp cries punctuating the song of the swords. Lindley could hear the ruffian's heavy breathing as Johan forced him up the bank that edged the road. He heard his horse's nervous whinny as the fight circled his flanks. But Lindley was so fascinated by the brilliancy of the lad's fighting that he had no thought of the outcome of the fray until he heard a sudden sharp outcry. Then he saw Johan stagger back, but he saw at the same instant that the highwayman had fallen, doubled over in a heap, upon the ground. He saw, too, that Johan's sword, trailing on the ground, was red with blood.

"You're hurt, lad!" Lindley, faint from loss of blood, staggered toward the boy.

"Ay, ay, hurt desperately," moaned Johan. His voice seemed weak and faltering.

"But how? But where? I did not see him touch you!" Lindley's left arm encircled the lad, his right hung limp at his side.

Johan's head sank for an instant onto Lindley's shoulder.

"No, he did not touch me, 'tis no bodily hurt," he moaned; "but I've—I've killed the man."

Lindley's support was withdrawn instantly and roughly.

"After such a fight, are you fool enough to bemoan a victory?" His words, too, were rough. "Why, man, it was a fight to the death! You'd have been killed if you had not killed. Did you think you were fighting for the fun of it? You're squeamish as a woman."

Johan tried to recover his voice. He tried to stand erect.

"I did it well, did I not?" An unsteady laugh rang out. "The play acting, I mean. You forget, Master Lindley, that I'm a player, that in my parts I'm more often a woman than a man. And we actors are apt to grow into the parts we oftenest counterfeit." Suddenly he staggered and the sword clattered from his hand. But again he straightened himself. "Would I gain applause as a woman, think you?"

"If it's play acting, have done with it," growled Lindley, whose wound was hurting; who, in reality, was almost fainting from loss of blood. "You've saved my life as well as your own, Johan. But we'll touch on that later. There's no fear, is there, that your dead man will come to life?"

The boy for the first time raised his eyes to Lindley's face. Even in the darkness he could see that it was ghastly white and drawn with pain. A nervous cry burst from his lips, and he stretched both arms toward Lindley.

"Da—damn your play acting, boy," sputtered Lindley. "Nay, I mean not to be so harsh. I'll—I'll not forget the debt I owe you either. But you must help me to The Jolly Grig, where Marmaduke has skill enough to tend my wound until I can reach London."

"But Master Ogilvie has skill in the care of wounds," cried Johan. "Surely we are nearer Master Ogilvie's than The Jolly Grig. And Mistress Judith will——"

"Nay, I'll not force myself on Mistress Judith in this way," answered Lindley, petulantly.

"You are over considerate of Mistress Judith's feelings, even for a lover," returned the boy.

"Ah, it's not Mistress Judith's feelings I'm considerate of," replied Lindley. "She's capable of saying that I got the wound on purpose to lie in her house, on purpose to demand her care."

Here Johan's unsteady laugh rang out once more.

"Indeed she's capable of that very thing, my master," he said, and as he spoke he began to tear his long coat into strips.

"What are you doing that for?" demanded Lindley, leaning more and more heavily against his horse's side.

"It's a bandage and a sling for your arm," answered the boy. "If you will persist in the ride to The Jolly Grig, your arm must be tied so that it will not bleed again."

"'Twill be a wonder if you do not faint away like a woman when you touch the blood," scoffed Lindley.

"'Twill be a wonder, I'm thinking myself," answered the boy, unsteadily.

And then, the bandage made and adjusted, Johan offered his shoulder to assist the wounded man into the saddle. But

Lindley, pressing heavily yet tenderly against the lad, said gently:

“I’ve been rough, Johan, but believe me, this night’s work will stand you in good stead. Hereafter your play acting may be a matter of choice, but never again of necessity.”

“Heaven grant that the necessity will never again be so great!” murmured Johan, indistinctly.

“I—I did not understand,” faltered Lindley, reaching the saddle with difficulty.

“I said—why I said,” stammered Johan, “Heaven be praised that there would be no more necessity for play acting.”

Arrived at The Jolly Grig, Master Marmaduke Bass’ perturbed face boded ill for his surgical skill.

“Hast heard the news, my master?” he cried, before he saw the condition of his guest. “Ah, Mr. Lindley, ’tis about a friend of your own, too—a friend who was with you here not a week ago.”

“I—I care not for your news, whatever it may be, whomever it may be about,” groaned Lindley, who was near the end of his endurance.

“Master Lindley’s met with highwaymen,” interrupted Johan. “Perchance ’tis the Black Devil himself. He’s wounded and has need of your skill, not of your news.”

“Met with my Lord Farquhart!” cried honest Marmaduke. “But that’s impossible. My Lord Farquhart’s been in prison these twelve hours and more, denounced by his cousin, the Lady Barbara Gordon!”

It would have been hard to say which was the whiter, Master Lindley or Johan, the player’s boy. It would have been difficult to distinguish between their startled voices.

“Lord Farquhart! In prison!”

“Ay, Lord Farquhart. The Black Devil. The Black Highwayman. Denounced at a festival at my Lord Grimsby’s by the Lady Barbara Gordon.”

XIII.

The worthy Marmaduke’s gossip was indeed true, for as strange a thing as that had really happened. Lady Barbara Gordon, in open company, had announced that she knew positively that Lord Farquhart was no other than the Black Highwayman who for a twelvemonth had been terrorizing the roads round about London town. He had confessed it to her, himself, she said. She had seen him guised as the highwayman. Mr. Ashley, the Lady Barbara’s escort at the moment, had corroborated her statements, vouchsafing on his own account that he had been with the Lady Barbara when Lord Farquhart’s servants had returned her rings and a rose that had been stolen from her by the Black Highwayman only the night before.

Just a moment’s consideration of the conditions and incidents, the chances and mischances, that led up to this denouncement will show that it was not so strange a thing, after all. To take the Lady Barbara, first. Up to the time of her visit to London, Lord Farquhart had been to her something of a figurehead. She had considered him merely as a creature quite inanimate and impersonal, who was to be forced upon her by her father’s will just as she was to be forced upon him. But Lord Farquhart in the flesh was a young man of most pleasing appearance, if of most exasperating manners. When the Lady Barbara compared him with the other gallants of the society she frequented she found that he had few peers among them, and as she accepted his punctilious courtesies and attentions she began to long to see them infused with some personal warmth and interest. She saw no reason why Lord Farquhart should be the one and only gentleman of her acquaintance who discerned no charm in her. It piqued something more than her vanity to see that she alone of all the ladies whom he met could rouse in him no personal interest whatsoever. And, almost unconsciously, she exerted herself to win from him some sign of approbation.

Also, in addition to her awakened interest in Lord Farquhart—or possibly because of it—the Lady Barbara thought she saw in Mr. Ashley’s devotion some new, some curious, some quite displeasing quality. It was not that he was not as courteous as ever. It was not that he was not as attentive as ever. It was not that he did not speak his love as tenderly, as warmly, as ever. All this was quite as it had been. But in his courtesies the Lady Barbara recognized a thinly veiled—it was not contempt, of course, but there was the suggestion of the manner one would offer to a goddess who had advanced a step toward the extreme edge of her pedestal. And this Barbara resented. In his attentions he was quite solicitous, but it was a solicitude of custom—of custom to be, perhaps, as much as of custom that has been. To this Barbara objected. Already, too, his love savored of possession. Against this Barbara chafed. She would give her favors when she was ready to give them. They would be gifts, though—not things held by right.

Her resentments, her objections, her chafings, she tried to hold in check. She endeavored to show no sign of them to Ashley, with the result that in her manner to him he saw only the endeavor. So he, in turn, was piqued by the change in his lady. He was angry and annoyed, and asked himself occasionally what right the Lady Barbara had to change toward him when she and her Lord Farquhart were so absolutely in his power. All of which strained, somewhat, the relations between the Lady Barbara and Mr. Ashley.

To come to Lord Farquhart: he loved or thought he loved—he had loved or had thought he loved Sylvia—Sylvia, the light o’ love, one of the pretty creatures on whom love’s hand falls anything but lightly. To his prejudiced eyes, the Lady Barbara, cold and colorless in the gloom of Gordon’s Court, had seemed quite lacking in all charm. But when he had sauntered from her presence to that of Sylvia on the afternoon when the jest of the highway robbery had been discussed, he found that his curiosity, nay, his interest, had been aroused by the Lady Barbara. He found that his unsophisticated cousin was not altogether lacking in color and spirit, and Sylvia, for the first time, seemed somewhat

over blown, somewhat over full of vulgar life and gayety. Later, that same night, when he saw the future Lady Farquhart dimpling and glowing, the central star in a galaxy of London beaux, he wondered if the Lady Barbara might not be worth the winning; he wondered if the *mariage de convenance* might not be transformed into the culmination of a quick, romantic courtship. To win the Lady Barbara before the Lady Barbara was his without the winning! Might not that be well worth while?

To give just a passing word to Sylvia; for it was to Sylvia that the main mischance was due. Sylvia saw that her reign was over, that she had lost all hold on Lord Farquhart, and, in her own way, which, after all, was a very definite and distinct way, poor Sylvia loved Lord Farquhart.

For six days these conditions had been changing, with all their attendant incidents and chances, and the time was ripe for a mischance. Lord Farquhart, lounging in the park, hoping to meet the Lady Barbara, even if it was only to be snubbed by the Lady Barbara, saw that young lady at the end of a long line of trees with Mr. Ashley. For Barbara had consented to walk with Mr. Ashley, partly so that she might have the freedom of open air and sunshine in which to express a belated opinion to Mr. Ashley concerning his new manner and tone, and partly in hopes that she would encounter Lord Farquhart and pique his jealousy by appearing with his rival.

“I tell you I’ll not stand it, not for an instant,” she was saying, the roses in her cheeks a deep, deep damask and the stars in her eyes beaming with unwonted radiance. “To hear you speak the world would think that we had been married a twelvemonth! That you demanded your rights like a commonplace husband, rather than that you sought my favor. I’ll warn you to change your manner, Mr. Harry Ashley, or you’ll find that you have neither rights nor favors.”

It was at this instant that the Lady Barbara caught sight of Lord Farquhart at his own end of the lime-shaded walk. Instantly her manner changed, though the damask roses still glowed and the stars still shone.

“Nay, nay, Hal”—she laid a caressing hand on his arm—“forgive my lack of manners. I’m—I’m—perchance I’m over weary. We country maids are not used to so much pleasure as you’ve given me in London.” She leaned languorously toward Ashley and he, made presumptuous by her change of tone, slipped his arm about her slender waist.

The Lady Barbara slid from his grasp with a pretty scream of amazement and shocked propriety. Then there might have followed a bit of swordplay; indeed, the Lady Barbara hoped there would—the affianced lover should have fought to defend his rights, the other should have fought for the privileges bestowed by the lady, and all the time the lady would have stood wringing her hands, moaning perchance, and praying for the discomfiture of the one or the other. But, unfortunately, none of this came to pass because, just at the critical moment, just when Lord Farquhart, watched slyly by Lady Barbara’s starry eyes, was starting forward to defend his rights, Sylvia slipped from behind a tree and flung herself with utter abandon upon Lord Farquhart.

Now, in reality, Lord Farquhart tried to force the woman away from him, but the Lady Barbara saw only that his hands were on her arms, that, in very truth, he spoke to the girl! Turning on her heel, she sped from the lime walk, followed by Mr. Ashley.

What ensued between Lord Farquhart and his Sylvia concerns the story little, for he had already told her that her reign was over, that a new queen had been enthroned in his heart. What ensued between the Lady Barbara and her escort cannot be written, for it was but a series of gasps and sharp cries on the lady’s part, interspersed with imploring commands on the lover’s part to tell him what ailed her. The interview was brought to a summary conclusion when the Lady Barbara reached her aunt’s house, for she flung the door to in his face and left him standing disconsolate on the outside.

XIV.

It was on that night that the Lady Barbara received an ovation at Lord Grimsby’s rout as the belle of London town. Most beautiful she was, in reality, for the damask roses in her cheeks were dyed with the hot blood of her heart; her eyes, that were wont to be blue as the noonday sky, were black as night, and the pomegranates of her lips had been ripened by passion. Surrounded by courtiers, she flung her favors right and left with impartial prodigality. All the time her heart was crying out that she would be avenged for the insult that had been offered her that afternoon. Harry Ashley, approaching her with hesitating deference, was joyously received, although to herself she declared that she loathed him, abhorred him and detested him.

Jack Grimsby, toasting the Lady Barbara for the dozenth time, exclaimed to his crony:

“’Pon my honor, though, I know not if I envy Lord Farquhart or not. His future lady seems somewhat unstinting in her favors.”

“To me it seems that Lord Farquhart asks but little from his future lady,” laughed the crony.

“Is not that Lord Farquhart now?” asked young Grimsby. “Let us watch him approach the lady. Let us see if she has aught left for him.”

A narrow opening in the court that surrounded Lady Barbara permitted Lord Farquhart to draw near her. There was a sudden lull in the chatter that encompassed her, for others beside Jack Grimsby were questioning what the Lady Barbara had reserved for her future lord. Possibly the Lady Barbara had drawn a little aloof from her attendant swains, for she seemed to stand quite alone as she measured her fiancé with her eyes from his head to his feet and back again to his eyes. And all the while her heart was beating tempestuously and her brain was crying passionately: “If only he had loved me! If only he had loved me the least little bit!”

On Lord Farquhart’s lips was an appeal to his lady’s forbearance, in his eyes lay a message to her heart, but she saw them not. His face flushed slightly, for he knew that all eyes were bent upon him. Then it paled under Barbara’s cold

glance. For a full moment she looked at him before she turned from him with a shiver that was visible to all, with a shrug that was seen by all. And yet, when she spoke, it was after a vehement movement of her hand as though she had silenced a warning voice.

“My lords and ladies,” she cried, her voice ringing even to the corners of the hushed room, “I—I feel that I must tell you all that this man, this Lord Farquhart, who was to have been my husband in less than a week, is—is your gentleman highwayman, your Black Devil who has made your London roads a terror to all honest men.”

For an instant there was absolute silence. Then surprise, amazement and consternation rose in a babel of sound, but over all Lady Barbara’s voice rang once more.

“I am positive that I speak only the truth,” she cried. “No, Lord Farquhart, I’ll not hear you, now or ever again. I’ve seen him in his black disguise. He told me himself that he was this Black Devil of the roads. He confessed it all to me.”

The lady still stood alone, and the crowd had edged away from Lord Farquhart, leaving him, also, alone. On every face surprise was written, but in no eyes, on no lips, was this so clearly marked as on Lord Farquhart’s own face.

And yet he spoke calmly.

“Is this the sequel to your jest, my lady, or has it deeper meaning than a jest?”

“Ah, jest you chose to call it once before, and jest you may still call it,” she answered, fiercely, but now her hand was pressed close against her heart.

“For a full week I have known this fact,” exclaimed Ashley, stepping to the Lady Barbara’s side. “Unfortunately, I have seen with my own eyes proofs convincing even me that my Lord Farquhart is this highway robber. I cannot doubt it, but I have refrained from speaking before because Lady Barbara asked me to be silent, asked me to protect her cousin, hoping, I suppose, that she could save him from his fate, that she could induce him to forego this perilous pursuit; but ——”

Lord Farquhart’s hand was closing on his sword, but he did not fail even then to note the disdain with which Lady Barbara turned from her champion. She hurriedly approached Lord Grimsby, who was looking curiously at this highwayman who he himself had had reason to think was the devil incarnate.

“I beg your pardon, Lord Grimsby”—Lady Barbara was still impetuous—“for this interruption of your fête, but, to me, it seemed unwarranted that this man should longer masquerade among you as a gentleman.”

She swept away from Lord Grimsby. She passed close to Lord Farquhart, lingering long enough to whisper for his ear alone: “You see I can forgive a crime, but not an insult.” Then, sending a hurried message to her aunt, she paced on down the room, her head held high, the damask roses still blooming brilliantly, the stars still shining brightly.

A score of officious hands held her cloak, a dozen officious voices called her chair. And my Lady Barbara thanked her helpers with smiling lips that were still pomegranate red, and yet the curtains of her chair caught her first sob as they descended about her, and it seemed but a disheveled mass of draperies that the footmen discovered when they set the lady down at her own door, so prone she was with grief and despair.

XV.

Lord Farquhart seemed to recover himself but slowly from the shock of Lady Barbara’s denunciation, from the surprise of her whispered words. At last he raised his eyes to Lord Grimsby, who was still looking at him curiously.

“I fear that I should also ask your pardon, my Lord Grimsby, for this confusion.” Lord Farquhart’s words came slowly. “My cousin, the Lady Barbara, must be strangely overwrought. With your permission, I will follow her and attend to her needs.”

He turned and for the first time looked definitely at the little knot of men that surrounded him. The women, young and old, had been withdrawn from his environment by their escorts. His eyes traveled slowly from one to another of the familiar faces.

“Surely, my Lord Grimsby,” clamored Ashley, “you will not let the fellow escape!”

“Surely my Lord Grimsby is going to place no reliance on a tale like this told by a whimsical girl!” retorted Lord Farquhart before Lord Grimsby’s slow words had fallen on his ears.

“We will most assuredly take all measures for safeholding my Lord Farquhart.”

“But, Lord Grimsby,” cried Farquhart, realizing for the first time that the situation might have a serious side, “you surely do not believe this tale!”

“I would like to see some reason for doubting the lady’s word,” answered the older man. “And you forget that her story is corroborated by Mr. Ashley. Neither must you overlook the fact that for some time the authorities have been convinced that this highwayman was no common rogue, that he is undoubtedly some one closely connected with our London life, if—if indeed——” But this was no place for Lord Grimsby to assert his own opinion that the highwayman was indeed the devil incarnate.

“Why, the whole thing is the merest fabrication,” cried Lord Farquhart, impatiently. “It is all without reason, without sense, without possible excuse. The Lady Barbara’s imagination has been played upon in some way, for some reason that I cannot understand. You heard her declare that she’d seen me in the fellow’s disguise. That is an absolute

impossibility. I've never seen the rogue, much less impersonated him."

"You shall, of course, have the benefit of any doubt, Lord Farquhart." Lord Grimsby's voice had assumed its judicial tones and fell with sinister coldness on every ear. "But, innocent or guilty, you must admit that the safety of his majesty's realm demands that the truth be proved."

"Ay, it shall be proved, too," cried Jack Grimsby, who had been so warmly befriended in time of direct need by the Black Highwayman. "And you shall have the benefit of every doubt there may be, Percy. Rest assured of that. And in the event that there is no doubt, if it is proved that you are our Black Devil, you'll still go free. Your case will be in my father's hands, and I here repeat my oath that if the Black Devil goes to the gallows, I go on the road, following as close as may be in his footsteps."

Farquhart shuddered out from under the protecting hand young Grimsby had laid on his shoulder.

"You speak as though you half believed the tale," he cried. His eyes traveled once again around the little circle. Then his face grew stern. "Let Mr. Ashley repeat his tale," he said, slowly. "Let him tell the Lady Barbara's story and his own corroboration as circumstantially as may be."

"Yes, let Harry Ashley tell his story," echoed Jack Grimsby, "and when he has finished let him say where and when he will measure swords with me, for if he lies he lies like a blackguard, and if he spoke the truth he speaks it like a liar."

Ashley's sword was half out of its sheath, but it was arrested by Lord Grimsby's voice.

"I will consent that Mr. Ashley should tell his story here and now," he said. "It's unusual and irregular, but the circumstances are unusual and irregular. I request your appreciation of this courtesy, my Lord Farquhart, and as for you, my son, a gentleman's house may serve strange purposes, but it's no place for a tavern brawler. So take heed of your words and manners."

Lord Farquhart had merely bowed his head in answer to Lord Grimsby's words; Jack still stood near him, his hand on his shoulder, but Ashley looked in vain for a pair of friendly eyes to which he might direct his tale. And yet he knew that everyone was waiting avidly for his words.

"The story is short and proves itself," he began. "A week ago the Lady Barbara Gordon was traveling toward London attended only by her father's servants. My Lord Farquhart, with a party of his friends, among whom I was included at that time, awaited her at Marmaduke Bass' tavern, The Jolly Grig. A short time before the Lady Barbara was to arrive, Lord Farquhart withdrew to his room, presumably to sleep, until——"

"Ay, and sleep he did," interrupted young Treadway, who spoke for the first time. "We both slept in my room on the ground floor of the tavern."

"You slept, no doubt, Mr. Treadway," answered Lord Grimsby. "But, if so, how can you vouch for the fact that Lord Farquhart slept?"

"I can vouch for it—I can vouch for it because I know he slept," spluttered Treadway.

"I fear me much that your reasoning will not help to save your friend," answered the councillor, a little scornfully. "Let me beg that Mr. Ashley be not again interrupted to so little purpose."

"While, according to his own account, Mr. Treadway slept," continued Ashley, "while he supposed Lord Farquhart was also sleeping, I heard Lord Farquhart singing in his room overhead. At the time I paid little heed to it. In fact, I did not think of it again that night, although, if I remember rightly, I commented on Lord Farquhart's voice to Mr. Cecil Lindley, who sat with me in the tavern. It was full fifteen minutes after that when the Lady Barbara drove into the inn, crying that she had been waylaid by the Black Highwayman. Her rings had been stolen, her rings and a jeweled gauntlet and a rose. She was strangely confused and would not permit us to ride in pursuit of the villain, averring that she had promised him immunity in exchange for her own life."

"A pretty tale," Jack Grimsby again interrupted, in spite of his father's commands. "It's a lie on its own face. 'Tis well known that the Black Devil has never taken a life, has never even threatened bodily injury."

"Be that as it may"—Ashley's level voice ignored the tone of the interruption, although his nervous fingers were on his sword—"when the Lady Barbara's companion, Mistress Benton, tried to say that the Lady Barbara had recognized her assailant, that the Lady Barbara had willingly descended from the coach with the highwayman, the Lady Barbara silenced her peremptorily and ordered that we hurry with all speed to London. 'Twas the following morning, my Lord Grimsby, that the truth was revealed to me, for Lord Farquhart's own servant returned to the Lady Barbara, in my presence, the jewels that had been stolen the night before, the jewels and the rose the highwayman had taken from her."

"You forget the jeweled gauntlet, Mr. Ashley." Again it was Jack Grimsby's sneering voice that interrupted Ashley's tale. "Did my Lord Farquhart keep his lady's glove when he returned the other baubles?"

Ashley's face flushed, but he looked steadily at Lord Grimsby; he directed the conclusion of his story to Lord Grimsby's ears.

"It was then that the Lady Barbara confessed, much against her will, I will admit, that it was indeed her cousin and her fiancé who had waylaid her, merely to confess to her his identity with this bandit whose life is, assuredly, forfeit to the crown."

Lord Farquhart had listened in tense silence. Now he started forward, his hand on his sword, but his arms were caught

by two of Lord Grimsby's men. "You will admit, my Lord Farquhart, that the matter demands explanation," said the councillor, dryly. "How came you by the jewels and rose? Can you tell us? And what of the missing gauntlet?"

"The rings and the rose my servant found in my coat," answered Farquhart, his eyes so intent on his questioner's face that he failed to see the smile that curved the lips of those who heard him. "The gauntlet I never saw, I never had it in my possession for a moment."

"How did you account for the jewels in your coat if you did not put them there yourself?" demanded Lord Grimsby.

"At first I was at a loss to account for them at all." Lord Farquhart's voice showed plainly that he resented the change in his questioner's manner. "I recalled my cousin's confusion when she had told her tale of highway robbery, and all at once it seemed to me that the whole affair was an invention of her own, some madcap jest that she was playing on me, perchance to test my bravery, to see if I would ride forthwith after the villain. If so, I had failed her signally, for I had accepted her commands and gone with her straight to London. I supposed, in furtherance of this idea, that she had hired her own servant, or bribed mine, to hide the jewels in my coat. I never thought once of the gauntlet she had claimed to lose, never remembered it from that night until now. I sent the jewels to her, and later in the day I taxed her with the jest, and she agreed, it seemed to me, that it had been a jest and asked that the return of the rings might close the incident. I have not spoken of it since, nor has she, until to-night."

There was a long silence, and then Lord Grimsby spoke.

"Your manner carries conviction, Lord Farquhart, but Mr. Ashley's tale sounds true. Perchance some prank is at the bottom of all this, but you will pardon me if I but fulfill my duty to the crown. The case shall be conducted with all speed, but until your name is cleared, or until we find the perpetrator of the joke, if joke it be, I must hold you prisoner."

There was a short scuffle, a sharp clash of arms. But these came from Lord Farquhart's friends. Lord Farquhart himself stood as though stunned. He walked away as though he were in a dream, and not until he was safely housed under bolt and bar in the sheriff's lodge could he even try to sift the matter to a logical conclusion.

For an instant only did he wonder if Barbara and Ashley had chosen this way to rid themselves of him. He remembered with a gleam of triumph Barbara's disdainful manner toward Ashley when he had stepped to her side, vouching for the truth of her statement. He remembered, too, that Barbara had had short moments of kindness toward him in the last few days, that there had been moments when she had been exceeding sweet to him; when he had even hoped that he was, indeed, winning her love.

Then, like a flash, he remembered Sylvia's presence under the trees that afternoon. Undoubtedly Barbara had seen her, and if Barbara had grown to care for him ever so little, she would have resented bitterly a thing like that. That might have been the insult to which she referred. But the crime! Of what crime had he been guilty? Assuredly she did not believe, herself, the tale she had told. She did not believe that he was this highwayman.

Here Lord Farquhart caught a gleam of light. Ashley might have convinced her that such a tale was true. Ashley might have arranged the highway robbery and might have placed the jewels in his coat to throw the guilt on him. Ashley was undoubtedly at the bottom of the whole thing. Then he remembered Ashley's flush when the gauntlet had been referred to. Had Ashley kept the gauntlet, then?

Following fast upon this question was another flash of light even brighter than the first. To Farquhart the truth seemed to stand out clear and transparent. Ashley was the gentleman of the highways! Ashley was the Black Devil. Farquhart threw back his head and laughed long and loud. If only he had used his wits, he would have denounced the fellow where he stood.

And in this realization of Ashley's guilt, and in the consciousness that Barbara must love him at least a little if she had been jealous of Sylvia, Lord Farquhart slept profoundly.

XVI.

All this merely brings the narrative back to the announcement made by Marmaduke to Lindley and Johan when they entered the courtyard of The Jolly Grig after the fight with the highwaymen.

As may be supposed, it was several nights before Lindley was sufficiently recovered from his wound to again keep tryst with Johan, the player's boy. When at last he could ride out to the edge of the Ogilvie woods, he found the lad sitting on the ground under an oak, apparently waiting for whatever might happen. He did not speak at all until he was accosted by Lindley, and then he merely recited in a listless manner that Mistress Judith was gone to London with her father.

The boy's manner was so changed, his tone was so forlorn, that Lindley's sympathy was awakened. He wondered if the lad really loved Judith so devotedly.

"And that has left you so disconsolate?" he asked.

"Ay, my master!" Indeed the youth's tone was disconsolate, even as a true lover's might have been.

"And when went Mistress Judith to London?" asked Lindley. "This afternoon? This morning?"

"But no. She went some four days ago, all in a hurry, as it seemed," Johan answered.

"Four days ago!" echoed Lindley. "But why did you not send me word?" He was thinking of the days that had been wasted with his lady near him, all unknown to him, in London.

“She—I mean—I thought you would be here each night,” stammered the boy, contritely, and yet his tone was listless. “I’ve but kept the tryst with you.”

Lindley looked at the boy curiously. Preoccupied as he was with his own thoughts, he still recognized the change in his companion.

“What’s the matter, Johan?” he asked. “You were not hurt the other night, were you? Are you still brooding on the fact that you killed your man? Are you ill? Or do you fear that I’ve forgot my debt? What ails you? Can’t you tell me?” The questions hurried on, one after another. “Or is it Mistress Judith’s absence, alone, that hurts you thus? Is she to be long in London?”

“N—no. That is, I do not know,” the boy made answer to the last question. “We, my master and I and all his company, go ourselves early to-morrow to London. Doubtless I shall see Mistress Judith there.”

“Why, then, ’tis only that the scene will shift to London,” cried Lindley. “Cheer up, my lad, we’ll name a tryst in London. Besides, there’s news waiting you in London; news for you and your master concerning your bond to him. You hardly look the part of a lad who’s won to freedom by a pretty bit of swordplay. You should have learned ere now to fit your countenance to the parts you perform.”

“But I’ve performed so few parts, Master Lindley. I am only Johan, the player’s boy, and, by your leave, I’ll go now, and for a tryst—she—for our tryst, say at ten o’clock, in front of Master Timothy Ogilvie’s mansion, where Mistress Judith and her father lodge. I’ll have surely seen Mistress Judith then, and can report to you any change, if change there be.”

The slender lad slipped back into the shadows of the Ogilvie woods, but for full ten minutes he held Lindley’s thoughts away from the lady of his heart’s desire. What could ail the lad to be so changed, so spiritless? Was his love so deep that to be weaned from Judith for even a few short hours could break his spirit thus? Or was it possible that the duel and the fatigues of that midnight encounter had been too much for his strength? Lindley could answer none of these questions, so the lover’s thoughts soon strayed back to Mistress Judith, and the player’s lad was forgot.

But even Mistress Judith held not all of Lindley’s thoughts that night, for Lord Farquhart’s fate was resting heavily on his mind. That Farquhart was, indeed, the gentleman of the highways Lindley knew to be impossible, and yet all the facts seemed to be against the imprisoned lord. Even Lindley’s word had gone against him, for Lindley had been questioned, and had been obliged to admit that he had heard Lord Farquhart singing in his room above the stairs at the very time when Clarence Treadway, when Farquhart himself, swore that he was asleep belowstairs in Treadway’s room. There was no evidence, whatsoever, for Lord Farquhart save his own words. All the evidence was against him.

And the affair that had savored more of a jest than of reality seemed gradually to be settling down to a dull, unpleasant truth. Farquhart could and would tell but the one tale. Ashley would tell but one tale, and he, in truth, had convinced himself of Farquhart’s guilt, absurd as it seemed. The Lady Barbara could only lie on her bed and moan and sob, and cry that she loved Lord Farquhart; that she wished she could unsay her words. She could not deny the truth of what she had told, though nothing could induce her to tell the story over. But all of her stuttering, stammering evasions of the truth seemed only to fix the guilt more clearly upon Lord Farquhart. Even to Lindley, who had been with him on the night in question, it did not seem altogether impossible that Lord Farquhart had had time to ride forth, waylay his cousin and rejoin his friends at the inn ere the lady drove into the courtyard.

Another point that stood out strongly against Lord Farquhart—a point that was weighing heavily in public opinion—was that since the night of Lady Barbara’s arrival in London, since which time Lord Farquhart had been obliged to be in close attendance upon his cousin, there had been no hold ups by this redoubtable highwayman. The men who had attacked Lindley and the player’s lad had been but bungling robbers of the road. That they could have had any connection with the robbery of the Lady Barbara, or with the other dashing plays of the Black Devil, had been definitely disproved.

So all of Farquhart’s friends were weighed down with apprehension of the fate in store for him, whether he was guilty or not. The only hope lay in Lord Grimsby, the old man who had been convinced that the highwayman was in league with the devil, if he was not the devil himself; the old man whose only son had vowed to take to the road if the Black Highwayman met his fate at his father’s hands. But the hopes that were based on the demon-inspired terror, and the paternal love of Lord Grimsby, seemed faint, indeed, to Lindley as he rode toward London that night.

XVII.

Lindley was first at the tryst in London, but Johan soon slipped from the shadow of Master Timothy Ogilvie’s gateway.

“I can stop but a moment,” he whispered, nervously. “I must not be seen here. My—my master must not know that I—I am abroad in London.”

“And Mistress Judith?” questioned Lindley. “Have you seen her? Is she still here? Is she well?”

“I have seen Mistress Judith for a moment only,” answered the lad. “She is well enough, but she is worn out with the care of her cousin, Lady Barbara, and she is sadly dispirited, too.”

“’Tis a pity Lady Barbara cannot die,” muttered Lindley, “after the confusion she’s gotten Lord Farquhart into. A sorry mess she’s made of things.”

“The poor girl——” Johan shuddered. “Mistress Judith says the poor girl is in desperate straits, does naught but cry and sob, and vows she loves Lord Farquhart better than her life.”

“Ay, she may well be in desperate straits,” shrugged Lindley. “And she’ll be in worse ones when she finds she’s played a

goodly part in hanging an innocent man!”

“Hanging!” Johan’s exclamation was little more than a shrill, sharp cry.

“Ay, hanging, I said,” answered Lindley. “What other fate does she think is in store for Lord Farquhart?”

“But—but this Lord Farquhart is a friend of yours, too, is he not, Master Lindley?” The boy’s question was slow and came after a long silence.

“Yes, a good friend and an honest man, if ever there was one,” answered Lindley.

“An—an honest man!” Johan shuddered again. “That’s it, an honest man he is, isn’t he?”

“As honest as you or I!” Lindley’s thoughts were so preoccupied that he hardly noticed his companion’s agitation.

“But there must be some way of escape,” Johan whispered, after another silence. “Some way to save him! If nothing else, some way to effect his escape!”

“Nay, I see no way,” gloomed Lindley.

In the darkness Johan crept closer to Lindley.

“Is it only grief for Lord Farquhart that fills your heart,” he asked, “or is it your wound that still hurts? Or—or has Mistress Judith some place in your thoughts? You seem so somber, so depressed, my master!”

“Ah, lad!” Lindley’s sigh was deep and long. “Even Mistress Judith herself might fail to comprehend. She still fills all of me that a woman can fill, but a man’s friend has a firm grip on his life. If harm comes to Lord Farquhart, the world will never again be so bright a place as it has been!”

“But harm cannot come to Lord Farquhart!” Johan’s voice was suddenly soft and full. “He *must* be helped. There are a hundred ways that have not been tried. There is one way—oh, there is one way, in all those hundred ways—I mean, that must succeed. Think, Master Lindley. Cannot I help? Cannot I help in some way—to—to save your friend?”

Lindley was touched by the earnestness of the boy’s tone, and laid a kindly hand on his shoulder.

“I’ll think, my lad, but to what purpose I cannot promise you. This is no place for swordplay, however brilliant it may be.”

Johan had drawn roughly away from Lindley’s side. Now he leaned against the gate, dejection in every line of his drooping figure.

“There is one way,” he muttered, slowly. “There is always one way, but——”

“You need not take it so to heart, boy,” Lindley urged. “You’re sadly worn and tired now. I saw last night that you were quite spiritless and lacking in heart! To-night, I see it even plainer.”

“Oh, ’tis naught but the work I have to do,” Johan answered, wearily.

“The work?” questioned Lindley. “Is it a new part you have to play?”

“Ay, that’s it,” sighed Johan; “a new part, a man’s part and a woman’s part all in one! It’s a most difficult part, indeed.” He was muttering the words to himself, and, under his cloak, Lindley could see his hands twisting nervously.

“Forgive me, lad!” Lindley’s tone was conscience-stricken. “I’d not forgotten the debt I owed you, though I seem to have forgot the promised payment. There’s been over much on my mind these last few days. But I’ll buy your freedom now, to-night, from this master player of yours. Where lies he? Let us go to him at once. Then you can give up this part and take the rest you need.”

“Oh, no, no, I must play this part,” answered the player’s boy, hurriedly. “I—I——Let me win to success before I speak to him of leaving him. I must, *must* succeed now. Then, perhaps, we can talk of freedom, not before.”

“Well, as you like!” Lindley’s voice had grown careless once again. He was again absorbed in his own affairs. “Think you I might see Mistress Judith to-morrow, if I had a message from Lord Farquhart for the Lady Barbara?”

“But have you access to Lord Farquhart?” The boy spoke quickly, so quickly that Lindley failed to notice the change in voice and manner.

“Why, I suppose I can gain access to him,” answered Lindley.

“But then surely I—surely we can rescue him,” cried Johan. “I’d not supposed that we could see Lord Farquhart, that we could gain speech with him. Now I know that I can help you free him. Think, think from now until to-morrow night at this time of some feasible plan, some way of taking Johan, the player’s boy, into Lord Farquhart’s presence. But wait! Why could you not take me to him disguised as the Lady Barbara? Mistress Judith would provide me with Lady Barbara’s cloak and veil and petticoats. She could coach me in her looks and manners. Have you forgotten how well I can impersonate a woman? And then, if I could pass the jailer as the Lady Barbara, what would hinder Farquhart from passing out as the Lady Barbara? I—I could personate Lord Farquhart, at a pinch, until rescue came to me. Or if it came to a last extremity, why I could still go to the gallows as Lord Farquhart! But that extremity would not come. There would be no difficulty in saving a worthless player’s lad, and they say that ’tis only Mr. Ashley’s work that is telling against the prisoner; that he is using this public means to wreak a private vengeance. Oh, if I can but see Lord

Farquhart! If I can but speak to him! Much might be done, even if he refused the disguise of hood and cloak. Be here to-morrow night, with permits for yourself and Lady Barbara to see Lord Farquhart. Leave all the rest to me!” Johan’s impetuous voice had grown stronger, more positive, as his thoughts had formed themselves. His last words savored of a command. They were uttered in the tone that expects obedience, but Lindley ignored this.

“’Twould be but a waste of time,” he answered, gloomily.

“Well, what of that?” demanded Johan. “Perhaps it would be but a waste of one night. But of what value is your time or my time when there is even a chance of safety for Lord Farquhart?”

“I suppose you’re right in that,” agreed Lindley. “I’ll be here with the permits, as you say, to-morrow night. But what think you of my ruse to speak to Mistress Judith in the morning? If I were to present myself here at the house with a message from Lord Farquhart to the Lady Barbara, would not Judith speak with me? Remember, boy, that twenty-five crowns are yours the day I speak with Mistress Judith!”

“Oh, Mistress Judith, Mistress Judith!” cried the lad, impatiently. “Your thoughts are all for Mistress Judith. She will see no one, she will speak to no one, so she said to-day, until the Lady Barbara is recovered, until Lord Farquhart is free. It will be all that I can do to gain access to her to make my demand for the Lady Barbara’s clothes. And she is—she says that she is sick of the whole world. Her cousin’s plight, Lord Farquhart’s danger, have sickened her of the whole world. It’s for her sake that I would free Lord Farquhart. Until Lord Farquhart is released, Judith Ogilvie’s mind cannot rest for a single second. So for her sake you must work to free him, for Judith’s sake, for the sake of the woman you love!”

Without further word Lindley was left standing alone in the empty street, and his entire mind was absorbed in amazement at the impetuosity of the lad’s voice and manner.

XVIII.

The following night it was again Lindley who was first at the tryst under Master Timothy Ogilvie’s gateway. A gusty wind blew down the street, and there was little comfort to be found in any shelter that was near at hand. Just as Lindley’s patience was about exhausted, though, he saw a slender shadow move with hesitating steps out from the gate, then scurry back to its protection. A voice, muffled in the folds of a cloak that covered the figure, a voice sweet as a silver bell, called softly:

“Master Lindley, Master Lindley, are you not here? Are you not waiting?”

Lindley advanced somewhat slowly until he saw that a woman stood half in, half out, of the shadow.

“But is it not you, Johan?” he asked, with some hesitation.

“Nay, ’tis I, Lady Barbara Gordon,” a girl’s voice answered. “Judith—Johan, the lad that came to Judith, told me that you were to take him to-night in my guise to Lord Farquhart. But I would speak to Lord Farquhart myself. I must see Lord Farquhart myself. I may not have another chance. You have the permits of which the boy spoke? You will take me in his place?”

She advanced slowly, still hesitating, her manner pleading as her words had pleaded; her trembling voice seeming but an echo of the tremors that shook her frame.

Lindley hurriedly tried to reassure her. Yes, he said, he had the permits. Assuredly he would take her. And yet, even as he spoke, he chafed at the woman’s interference with Johan’s plan of rescue. Why could she not have let the boy offer Lord Farquhart a chance to escape? But nothing of this was in his manner. Instead he soothed her fears, assuring her that ’twas but a short distance to the place where Farquhart was lodged, and, undoubtedly, the stormy night would aid their purpose, for few inquisitive stragglers would be abroad.

With faltering steps the lady moved by his side. Once he thought he heard a sob, and he laid a hand on her arm to comfort her.

“You must have courage, my lady,” he muttered. “You must take courage to Lord Farquhart.”

Once in the flare of a passing torch he saw the girl quite distinctly. She was draped all in scarlet, a scarlet velvet coat and hood, and, underneath, a scarlet petticoat. One hand held a corner of the cloak about her chin and lips, and, under the drooping hood, he saw a black silk mask. She shrank toward him as the light fell on her and caught his arm with her free hand. He laid his hand protectingly on hers, and after that, until they reached the sheriff’s lodge, she held fast to him.

Even when Lindley showed his permits to the guard on duty, she still held him fast, and it was well that she did, for she seemed almost to swoon when their entry was denied.

All permits to see the prisoner had been revoked at sundown, the fellow said. The prisoner’s case had come before the court that afternoon. He was to be sentenced in the morning at ten o’clock. No, Lord Grimsby had not been present. Lord Grimsby had been summoned from Padusey, however, to pronounce the highwayman’s doom.

For an instant the Lady Barbara seemed about to fall forward. Her entire weight hung on Lindley’s arm. He supported her as best he could, but his own voice shook as he whispered once more:

“Courage, courage, my lady!”

Then his anger vented itself upon the guard.

"Have you no sense, blockhead?" he cried. "How dare you blurt out your tidings in such a careless fashion? Do you not see the lady? Did I not tell you that it was the Lady Barbara Gordon's name in that permit? You've likely killed her with your words."

For, indeed, it seemed a dead weight that he held in his arms. The guard thrust forward a bench, and Lindley tried to place the lady down upon it, but she clung to him almost convulsively. When he attempted to take the cloak from over her mouth, he heard her whispered words.

"Ah, get me away from here, away from here—anywhere. I can walk, I——Indeed I can walk!"

Then she stood erect and turned away from the guarded door, but Lindley still hesitated there.

"At ten o'clock you said the prisoner would be sentenced?" he asked.

"Ay, at ten o'clock, they said."

Then Lindley heard the Lady Barbara's voice.

"You said Lord Grimsby would come to-night from Padusey?" she asked, faintly.

"Yes, from Padusey, to-night," the guard answered once again.

Why did she care from where Lord Grimsby would come, Lindley demanded, savagely, of himself. Was this a time to think of trivial things like that? And although he supported her as tenderly, as courteously, as he could, he felt in every fiber of him that it was this woman alone who was responsible for Lord Farquhart's fate, and he longed to be free from her. Monotonously he was counting the distance that must be traversed with her clinging to his arm, when suddenly she drew away from him and stopped short.

"Enough of this, Master Lindley!" It was Johan's voice that came from the hidden hooded face.

"Johan!" cried Lindley, now in a frenzy of indignation. "What do you mean by bringing your cursed play acting into a tragedy like this? Have you no heart whatsoever?"

"Nay, I've heart enough and to spare," the boy returned. "And 'tis not all play acting, by any means. Did I not tell you that I would personate the Lady Barbara? Did I not have to practice my part before I passed the guards? Did you not serve me as well for that as anyone? But there's no time for more of it. And I've no time for foolish words and explanations, either." He had thrown aside the mask, the scarlet coat and hood, and at last he stepped from the scarlet petticoat, standing slim and long in black silk hose and short black tunic, his black curls that fringed his small black cap alone shading his eyes. "Listen to me, Master Lindley, and save your reproaches until I've time for them. There are still more chances to save Lord Farquhart, and not one must be lost. Not one second can be wasted. Take these woman's togs and throw them inside Master Timothy Ogilvie's gate, where they'll be found in the morning. I—I leave you here."

"But where are you going?" demanded Lindley. "You cannot cross London at night in that guise, with no coat or cloak about you. You've woman's shoes on your feet. You're mad, boy, and you'll be held by the first sentry you pass."

Johan, who had turned away, stopped and came back to Lindley's side.

"Ay, perhaps you're right," he said. "Give me your coat and lend me your sword. I may have need of it, and you've but to pass Master Ogilvie's, and then to reach your own lodging, a safer transit than mine by many odds. And—and, Master Lindley, wait in your lodgings until you hear from me. Wait there unless it nears ten o'clock. If you've not heard from me by then, you'll find me there, where Lord Farquhart is to be sentenced, and—and be on the alert for any signal that may be made to you by anyone, and—and——" He had buckled Lindley's sword about his waist, he had wrapped himself in Lindley's coat, and still he hesitated. Suddenly he dashed his hand across his eyes. "Ah, I've no time for more," he cried, "save only—only good-by."

He was gone into the darkness, and Lindley was left alone—coatless and swordless—with a bundle of scarlet garments under his arm, and, in his heart, an inexplicable longing to follow the boy, Johan, into the night.

XIX.

It seemed as though fate had decreed that there should be but two more acts in the career of Lord Farquhart. All London knew that he was to be condemned to death for highway robbery at ten o'clock on the Friday morning. All London knew that his hanging would quickly follow its decree, and all London, apparently, was determined to see, at least, the first act in the melodrama. The court was crowded with society's wits and beaux, with society's belles, many of the latter hooded and masked, but many revealing to all the world their ardent sympathy for the prisoner at the bar.

Lord Farquhart's habitual pose of indifference, of insolent indifference to the world and its opinions, stood him in good stead on that October morning. He had passed through moments of blackest agony, of wild rebellion against the doom in store for him. He had gibed and mocked and railed at fate, at the laws of his country that could condemn an absolutely innocent man to so grewsome a death. He had struggled and fought with his jailers; he had appealed in vain to man and God, but now he sat quite calm and still, determined only that the world that had so incomprehensibly turned from him should not gloat over his despair. Only once had his lips twitched and his eyelids contracted, and that was when he recognized in a figure hooded, cloaked and masked in black, the Lady Barbara Gordon. He had turned his eyes from her instantly, but not quickly enough to miss, the sight of the pathetic white hands she'd stretched toward him. Was she asking for pardon, he wondered. No word from Barbara had reached him in his confinement.

A moment later a faint smile flickered across Lord Farquhart's face. He had caught sight of Harry Ashley occupying a

prominent place near the judge’s stand, and his conviction that Ashley was responsible for his imprisonment and for the sentence that was so soon to be pronounced strengthened his determination to hide his anguish from the world. For the rest, his eyes traveled impersonally over the crowded room. He would greet no one of the intimate friends who crowded as close as they dared to the place where he sat.

Lord Grimsby had not yet entered the room, but from behind the curtains that covered the door of Lord Grimsby’s private apartment rolled Lord Grimsby’s sonorous voice. It reached the first circle of inquisitive ears, and the meaning of his words slipped through the courtroom.

“Ay, but I tell you it was the same. I’ve had dealings with the fellow before. I’ve seen him at close quarters before. I know his voice and his touch and his manner. He’s like enough to Lord Farquhart in size and build, but he’s not like him altogether.”

“And you say he stopped you, my lord?”

“Stopped me not two hours’ ride from Padusey!” roared Lord Grimsby. “On the darkest bit of the road, the fellow sprang from nowhere and brandished his sword in front of my horse. And then he took my purse and my seal and my rings. You’ve questioned all the guards most carefully? They’re sure that the prisoner did not leave his quarters last night? That no one entered his room or left it?”

“Why, yes.” The answer was low and deferential. “He had visitors asking for him in plenty, some with permits and some without, but no one saw him save the guard.”

“And the guard is sure he did not leave his room?” Lord Grimsby’s roar was heard again.

“They’re sure, my lord. And, in very truth, would the prisoner have returned had he once escaped? Lord Farquhart’s presence here argues Lord Farquhart’s innocence of this latest outrage.”

“One can argue little of the devil’s doings,” raged Lord Grimsby.

“But will this not free Lord Farquhart?” asked the deferential voice.

“How can it free him, fool?” demanded the roaring voice. “How could I prove that the fellow I met was not the devil trying to save one of his own brood? And would there not be fools a-plenty to say that I’d met no one, that I’d invented the tale to save myself from the devil’s clutches, if I freed Lord Farquhart on such evidence? The whole affair from the beginning has savored of the devil’s mixing. Who else would have driven his majesty on to demand such hot haste against the fellow? ’Tis all most uncanny and most unwholesome. I’ll be thankful, for one, when my part in it’s over.”

“I wonder on what we wait. ’Tis surely long after ten o’clock!”

It was Ashley’s voice that made this statement loud enough for all the room to hear, loud enough to penetrate even to Lord Grimsby’s ears; loud enough to force that timorous jurist back into a judicial calm.

It was then that Lord Farquhart’s lips parted in a second smile. It was then that some fifty hands sprang to their swords, for there were fifty gentlemen there who resented Ashley’s unseemly eagerness to hurry on Lord Farquhart’s fate.

“And ’tis like the devil, too, to make me finish his black work,” commented Lord Grimsby’s natural voice, ere his judicial voice took up the opening formalities of the sentence he was to pronounce.

’Twas well known that the crown left naught to the court save the announcement of the crown’s decree. Thus was Lord Grimsby hiding himself behind his majesty, the king, in order to protect himself from his majesty, the devil, when he was interrupted by a commotion that would not be downed, by the cries of silence from the court’s servants.

“I tell you I must speak! I will be heard! I will speak! Will you all stand by and hear an innocent man sentenced to be hanged merely for the sake of custom, of courtesy to the court; merely on a question of privilege to speak? I should have been here before. I was detained. Now I will speak. I will be heard, I say. Will be, *will be, will be!*”

It was a girl’s voice that rang out sharp and clear. To Lindley it seemed faintly familiar, and yet the girl who spoke was a stranger to him; a stranger, apparently, to everyone in the room. She stood in front of Jack Grimsby. It was Jack Grimsby she was haranguing. She was, evidently, a woman of rank and quality, for she carried herself as one accustomed to command and to be obeyed. She was gowned in blue velvet, and her russet hair, drawn high in a net—a fashion in favor in France—was shaded by a blue velvet hat, over which drooped heavy white plumes. A thin lace mask veiled her eyes. Only her small, red mouth and delicate chin were visible.

“Is an oath nothing to you, then?” she cried, impetuously, still addressing Jack Grimsby. “You’ve sworn to do all in your power to save this highwayman. Now is your chance! Gain me but five minutes and I’ll have Lord Farquhart freed from, this absurd charge against him.”

And then it was Lord Grimsby’s voice that answered her.

“Ay, madam, the court will willingly grant you five minutes. Nay, I will grant you ten, in the cause of justice, for I like not the way this matter has been handled.” And even Lord Grimsby himself could not have told whether it was the devil who had prompted him to so interfere with the decorum of the law.

The girl bowed her thanks with informal gratitude, then hurried from the room. She passed so close to Lindley that he seemed enveloped in a strange perfume that floated from her, and after she had passed he, and he alone, saw a tiny scrap of paper lying at his feet. As carelessly as possible he picked it up, and saw that it was written on. He read as

follows:

> Mistress Judith's Star is at Cavanaugh's inn, three squares away. Fetch him to the end of the lane with what speed you may.
>
> Johan.

In the tumult that followed the curious interruption of the morning's work, Lindley's exit was unnoticed. It was less than five minutes before he returned, and in that time he had delivered the white horse, with its starred forehead, to Johan, who was waiting, apparently at ease, at the end of the lane. Lindley stopped not to question the boy, so anxious was he to see what was happening in the court.

There were a clamor of voices, a rustle of silks, a clanking of spurs and swords. Many averred that the lady was some well-known beauty infatuated by Lord Farquhart, playing merely for time. Others thought she might be lady to the real highwayman, whoever he was, and that she was about to force him to reveal himself. Some suggested that she might even be the highwayman himself. Lord Grimsby was trying to recall if ever he had heard of the devil guising himself as a young red-headed girl, covering himself, from horned head to cloven hoof, in azure velvet. Lord Farquhart still sat quite unmoved, seemingly as indifferent as ever to the world, apparently unmindful of his champion. Ashley's face was black with rage, and he stood all alone in the midst of the crowd. Lady Barbara had flung aside her mask; her loosened cloak and its hood had fallen from her, but her white face was hidden behind her white hands. Jack Grimsby, Treadway, all of Farquhart's friends, were watching eagerly, intently, the door through which the woman had disappeared, through which she or the real highwayman must reappear. There had been a movement to follow her, but this had been checked by Lord Grimsby's voice. The word of the court had been given. Its word was not to be violated. The stranger should not be followed or spied upon. Lord Grimsby's lips were working feverishly, and those nearest to him heard muttered imprecations and prayers, but prayers and imprecations were alike addressed to the ruler of the nether world.

Through the window that faced Lord Farquhart fluttered a faint breeze, and, suddenly, on its wings, floated a song caroled gayly by careless lips.

> Lips that vie with the poppy's hue,
>
> Eyes that shame the violet's blue,
>
> Hearts that beat with love so true,
>
> Barb'ra, sweet, I come to you!

As the last line was reached, the window framed a figure; a figure that seemed as familiar to all as the voice that crossed the figure's lips. And yet the figure was cloaked and hatted and masked in black.

"Lord Farquhart!" shouted a hundred voices, looking from the motionless prisoner to the picture in the window.

"Percy, Percy!" screamed the Lady Barbara, and it was to the window that her arms were stretched.

"The devil!" shouted Lord Grimsby, wavering back from the thrice encountered fiend.

"Yes, the devil, the Black Devil," laughed the voice in the window. "But not Lord Farquhart, not your Percy, Lady Barbara. For he sits there as innocent as all the rest of you. But there's your purse, Lord Grimsby; your purse and your seal and your rings that I took last night!" He flung the articles toward Lord Grimsby. "And there's your broidered gauntlet, that you gave somewhat easily, my Lady Barbara." The glove fell at Lady Barbara's feet. "And here's one of my lord bishop's rings that I sent not back with the rest. I have five minutes more by your own word, Lord Grimsby. After that I'm yours—if you can take me!"

XX.

The king's guards, and the motley crowd that followed them, found no one on any road round about the court save Johan, the player's boy, riding in most ungainly fashion on Mistress Judith's nag in the direction of the Ogilvie woods. He had seen naught, he had heard naught, of any fugitive highwayman. He shivered and crossed himself when the Black Devil's name was mentioned. He even begged one of the guards to mount and ride behind him until they should be beyond the danger zone, assuring the fellow that Mistress Judith would reward him well if he saved her favorite horse from the highwayman's clutches.

At practically the same moment, Master Lindley came upon Johan, the player's boy, stupidly asleep at the end of the lane, quite unmindful of the commotion that surged about him.

When Lindley had shaken him into some semblance of wakefulness, he only stammered:

"Ay, ay, Master Lindley, I know you. But I know naught of last night save that I sat late over my supper. I've not seen Mistress Judith to-day, at all. Yes, she's spoken much of Lord Farquhart, but I know naught of him. Now I——" And he had already drowsed off into sleep.

It was the first time that Lindley had ever seen the player's boy by the light of day, and he was shocked by the sickly pallor of the lad's face. The thin lips were feverishly bright and his black curls straggled across his brow. It was a stupid face, too, but Lindley could not stop then to marvel at the discrepancy between the clever brain and its covering. Instead he hurried eagerly after the throng that was in vain pursuing the gentleman highwayman, who seemed to possess the devil's luck, if he were not, in reality, the devil himself.

XXI.

Lord Farquhart's imprisonment, his trial, his escape, had suffered the fate of all nine day wonders. There were some busybodies in London who occasionally commented on the fact that the Black Devil no longer frequented the highways, but they were answered by others who declared that, doubtless, the gentleman was otherwise amused. And those who commented and those who answered might and might not have had double meanings in their words.

As it happened, Lord Farquhart was otherwise engaged. His marriage to the Lady Barbara had been solemnized quite simply down at Gordon's Court, and Lord and Lady Farquhart were enjoying a honeymoon on the continent. Harry Ashley was balked not only of his lady but also of his revenge, and his own black looks seemed to encounter naught save black looks in others, so he had taken himself out of the way. No one knew or cared whither.

Otherwise, the life and gossip of the town had returned to its wonted serenity. Everyone was moving on quietly and calmly in dead level ruts save Cecil Lindley. He found serenity in nothing. He could do nothing quietly or calmly. Twice he had communicated directly with his cousin, Mistress Judith, and twice she had returned his communications unread. In a personal interview with his uncle, Master James Ogilvie, he fared no better. Judith's father shook his head over Judith's obstinacy, but declared he could not shake her will.

There seemed nothing in all the world for Lindley to do save to wander back and forth on the roads that lay between Ogilvie's woods and London, hoping to meet thereon some chance that would lead him to his lady's feet or something that would open his lady's heart to him. And then, quite suddenly, when he had almost given up hope of ever winning word with her or look from her, he received a note written in her round, clerkly hand, saying that she would meet him at two o'clock of the afternoon of Thursday, the twentieth day of November, at the tavern known as The Jolly Grig, the tavern hosted by Marmaduke Bass.

As it happened, by chance or by Mistress Judith's own will, the lady was first at the inn. The room was quite empty and deserted. The hour named for the tryst savored little of conviviality. The rotund innkeeper slumbered peacefully in front of his great hearth, and small patches of November sunshine lay on the floor, while merry November motes danced in the yellow beams.

Johan, the player's boy, had said that Mistress Judith was no beauty; but no one in all England would have agreed with that verdict had they seen her lightly poised on the threshold of the old inn, the gray plumes of her high crowned riding hat nodding somewhat familiarly to the motes in the sunshine. Her gray velvet riding skirt was lifted high enough to reveal her dainty riding boots; her hair, bright and burnished as a fox's coat, fell in curls about her shoulders, and mischief gleamed from her tawny eyes, even as mischief parted her red lips over teeth as white as pearl. It almost seemed as though she were about to cross the room on tiptoe, and yet she stopped full in the doorway, sniffing the air with dainty nostrils, before she turned back to meet her father, who followed close on her footsteps.

"Faugh!" she cried, shrugging her shoulders, holding a kerchief to her nose. "Why, the place reeks of wine and musty ale. A pretty place, I must say, for a lover's tryst."

"But, Judith, my love," remonstrated her father, "the place is of your own choosing. You stated that 'twas here you'd meet your cousin Lindley, and nowhere else. Surely you're not going to blame him if a tavern reeks of a tavern's holdings."

"In truth, I fancy I'll blame my cousin Lindley for whatsoever I choose to blame him," answered the girl, her small mouth seeming but a scarlet line over her dainty chin, under her tilting nose. She was still standing in the black frame of the doorway, her merry eyes noting each detail of the room within, still excluding her father from the place.

"I hope, Judith, my dear, as I've said a hundred times, that you've not induced your cousin to meet you here merely that you may flout him." The words evidently cost Master Ogilvie great effort. "For my sake——"

"Flout him!" laughed the girl. "Flout my cousin Lindley!" Then her voice grew suddenly serious. Turning, she put both hands caressingly on her father's shoulders. "Let us pray Heaven, rather, that there be no flouting on either side!" She bent her head slightly and kissed him on either cheek. Then her serious mood fled as quickly as it had come. "Though I'm in no way bound to give my reason for choosing a wayside inn for this meeting with my cousin—you'll admit, sir, that I'm not bound so to do? Well, I've no objection to telling you that I meet him here so that, if I like him not, I can leave him on the instant. If I had him come to my own house, if I met him anywhere save on the common ground of a public place, and liked him not, or saw that he liked me not at all—why, there would be certain courtesies due from a lady to a gentleman, and I choose not to be held by those. And—and I may have had another reason for choosing The Jolly Grig, and then—I may not. But I think, sir, that the innkeeper solicits your attention."

Marmaduke Bass had, for several moments, been hovering officiously in the wake of Master James Ogilvie.

"It's many a day since I've seen your honor at The Jolly Grig," murmured Marmaduke, with a certain obsequious familiarity that he reserved for old and well-known patrons.

"Ay, I've had little time for jollity this many a year," agreed Master Ogilvie, with a ponderous wink behind his daughter's back. "My hands and my head have been full."

Judith's small nose was still sniffing the air while she moved lightly about the long, dark room.

"I—I like not the smell of your place, Master—Master——"

"'Tis Marmaduke Bass, my love," interrupted her father.

"Ah, yes," she assented. "I'd forgotten for the moment. This hearth has an air of comfort, though, and as for this chair

——” She had seated herself in the chair that fronted Marmaduke’s settle. “Ah, Master Bass, I should say that your chair would induce sleep.” She yawned luxuriously, and her feet, in their dainty riding boots, were stretched over far in front of her for a well-brought-up damsel. But it must not be forgotten that Mistress Judith Ogilvie had been brought up quite apart from other girls, quite without a woman’s care. “If I were only a man, now,” she continued, “I’d call for a glass of—what would I ask for, Master Bass? Would it be Geldino’s sherris or Canary Malmsey, or would I have to content myself with a royal port lately brought from France?” She sprang to her feet, laughing gayly, while old Marmaduke scratched his head, wondering of what her words reminded him. She touched his shoulder lightly and added: “If my father calls for wine, later—later, mind you, we’ll have the sherris, Geldino’s own.”

Her words and Marmaduke’s efforts to collect his thoughts were interrupted here by the clatter of horse’s hoofs in the court. The next instant Lindley was entering the room.

“I’m not late?” he cried. “Surely, I’m not late?”

“No, my boy, ’tis not yet two,” Master Ogilvie answered, hurriedly, but Judith answered nothing. She still stood in front of the deep hearth. “Come, come, Judith, girl,” cried her father, “surely you need no introduction to Cecil Lindley?”

“No, surely I know my cousin well.” The girl’s voice fell soft and full of singing notes as a meadow lark’s. “But I think he questions if he knows me.”

Her brown eyes were on a level with his, and he was remembering at that instant that Johan had said Mistress Judith’s lips would be level with his. Ay, they were level with his, and they were near his, too, for she had come straight to him and given him both her hands.

“Judith!”

That was all he said, and it seemed to the girl that he drew back, away from her. And possibly he did, for he knew that he must not draw her close, not yet, oh, not yet, anyway.

And after he had spoken that one word, after he had said her name, he seemed to find no words to offer her, and she looked for none. He still held her hands, however, and she still looked straight and deep into his eyes.

Once the red line of her mouth widened into a smile, once it twisted into a mutinous knot. But she would not speak, nor would she help him to find words.

Master Ogilvie and Marmaduke Bass had passed into the room behind the hearth. The girl and the man were alone.

“You are as familiar to me as my own self, Judith,” he said at last. “It seems to me that I have known you always, that we have never been apart.”

“And even to me, we seem not quite strangers,” answered the soft, singing voice that held the meadow lark’s notes.

“You wrote me that love lay all in the chance of meeting, Judith!” The man’s voice was tremulous with desire.

“Ay, so I believe it does,” she answered, her eyes falling for an instant before his.

“You said that you might meet me and find me the man of your heart’s desire, Judith.”

“Well, if love lies in chance, why might I not chance to love you?” Her words were brave, her eyes were again steady, were again deep in his, but the red line of her mouth was tremulous.

“When will you know, when will you tell me that I am the man of your heart’s desire, Judith? I—I love you, Judith.”

“Must I tell you unasked? Might you not ask me now and see?”

Her white lids drooped over her tawny eyes, and just for an instant the red lips that were level with his met his.

But suddenly the girl drew back, withdrew her hands from his. She had not meant to yield so easily. She had not meant to give so much. She had not meant to yield at all until Cecil knew—until he knew—why, certain things that he must know before he could take what she so longed to give.

“I—I must speak, my cousin, there is something I must tell you,” she faltered, and no one would have known the trembling voice for that of Mistress Judith Ogilvie.

“Ah, sweetheart, speak, speak all you will,” cried Lindley. “Your voice is music in my ears. Say that you love me, say it over and over, for whatever else you say, whatever else you tell me, that is all I’ll hear.”

“Nay, but, Master Lindley——”

Cecil’s brain sprang to the sound, and all at once he seemed to recognize a perfume familiar, yet all unfamiliar.

But then there fell upon their ears a clash of swords in the court. Lindley and the girl, standing near the window, were thrust aside by Master Ogilvie and the innkeeper.

“Mr. Ashley and his servant are quartered here,” sputtered the latter, “and like as not ’tis one of them. The man’s as quarrelsome as his master.”

“*Aie!*” cried Judith, suddenly, “’tis Johan, the player’s boy, and Johan cannot fight. He will be killed! Stop it, good Marmaduke. Have a care, boy! Protect yourself! Hit under! Ay, now, to the left! ’Fend yourself, Johan!”

“But if ’tis Johan, the player’s boy,” cried Lindley, “he needs no instructions. He’s master of the art of fighting.”

But Judith was heedless of the meaning in his words.

“He knows not one end of the sword from t’other,” she cried, impetuously, the hot blood in her cheeks. Leaning far from the window, it seemed almost as though she fought with Johan’s sword, so fast her instructions followed one the other, so exactly her motions portrayed what he should do.

The fight in the yard was summarily stopped by the intervention of Marmaduke and Master Ogilvie. Then Judith, drawing back into the room, met Lindley’s eyes for just a second.

“Ah, what have I done?” she cried.

“Oh, Judith, Judith!” he exclaimed. “Johan, Johan, and I never for an instant knew it!”

“Ay, Johan, the player’s boy,” she answered. The words were almost a sob, and yet Lindley heard the same tremulous laugh that had rung through the woods the night when Johan had killed the highwayman. “Johan, the player’s boy, and Judith, the play actor!”

“But——”

“No, there is no but,” she answered, quickly. “’Twas that, too, that I was trying to tell you. But I’ve been Johan to you for all this time, though I’ve had to play so many parts. And love did lie in the chance of meeting, too. I loved you when first I laid eyes on you, when I lay feigning sleep in that chair by the hearth, when Lord Farquhart entertained his guests, when you took my part and begged that I might be let to sleep, when you vouched for my conscience. And I think my conscience should have wakened then, but it did not. And I loved you even more that same night when we rode through the moonlit roads together, when you vowed to win Judith’s love in spite of Judith’s hate. See, I’ve the golden crown you threw to Johan to bind your bargain with him.” She drew from her bosom the golden piece of money strung on a slender chain.

Her words had poured forth so tumultuously that Lindley had found no chance to interrupt. Now he said, almost mechanically, the first words that had occurred to him.

“You were the lad asleep in the chair that night?” He was holding her close, as though she might escape him.

“Ye-es,” she answered, faintly, “and—and, oh, Cecil, shall I tell you all? I was Johan all the time, you know. You only saw the real Johan twice; once that night at the edge of our woods, when he told you that I had gone to London, and—and once on the day of the trial, when you saw him asleep at the end of the lane. And—and—of course you know that I disguised myself as the Lady Barbara that night in hopes of gaining a word with Lord Farquhart. I did that well, did I not, Cecil?” There was a touch of bravado in the voice for a second, but it quickly grew tremulous once more. “’Tis harder to be a woman than a man, I think, harder to play a woman’s part than a man’s. And—well, I was the woman in the court who stopped Lord Grimsby’s sentence. ’Twas Lady Barbara’s gown that she had ready for her wedding journey with Lord Farquhart. It was a beautiful gown, did you not think so?” Again the bravado quivered in and out of her voice. “I ruined it outright, for Johan and I shoved it, gown and hat and all, under Star’s saddle cloth, and I rode on it all the way from London to Ogilvie’s woods, with a king’s guard mounted behind for part of the way. I’ve played all those parts, Cecil, and it’s been a wearying, worrisome thing, part of the time, with quick work and rapid changes, but it’s all over now. I’ve learned my lesson and I’ve done with mumming forever.”

“And those are all the parts you’ve played?” Lindley’s question was almost careless, for he was tasting again the girl’s sweet lips.

“No,” she answered, slowly, with long hesitations between the words. “There was one other. But—but must you know all, every one?” For an instant the eyes and lips were mutinous.

“All, every one, sweetheart,” he answered.

“Well,” she said, slowly again and with still longer hesitations, “there was one other, but—but ’twas—well, the blackest kind of a black devil that tempted me, that led me on, that showed me the excitement of it all, that taught me the ease of escape and flight!”

“A—a—black devil!” Cecil was echoing her words, and yet Judith was well aware that not yet did he know the truth.

“Ay, a black devil,” she answered. “The Black Devil himself. I was the Black Devil. I was that black highwayman. But ’twas only a joke of a highwayman, Cecil, only a joke when I held up all those stupid, cowardly lords. Only a joke when I frightened the poor old bishop. Only a joke when I made Grimsby come to poor Jack’s rescue. Only a joke to frighten Barbara. It was all a joke, until I knew what a scrape I’d got Lord Farquhart into. And then I knew I had to rescue Farquhart. And rescue him I did. So I’ve never hurt anyone. I’ve never injured anyone. I robbed no one really, you know, and, oh, Cecil, Cecil, can’t you see that ’twas only done for fun, all of it? And it’s all gone from me now, gone from me forever, every bit of it. And, Cecil, it’s love, love for you, that’s exorcised it. Even the devil himself can be exorcised by love. Even the Black Devil himself can be exorcised by the kind of love I have for you.”

It was not only her words that pleaded. Love itself pleaded in the tawny eyes, on the tender lips, with the clinging hands, and in very truth it is doubtful if the devil himself could have found place between her lips that clung to his, within his arms that clasped her close.

And in Geldino’s sherris, opened by Marmaduke Bass, Lindley only repeated a former toast, offered in the same place; for, with laughing eyes on Judith’s, he said:

“Shall we drink once more, and for the last time, to the Gentleman of the Highways?”

FROM GARDENS OVER SEAS

(A Rondel After Catulle Mendes)

I am the merle for whistling known,

And you, the sweet branch small and light;

I, gold and black; you, green and white;

I, full of songs; you, flower full-blown.

Take if you will my merry tone

And with your rose-blooms me requite;

I am the merle for whistling known,

And you the sweet branch small and light.

But should your blossoms—overthrown

By storm’s or wind’s or water’s might—

Be swept to earth in sudden plight,

Count not on me for grief or groan;

I am the merle for whistling known.

Thomas Walsh.

AN EDITORIAL

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS I-XV 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 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, a young society girl whose family have been the recipients of many financial favors from him.

Using these obligations as a lever, he secures the entree to the Ellersly home, though it is soon made plain to him that his intentions with respect to Anita are extremely distasteful to her.

His first impulse 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 of good birth and breeding. Under Monson’s tuition he makes rapid progress in adapting himself to the requirements imposed upon aspirants for social distinction.

Blacklock persists in his attention to Anita 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 Mowbray Langdon, one of Roebuck’s trusted lieutenants, 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 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.

They go to the house of Blacklock's partner, Joseph Ball, where they are married, after which Blacklock takes his wife to his own apartments, despite her protest that she wishes to go to her uncle's.

Anita plainly shows her aversion to her husband, though he treats her with the greatest delicacy and consideration.

After some days the young wife receives a call from her parents, who seek to persuade her to leave Blacklock, telling her that they have private information that he will soon be a bankrupt. Anita refuses to go unless they will return to her husband all the money they have obtained from him.

All this she frankly tells Blacklock, who scoffs at the idea that he is in sore straits financially, though in his secret heart he knows that his position is indeed precarious.

In his extremity he goes to Roebuck, to ascertain, if he can, if he too is in the plot to ruin him.

THE DELUGE

By David Graham Phillips

[FOR SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALLMENTS SEE PRECEDING PAGE]

XV—(*Continued*).

When Roebuck lived near Chicago, he had a huge house, a sort of crude palace such as so many of our millionaires built for themselves in the first excitement of their new wealth—a house with porches and balconies and towers and minarets and all sorts of gingerbread effects to compel the eye of the passer-by. But when he became enormously rich, so rich that his name was one of the synonyms for wealth, so rich that people said "rich as Roebuck" where they used to say "rich as Crœsus," he cut away every kind of ostentation, and avoided attention more eagerly than he had once sought it. He took advantage of his having to remove to New York, where his vast interests centered; he bought a small and commonplace and, for a rich man, even mean house in East Fifty-second Street—one of a row and an almost dingy looking row at that. There he had an establishment a man with one-fiftieth of his fortune would have felt like apologizing for. The dishes on his table, for example, were cheap and almost coarse, and the pictures on his walls were photographs or atrocious bargain-counter paintings. To his few intimates who were intimate enough to question him about his come-down from his Chicago splendors, he explained that with advancing years he was seeing with clearer eyes his responsibilities as a steward of the Lord, that luxury was sinful, and no man had the right to waste the Lord's gifts that way. The general theory about him was that advancing years had developed his natural closeness into the stingiest avariciousness. But my notion is he was impelled by the fear of exciting envy, by the fear of assassination—the fear that made his eyes roam restlessly whenever strangers were near him, and so dried up the inside of his body that his dry tongue was constantly sliding along his dry lips. I have seen a convict stand in the door of his cell and, though it was impossible that anyone could be behind him, look nervously over his shoulder every moment or so. Roebuck had the same trick—only his dread, I suspect, was not the officers of the law, even of the divine law, but the many, many victims of his merciless execution of "the Lord's will." This state of mind is more common than is generally supposed, among the very rich men, especially those who have come up from poverty. Those who have inherited great wealth, and have always been used to it, get into the habit of looking upon the mass of mankind as inferiors, and move about with no greater sense of peril than a man has in venturing among a lot of dogs with tails wagging. But those who were born poor and have risen under the stimulus of a furious envy of the comfortable and the rich, fancy that everybody who isn't rich has the same savage hunger which they themselves had, and is ready to use the same desperate methods in gratifying it. Thus, where the rich of the Langdon sort are supercilious, the rich of the Roebuck sort are nervous and often become morbid on the subject of assassination as they grow richer and richer.

The door of Roebuck's house was opened for me by a maid—a manservant would have been a "sinful" luxury, a

manservant might be an assassin or might be hired by plotters against his life. I may add that she looked the cheap maid-of-all-work, and her manners were of the free and fresh sort which indicates that a servant feels he or she should get as high, or higher, wages, and less to do, elsewhere. “I don’t think you can see Mr. Roebuck,” she said.

“Take my card to him,” I ordered, “and I’ll wait in the parlor.”

“Parlor’s in use,” she retorted, with a sarcastic grin, which I was soon to understand.

So I stood by the old-fashioned coat and hat rack while she went in at the hall door of the back parlor. Soon Roebuck himself came out, his glasses on his nose, a family Bible under his arm. “Glad to see you, Matthew,” said he, with saintly kindliness, giving me a friendly hand. “We are just about to offer up our evening prayer. Come right in.”

I followed him into the back parlor. Both it and the front parlor were lighted; in a sort of circle extending into both rooms were all the Roebucks and the four servants. “This is my friend, Matthew Blacklock,” said he, and the Roebucks in the circle gravely bowed. He drew up a chair for me, and we seated ourselves. Amid a solemn hush, he read a chapter from the big Bible spread out upon his lean lap. My glance wandered from face to face of the Roebucks, as plainly dressed as were their servants. I was able to look freely, mine being the only eyes not bent upon the floor. It was the first time in my life that I had witnessed family prayers. When I was a boy at home, my mother had taken literally a Scriptural injunction to pray in secret—in a closet, I think the passage of the Bible said. Many times each day she used to retire to a closet under the stairway and spend from one to twenty minutes shut in there. But we had no family prayers. I was therefore deeply interested in what was going on in those countrified parlors of one of the richest and most powerful men in the world—and this right in the heart of that district of New York where palaces stand in rows and in blocks, and where such few churches as there are resemble social clubs for snubbing climbers and patronizing the poor.

It was astonishing how much every Roebuck in that circle, even the old lady, looked like old Roebuck himself—the same smug piety, the same underfed appearance that, by the way, more often indicates a starved soul than a starved body. One difference—where his face had the look of power that compels respect and, to the shrewd, reveals relentless strength relentlessly used, the expressions of the others were simply small and mean and frost-nipped. And that is the rule—the second generation of a plutocrat inherits, with his money, the meanness that enabled him to hoard it, but not the greatness that enabled him to make it.

So absorbed was I in the study of the influence of his terrible master-character upon those closest to it, that I started when he said: “Let us pray.” I followed the example of the others, and knelt. The audible prayer was offered up by his oldest daughter, Mrs. Wheeler, a widow. Roebuck punctuated each paragraph in her series of petitions with a loudly whispered amen. When she prayed for “the stranger whom Thou hast led seemingly by chance into our little circle,” he whispered the amen more fervently and repeated it. And well he might, the old robber and assassin by proxy! The prayer ended and us on our feet, the servants withdrew, then all the family except Roebuck. That is, they closed the doors between the two rooms and left him and me alone in the front parlor.

“I shall not detain you long, Mr. Roebuck,” said I. “A report reached me this evening that sent me to you at once.”

“If possible, Matthew,” said he, and he could not hide his uneasiness, “put off business until to-morrow. My mind—yours, too, I trust—is not in the frame for that kind of thoughts now.”

“Is the Coal reorganization to be announced the first of July?” I demanded. It has always been, and always shall be, my method to fight in the open. This, not from principle, but from expediency. Some men fight best in the brush; I don’t. So I always begin battle by shelling the woods.

“No,” he said, amazing me by his instant frankness. “The announcement has been postponed.”

Why did he not lie to me? Why did he not put me off the scent, as he might easily have done, with some shrewd evasion? I suspect I owe it to my luck in catching him at family prayers. For I know that the general impression of him is erroneous; he is not merely a hypocrite before the world, but also a hypocrite before himself. A more profoundly, piously conscientious man never lived. Never was there a truer epitaph than the one implied in the sentence carved over his niche in the magnificent Roebuck mausoleum he built: “Fear naught but the Lord.”

“When will the reorganization be announced?” I asked.

“I cannot say,” he answered. “Some difficulties—chiefly labor difficulties—have arisen. Until they are settled, nothing can be done. Come to me tomorrow, and we’ll talk about it.”

“That is all I wished to know,” said I. And, with a friendly, easy smile, I put out my hand. “Good-night.”

It was his turn to be astonished—and he showed it, where I had given not a sign. “What was the report you heard?” he asked, to detain me.

“That you and Mowbray Langdon had conspired to ruin me,” said I, laughing.

He echoed my laugh rather hollowly. “It was hardly necessary for you to come to me about such a—a statement.”

“Hardly,” I answered, dryly. Hardly, indeed. For I was seeing now all that I had been hiding from myself since I became infatuated with Anita, and made marrying her my only real business in life.

We faced each other, each measuring the other. And as his glance quailed before mine, I turned away to conceal my exultation. In a comparison of resources this man who had plotted to crush me was to me as giant to midget. But I had the joy of realizing that man to man, I was the stronger. He had craft, but I had daring. His vast wealth aggravated his natural cowardice—crafty men are invariably cowards, and their audacities under the compulsion of their insatiable

greed are like a starving jackal's dashes into danger for food. My wealth belonged to me, not I to it; and, stripped of it, I would be like the prize-fighter stripped for the fight. Finally, he was old while I was young. And there was the chief reason for his quailing. He knew that he must die long before me, that my turn must come, that I could dance upon his grave.

As I drove away, I was proud of myself. I had listened to my death sentence with a face so smiling that he must almost have believed me unconscious; and also, it had not even entered my head, as I listened, to beg for mercy. Not that there would have been the least use in begging—as well try to pray a statue into life as try to soften that set will and purpose. Still, another sort of man than I would have weakened, and I felt—justly, I think—proud that I had not weakened. But when I was once more in my apartment—in *our* apartment—perhaps I did show that there was a weak streak through me. I fought against the impulse to see her once more that night; but I fought in vain. I knocked at the door of her sitting room—a timid knock, for me. No answer. I knocked again, more loudly—then a third time, still more loudly. The door opened and she stood there, like one of the angels that guarded the gates of Eden after the fall. Only, instead of a flaming sword, hers was of ice. She was in a dressing gown or tea gown, white and clinging and full of intoxicating hints and glimpses of all the beauties of her figure. Her face softened as she continued to look at me, and I entered.

"No—please don't turn on any more lights," I said, as she moved toward the electric buttons. "I just came in to—to see if I could do anything for you." In fact, I had come, longing for her to do something for me, to show in look or tone or act some sympathy for me in my loneliness and trouble.

"No, thank you," she said. Her voice was that of a stranger who wished to remain a stranger. And she was evidently waiting for me to go. You will see what a mood I was in when I say I felt as I had not since I, a very small boy indeed, ran away from home—it was one evening after I had been put to bed; I came back through the chilly night to take one last glimpse of the family that would soon be realizing how foolishly and wickedly unappreciative they had been of such a treasure as I; and when I saw them sitting about the big fire in the lamp light, heartlessly comfortable and unconcerned, it was all I could do to keep back the tears of self-pity—and I never saw them again.

"I've seen Roebuck," said I to Anita, because I must say something, if I was to stay on.

"Roebuck?" she inquired. Her tone reminded me that his name conveyed nothing to her.

"He and I are in an enterprise together," I explained. "He is the one man who could seriously cripple me."

"Oh," she said, and her indifference, forced though I thought it, wounded.

"Well," said I, "your mother was right."

She turned full toward me, and even in the dimness I saw her quick and full sympathy—an impulsive flash that was instantly gone. But it had been there!

"I came in here," I went on, "to say that—Anita, it doesn't in the least matter. No one in this world, no one and nothing, could hurt me except through you. So long as I have you, they—the rest—all of them together—can't touch *me*."

We were both silent for several minutes. Then she said, and her voice was like the smooth surface of the river where the boiling rapids run deep:

"But you *haven't* me—and never *shall* have. I've told you that. I warned you long ago. No doubt you will pretend, and people will say, that I left you because you lost your money. But it won't be so."

I was beside her instantly, was looking into her face. "What do you mean?" I asked, and I did not speak gently.

She gazed at me without flinching. "And I suppose," she said, satirically, "you wonder why I—why you—are repellent to me. Haven't you learned that, while I may have been made into a moral coward, I'm not a physical coward? Don't bully and threaten. It's useless."

I put my hand strongly on her shoulder—taunts and jeers do not turn me aside. "What do you mean?" I repeated.

"Take your hand off me," she commanded.

"What did you mean?" I repeated, strongly. "Don't be afraid to answer me."

She was very young—so the taunt stung her. "I was about to tell you," said she, "when you began to bluster."

I took advantage of this to extricate myself from the awkward position in which she had put me—I took my hand from her shoulder.

"I am going to leave you," she went on. "I am ready to go at any time. But if you wish it, I shall not go until my plans are arranged."

"What plans?" I demanded.

"That is no concern of yours."

"You forget that you are my wife," said I, my brain on fire.

"I am not your wife," was her answer, and if she had not looked so young and childlike, there in the moonlight all in white, I could not have held myself in check, so insolent was the tone and so hopeless of ever being able to win her did she make me feel.

“You are my wife, and you will stay here with me,” I reiterated.

“I am my own, and I shall go where I please, and do what I please,” was her contemptuous retort. “Why won’t you be reasonable? Why won’t you see how utterly unsuited we are? I don’t ask you to be a gentleman—but just a man, and be ashamed even to wish to detain a woman against her will.”

I drew up a chair so close to her that, to retreat, she was forced to sit in the broad window seat. Then I seated myself. “By all means, let us be reasonable,” said I. “Now, let me explain my position. I have heard you and your friends discussing the views of marriage you’ve just been expressing. Their views may be right, may be more civilized, more ‘advanced,’ than mine. No matter. They are not mine. I hold by the old standards—and you are my wife—mine. Do you understand?” All this as tranquilly as if we were discussing fair weather. “And you will live up to the obligation which the marriage service has put upon you.”

She might have been a marble statue pedestaled in that window seat.

“You married me of your own free will—for you could have protested to the preacher, and he would have sustained you. You put certain conditions on our marriage. I assented to them. I have respected them. I shall continue to respect them. But—when you married me, you didn’t marry a dawdling dude chattering ‘advanced ideas’ with his head full of libertinism. You married a man. And that man is your husband.”

I waited, but she made no comment—not even by gesture or movement. She simply sat, her hands interlaced in her lap, her eyes straight upon mine.

“You say, let us be reasonable,” I went on. “Well, let us be reasonable. There may come a time when a woman can be free and independent, but that time is a long way off yet. The world is organized on the basis of every woman having a protector—of every decent woman having a husband, unless she remains in the home of some of her blood relations. There may be women strong enough to set the world at defiance. But you are not one of them—and you know it. You have shown it to yourself again and again in the last forty-eight hours. Further, though you do not know it, your bringing up has made you more of a child than most of the inexperienced women. If you tried to assert your so-called independence, you would be the easy prey of a scoundrel or scoundrels. When I, who have lived in the thick of the fight all my life, who have learned by many a surprise and defeat never to sleep except sword and gun in hand, and one eye open—when I have been trapped as Roebuck and Langdon have just trapped me—what chance would a woman like you have?”

She did not answer, or change expression.

“Is what I say reasonable or unreasonable?” I asked, gently.

“Reasonable—from *your* standpoint,” she said.

She gazed out into the moonlight, up into the sky. And at the look in her face, the primeval savage in me strained to close round that slender white throat of hers and crush and crush until it had killed in her the thought of that other man which was transforming her from marble to flesh that glowed and blood that surged. I pushed back my chair with a sudden noise that startled her; by the way she trembled, I gauged how tense her nerves must have been. I rose and, in a fairly calm tone, said: “We understand each other?”

“Yes,” she answered. “As before.”

I ignored this. “Think it over, Anita,” I urged—she seemed to me so like a sweet, spoiled child again. I longed to go straight at her about that other man. I stood for a moment with Tom Langdon’s name on my lips, but I could not trust myself. I went away to my own rooms.

I thrust thoughts of her from my mind. I spent the night gnawing upon the ropes with which Mowbray Langdon and Roebuck had bound me, hand and foot.

XVI.

No sane creature, not even a sane bulldog, will fight simply from love of fighting. When a man is attacked, he may be sure he has excited either the fear or the cupidity of his assailants, for men fight either to protect that which they have or to gain that which they feel they must have. So far as I could see, it was absurd that cupidity was inciting Langdon and Roebuck against me. I hadn’t enough to tempt them. Thus, I was forced to conclude that I must possess a strength of which I was unaware, and which stirred even Roebuck’s fears. But what could it be?

Besides Langdon and Roebuck and me, there were six principals in the proposed Coal combine, three of them richer and more influential in finance than even Langdon, all of them except possibly Dykeman, the lawyer or navigating officer of the combine, more formidable figures than I. Yet none of these men was being assailed. “Why am I singled out?” I asked myself, and I felt that if I could answer, I should find I had the means wholly or partly to defeat them. But I could not even explain to my satisfaction Langdon’s activities against me. I felt that Anita was somehow the cause; but, even so, how had he succeeded in convincing Roebuck that I must be clipped and plucked into a groundling?

“It must have something to do with the Manasquale mines,” I decided. “I thought I had given over my control of them, but somehow I must still have a control that makes me too powerful for Roebuck to be at ease so long as I am afoot and armed.” And I resolved to take my lawyers and search the whole Manasquale transaction—to explore it from attic to underneath the cellar flooring. “We’ll go through it,” said I, “like ferrets through a ship’s hold.”

As I was finishing breakfast, Anita came in. She had evidently slept well, and I regarded that as ominous. At her age, a crisis means little sleep until a decision has been reached. I rose, but her manner warned me not to advance and try to

shake hands with her.

“I have asked Alva to stop with me here for a few days,” she said, formally.

“Alva!” said I, much surprised. She had not asked one of her own friends; she had asked a girl she had met less than two days before, and that girl my partner’s daughter.

“She was here yesterday morning,” Anita explained. And I now wondered how much Alva there was in Anita’s firm stand against her parents.

“I’m glad you like her,” said I. “Why don’t you take her down to our place on Long Island? Everything’s ready for you there, and I’m going to be busy the next few days—busy day and night.”

She reflected. “Very well,” she assented, presently. And she gave me a puzzled glance she thought I did not see—as if she were wondering whether the enemy was not hiding a new and deeper plot under an apparently harmless suggestion.

“Then I’ll not see you again for several days,” said I, most business-like. “If you want anything, there will be Monson out at the stables, where he can’t annoy you. Or you can get me on the ‘long distance.’ Good-by. Good luck.”

And I nodded carelessly and friendlily to her, and went away, enjoying the pleasure of having startled her into visible astonishment. “There’s a better game than icy hostility, you very young lady,” said I to myself, “and that game is friendly indifference.”

Alva would be with her. So she was secure for the present, and my mind was free for “finance.”

At that time the two most powerful men in finance were Galloway and Roebuck. In Spain I once saw a fight between a bull and a tiger—or, rather, the beginning of a fight. They were released into a huge iron cage. After circling it several times in the same direction, searching for a way out, they came face to face. The bull tossed the tiger; the tiger clawed the bull. The bull roared; the tiger screamed. Each retreated to his own side of the cage. The bull pawed and snorted as if he could hardly wait to get at the tiger; the tiger crouched and quivered and glared murderously, as if he were going instantly to spring upon the bull. But the bull did not rush, neither did the tiger spring. That was the Roebuck-Galloway situation.

How to bait tiger Galloway to attack bull Roebuck—that was the problem I must solve, and solve straightway. If I could bring about war between the giants, spreading confusion over the whole field of finance and filling all men with dread and fear, there was a chance, a bare chance, that in the confusion I might bear off part of my fortune. Certainly, conditions would result in which I could more easily get myself intrenched again; then, too, there would be a by no means small satisfaction in seeing Roebuck clawed and bitten in punishment for having plotted against me. Mutual fear had kept these two at peace for five years, and most considerate and polite about each other’s “rights.” But while our country’s industrial territory is vast, the interests of the few great controllers who determine wages and prices for all are equally vast, and each plutocrat is tormented incessantly by jealousy and suspicion; not a day passes without conflicts of interest which adroit diplomacy could turn into ferocious warfare. And in this matter of monopolizing the Coal, despite Roebuck’s earnest assurances to Galloway that the combine was purely defensive, and was really concerned only with the labor question, Galloway, a great manufacturer, or, rather, a huge levier of the taxes of dividends and interest upon manufacturing enterprises, could not but be uneasy.

Before I rose that morning I had a tentative plan for stirring him to action. I was elaborating it on the way downtown in my electric. It shows how badly Anita was crippling my brain, that not until I was almost at my office did it occur to me: “That was a tremendous luxury Roebuck indulged his conscience in last night. It isn’t like him to forewarn a man, even when he’s sure he can’t escape. Though his prayers were hot in his mouth, still, it’s strange he didn’t try to fool me. In fact, it’s suspicious. In fact——”

Suspicious? The instant the idea was fairly before my mind, I knew I had let his canting fool me once more.

I entered my offices, feeling that the blow had already fallen; and I was surprised, but not relieved, when I found everything calm. “But fall it will within an hour or so—before I can move to avert it,” said I to myself.

And fall it did. At eleven o’clock, just as I was setting out to make my first move toward heating old Galloway’s heels for the warpath, Joe came in with the news: “A general lockout’s declared in the coal regions. The operators have stolen a march on the men, who, so they allege, were secretly getting ready to strike. By night every coal road will be tied up and every mine shut down.”

Joe knew our coal interests were heavy, but he did not dream his news meant that before the day was over we should be bankrupt and not able to pay fifteen cents on the dollar. However, he knew enough to throw him into a fever of fright. He watched my calmness with terror. “Coal stocks are dropping like a thermometer in a cold wave,” he said, like a fireman at a sleeper in a burning house.

“Naturally,” said I, unruffled, apparently. “What can we do about it?”

“We must do something!” he exclaimed.

“Yes, we must,” I admitted. “For instance, we must keep cool, especially when two or three dozen people are watching us. Also, you must go and attend to your usual routine.”

“What are you going to do?” he cried. “For God’s sake, Matt, don’t keep me in suspense.”

“Go to your desk,” I commanded. And he quieted down and went. I hadn’t been schooling him in the fire drill for fifteen years in vain.

I went up the street and into the great banking and brokerage house of Galloway & Co. I made my way through the small army of guards, behind which the old beast of prey was intrenched, and into his private den. There he sat, at a small, plain table, in the middle of a room without any article of furniture in it but his table and his chair. On the table was a small inkstand, perfectly clean, a steel pen, equally clean, on the rest attached to it. And that was all—not a letter, not a scrap of paper, not a sign of work or an intention to work. It might have been the desk of a man who did nothing; in fact, it was the desk of a man who had so much to do that his only hope of escape from being overwhelmed was to dispatch and clear away each matter the instant it was presented to him. Many things could be read in the powerful form, bolt upright in that stiff chair, and in the cynical, masterful old face. But to me the chief quality there revealed was that quality of qualities, decision—the greatest power a man can have, except only courage. And old James Galloway had both.

He respected Roebuck; Roebuck feared him. Roebuck did have some sort of a conscience, distorted though it was, and the dictator of savageries Galloway would have scorned to commit. Galloway had no professions of conscience—beyond such small glozing of hypocrisy as any man must put on if he wishes to be intrusted with the money of a public that associates professions of religion and appearances of respectability with honesty. Roebuck’s passion was wealth—to see the millions heap up and up. Galloway had that passion, too—I have yet to meet the millionaire who is not avaricious and even stingy. But Galloway’s chief passion was power—to handle men as a junk merchant handles rags, to plan and lead campaigns of conquest with his golden legions, and to distribute the spoils like an autocrat who is careless how they are divided, since all belongs to him, whenever he wishes to claim it.

He pierced me with his blue eyes, keen as a youth’s, though his face was seamed with the scars of seventy tumultuous years. He extended toward me over the table his broad, stubby white hand—the hand of a builder, of a constructive genius. “How are you, Blacklock?” said he. “What can I do for you?” He just touched my hand before dropping it, and resuming that idol-like pose. But although there was only repose and deliberation in his manner, and not a suggestion of haste, I, like everyone who came into that room and that presence, had a sense of an interminable procession behind me, a procession of men who must be seen by this master-mover, that they might submit important and pressing affairs to him for decision. It was unnecessary for him to tell anyone to be brief and pointed.

“I shall have to go to the wall today,” said I, taking a paper from my pocket, “unless you save me. Here is a statement of my assets and liabilities. I call to your attention my Coal holdings. I was one of the eight men whom Roebuck has got round him for the new combine—it is a secret, but I assume you know all about it.”

He laid the paper before him, put on his nose-glasses and looked at it.

“If you will save me,” I continued, “I will transfer to you, in a block, all my Coal holdings. They will be worth double my total liabilities within three months—as soon as this lockout is settled and the reorganization is announced. I leave it to your sense of justice to decide whether I shall have any part of them back when this storm blows over.”

“Why didn’t you go to Roebuck?” he asked, without looking up.

“Because it is he that has stuck the knife into me.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. I suspect the Manasquale properties, which I brought into the combine, have some value, which no one but Roebuck, and perhaps Langdon, knows about—and that I in some way was dangerous to them through that fact. They haven’t given me time to look into it.”

A grim smile flitted over his face. “You’ve been too busy getting married, eh?” And I then thought that the grim smile was associated with his remark. I was soon to know that it was an affirmation of my shrewd guess about Manasquale.

“Exactly,” said I. “It’s another case of unbuckling for the wedding feast and getting assassinated as a penalty. Do you wish me to explain anything on that list—do you want any details of the combine—of the Coal stocks there?”

“Not necessary,” he replied. As I had thought, with that enormous machine of his for drawing in information, and with that enormous memory of his for details, he probably knew more about the combine and its properties than I did.

“You have heard of the lockout?” I inquired—for I wished him to know that I had no intention of deceiving him as to the present market value of those stocks.

“Roebuck has been commanded by his God,” he said, “to eject the free American labor from the coal regions and to substitute importations of coolie Huns and Bohemians. Thus the wicked American laborers will be chastened for trying to get higher wages and cut down a pious man’s dividends; and the downtrodden coolies will be brought where they can enjoy the blessings of liberty and of the preaching of Roebuck’s missionaries.”

I laughed, though he had not smiled, but had spoken as if stating colorless facts. “And righteousness and Roebuck will prevail,” said I.

He frowned slightly, a sardonic grin breaking the straight, thin, cruel line of his lips. He opened his table’s one shallow drawer, and took out a pad and a pencil. He wrote a few words on the lowest part of the top sheet, folded it, tore off the part he had scribbled on, returned the pad and pencil to the drawer, handed the scrap of paper to me. “I will do it,” he said. “Give this to Mr. Farquhar, second door to the left. Good-morning.” And in that atmosphere of vast affairs, speedily dispatched, his consent without argument did not stir suspicion in me.

I bowed. Though he had not saved me as a favor to me, but because it fitted in with his plans, whatever they were, my eyes were dimmed. “I shan’t forget this,” said I, my voice not quite steady.

“I know it,” said he, curtly. “I know you.”

I saw that his mind had already turned me out. I said no more, and withdrew. When I left the room it was precisely as it had been when I entered it—except the bit of paper torn from the pad. But what a difference to me, to the thousands, the hundreds of thousands, directly and indirectly interested in the Coal combine and its strike and its products, was represented by those few, almost illegible scrawlings on that scrap of paper.

Not until I had gone over the situation with Farquhar, and we had signed and exchanged the necessary papers, did I begin to relax from the strain—how great that strain was I realized a few weeks later, when the gray appeared thick at my temples and there was in my crown what was for such a shock as mine a thin spot. “I am saved!” said I to myself, venturing a long breath, as I stood on the steps of Galloway’s establishment, where hourly was transacted business vitally affecting the welfare of scores of millions of human beings, with James Galloway’s personal interest as the sole guiding principle. “Saved!” I repeated, and not until then did it flash before me, “I must have paid a frightful price. He would never have consented to interfere with Roebuck as soon as I asked him to do it, unless there had been some powerful motive. If I had had my wits about me, I could have made far better terms.” Why hadn’t I my wits about me? “Anita,” was my instant answer to my own question. “Anita again. I had a bad attack of family man’s panic.” And thus it came about that I went back to my own office feeling as if I had suffered a severe defeat, instead of jubilant over my narrow escape.

Joe followed me into my den. “What luck?” asked he, in the tone of a mother waylaying the doctor as he issues from the sick room.

“Luck?” said I, gazing blankly at him.

“You’ve seen the latest quotation, haven’t you?” In his nervousness his temper was on a fine edge.

“No,” replied I, indifferently. I sat down at my desk and began to busy myself. Then I added: “We’re out of the Coal combine, I’ve transferred our holdings. Look after these things, please.” And I gave him the checks, notes and memoranda of agreement.

“Galloway!” he exclaimed. And then his eye fell on the totals of the stock I had been carrying. “Good God, Matt!” he cried. “We were ruined!”

And he sat down, and buried his face and cried like a child—and it was then that I measured the full depth of the chasm I had escaped. I made no such exhibition of myself, but when I tried to relight my cigar my hand trembled so that the flame scorched my lips. I registered a vow never to gamble again—not with stocks, not with cards, not at all. And I’ve kept faith with myself.

“Ruined?” I said to Joe, easily enough. “Not at all. We’re back in the road, going smoothly ahead—only, at a bit less stiff a pace. Think, Joe, of all those poor devils down in the mining districts. They’re out—clear out—and thousands of ’em don’t know where their families will get bread. And though they haven’t found it out yet, they’ve got to leave the place where they’ve lived all their lives, and their fathers before them—have got to go wandering about in a world that’s as strange to them as the surface of the moon, and as bare for them as the Sahara desert.”

“That’s so,” said Joe. “It’s hard luck.” But I saw he was thinking only of himself and his narrow escape from having to give up his big house and all the rest of it; that, soft-hearted and generous though he was, to those poor chaps and their wives and children he wasn’t giving a thought. Wall Street never does—they’re too remote, too vague. It deals with columns of figures and slips of paper. It never thinks of those abstractions as standing for so many hearts and so many mouths, just as the bank clerk never thinks of the bits of metal he counts so swiftly as money with which things and men could be bought. I read somewhere once that Voltaire—I think it was Voltaire—asked a man what he would do if, by pressing a button on his table, he would be enormously rich and at the same time would cause the death of a person away off at the other side of the earth, unknown to him, and probably no more worthy to live, and with no greater expectation of life or of happiness, than the average sinful, short-lived human being. I’ve often thought of that dilemma as I’ve watched our great “captains of industry.” Voltaire’s dilemma is theirs. And they don’t hesitate; they press the button. I leave the morality of the performance to moralists; to me, its chief feature is its cowardice, its sneaking, slimy cowardice.

“You’ve done a grand two hours’ work,” said Joe.

“Grander than you think,” replied I. “I’ve set the tiger on to fight the bull.”

“Galloway and Roebuck?”

“Just that,” said I. And I laughed. Then I started up—and sat down again. “No, I’ll deny myself the pleasure,” said I. “I’ll let Roebuck find out when the claws catch in that tough old hide of his.”

XVII.

On about the hottest afternoon of that summer I had the yacht take me down the Sound to a point on the Connecticut shore within sight of Dawn Hill, but seven miles further from New York. I landed at the private pier of Howard Forrester, the only brother of Anita’s mother. As I stepped upon the pier I saw a fine looking old man in the pavilion overhanging the water. He was dressed all in white except a sky-blue tie that harmonized with the color of his eyes. He was neither fat nor lean, and his smooth skin was protesting ruddily against the age proclaimed by his wool-white hair. He rose as I came toward him, and, while I was still several yards away, showed unmistakably that he knew who I was

and that he was anything but glad to see me.

“Mr. Forrester?” I asked.

He grew purple to the line of his thick white hair. “It is, Mr. Blacklock,” said he. “I have the honor to wish you good-day, sir.” And with that he turned his back on me.

“I have come to ask a favor of you, sir,” said I, as polite to that hostile back as if I had been addressing a cordial face. And I waited.

He wheeled round, looked at me from head to foot. I withstood the inspection calmly; when it was ended I noted that in spite of himself he was somewhat relaxed from the opinion of me he had formed upon what he had heard and read. But he said: “I do not know you, sir, and I do not wish to know you.”

“You have made me painfully aware of that,” replied I. “But I have learned not to take snap judgments too seriously. I never go to a man unless I have something to say to him, and I never leave until I have said it.”

“I perceive, sir,” retorted he, “you have the thick skin necessary to living up to that rule.” And the twinkle in his eyes betrayed the man who delights to exercise a real or imaginary talent for caustic wit. Such men are like nettles—dangerous only to the timid touch.

“On the contrary,” replied I, easy in mind now, though I did not anger him by showing it, “I am most sensitive to insults—insults to myself. But you are not insulting *me*. You are insulting a purely imaginary, hearsay person who is, I venture to assure you, utterly unlike me, and who doubtless deserves to be insulted.”

His purple had now faded. In a far different tone he said: “If your business in any way relates to the family into which you have married, I do not wish to hear it. Spare my patience and your time, sir.”

“It does not,” was my answer. “It relates to my own family—to my wife and myself. As you may have heard, she is no longer a member of the Ellersly family. And I have come to you chiefly because I happen to know your sentiment toward the Ellerslys.”

“I have no sentiment toward them, sir,” he exclaimed. “They are non-existent, sir—non-existent! Your wife’s mother ceased to be a Forrester when she married that scoundrel. Your wife is still less a Forrester.”

“True,” said I. “She is a Blacklock.”

He winced, and it reminded me of the night of my marriage and Anita’s expression when the preacher called her by her new name. But I held his gaze, and we looked each at the other fixedly for, it must have been, full a minute. Then he said, courteously: “What do you wish?”

I went straight to the point. My color may have been high, but my voice did not hesitate as I explained: “I wish to make my wife financially independent. I wish to settle on her a sum of money sufficient to give her an income that will enable her to live as she has been accustomed. I know she would not take it from me. So I have come to ask you to pretend to give it to her—I, of course, giving it to you to give.”

Again we looked full and fixedly each at the other. “Come to the house, Blacklock,” he said at last in a tone that was the subtlest of compliments. And he linked his arm in mine. Halfway to the rambling stone house, severe in its lines, yet fine and homelike, quaintly resembling its owner, as a man’s house always should, he paused. “I owe you an apology,” said he. “After all my experience of this world of envy and malice, I should have recognized the man even in the caricatures of his enemies. And you brought the best possible credentials—you are well hated. To be well hated by the human race and by the creatures mounted on its back, is a distinction, sir. It is the crown of the true kings of this world.”

We seated ourselves on the wide veranda; he had champagne and water brought, and cigars; and we proceeded to get acquainted—nothing promotes cordiality and sympathy like an initial misunderstanding. It was a good hour before this kind-hearted, hard-soft, typical old-fashioned New Englander reverted to the object of my visit. Said he: “And now, young man, may I venture to ask some extremely personal questions?”

“In the circumstances,” replied I, “you have the right to know everything. I did not come to you without first making sure what manner of man I was to find.” At this he blushed, pleased as a girl at her first beau’s first compliment. “And you, Mr. Forrester, cannot be expected to embark in the little adventure I propose, until you have satisfied yourself.”

“First, the why of your plan.”

“I am in active business,” replied I, “and I shall be still more active. That means financial uncertainty.”

His suspicion of me started up from its doze and rubbed its eyes. “Ah! You wish to insure yourself.”

“Yes,” was my answer, “but not in the way you hint. It takes away a man’s courage just when he needs it most, to feel that his family is involved in his venture.”

The old man settled back, partially reassured. “Why do you not make the settlement direct?” he asked.

“Because I wish her to feel that it is her own, that I have no right over it whatever.”

He thought about this. His eyes were keen as he said: “Is that your real reason?”

I saw I must be unreserved with him. “Part of it,” I replied. “The rest is—she would not take it from me.”

The old man smiled cynically. “Have you tried?” he inquired.

“If I had tried and failed, she would have been on the alert for an indirect attempt.”

“Try her, young man,” said he, laughing. “In this day there are few people anywhere who’d refuse any sum from anybody for anything. And a woman—and a New York woman—and a New York fashionable woman—and a daughter of old Ellersly—she’ll take it as a baby takes the breast.”

“She would not take it,” said I.

My tone, though I strove to keep angry protest out of it, because I needed him, caused him to draw back instantly. “I beg your pardon,” said he. “I forgot for the moment that I was talking to a man young enough still to have youth’s delusions about women. You’ll learn that they’re human, that it’s from them we men inherit our weaknesses. However, let’s assume that she won’t take it. *Why* won’t she take your money? What is there about it that repels Ellersly’s daughter, brought up in the sewers of fashionable New York—the sewers, sir?”

“She does not love me,” I answered.

“I have hurt you,” he said, quickly, in great distress at having compelled me to expose my secret wound.

“The wound does not ache the worse,” said I, “for my showing it—to *you*.” And that was the truth. I looked over toward Dawn Hill, whose towers could just be seen. “We live there.” I pointed. “She is—like a guest in my house.”

When I glanced at him again, his face betrayed a feeling which I doubt if anyone had thought him capable in many a year. “I see that you love her,” he said, gently as a mother.

“Yes,” I replied. And presently I went on: “The idea of anyone I love being dependent on me in a sordid way is most distasteful to me. And since she does not love me, does not even like me, it is doubly necessary that she be independent.”

“I confess I do not quite follow you,” said he.

“How can she accept anything from me? If she should finally be compelled by necessity to do it, what hope could I have of her ever feeling toward me as a wife should feel toward her husband?”

At this explanation of mine his eyes sparkled with anger—and I could not but suspect that he had at one time in his life been faced with a problem like mine, and had settled it the other way. My suspicion was not weakened when he went on to say:

“Boyish motives again! They show you do not know women. Don’t be deceived by their delicate exterior, by their pretenses of super-refinement. They affect to be what passion deludes us into thinking them. But they’re clay, sir, just clay, and far less sensitive than we men. Don’t you see, young man, that by making her independent you’re throwing away your best chance of winning her? Women are like dogs—like dogs, sir! They lick the hand that feeds ’em—lick it, and like it.”

“Possibly,” said I, with no disposition to combat views based on I knew not what painful experience; “but I don’t care for that sort of liking—from a woman or from a dog.”

“It’s the only kind you’ll get,” retorted he, trying to control his agitation. “I’m an old man. I know human nature—that’s why I live alone. You’ll take that kind of liking, or do without.”

“Then I’ll do without,” said I.

“Give her an income, and she’ll go. I see it all. You’ve flattered her vanity by showing your love for her—that’s the way with the women. They go crazy about themselves, and forget all about the man. Give her an income and she’ll go.”

“I doubt it,” said I. “And you would, if you knew her. But, even so, I shall lose her in any event. For, unless she is made independent, she’ll certainly go with the last of the little money she has, the remnant of a small legacy.”

The old man argued with me, the more vigorously, I suspect, because he found me resolute. When he could think of no new way of stating his case—his case against Anita—he said: “You are a fool, young man—that’s clear. I wonder such a fool was ever able to get together as much property as report credits you with. But—you’re the kind of fool I like.”

“Then—you’ll indulge my folly?” said I, smiling.

He threw up his arms in a gesture of mock despair. “If you will have it so,” he replied. “I am curious about this niece of mine. I want to see her. I want to see the woman who can resist *you*.”

“Her mind and her heart are closed against me,” said I. “And it is my own fault—I closed them.”

“Put her out of your head,” he advised. “No woman is worth a serious man’s while.”

“I have few wants, few purposes,” said I. “But those few I pursue to the end. Even though she were not worth while, even though I wholly lost hope, still I’d not give her up. I couldn’t—that’s my nature. But—*she* is worth while.” And I could see her, slim and graceful, the curves in her face and figure that made my heart leap, the azure sheen upon her petal-like skin, the mystery of her soul luring from her eyes.

After we had arranged the business—or, rather, arranged to have it arranged through our lawyers—he walked down to the pier with me. At the gangway he gave me another searching look from head to foot—but vastly different from the

inspection with which our interview had begun. “You are a devilish handsome young fellow,” said he. “Your pictures don’t do you justice. And I shouldn’t have believed any man could overcome in one brief sitting such a prejudice as I had against you. On second thought, I don’t believe I care to see her. She must be even below the average.”

“Or far above it,” I suggested.

“I suppose I’ll have to ask her over to visit me,” he went on. “A fine hypocrite I’ll feel.”

“You can make it one of the conditions of your gift that she is not to thank you or speak of it,” said I. “I fear your face would betray us, if she ever did.”

“An excellent idea!” he exclaimed. Then, as he shook hands with me in farewell: “You will win her yet—if you care to.”

As I steamed up the Sound, I was tempted to put in at Dawn Hill’s harbor. Through my glass I could see Anita and Alva and several others, men and women, having tea on the lawn under a red and white awning. I could see her dress—a violet suit with a big violet hat to match. I knew that costume. Like everything she wore, it was both beautiful in itself and most becoming to her. I could see her face, could almost make out its expression—did I see, or did I imagine, a cruel contrast to what I always saw when she knew I was looking?

I gazed until the trees hid lawn and gay awning, and that lively company and her. In my bitterness I was full of resentment against her, full of self-pity. I quite forgot, for the moment, *her* side of the story.

XVIII.

It was the next day, I think, that I met Mowbray Langdon and his brother Tom in the entrance to the Textile Building. Mowbray was back only a week from his summer abroad; but Tom I had seen and nodded to every day, often several times in the same day, as he went to and fro about his “respectable” dirty work for the Roebuck-Langdon clique. He was one of their most frequently used stool-pigeon directors in banks and insurance companies whose funds they staked in their big gambling operations, they taking almost all the profits, and the depositors and policy holders taking almost all the risk. It had never once occurred to me to have any feeling of any kind about Tom, or in any way to take him into my calculations as to Anita. He was, to my eyes, too obviously a pale understudy of his powerful and fascinating brother. Whenever I thought of him as the man Anita fancied she loved, I put it aside instantly. “The kind of man a woman *really* cares for,” I would say to myself, “is the measure of her true self. But not the kind of man she *imagines* she cares for.”

Tom went on; Mowbray stopped. We shook hands, and exchanged commonplaces in the friendliest way—I was harboring no resentment against him, and I wished him to realize that his assault had bothered me no more than the buzzing and battering of a summer fly. “I’ve been trying to get in to see you,” said he. “I wanted to explain about that unfortunate Textile deal.”

This, when the assault on me had burst out with fresh energy the day after he landed from Europe! I could scarcely believe that his vanity, his confidence in his own skill at underground work, could so delude him. “Don’t bother,” said I. “All that’s ancient history.”

But he had thought out some lies he regarded as particularly creditable to his ingenuity; he was not to be deprived of the pleasure of telling them. So I was compelled to listen; and, being in an indulgent mood, I did not spoil his pleasure by letting him see or suspect my unbelief. If he could have looked into my mind, as I stood there in an attitude of patient attention, I think even his self-complacence would have been put out of countenance. You may admire the exploits of a “gentleman” cracksman or pickpocket, if you hear or read them with only their ingenuity put before you. But *see* a “gentleman” liar or thief at his sneaking, cowardly work, and admiration is impossible. As Langdon lied on, as I studied his cheap, vulgar exhibition of himself, he all unconscious, I thought: “Beneath that very thin surface of yours, you’re a poor cowardly creature—you and all your fellow bandits. No; bandit is too grand a word to apply to this game of ‘high finance.’ It’s really on the level with the game of the fellow that waits for a dark night, slips into the barnyard, poisons the watch dog, bores an auger hole in the granary, and takes to his heels at the first suspicious sound.”

With his first full stop, I said: “I understand perfectly, Langdon. But I haven’t the slightest interest in crooked enterprises now. I’m clear out of all you fellows’ stocks. I’ve reinvested my property so that not even a panic would trouble me.”

“That’s good,” he drawled. I saw he did not believe me—which was natural, as he thought I was laboring in heavy weather, with a bad cargo of coal stocks and contracts. “Come to lunch with me. I’ve got some interesting things to tell you about my trip.”

A few months before, I should have accepted with alacrity. But I had lost interest in him. He had not changed; if anything, he was more dazzling than ever in the ways that had once dazzled me. It was I that had changed—my ideals, my point of view. I had no desire to feed my new-sprung contempt by watching him pump in vain for information to be used in his secret campaign against me. “No, thanks. Another day,” I replied, and left him with a curt nod. I noted that he had failed to speak of my marriage, though he had not seen me since. “A sore subject with all the Langdons,” thought I. “It must be very sore, indeed, to make a man who is all manners neglect them.”

My whole life had been a series of transformations so continuous that I had noted little about my advance, beyond its direction—like a man hurrying up a steep that keeps him bent, eyes down. But, as I turned away from Langdon, I caught myself in the very act of transformation. No doubt, the new view had long been there, its horizon expanding with every step of my ascent; but not until that talk with him did I see it. I looked about me in Wall Street; in my mind’s eye I saw the great rascals of “high finance,” their respectability stripped from them, saw them gathering in the spoils which their cleverly trained agents, commercial and political and legal, filched with light fingers from the pockets of the crowd, saw the crowd looking up to these trainers and employers of pickpockets, hailing them “captains of industry”! They reaped

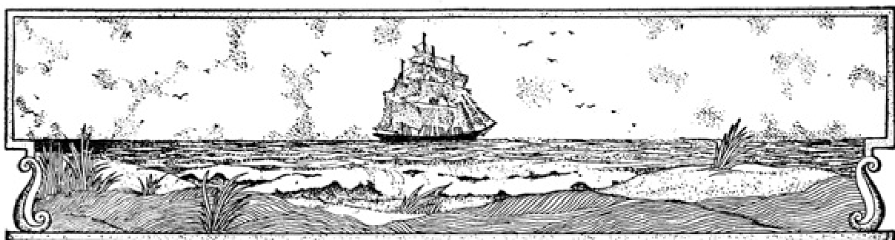
only where and what others had sown; they touched industry only to plunder and to blight it; they organized it only that its profits might go to those who did not toil and who despised those who did. “Have I gone mad in the midst of sane men?” I asked myself. “Or have I been mad, and have I suddenly become sane in a lunatic world?”

I did not linger on that problem. For me action remained the essential of life, whether I was sane or insane. I resolved then and there to study out a new course. By toiling like a sailor at the pump of a sinking ship, I had taken advantage to the uttermost of the respite Galloway’s help had given me. My property was no longer in more or less insecure speculative “securities,” but was, as I had told Langdon, in forms that would withstand the worst shocks. The attacks of my enemies, directed partly at my fortune, or, rather, at the stocks in which they imagined it was still invested, and partly at my personal character, were doing me good instead of harm. Hatred always forgets that its venomous shafts, falling round its intended victim, spring up as legions of supporters for him. My business was growing rapidly; my daily letter to investors was read by hundreds of thousands where tens of thousands had read it before the Roebuck-Langdon clique began to make me famous by trying to make me infamous.

“I am strong and secure,” said I to myself as I strode through the wonderful canyon of Broadway, whose walls are the mighty palaces of finance and commerce from which business men have been ousted by the cormorant “captains of industry.” I must *use* my strength. How could I better use it than by fluttering these vultures on their roosts, and perhaps bringing down a bird or two?

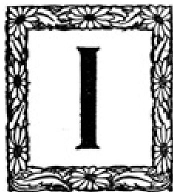
I decided, however, that it was better to wait until they had stopped rattling their beaks and claws on my shell in futile attack. “Meanwhile,” I reasoned, “I can be getting good and ready.”

TO BE CONTINUED.



A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

By Francis Metcalfe



In the region of South Washington Square there are many ancient dwellings which have fallen into uses which would make their original owners, who were the solid men of old New York, turn over in their narrow vaults in Trinity churchyard if they could know of them. Alien peoples, swarthy of skin and picturesque of dress, occupy and surround them, and strange industries are carried on under the roofs which once sheltered the families of the dignified old Knickerbockers who formed the aristocracy of the city.

In many of these transformed residences of the wealthy, after climbing many flights of stairs, whose quaint old mahogany balustrades have been marred by generations of careless movers, one comes to apartments which are provided with skylights and northern windows, and these, being classified as studios, command relatively high rents, considering the lack of every modern convenience and comfort. They are occupied by the younger and unknown artists, who cannot afford the rents demanded in the more fashionable studio buildings, and the reek of the oil stove and odor of cooking, mingling with the smell of paint and turpentine, which pervades the hallways, indicate that they are used as living quarters and work rooms combined.

The whole quarter abounds in cheap restaurants, places where one may obtain a full course dinner, of sorts, and a small bottle of alleged claret included, for an absurdly small sum; but a carton of biscuits, a tin of sardines and a can of condensed milk are usually in evidence on the littered tables of the studios, and, together with the odor of stale coffee, bespeak an economy of diet which is incompatible with the good work which comes of the well-fed body.

It was in one of these small rooms, perched at the top of the tallest among the houses, that a girl lay on a couch, her face buried in her hands, as the early dusk of a winter’s afternoon softened the tawdriness of the furnishings. A curtain of burlaps screened one corner, hiding the toilet arrangements, which would have suggested that the couch served as a bed by night; and the flowering plants at the window, the arrangement of artistic posters and sketches on the walls, and, above all, the neatness and orderliness of the room, proclaimed feminine occupancy.

Her attitude was that of dejection, and she had not waited to remove coat or hat before seeking consolation in the

refuge of tears; but there was determination in her expression and in the set of her shoulders when she sat up and looked resentfully at the flat package lying on the table. The imprint of a well-known publishing house was on the wrapping paper, and in her hand was a letter from the same firm, thanking her for the privilege of examining the sketches and regretting that they were not fitted to their immediate needs. She lighted a gas jet and re-read the letter, trying to derive some comfort from the courtesy of the declination, but when she unwrapped the sketches, she was forced to acknowledge to herself that they did not seem so strong as when she hopefully submitted them a fortnight before.

These two weeks had been a time of anxiety for Elizabeth Thornton, for so much depended upon the sale of the sketches, the results of months of labor, that she had alternately built castles in the air and wondered what was to become of her, as her mood made her hopeful or despondent of their acceptance. She had sold some of her work during her three years of study in New York, but not enough to pay even her very modest living expenses, and these, together with the fees for tuition at the art school and the purchase of material, had diminished almost to the vanishing point the few hundreds of dollars which she possessed when she commenced her studies.

A knock on the door caused her to glance hastily around the room, to be sure that evidences of domestic occupancy were not scattered about, before opening it to the tall, good-looking young fellow who stood hat in hand, his fur-lined coat thrown open and an expectant smile on his face.

“I have climbed so many stairs that I am not sure whether I have reached heaven or the studio of Miss Elizabeth Thornton,” he said, breathlessly, in a cheery voice; but the girl, whose face was in the shadow while his was in the light, extended her hand and greeted him warmly.

“Tom, you irreverent boy! Come inside this minute, before you scandalize my neighbors,” she exclaimed. “And now that you are in, tell me how you found me out and how you happen to be in New York.”

“In the first place, I am fortunate enough not to find you out, and, secondly, I don’t happen to be in New York; I just live here, as I have done any time these past three years. But I didn’t know that you did until I met old Oliver, who gave me your address. I didn’t know whether it was your place of business or your dwelling; but I came on the chance of finding you.”

“And I don’t think you appreciate yet that it is both,” she said, an amused expression on her face, as she saw him glance around the room.

“Do you really live here, too?” he asked. The evidence of the studio was there, but none of the delicate and dainty traces of a feminine bedchamber.

“Indeed I do, and when it comes ‘by-low’ time, there is a grand transformation scene,” she answered, laughing; and, although he joined in her laughter, there was sadness in his heart as he realized the import of the meager accommodations.

“I don’t see a kitchen, at any rate, so I suppose there is no reason why you can’t come out to dinner with me this evening,” he said.

“Nothing but your presence, which prevents me from changing my gown,” she replied, doubtfully. “You can choose between walking the streets and sitting on the stairs outside while I get ready.”

“Don’t make it as long a proceeding as in the old days, then,” he said, as he stood by the table and carelessly turned over the sketches, and she smiled a little bitterly as she promised to hurry, realizing how little she had to select from as compared to the days when the choice from many gowns demanded due consideration. A flood of recollections came to her as she made her hasty toilet, and she appreciated, from the cheer and life which Tom Livingston’s brief presence had brought into the studio, how terribly lonely her life had been for the past few months. Before that there had been the companionship of her fellow students in the art school, many of the women struggling along like herself, living on the bare necessities of life and oftentimes knowing what it meant to lack for them, but stimulated and kept at their work by the hope of ultimate success in their painting.

The small glass told her that her face was still very attractive, although it had lost much of the girlish prettiness it possessed in the days when Tom had known and loved her; but then—thank Heaven!—she had never cared for such things, and all she wanted was success in her chosen profession, the one thing which she loved in life.

And Tom, on the other side of the door, was also thinking of her career and the visible results of her work since he had seen her; the small, cheap studio in the dilapidated old house and the lack of comfort in her mode of living, and he contrasted it with the home he had known her in and the things he could have surrounded her with, had she accepted his offer when the crash came which threw her on her own resources. She had elected to remain independent, to devote what little money had been saved from the wreck of her fortunes to pursuing her studies in painting; encouraged in her decision by the praise which her amateurish efforts had gained from sympathetic friends. But while the studies of the daughter of John Thornton, one of the most influential men of the city where they lived, might be praised by the good-natured reporters of the home papers at local exhibitions, the works of Elizabeth Thornton, of whose parentage and social position the critics neither knew nor cared, were judged on their merits when she asked that they be taken seriously, and they were found sadly wanting.

Tom could imagine the girl’s latter history from what he knew of the artists’ colony in New York; the years in the art school, where she had worked hard and no one had been sufficiently ill-natured or had cared enough for her to tell her to give it up, and then the misguided judgment which had led her to take a studio for herself. He had tactfully said nothing when he had looked over the sketches; but he knew that they were bad, and his sharp eyes had not missed the traces of tears on her face; so he easily made two, by the old process of putting one and one together, and formed a pretty accurate guess as to what had happened.

Elizabeth was all smiles when she joined him, and they went down the long stairs together. The dinner was a delight to her; the well-cooked and daintily served food, the pretty table appointments, and the music from the balcony, all seemed like a breath from the past—from the time before she became absorbed in what she called her "life work."

"It is so long since I have been in such a delightful place as this, with the prospect of such a dinner, that you must not expect me to talk," she said, when he had given the order, after due consultation with her over the menu. "But I am a good listener, and you can tell me about what you have been doing."

"It is neither a very long nor a very exciting narration," he replied, laughing. "You gave me such a very decided answer, three years ago, that I haven't had the courage to look at a woman since, and if you can't find a woman in three years of a man's life, it is safe to say that it has been uneventful." She looked at him apprehensively, for there was one topic which she had determined to avoid, and here he was rushing into it before the oysters were served.

"No, no. It isn't that which I wish to know about," she said, hastily. "But tell me what you have been doing; what you are doing now."

"This evening I am dining with some one whom I have thought of every day since I saw her last," he answered, gallantly. "During the day I spend most of my time in a disagreeable office, working for money which I do not need, because that seems to be the custom of American men. That has been my life for half of each of these three years; the alternate six months I have spent in Florence with my mother."

"I envy you the Florentine portion of the year," she said, looking at him a little wistfully. "Some day, when my ship comes in, I hope to spend a long time there."

"I go back in two months," he said, eagerly. "My mother would be delighted to see you, if you would come over with me."

"Ah, but my ship may be delayed longer than that and——"

"There is a ship always at your disposal, now as it was three years ago," he interrupted, but she made a gesture of protest.

"It is good to see you again, Tom; it is nice to be with you. Please don't make it necessary for me to send you away again. Let's just be friends, and let me feel that I have your sympathy and affection in the struggle I am having with my life work."

"You have both, always, little girl; but is it worth it, this 'life work'? Is it enough to repay you for sacrificing all that other women find good in life? I wish that you would tell me about your troubles in it; your struggles and disappointments and what you hope for." It was no easy recital which the girl entered upon, and her pride made her conceal a great deal; but from what Tom knew of her circumstances before she started in, and the conclusions he had drawn from what he had seen, he was able to read between the lines of her story.

"And so, you see, I am not able to do as good work as I should," she faltered over the coffee. "I am 'faking' it all, because I cannot afford to use models, and what talent I may have is in the line of portraiture. But sitters don't flock to South Washington Square, and it is hard to get a start."

"Have you ever done portraits?" he asked, anxious to find a way to help her.

"No—that is, no paying ones. I have painted only two, and, like the country storekeeper, taken my pay in kind; but they were good, Tom—really they were, and I feel that if I could get such work to do I could make a name for myself."

"Why not paint my portrait?" he asked, suddenly. "I have always longed to have my phiz, labeled 'Portrait of a Gent,' staring from the wall at an exhibition."

"I'm afraid it would be from near the skyline, if my signature were on it," she answered, laughing. "That is, if it were accepted at all; but you must understand, Tom, old boy, that I can't accept your offers of help, even under the thickest of veils."

"That is the beastly part of the conventions of this miserable world," he answered, irritably. "Here am I, strong, healthy and with more of its goods than I can use, and yet you can't accept from my surplus enough to tide you over a lean year or two, because Mrs. Grundy forbids."

"But she is a very real and very terrible person; even to bachelor maids, Tom. If, like a sensible boy, you had married a sensible girl, whom you could send to me for her portrait, it would be different, for you would receive full value, and at the same time assist a struggling young artist."

"By Jove, I have it!" he exploded. "I have not committed matrimony myself, but a lot of my friends have, and I am going to demand payment for all the teething rings, caudle cups and other baby truck I have been distributing, and make 'em all send their kids to you for their portraits."

"Oh, Tom, you are a dear, but remember the size of my studio, and let them come one at a time," she answered, laughing at his enthusiasm. "Remember that two babies would crowd it dreadfully, and I wouldn't know how to get on with even one."

"Never fear, you will pick that up fast enough, Betsy, and if you can deliver the goods, your fortune is made. What do you charge for the life-sized portrait of a baby?"

"Why, really, I haven't a fixed price," she answered, realizing that he was in earnest. "As I told you, I have painted but

two portraits, and the payment for the last was the making of this gown. It was my dressmaker's picture." He looked her over critically.

"Well, it's mighty becoming. I suppose that is equivalent to about five hundred dollars, isn't it?"

"Oh, Tom! You are a greater baby than the sitters whom you propose to send to me," she exclaimed. "If I become famous, I may ask that much years and years from now."

"Young woman, you are to understand that you are 'personally conducted' in your new field, and I am your manager. It won't do to cheapen your work by putting a small price on it. Make 'em pay, and they will think that you are great."

"Not when they see my studio," she answered, but his enthusiasm was comforting to her.

The little studio was not satisfying to Elizabeth as she transformed it into a bedroom by the simple process of bringing the bedclothes out from their place of concealment and sliding back the curtain. The unaccustomed luxury of the dinner had awakened old memories of the comfort and daintiness which had been unknown to her in her later life, and the rejection of her sketches had shattered the dreams of acquiring them again, which had comforted her when she sent them out. And Tom, bowling up the avenue in a hansom, felt uncomfortable at the thought of her being in such a place alone and unprotected, for the dinner had awakened memories in his mind, too, and renewed the old longing for Elizabeth which he thought the years of separation had conquered.

"But she is not the kind of a woman to come to me because she has made a failure, and, if she were, she would not be worth the winning," he thought, bitterly, as he lighted his cigar. "A little more of the life she is leading now, a few more disappointments, and the woman that is in her, the part of herself which she has crushed back for the past three years, will be annihilated. I must find some way to rescue it, to rouse it, and when she has achieved, at least, a semblance of success, trust to my own good fortune to make her look at things as I want her to see them."

It was a new proposition to him, and he racked his brain to find a way out, and by the time he reached his club he was in a mood to resort to physical violence, if necessary, to make any one of his married friends promise to deliver up a child for portrait purposes. But the club was deserted, and he went to bed to spend a wakeful night in seeking a solution of his problem.

Elizabeth smiled grimly the next day as she was preparing her frugal luncheon. A bunch of violets, whose value represented a half month's rent of her tiny studio, was diffusing fragrance through it, and a basket of fruit, which would last a month, was on the table; but the necessaries were represented by a pot of tea, a package of biscuits and a small pat of butter. Even the last was an unwonted extravagance at midday, but, after the dinner of the night before, she could not descend too suddenly to dry biscuits, and, after all, Tom's confidence had given her more courage for the future. She had even tried to work over the rejected sketches with a certain degree of hopefulness, but her heart was not in it, and she was gazing at one of them disconsolately, when there was a sharp knock at the door, and Tom, disregarding all studio ethics, burst in before she could open it. He seized both of her hands and whirled her about the room, to the grave peril of her modest bric-à-brac, his face beaming and his eyes sparkling with pleasure.

"Betsy, things are coming your way; I've caught one for you," he almost shouted, and she implored him to be quiet and tell her what he meant.

"Why, a subject—a victim, or whatever you call people who have their portraits painted. No end of money and fame undying—but I haven't time to tell you about it all now. Just let me know when you can commence, and I will have her here."

"Are you in earnest, Tom?" she asked, incredulously; for the sudden realization of his prophecies of the night before seemed too good to be true.

"In earnest? Well, rather. Young woman, your foot is on the first rung of the ladder of fame, and the day is coming when I shall be proud to know you."

"But who is it?" she persisted.

"Her name wouldn't mean anything to you, and I haven't time to tell you the story, but I will take you out to dinner to-night and tell you all about it."

"But how old is she, Tom? I must know what to prepare for."

"I wasn't indiscreet enough to ask the lady's age, but I should say about four years. I can see that there is no chance of getting anything but questions out of you; but I will make the appointment for ten to-morrow morning, and call for you at six-thirty tonight for dinner. Please be ready, so that I will not have to camp on those confounded stairs."

Tom's story at dinner was as delightful as a fairy tale to her, and if the first one had been made pleasant by anticipation, the feast of realization transported her to the realm of air castles. The arrival of the Italian family which had come from Florence to settle in New York, bearing letters of introduction to Tom from his mother, just in time to fit into his plans to make her a painter of children, seemed a harbinger of good fortune. The father had been most enthusiastic when Tom mentioned the "rising young artist" to him, and was anxious that the sittings should commence immediately, before her time was all taken up.

"There is only one drawback, Betsy," said Tom, as he finished his story. "Little Carlotta speaks only Italian, so I will have to be there a lot to translate."

"But won't the mother, or some one, come with her?" she asked, in surprise.

“You would be no better off, for they can’t any of ’em speak English. I have promised to bring her and fetch her away, anyway.”

“Tom, I don’t know how to thank you for what you are doing for me; but it is awful to be under such an obligation to anyone,” she said, the tears coming to her eyes.

“If you think it’s any hardship to ride around in a cab with the young lady, just wait until you see her. She is a raving, tearing beauty,” he answered, laughing, but Elizabeth was none the less grateful.

Tom’s enthusiastic description of the child was borne out by the facts, and it was a very beautiful and very dainty little lady whom he carried into the studio the next morning. She was typically Italian, and the dark hair, warm, brown skin and large, soft eyes, gave her almost an Oriental expression, in spite of the conventional frills and furbelows in which she was dressed.

“Here she is, Betsy,” said Tom, gayly, as he sat down with the youngster on his lap. “Now tell me what you want her to do, and I will translate for you, for I must leave her with you while I go to the office.” Elizabeth looked at the child, who was gravely inspecting the studio with wise-looking eyes.

“But, Tom, suppose she should cry or anything; what am I to do? She can’t understand me, and I shouldn’t know what to say, anyway.”

“And this is what comes of being an independent woman,” he said, looking at her in disapproval. “Well, you will have to take a chance, and get on the best you know how, but I shall have luncheon sent in here, and come back to eat it with you, for I can’t trust the child’s diet to a bachelor maid.”

Carlotta was frightened when Tom left, and Elizabeth began, rather timidly, to comfort her; but she found it an easier task than she had imagined. The feeling of the warm young body against her breast, the sweet perfume of the child’s hair and the caressing touch of the little hands as they crept about her neck, were grateful to the lonely artist, and somewhere in the womanhood within her, she found words which Carlotta could understand, although they belonged to no language known to grownups. After the first feeling of strangeness had worn off, the child was quite contented with her, and so comfortable and comforting in her arms that but little progress had been made with the portrait when a waiter brought in the luncheon which Tom had ordered from a neighboring restaurant. Tom came back to eat it with them, and he was entirely satisfied with the friendship which had sprung up between the woman and the child.

“I was asked to give you this; it seems that it is an Italian custom to pay part in advance,” he said, handing her an envelope as he left her, and when she opened it she found a crisp and substantial bank note. He took the little girl home that night, and when he returned to take Elizabeth out to dinner, she was so elated that she seemed to be walking on air; but she insisted that they go to a little Italian restaurant, where she had been in the habit of dining.

“I was getting awfully tired of it, Tom, but Carlotta has given me a liking for everything Italian,” she said, merrily, and Tom, in the happiness which the change in her brought to him, ate the indifferent food and drank the doubtful wine contentedly. A few days later he heard singing when he knocked on Elizabeth’s door for luncheon, and recognized an old nursery rhyme, which he had not heard since his childhood, and when he came in he found her seated on the floor with Carlotta, in the midst of a collection of toys, which must have made a decided hole in her advance payment.

“Is this the way you attend to your ‘life work,’ young woman?” he asked, with mock severity, and she seemed a little shamefaced; but when the waiter brought the luncheon, he found all three of them on the floor, and Elizabeth not at all pleased with the fickle Carlotta’s preference for the house which Tom had built with the blocks. But nothing could disturb Tom’s good nature these days, for he realized that Elizabeth was growing fonder of the child each day, and with it all she seemed happier and more feminine. About a week after the sittings commenced, he noticed that her hair was arranged in the fluffy, loose way he had admired so much three years before, giving her face more of the girlish expression it had lost, and a bright ribbon at the throat relieved the somberness of her working gown.

“Why, Betsy, you are growing younger,” he said, looking at her in admiration, and she blushed in confusion.

“You mean my hair and the ribbon,” she replied, with a little trace of self-consciousness in her manner. “Well, you see, Carlotta is of a race which likes bright colors, so I thought it would please her.”

“And incidentally you have given me great pleasure,” he said, smiling at her, approvingly, and a song was in his heart as he went down the stairs.

Sunshine is not abundant in a New York winter, and none of it enters the northern windows of a studio; but Elizabeth’s tiny apartment came to have an entirely different atmosphere while the child spent her days in it. The program remained the same as on the first day; but Elizabeth employed so much of her time in petting and playing with the child, that the portrait did not advance rapidly, although enough had been accomplished to show that it promised to be, by far, the best thing which she had ever done. The jolly luncheons were a joy to both of them, and Carlotta always gave a crow of delight, which Elizabeth’s heart was beginning to echo, when Tom’s merry whistle heralded his arrival.

But on the day he had noticed the change in Elizabeth’s hair, there was a marked restraint in her manner when he came in for luncheon, and Carlotta, with the sensitiveness which makes children so quick to recognize the moods of their elders, was sitting on the couch, finger in mouth, and with widely opened eyes, which threatened tears.

“Tom, I must have a talk with you,” said Elizabeth, her voice trembling a little as he looked inquiringly from one to the other.

“Have you two had a falling out?” he asked, laughing, but Elizabeth’s expression checked his merriment.

“No, but I will tell you just what has happened, and then I want an explanation. Let me speak without interruption, and then I will hear what you have to say.” He took off his coat and sat down without speaking, and Elizabeth faced him.

“The Italian woman who cleans this place came in this morning with her mop and pail, and Carlotta commenced chattering with her at once, and the woman laughed, so that I asked her what she was saying. She told me that Carlotta said she looked like her mother, and that she had the same kind of mop and pail. Of course, judging from the appearance and expensive clothing of the child, she thought it was absurd; but I got her to question Carlotta for me, and she persisted in her story, and described their home, which seems to consist of two overcrowded rooms on Mulberry Street.” She paused, and Tom looked at her with no trace of embarrassment.

“Well, what of it?” he asked, defiantly. “The child was telling the truth, and there is no reason to punish her.”

“Punish her!” exclaimed Elizabeth, taken aback. “It is not a question of what she has said or done; but of your conduct. Rich Italians do not live in two rooms on Mulberry Street, and you have deceived me and humiliated me by using this means to give me money.”

“Nothing of the sort,” he replied. “I haven’t deceived you; although I will admit that you deceived yourself, and I did not set you right. The child’s father was one of my mother’s gardeners in Florence, and when he decided to bring his large family over here, she gave him a letter to me. He came to my office the morning after we dined together, and I went to see his family, and fell in love with Carlotta at once. The father was delighted to have her portrait painted, and I thought it would be better to get fresh clothes for such an important occasion.”

“But immigrants are not making advance payments which are more than I should have charged for a half-dozen portraits, and you have done this simply to cloak an advance of money to me,” she said, indignantly. “I suppose that you meant it in kindness, but you have put me under an obligation which I hate and which it will take me years to repay.”

“There is no question of obligation,” he replied, gently. “If I, as the child’s foster father, wish a portrait of her, it is my own business whom I get to paint it, and how much I pay for it. I have made arrangements to care for Carlotta, and I wish you to finish the portrait for me, so that I may have something to remember her and this happy time by, when she grows up and leaves me.”

“Oh, Tom, you must not take her away from me!” exclaimed Elizabeth, in dismay. “If you will let me finish this portrait and exhibit it, I am sure that it will bring me other orders, and then I can repay you and keep her with me.”

“Do what? Keep the child with you?” asked Tom, in amazement.

“Yes, if you will help that much,” she faltered. “I have thought it all out since the woman translated for me. I know that I can get other orders from this portrait, and I will be able to keep her, if the parents will permit it, and they have so many children that I am sure they will. Oh, Tom, it has been so lonely here, and now I can’t let you come any more—and I want her so!” She covered her face with her hands, and, although Tom was not a man to be amused by a woman’s tears, he smiled and winked solemnly at the frightened looking child, before he took them and held them in his own.

“Elizabeth Thornton,” he said, seriously, “I will not relinquish my claim on Carlotta, and if you want her, you must take me, too. It is time to stop this foolishness about ‘life work,’ and to remember that you are a woman, with all the weaknesses of the sex, which we condone, and with all of its sweetness, which we love.”

Carlotta looked at them wonderingly as Elizabeth put her arms around his neck and her head on his breast; but when he raised Elizabeth’s face and kissed her lips, she clapped her tiny hands and gave a crow of joy; for she knew that her friends had found happiness.

SONG

Love planted my rose in his garden fair—

My rose of heart’s delight—

And he laughed with joy when he saw it bear

A crown of blossoms bright.

But the harsh wind shattered the petals red

’Twixt darkness and the dew;

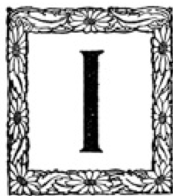
What blossoms were living, what blooms were dead,

Ah, Love nor cared nor knew!

Charlotte Becker.

THE DESPOT

By Johnson Morton



It was the boast of the summer dwellers in Roscoe that they had not spoiled the place. Mr. William Bangs was reiterating this to his wife's niece, who stood regarding his potato patch rather disdainfully through the glamour of a lorgnette.

"You see, Annie, my house is no better than my neighbors', my land not so good," he went on. "We keep no servants, in the accepted sense, only the girls whom you have seen—farmers' daughters from the mountain road—or, as your aunt Mary *will* put it, 'We look to the hills whence cometh our *help*.' And the outside work is done by Paterson Roscoe and myself, with occasional aid in haying time. The Smiths live in quite the same fashion, the Jacksons, with all their money, just as simply, and the Babbits and Thomases follow the lead. As a result"—he dug his hoe into a hill of potatoes and Miss Jenkins drew back a high-heeled slipper from the contact—"we have an ideal community. The villagers haven't lost their proper sense of democracy and equality. And we—the outsiders—have learned much from meeting these plain, simple folk on their own ground. So I don't really approve of this plan of yours. It's a tremendous innovation. We've got on quite well enough for nearly four years without entertainments, save those which are, so to speak, indigenous and natural. I don't at all like the idea of vaudeville, and I abhor a raffle!"

"But the church does need the money so much, Uncle William," the girl interrupted, "and it's a Unitarian church, so the raffle doesn't matter. Mr. Blythe says he sees no objection to it if it's conducted properly, and everyone is so interested. All the Pungville people will come in quite a procession, and Tom Mason is to drive the performers over on his coach."

"Oh, if Tom Mason's the reason"—uncle William's hoe rested helplessly—"there's nothing more to be said." Annie frowned behind a smile. "But we've been thanking Heaven every night of our lives that nineteen stiff miles lay between us and that barbarous Pungville."

He picked up a handful of warm, brown potatoes and threw them into the basket.

"My dear girl, you're a wonder! You've been here five days, and you'll tear down in just that time what it has taken us four years to build up."

"Then have I your blessing?"

The girl showed roguish under her insistence, but uncle William shook his head. "The best you'll get from me, young woman, is a most reluctant sufferance. You are hopeless. I don't see why you asked me at all, with the thing as good as settled. Go on; but don't come back to your old uncle with the demoralization of an entire village on your conscience."

"Nonsense!" laughed the other. "That won't trouble me one bit. Just now I'm much more concerned as to what you're to do for us at the fair—something that will be popular and yet entail no loss of dignity." She regarded him quizzically. "Ah! I have it! Fortunes told by the cards! A magician in gown and fez, behind a curtain. Slight extra charge, flattering and profitable alike." She clapped her hands and Mr. Bangs groaned.

"Don't make me face details yet."

He struck at another potato hill, and Annie turned to the road. "Wait a minute," he called after her; "this is serious. Have you spoken to Miss Pamela yet?"

"Miss Pamela Roscoe, you mean? No, of course not; why should I?"

"Why should you?" Uncle William leaned on his hoe and fixed her with stern eye. "Easier a brick without straw, a law without a legislature, than to foist an idea, a plan, a measure on this village save in one way. My dear Annie, haven't you found out in five days that Miss Pamela is chief of the clan? Sister, aunt, cousin, in varying degrees, to every Roscoe and Collamer in the township—and there are no others worthy the count. Don't you know that she lives in the biggest house, has money in the bank, owns railroad stock, preserves opinions and never goes out of doors? That last is enough to surround her with a wall of mystery, and her own personality does the rest. Her position is almost feudal; the others may be jealous, most of the women are, for she is as acquisitive as she is dogmatic, and somehow she has been able to deflect nearly all the family possessions to her own line of inheritance; but, though they scold behind her back, they bend the knee, every one of them.

"You really must see her and get her consent, or gradually you will have the whole village backing out of its agreements. You'd better go before she hears of the plan from anyone else. I dare say you're too late already. You'll need all your diplomacy, and I wouldn't attempt it till after dinner. Get some points from your aunt Mary. We'll talk it over by and by. Now, speaking of dinner, do you mind taking these potatoes to Cassandra as you go by the kitchen door? They're my very first. They're late enough, but I guess I'm a week ahead of Smith, anyway. Thank you." He turned to his work again.

Miss Pamela Roscoe lived in a large house freshly painted white, with dark green blinds, chronically closed. To the front door wandered a box-bordered gravel path, and up this avenue Annie Jenkins walked in the red radiance of the September afternoon. Like a good soldier, she had donned her brightest armor, and her muslin skirts flicked in a

friendly yet business-like way against the green. She raised the heavy brass knocker, its rattle shook the door and echoed through an empty hall.

Miss Pamela Roscoe heard the sound, and went softly, with no show of haste, to a window that commanded what is, in local parlance, known as a *handsome view* of the front porch, from which vantage she remarked her visitor through peeping shutters.

But she waited—it is not considered good form in Roscoe to admit a stranger too eagerly—for a decent interval to elapse. Thanks to aunt Mary's coaching, Annie did not knock again, but stood in pretty decision with her eyes straight before her. A leisurely footstep sounded within; the latch lifted with dignity, the door opened a crack at first, then more widely; and, outlined against a blacker background, stood the tall, stern, forbidding figure of Miss Pamela Roscoe herself!

She was a lady of fateful appearance, black-haired and pale, with a marvelous impression of preservation. Her manner was of the *nil admirari* sort, and her voice what Annie afterward described as *mortuary*. The girl murmured her name, a wan smile welcomed her.

"Come right in, Miss Jenkins," the gloomy voice began, "only I don't want you should step off that oilcloth. I ain't going to get that carpet all tracked up. You go right on into the front room"—a gaunt arm pushed her toward a darker space —"and I'll open up there in a minute."

Miss Pamela, at the window, threw back the shutter, rolled up a curtain and the western sunlight filled the place. Annie took the chair which her hostess dusted ostentatiously, a stout, wooden rocker with a tidy—Bo-Peep in outline stitch in red—flapping cozily at its back but Miss Roscoe still stood.

"It ain't hospitable, I know," her monotone apologized; "a first visit, too—but I'm going to ask you to excuse me a minute right at the set-off. When you knocked, I was buying some berries of the Collamer twins, and just a-measuring of them. I don't allow no one to measure in my house but myself, if they are my grand-nephews, and I most ought to go back to the summer kitchen to finish and pay 'em—if you don't mind. There's the album and last week's paper, and you just make yourself to home till I get back."

Left alone, in somewhat austere comfort, Miss Jenkins' eyes wandered over the room, from the strips of bunting at the windows—black alternating with red, white and blue, which a card in pale, cramped writing explained: "In Memory of Garfield, 1881"—to two elaborate fly-catchers which did duty as chandeliers from vantage points of the ceiling. The simpler, made of straw tied with bows of red worsted, paled before the glories of the other—a structure of silver cardboard in cubes, the smaller depending from the corners of the larger in diminishing effect, ribbon-bound, with a gleaming pearl bead in the center of each.

A pair of strange tables, laden with still stranger ornaments, filled the larger spaces of the floor and bore testimony to the prowess of some pioneer in the line of industrial adornment.

"Poor soul," thought the girl, "here is the decorative instinct untrammeled by imitation. Individuality inherent! Unkind fate, furnishing no models, has produced originality." She walked toward the larger table for closer scrutiny just as Miss Pamela re-entered the room. A faint accent of gratification colored the latter's voice.

"I see you looking at them stands," she said; "mosaic, I call 'em. I made every stitch of 'em myself. Soft pine they are; my brother Nathan gave me the wood, and I'd been saving the pieces of crockery for years. You cut places in the wood and stick 'em in close in patterns with colors that look pretty together—sometimes you have to use a hammer—and then you sandpaper the rough places—it's terrible on the hands—and put on a couple of coats o' shellac. I call 'em pretty handsome. Cousin Parthenia Roscoe was here the day I was finishing them, and I tell you she admired 'em. Those crackle ware pieces were from an old pitcher of her mother's that came to me—it got broken, and I worked 'em in at the corners. I don't set no great store by that alum cross. They're kind o' common, but it turned out so nice I let it stand there. How did I make it? Why you just take a cross of wood and wind it with yarn and let it hang overnight in a solution of alum and water, and in the morning it's all crystal. 'Tain't no work; but, land's sakes! there's enough to make up in those wax autumn leaves; I call that a likely spray of woodbine. It took me the bigger part of three mornings to get it done, and 'twas in the winter I made it, so I didn't have nothing to go by but my memory."

She pinched the stiff little garland into a more aggressive attitude, and turned, with a sort of caress, to a jar of colored pampas grass that flaunted itself in the corner. Annie's eyes followed the motion, and Miss Pamela answered the question in them by handing her the jar for a closer inspection.

There was pride in her voice as she spoke, though her tone was casual. "It's just one of my *what-not* vases, I call 'em. I invented it myself. 'Twas a blacking bottle, to begin with, but I covered it with putty, good and thick, and then I stuck all them things on it. Here's a peach-stone basket and a couple of Florida beans and some seashells that were brought me from down East. The sleeve buttons on the front were broken, but I think they stand up well, and that gold paint does set off the whole. It's been imitated, you'll find," she added, dismally, "but the idea's original with me."

She replaced the jar in its corner. Then, as a sudden realization of the duty of a hostess seized her, she seated herself decorously in a stiff-backed chair opposite her visitor, and, adjusting primly what is technically known as a "front breadth," gave herself unreservedly to polite inquiry.

"Is your health good?" she asked, with an air of expecting the worst.

"Oh, very good, indeed," said Annie, conscious that she brought disappointment on the wings of her voice.

"It has been a sickly season," remarked the elder lady.

“I am always well,” laughed Annie, but it was the ghost of a laugh.

“And is Mr. Bangs well, and your aunt?” The voice rose at the last word—expectantly. And Annie clutched at the fact that she had left aunt Mary lying down at home.

“My uncle? Yes. But my aunt has a headache. Otherwise she’d have come with me this afternoon.”

“She’d better keep quiet.” Miss Pamela shook her head. “A cousin of mine, over Rutland way—Andromeda Spear, you’ve heard of her, maybe—your aunt always puts me in mind of her—she used to have headaches like that, and she wouldn’t hear to reason about ’em. So she kept on her feet when she’d ought to be lyin’ down, and one day—’twas a fall day, like this, I remember—she had a seizure in the hen house, and she never got over it—though she lingered for years,” she added, by way of consideration.

“But, you see, Miss Roscoe, we have no hen house,” retorted Annie, with a sort of flippant desperation.

“Well, there’s plenty of places,” remarked the other, sententiously. “Bed’s not the only place to die in, and I’ve always believed in proper precautions. You give Miss Bangs my respects, and tell her that she can’t be too careful.”

Then followed a fusillade of questions—the length of her stay, her graduation from college in June, her likelihood of marriage, and her religious beliefs.

Dazed, depleted, the girl’s answers grew monosyllabic, in spite of an air of forced gayety which she strove hard to maintain. Somehow the inherent and masterful depression of her hostess was weighing her down. Outside the sun had settled in clouds, and a somber twilight stole in through the window. The voice opposite droned on, engrossing, dominating, hypnotic. Annie realized that unless she roused herself she would relapse into permanent silence, and so, in a lucky pause, as her eyes fell upon a strange object hanging above the mantelpiece, she grew aggressive for the moment, and boldly asked a question herself.

“Pardon my interrupting, Miss Roscoe, but do you mind telling me what is that mysterious and interesting—*thing?*”

Miss Pamela’s gaze followed the turn of Annie’s head. She rose grimly from her seat and went to the further corner of the room, whence she abstracted a yardstick and stood before the fire-board. Deftly she pushed off a cloth that enshrouded the object, and disclosed what had evidently been, at one time, a chromo of vast dimensions; its bright gilt frame remained intact, but the picture itself was entirely obliterated by successive coatings of her useful gold paint, and to the center was affixed half of a flower basket—the flaring kind—cut longitudinally. This basket, also gilded heavily, was filled with a varied profusion of artificial fruits.

Annie turned her chair. Miss Pamela cleared her throat and pointed with the yardstick.

“It’s not a *thing*, Miss Jenkins,” she began, with some severity, “but a sort of monument that I have made—I call it my ‘Memorial Fruit Piece.’” There was about Miss Roscoe something of the pride of the discoverer, and she warmed to her subject.

“You see, ours was a large family, and, from time to time, many of us were taken away—‘called home,’ you might say—and those that went left to those that remained a good many relics and keepsakes like. They came to mother first, and after mother’s death they came to me, and I had ’em round in bureau drawers and bandboxes and trunks, and they was in the way when I was cleaning house or making changes of arrangements, and I won’t say that such as was fabrics wasn’t attracting moths. But I couldn’t think of no way to remedy it. Till suddenly—let’s see, ’twas eleven weeks ago last Tuesday—the idea came to me, and I grouped ’em together, like you see ’em here—this tribute.”

Her yardstick touched the basket lovingly, as she went on: “That banana, on the extreme left, contains my grandfather’s gold-bowed spectacles, jest as he used to wear ’em. Gran’pa grew terrible deaf when he got to be an old man, and so he never heard a team coming up behind him one day when mother’d sent him down to the store for a loaf of bread. Miss Jenkins, them glasses was on his nose just as lifelike when they brought him in to us! My mother’s wedding ring is in that greengage plum next to the banana, and aunt Sophia Babcock’s is in that damson, a little below to the right.

“You see that peach? Pretty lifelike, I call it—well, there ain’t anything in it yet, but my great-uncle Bradly’s shirtstuds are in the Bartlett pear, just beyond, and that orange contains a Honiton lace collar that my mother wore the day she was married.

“And this Baldwin apple”—her voice grew intimate—“has in it some little relics of my own uncle Aaron Roscoe. He was a good man, and he felt the call early, and he journeyed to heathen lands to carry the glad tidings, and we never heard from him again—till quite recent, when these little relics was sent back.

“Do you remember my brother Willy? Gracious, no! What was I thinking of? Of course you don’t—your aunt Mary’d remember him, though. He was my youngest brother, and a great hand for all sorts of frolic and fun. Well, it’s more’n thirty years ago, but it seems just yesterday that he fell in the mill pond. Sister Coretta was with him, and she’d let him get out of her sight—which she hadn’t ought to—but, childlike, she’d got to playing with the shavings, and sticking ’em over her ears, and when she sensed things Willy wa’n’t nowhere to be found. They drawed off the water, and there he was, poor little thing, and they brought him home and laid him on the kitchen table, and then mother and I, we went through his pockets to see what there was, and there we found a bag of marbles, just as he’d had ’em—and he was a great hand for marbles. Well, mother she kept ’em in her bureau drawer for years, and whenever she’d open the bureau drawer it would make her feel bad, ’cause she’d think of Willy, and after mother’s death it made me feel bad to see ’em, ’cause I’d think of Willy and mother, too. Yet, somehow, I couldn’t think of no way to put ’em in here till suddenly it occurred to me in the night—’twas three weeks ago come Friday—and I got up then and there and I covered ’em each with purple silk and made ’em into that bunch of grapes on the extreme right.”

Miss Roscoe turned to her audience, her face rapt, as is the face of one who has gazed on a masterpiece. Annie recognized that now or never was her chance to state the errand that had brought her, to break through the strong reluctance that had held her at bay through the interview. She rose and held out her hand.

"It is—wonderful," she looked toward the memorial, "and I can't tell you how good it is of you to explain it all to me. I envy you the power you have of making—*wonderful* things." The adjective crowded out every other in her vocabulary. "But I really came to ask you to do something for me, Miss Roscoe," she smiled at the sphinxlike figure. "I've been getting up a sort of fair, and it's going to be a great success—everybody in the village has promised to help, and my New York friends from Pungville are to give a sort of entertainment. I thought, you know—that you'd like to help, too, so I came to see what you'd be willing to do. We mean to have a sort of raffle."

Miss Roscoe maintained her air of pathetic sternness.

"And wouldn't you like to give something that we could take shares in—something, perhaps, that you have made—one of your *what-not* jars, or, if you're *very* generous, why not the 'Memorial Fruit Piece'?"

She stopped, somewhat staggered by the daring of her own suggestion. Miss Pamela had replaced the yardstick in its corner, and Annie was conscious of a vague relief when it was out of the way. She rested her hand on the Bo-Peep chair and waited.

Miss Pamela folded her thin arms across her breast, and regarded her calmly.

"Miss Jenkins, I don't think there's going to be any fair," she remarked, succinctly.

The blood of youth boiled at the finality of it. "Oh, yes, there is, Miss Roscoe; I told you that I'd made all the arrangements."

"Well, *I've* been making some arrangements, too."

"And everybody's going to help—your cousin, Mrs. Collamer, and Dorothea Roscoe and Roscoe Collamer and Mrs. Collamer Roscoe and your cousin Paterson."

"Paterson, indeed!" Miss Roscoe's voice showed its first touch of warmth as she seized the conversation. "Miss Jenkins," she said, "you're a young woman, and a well-meaning one, and my feelings toward you are kindly. But a mistake has been made. There ain't going to be any fair!

"I know all about your plans, knew 'em from the minute you started talking 'em over with the minister and cousin Parthenia, down at the meeting house. After she left you, she came right over and told me."

"But she seemed very enthusiastic," began Annie, feebly.

"Yes, *seemed*," interrupted the older woman, "but she didn't dare! Cousin Parthenia never set herself up against me yet, and she's getting a little too well on in years to begin. Next day there was quite a meeting of our folks here. My back gate kept a-clicking till sundown. All but Paterson came, Miss Jenkins, and he's less than half a Roscoe, and no Collamer at all. His mother was one of them white-livered Lulls, from Pomfret. He's bound, anyway, to stand by you, because he's getting wages from your uncle. Well, I settled it all then and there, this fair business, I mean, but I told them to wait, for I some expected to see you!"

Annie's eyes opened wide. "I meant to come before; I'm afraid I am a little late." Her attitude was deprecatory; it might have moved a stone, but it produced no impression on her listener.

"I'm afraid you are," Miss Pamela assented, gloomily. "I'm an old woman, and there ain't much left to me, but I don't mean to let the authority that I've always had in my family be taken away by any outsider. If you'd come to me *first*, Miss Jenkins, things might have been arranged different; but that's over now, and I was always one to let bygones be bygones."

Annie had moved to the hall, while her hostess fumbled at the door. It opened and let in a whiff of cool air and sounds of crickets on the grass.

"Autumn is here," remarked Miss Roscoe, impersonally, addressing the world at large. Then she called to the girl between the box rows. Was there a touch of amusement in the mortuary voice?

"I presume you'll hear from the folks to-morrow that they've changed their minds. Do drop in again some time. I've enjoyed your visit, and don't forget to tell Miss Bangs to be careful of her headache!"

At home they were all in the dining room. Annie stood in the doorway, taking the pins out of her straw hat.

"Well?" called uncle William from the head of the table.

"Far from it," replied the girl. Her cheeks burned, as she shook her head, but there was a glint of laughter in her eyes. She smoothed out her veil, pinned it to the hat and tossed them both in the hall, as she sank into her chair.

"I'll have a lot to tell you after supper, but here are a few facts to occupy you till then:

"*First*, there isn't going to be any fair!

"*Second*, I believe I shall accept the Masons' invitation, after all, and spend next week in Pungville.

“*Third*, behold in me a woman who knows when she is *beaten!*

“*Last*, my afternoon’s experiences have made me as hungry as a bear. Uncle William, I am preparing to eat four of those big, baked potatoes in front of you, and, Aunt Mary, please let Cassandra bring in a large pitcher of cream!”

WALL STREET

By Robert Stewart

Sir Richard Steele, in describing the Spectator Club, remarks of the Templer that “most of his thoughts are fit for conversation, as few of them are derived from business.” Nevertheless, almost any man should be able to philosophize more or less pleasantly and instructively over his calling, and if statesmen, soldiers, lawyers and medical gentlemen write autobiographies and describe the various debates, campaigns, litigations and horrible operations they have been engaged in, why should not an old stockbroker chat about his business, and give a little “inside information,” perhaps, about that Street whose ways are supposed to be so tortuous?

Go into the Waldorf any afternoon you please, and see which has the more attentive audience, Mr. Justice Truax discussing cases, or Mr. Jakey Field tipping his friends on sugar. Watch the women at a tea and see how their eyes brighten when young Bull, of the Stock Exchange, comes in. Bull has a surer road to smiles and favor than all the flowers and compliments in New York—he has a straight tip from John Gates.

Business not fit for conversation! Ask Mr. Morgan if anybody fidgets when *he* talks? Has any clergyman as eager a congregation as the audience Mr. Clews preaches to from the platform in front of his quotation board every morning at eleven o’clock?

“Come, ye disconsolate,” then, and if I can’t tell you how to make money, I venture to assert I can interest you in the place where you lost it.

There is no place of business, indeed, so pictorial as Wall Street. Sunk down amid huge buildings which wall it in like precipices, with a graveyard yawning at its head and a river surging at its feet, its pavement teeming with an eager, nervous multitude, its street rattling with trucks laden with gold and silver bricks, its soil mined with treasure vaults and private wires, its skyline festooned with ticker tape, its historic sense vindicated by the heroic statue of Washington standing in majestic serenity on the portico of that most exquisite model of the Parthenon, and with the solemn sarcasm of the stately brown church, backed by its crumbling tombstones, lifting its slender spire like a prophetic warning finger in its pathway—this most impressive and pompous of thoroughfares is at once serious and lively, solid and vivacious. You say to yourself this must be a vast business which is so grandly domiciled; and you wonder if the men live up to the buildings.

The broker, in fact, who fills the eye of pictorial satire and the country press, is not an admirable object. His tall hat and shiny boots are in too obvious a foreground in sketches of race meetings, uptown cafés and flash clubs. He is represented as a maddened savage on ’Change, and a reckless debauchee at leisure, who analyzes the operations of finance in the language of a monte dealer describing a prize fight, and whose notion of a successful career is something between a gambler, a revolutionist and a buccaneer. He is supposed to vibrate in cheerful nonchalance between Delmonico’s and a beanery, according as he is in funds or hard up, and to exhibit a genial assurance that “a member of the New York Stock Exchange, sir,” will prove a pleasant addition to the most exclusive circles.

This happy-go-lucky gentleman, however, to use one of his own delightful metaphors, “cuts very little ice” in the region where he is believed to exert himself most effectively. He is really but the froth, riding lightly on the speculative current. Still, I have placed him, like Uriah, “in the forefront of the battle,” while we draw back a little, because he is the caricature of that stocking-broking man-about-town Wall Street has had the honor to create, and because in popular fancy he is seen standing, like Washington, before the doors of the Stock Exchange, with a gold pencil in one hand and a pad in the other, ready to pounce on the pocketbooks of parsons and schoolmistresses.

Parsons and schoolmistresses actually do come to Wall Street; all the world comes here, incorporates its idioms into its dialect and is infected with its spirit. It is a lounge for men of pleasure, a study for men of learning, an El Dorado for men of adventure, and a market for men of business. It has a habitat and a manner, a character and a vernacular. It bristles with incongruity and contradiction, yet it is as logical as a syllogism.

Superficially, everything is manipulation, chance, accident. Really, every fluctuation is regulated by laws of science, and, with adequate knowledge and just deduction, profit is not speculative but certain. It is this which differentiates it from all mere gambling. And it is this union of impulse and logic which makes it so human, so humorous, so dramatic and pathetic.

Perhaps its most curious incongruity is its combination of secrecy and frankness. The atmosphere about the Stock

Exchange fairly palpitates with suspicion and subterfuge. No man knows what another man is about, and every man bends his energy to find out. “Inside information” is the philosopher’s stone that turns every fraction into golden units. The leading firms take the greatest pains to conceal their dealings. Orders are given in cipher. Certificates are registered in the names of clerks. Large blocks of stock are bought, and sold, and “crossed,” for the mere purpose of misleading. A wink or a shrug is accepted as more significant than the most positive assertion. The disposition to “copper a point” is so general that the late Mr. Gould used to say he always told the truth, because nobody ever believed him.

The very penny chroniclers of the market acquire an infelicitous adroitness in the phraseology of deceit. And yet nowhere on earth is ignorance so carefully counseled and so almost ludicrously warned as in this place of trickery and innuendo.

What conceivable enterprise which expected to exist on public patronage would assume as the unofficial metaphor of dealings a pair of wild beasts bellowing and growling over the carcass of a lamb, and make this most helpless and stupid of animals the representation of the customer? To call a trader a lamb is as opprobrious an epithet as it was to call a Norman baron an Englishman.

In any other business the buyer is an honored and privileged patron; in Wall Street he is welcomed with the respect and pleasure that was exhibited to a bailiff serving a writ in Alsatia. Should he stroll guilelessly into the Exchange he proposes to benefit, he is set upon, mobbed, hustled, mussed and finally ejected from the door with a battered hat and torn coat collar. Every other broking office in the Street has a pictorial caricature hanging over its ticker of his hesitancy and timidity, his rash venture, his silly and short-lived hilarity, his speedy and inevitable ruin, and his final departure, with his face distorted by rage and grief, and his pockets turned inside out.

The air is thick with signs and evil portents: Stop-loss orders, breaks, raids, slumps, more margins, are in everybody’s mouth. The path to fortune is emphasized as slippery by every adjective of peril, and is hedged with maxims, over each of which is dangling, like a horrible example, the corpse of a ruined speculator.

A too subtle analyst might suggest that this presentation of opportunity and restraint, while apparently incongruous, is the most fascinating form of temptation. But subtlety, except in manipulating stock values, is not a Wall Street characteristic. The Stock Exchange is an arena where men fight hand to hand, head to head. Beneath the conventions of courtesy, each man’s fists are guarding his pockets and his eyes are on his neighbor. Such a vocation breeds courage, quickness, keenness, coolness. Weak men and fools are weeded out with surprising celerity and certainty.

Wall Street men are frank because they have learned it is wisest. The average commission broker secretly regards his clients with a feeling of benevolence delicately tinctured with contempt. Experience teaches him to use a favorite professional phrase, that there are times when “you can’t keep the public out of the market with a club,” and that when engaged in stock operations they usually display the judgment of a child picking sweets out of a box. His first care, naturally, is to protect himself, financially and otherwise, against the losses which ensue. Hence he surrounds their transactions with every legal and friendly restraint. But his existence depends on their success, or in replacing them. The broker, therefore, is quite as anxious for his clients to make money as they are themselves. More profit, more margin; more margin, more commissions and less risk. There you have it in a nutshell.

The stockbroker says to the public: “My dear sir, here is an open market. Nowhere else can you get such large and quick returns on so small an investment. For these opportunities I charge you the ridiculously small percentage of one-eighth of one per cent., and loan you, besides, ninety per cent. of your investment. Could any man with a proper regard for his wife and children do better by you? You own whatever security you buy, and get its dividend. Your margin is your equity in it. In property whose market value fluctuates so widely and rapidly, I naturally require you to keep your margin at the per cent. agreed upon. If, unfortunately, it becomes exhausted, I, as mortgagee, foreclose at the best price obtainable. I shall be pleased to execute all orders with which you may favor me on the above basis, in all securities dealt in on the New York Stock Exchange, reserving to myself, of course, the right to refuse to carry any security I do not care to loan my capital on. Some are risky, some safe, some inactive. All speculation implies risk.

“I beg you to remember my relation with you is only to execute your orders. You must use your own judgment. I should advise you, nevertheless, to keep in the active stocks. Opportunities for quick and profitable turns in them are more frequent, and the broader the market, the closer the trades, and the less the difficulty of disposal. Union Pacific, just now, looks good for a rise. They tell me, confidentially, that the Rockefellers are buying it, but I know nothing about it. It acts all right. Mr. Jones, this is my partner, Mr. Robinson. I’ve just been telling Mr. Jones, Robinson, that we hear the Rockefellers are buying U. P. There it is, three-quarters, on the board now——”

And the broker glances over the quotation board, grabs his hat, and flies to the “floor,” shaking his head and saying to himself: “I’ll give that fellow just six months to drop his wad.”

Well, is it his fault? He has been honest with you, frank with you. Be sure he will help you make money if he can.

“I did *my* best for him—damn fool!” is the mental summary inclosed along with many a closing-out statement.

To the visitor accustomed to regard Wall Street as a vast faro layout, its very face should be a striking object-lesson.

Emerging from the lofty and beautiful hallway of the Empire Building, those stupendous heights of stone and glass which confront him in solid squares are evidently not the creations of the baccarat table and the roulette wheel. The most dignified temples of chance are designed to shelter pleasure and frivolity. These huge homes of the corporation and the bank, with entrances as sternly embellished as palaces of justice, are oppressively significant of business.

As one crosses Broadway and descends to Broad Street, the impression deepens, stirs, until you realize you are standing in a place of strength and power, in the very heart of the nation’s financial life. The crowd of curb brokers yelling out quotations before the Stock Exchange seems merely a casual and ludicrous episode, and the Stock Exchange

itself but a factor in this tremendous neighborhood.

Here is a world force which expresses itself on land and sea, and in the heaven above; which has built itself an abode that is the wonder of man; which bids fleets go forth, transports armies, and commands in foreign senates; which restrains kings in their wrath; which feeds the peasant on the banks of the Gloire, and clothes the coolie toiling in the rice fields of Honan.

You stand there, I say, and recognize that you are in the presence of the creative energy of millions of men and machines building, hauling, planting, laboring, all over the world; and then you go into your broker's office and hear slim young gentlemen talk of "playing the market," and you don't wonder the broker is cynical and careful.

This serious, solid, fundamental character of Wall Street, performing amid its colossal setting, an important and essential office in the world's work, must be conscientiously painted in and emphasized in any portrait, however gay and frolicsome, which attempts to depict its spirit.

This sense of drama, indeed, this consciousness that tremendous things are happening while we amuse ourselves, is one of the causes which make Wall Street so fascinating. You can take it as seriously or as frivolously as you please. You can operate with all the statistics of "Poor's Manual" and "The Financial Chronicle" packed into your head, or you can trade with the gay abandon of M. D'Artagnan breakfasting under the walls of La Rochelle.

I have said all the world comes here, and the more I reflect upon it, as a man of twenty years' experience, the less I wonder. The wonder is that anybody stays away. It is so tempting, so amusing, so respectable, so reckless or cautious, as you choose.

In appearance, a broker's office is something between a club parlor and a bank, and it unconsciously represents its business. The room is spacious and richly carpeted. The great quotation board, with that jumping jack of a boy bobbing up and down on the platform before it, is of solid mahogany. The chairs are large and comfortable. From the great windows you can look out on the varied and beautiful panorama of the Hudson and the harbor, the water flashing in the sunlight and lively with tugs, schooners, steamers, yachts. On the table are all sorts of stock reports, newsfiles, financial statements.

The daily papers are in a rack, and over the mantel are bound volumes of the "Chronicle," and copies of "Poor's Manual." Here is a commodious desk with note paper, order pads and so forth for your use. By the quotation board the ticker is clicking busily, and next it Dow-Jones' news machine is clacking out printed copy that the newsboy will be howling "Extra" over an hour afterward. Cigars in the table drawer await your acceptance.

A knot of gentlemen are chatting about the ticker; some more are watching the board. An old man with a white beard is dozing in a corner with a "Reading Annual Report" on his knee. If you are a quick and accurate judge of values, here is a means of livelihood under the most agreeable, gentlemanly and easy auspices. You are making your fortune seated comfortably among your friends, so to speak, smoking and chatting pleasantly.

Every minute something happens, and every other event is a financial opportunity. A boy rushes in with a news slip that Russia is to coerce China—wheat rises. Chicago unloads stocks to buy grain—shares decline a point all round. A money broker in to offer a million dollars, and he *knows* the City Bank people are buying Amalgamated Copper. There is a sudden chorus of greetings and smiles; the popular man of the office has arrived unexpectedly from London. The telephone rings; the board member sends word the market looks like a buy.

"Mr. Morgan has started for the Steel meeting," reads the manager, from the news machine. "The div-i-dend on Steel"—whirr—whirr—clack, clack, clack—"one per cent." … "regular."

"Gee whiz! Look at Steel," calls the tape trader. "Three-quarters, one-half, one-quarter, one-eighth, one! See 'em come. *Three thousand* at a clip. Sell 'em! Sell me two hundred, Robinson, quick!"

A clubman drops in with a funny story. Somebody offers to match you for lunch. A friend invites you, over the telephone, to dine with him. You conclude to take your profit in Wabash Preferred on the rally. It is three o'clock and "closing" before you know it, and time to run over to Fred Eberlin's and have Frank mix you a cocktail.

But aside from a profitable acquaintance with values, I know of no place equal to a stockbroking office for the acquirement of that general and intimate knowledge of men and of the town, which, organized and classified, constitutes the science of life. Here congregate men of every conceivable calling and character, all meeting on the equal and easy terms of a reputable pursuit, and all more or less under the influence of the natural and perfectly selfish ambition of money making.

One has only to observe them to be instructed. They are well groomed. They are rosy and plump. Any one of them evidently could sit down at the desk and write you a check any minute. Whatever they may be elsewhere, whether their private lives are distinguished and benevolent or riotous and shameless, whether their margins are the fruit of admirable diligence or the purloined inheritance of the widow and the orphan, while they are here these men are capitalists. They have the feelings, the ideals, the desires and fears of the rich.

Here is a railway president amusing himself taking a flier in sugar, while he waits for his steamer. He is chatting with a tobacco manufacturer who sold out to the Trust. On that sofa by the window Jerry Jackson, the bookmaker, is whispering a point to a man of pleasure from the Knickerbocker Club. There is a clergyman from Chelsea Seminary talking to a doctor smelling of iodoform. The two tall gentlemen laughing with the manager are lawyers who will be scowling fiercely at each other presently before Recorder Goff.

The man with his hand in a bag is a mine owner from Colorado, showing a copper specimen to a dry-goods merchant on his way to the Custom House. The man with his nose glued to the ticker globe is a professional operator who trades

from the tape. And that hungry-looking person who has just rushed in is a bankrupt tipster, making a precarious and pitiful existence, like a woman of the town, out of the means of his ruin.

Graduates of Oxford and alumni of Harvard rub elbows with City Hall politicians, and farmers from Kansas and Pennsylvania exchange market opinions with men of science.

It is only for short intervals that the customers in broking offices can be busy. At other times they must lounge, and smoke; and chat, and read, and watch the board. A good-sized concern may easily have two hundred running accounts. Can you imagine a livelier, more entertaining place of gossip? You can have stocks, horses, commerce, law, medicine, small talk, art, science, the theater and religion in fifteen minute *causeries*, every day if you like. You have the *milieu* of every club in New York and the Waldorf café massed in one elegant composition in more than one broker's parlor.

I once knew a clever fellow who dined out every evening. He always had the latest scandal, the newest story, the straightest tip and the last word from Washington. He knew all about stocks, grain, races, theaters, society, clubs, athletics. He could advise you about ocean steamers, table d'hôte places, country hotels, Berlin pensions, young ladies' schools, where to buy Ayrshire bacon and who had a yacht to sell. And he acquired this vast and useful assortment of knowledge simply by spending his afternoons, from noon to three, at different Wall Street offices.

The brokers cordially welcome such a visitor. Now and again they carry a hundred shares of stock for him. He is a kind of private news agency. The dull office gets ready to laugh when *he* comes in; and his tips, whispered merely out of friendship, of course, to the customers, add many a credit entry to Commission Account. It may be said, without any hysterical exaggeration, that he represents the worst of Wall Street; and that the worst of Wall Street is very bad. But among his virtues are a merry mind and an abiding faith that a "board member" is the most distinguished of associates.

The broker, indeed, if he is not always that most elevated of human spectacles, a Christian gentleman, is a highly pictorial and interesting person. He is the creature of his business, and is half host and half business man. His habitual chatty intercourse with all kinds of men of means gives him the easy nonchalance of the town, and the nervous strain he is constantly under to protect himself and his clients against those impulses of greed and fear so fostered by Wall Street, creates that keen, rapid concentration for which he is so remarkable.

Where everybody is liable to lose his wits any instant, it is necessary those in authority should be cool. This constant state of high tension, these perpetual changes from extreme concentration to frivolity, produce, in the end, the Wall Street manners, and the desire for exciting, highly colored amusements.

Every day in Wall Street is a completed day. It is a cash business. Your broker likes to talk about his trades over his after-dinner cigar, and to tell you, in the horsy, professional jargon of the Street, how he "pulled a thousand out of 'Paul,' and went home long of 'little Atch.'"

He is, like all nervous people, a social animal. He is gregarious by instinct and interest. Accustomed all day long to his exciting pursuit and his club-parlor office, he seeks society for amusement and profit. He wishes to chat with his friends and to increase his following. He has no wares to display. He has no monetary advantage to offer over any of the other seven or eight hundred commission men in the Exchange. All members must charge one-eighth of one per cent, per hundred shares, each way. Interest charges can't be very much reduced.

Every broker in Wall Street has inside information of some kind. His appeal, therefore, for commissions must rest on acquaintance and personality. He must know how to stimulate cupidity and create confidence. He must impress himself on as many people as possible as successful, honest, jolly, shrewd, well informed; a capital fellow and a first-rate business man. It is only fair to him to remark that whatever his faults, he almost invariably is a capital fellow and a first-rate business man. But is it extraordinary that this individual should become a man's man, a man about town?

Whether he is the blatant, vulgar wretch of the caricaturist, or the cultivated, polished person who justifies Wall Street's boast of being the aristocracy of trade, depends, of course, not on his being a broker, but on his being a gentleman.

His completed portrait, however, would be a too ambitious performance for the limits of my sketch, and I have made this little office study of him, as he leans against his ticker pinching the tape, with bits of board-room paper falling off his hat and a cigar between his teeth, simply to show the influence of his vocation on himself and on his companions.

The flavor of speculation permeates Wall Street like soot, and settles on the professional and the public alike. It is a sporty business. It appeals to the idle, the reckless, the prodigal and the *déclassé*. In the quickness and uncertainty of its evolutions, it is unfortunately so analogous to racing and gaming that their terms are interchangeable, and to the thoughtless the stock market is the ranking evil in that unholy trinity.

"Stocks, papers and ponies," is the ringside slang for Wall Street, cards and horses. The sporting man finds it a no less hazardous, but an equally congenial and more respectable, means of money making, and he drifts into a broker's office as naturally as the broker relaxes his nerves—*similia similibus curantur*—spending half an hour over a roulette wheel in his client's "place."

The flash public very naturally choose the same pleasant road to fortune. To their minds, whether they place their money on "Reading Common" or on "Waterboy," the intention, the risk and the result are the same. There are "fake races" and "fake pools."

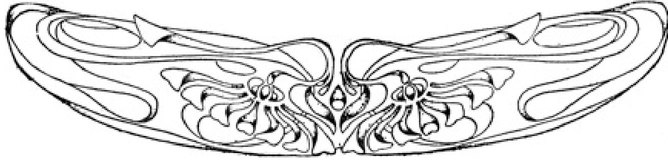
"The percentage will ruin you in the end," they warn you, "no matter what you play." And the business man, who should know better, too often enters the share market as if he were sitting in an open poker party, among sharpers and pickpockets, and recklessly surrenders himself to every temptation of this devil-may-care atmosphere, while he "plays the game."

It is this combination of the gambler, the sporting man, the fast broker, the frivolous and ignorant trader and the speculative public, all possessed with the mad passions of gain and fear, and all struggling more or less grimly in the maelstrom which boils about the Stock Exchange, that constitutes the Wall Street spirit.

It is a derisive goblin or a piteous, ineffective human soul, according as you are a laughing or a weeping philosopher. It expresses everything in the Street that is pictorial and dramatic; but Wall Street is first and last a realm of business. It is a strong man's country.

The men who built the buildings and work in them are giants. When they war, they hurl millions at each other, as the Titans did mountains. When they combine, civilization strides.

The Stock Exchange is their battleground. It is a dangerous place for ladies and civilians. It is best to be serious and cautious, and to keep one's eyes open, when one travels that way.



THE WIND'S WORD

O Wind of the wild sweet morning!

You have entered the heart in me!

And I'm fain to sing for life and spring

And all young things that be!

O whispering wind of the shadow!

A voice from the day that is past,

You make me fain for the home again

And quiet love at last.

Arthur Ketchum.

THE BOY MAN

By the Baroness Von Hutten

Among other things, Lady Harden knew when to be silent, and now, having made her speech, she sat watching Cleeve, as, aghast, he dropped his rod until its flexible tip lay on the darkening water, and stared off toward the house.

She had said it, and its effect on him was much what she had expected it to be.

He was so young that his strength, she knew, was largely potential; only she, as far as she knew, had ever observed its potentiality; to others he was a handsome, merry, young animal, "keen on girls," as he himself called it, and as innocent of any comprehension of the deeper meanings of life as a pleasant poodle pup.

She, being of those who have eyes to see, had, during the three days she had known him, watched him closely, with the result that he interested her.

And now she had said to him this thing that so utterly disconcerted him.

Partly out of kindness she had said it, and partly because it was the quickest way to fix his genial but roving attention where she wished it to be—on herself.

He was so young that her five years of seniority, and the existence of her eleven-year-old son, had, to his mind, separated her from him by something like a generation. He had found her a ripper as to looks, awfully jolly to talk to

and no end of a musician.

But he had never thought of her as belonging to his own class in years, and she knew this.

And as she watched him first shrink and then straighten himself under the blow she had given him, she knew that her first move was a success.

For over a minute he did not speak. Then he looked up.

“How in the devil did you find that out?” he asked, abruptly.

“I saw it. Do you mind my warning you?”

“Good gracious, no. It’s—most awfully kind of you. I—I really never thought of such a thing. You see, she was always a great pal of Dudley’s—my eldest brother’s.”

Lady Harden laughed.

“So she seemed too old for—that sort of thing? I see. In fact, I *saw* from the first, and that is why I ventured—— We have drifted nearly to the willows, by the way.”

He laid his neglected rod in the bottom of the boat, and rowed in silence until his companion resumed, lighting a cigarette, and speaking with easy deliberation between puffs: “She is thirty-four, and—that is not old, nowadays. The Duke of Cornwall is crazy to marry her, by the way.”

“Cornwall!”

“Cornwall. And—there are others. My dear Teddy—may I, a contemporary of Miss—Methuselah—call you Teddy? Are you really so *naïf* as not to have known?”

It was almost dark, but she could still see the flush that burnt his face at the question.

“I hadn’t the slightest idea,” he protested, indignantly, jerking the boat into the boathouse.

“But why have you been making love to her so—outrageously?”

She rose and stood balancing herself gracefully while she lit a fresh cigarette. Her figure was remarkably good.

“Making love to her? I? Nonsense!” he returned, rudely. “She’s the best dancer in the house, and the best sort, all round—those Warringham girls are frights, and the little Parham thing is—poisonous.”

“But—at breakfast, who fetched her eggs and bacon? Who made her tea? Who——”

She held out her hand as she spoke, and leaned on him as she got out of the boat.

“Who got *your* eggs and bacon, then?” he retorted.

It was the first sounding of the Personal tone, and behind the cigarette her lips quivered for a fraction of a second.

Then, looking up at him: “Colonel Durrant—a contemporary of my own, as is right and proper.”

“A contemporary—why, the man’s old enough to be your father!”

“No.” They had left the dusky darkness of the trees, and struck off across the lawn. “He could hardly be my father, as he’s forty-five and I—thirty!”

Then silence fell, and she knew that he was somewhat tumultuously readjusting his thoughts. If Mrs. Fraser, who was thirty-four, was in love with him, then this woman with the sleepy, farseeing eyes, who was only thirty—what an ass he had been! Just because he had known Bess Fraser ever since he was a kid, and because Lady Harden was a great swell, and wore diamond crowns and things, and had a son at Harrow——

And Lady Harden, apparently dreamily enjoying the exquisite evening, read his thoughts with the greatest ease, and smiled to herself—the vague smile that consisted more of a slight, dimpled lift of her upper lip than of a widening of her mouth.

That evening, by some caprice, she wore no diamonds, and the simplest of her rather sumptuous gowns.

Colonel Durrant, who had fallen deeply in love with her ten years before, and never fallen out, whispered to her that she looked twenty.

And as she smiled in answer, her eyes met Teddy Cleeve’s.

Mrs. Fraser, quite unconsciously, gave the great Lady Harden all the information she wanted.

And Lady Harden—her greatness, in several ways, was an undoubted fact, and the proof of this is that only two people in the world suspected it—was insatiable in the matter of information.

Like a boa constrictor, her tremendous curiosity would sleep for months, and then, on awakening, it hungered with a most mighty and most devastating hunger.

And her concentrative force was such that while one person interested her, she lived in a small world, half of which was in blackest shadow, half in brightest light, and in the shadow she stood, watching the only other person who, for the time being, existed.

Bess Fraser, after dinner, told her, quite without knowing it, the whole story of her own rather absurd love for the boy.

She had once been engaged to Dudley Cleeves; she had known Teddy as a little fellow in long sailor trousers and white blouses; he had had the *dearest* curls—had Lady Harden noticed that the close-cropped hair turned up at the ends even now?

He had been an obstinate child, always good-tempered but always bent on his own way. He was his mother's pet, and was by her always plentifully supplied with money, so that the world was for him a smiling place.

He had insisted on going into the navy—or, rather, he had not insisted; he had simply taken for granted that he was to go, and he had gone.

He had always been in love, but never with one girl for long. "Of course, he's a perfect child," Mrs. Fraser added, with elaborate carelessness.

She herself had been a widow for five years. She was a magnificently beautiful woman, much handsomer than Lady Harden, but she did not know her own points, and wore the wrong colors.

Lady Harden, watching her while she talked, knew how ashamed she was of her love for Teddy Cleeve, and, constitutionally kind and comforting, the younger woman tried to put her at her ease by chiming in with her tone of detached, middle-aged friendliness toward the beautiful youth.

"He is a *dear* boy," she agreed; "I do like to see him dance! He's so big and strong. Billy, my boy, is going to be big, too, and I only hope he'll turn out like this Teddy!"

And Teddy, attracted, while rather frightened, by the idea of Mrs. Fraser's caring for him, made love to her spasmodically, just to convince himself, and then, convinced by something in her voice, fled to Lady Harden for protection, and was scolded by her.

"You are a wretch," she said, looking up at him. She was a small woman, and in this day of giantesses this has its charm.

"A wretch?"

"Yes. You are a flirt."

Of course, he was delighted by this accusation, and smiled down, his teeth gleaming under his young, yellow mustache.

"I am a saint," he declared, with conviction. "A young, innocent—anchorite."

"Young—yes. You are *very* young, Mr. Cleeve."

"You called me Teddy this afternoon."

"Then I was a very abandoned person."

"Please be abandoned again. By the way, the colonel expiated many times at dinner, didn't he?"

She stared. "How?"

"By sitting where he did. Not even opposite side of the table! My luck, even, was better."

"Your luck? How?"

"Because—I could at least *see* you!"

Lady Harden was an adept in the gentle art of snubbing.

"My dear child," she said, very gently, pulling off her gloves, "*don't* be absurd. I can't bear being made love to by boys!"

"I haven't the slightest intention——" he began, fiercely, but she had turned, and, opening her violin case, took out what she always called her fiddle.

She was not a musical artist—so few people are—but she had worked hard, and knew the things she played.

If there was no Heaven-shaking inspiration about her, there was no flatting, no slipping from note to note. She played simple, little-known things, plaintive for the most part, and played them well.

She also looked her best with fiddle in her arms, a rapt, far-off expression in her half-closed eyes.

Teddy Cleeve, watching her, hated her for the moment.

And, while he had, in a youthful way, loved several women, this was the first one he had hated.

He was, however, too young to see the signification of this fact, and as soon as she had ceased playing, escaped to the smoking room with a major of hussars, who declared that fiddling was the one thing he couldn't stand.

"Lovely creature, Lady Harden," the unmusical major began, as he lit his cigar.

"Too thin," returned Teddy, the crafty.

The major stared. "Are you drunk?" he asked, severely. "Her figger's the best in England! And amusin'. Tells the best stories of any woman I know. Only thing I don't like about her is that infernal fiddlin'."

But the fiddling continued, and Teddy, who loved it, felt his hatred melt. After a bit he went back to the drawing room, only to see the violin being returned to its case. Lady Harden smiled absently at him, and soon afterward was settled at a bridge table, opposite Colonel Durrant.

The next morning Lady Harden went for a ride with a man who had just arrived—a fellow named Broughton. Cleeve watched them go. Then, finding Bess Fraser at his elbow, he asked her to play "fives" with him.

Bess had become non-interesting since Lady Harden's revelation. Poor old Bess—he wondered whether she really—— And to think of Cornwall's wanting to marry her! She really was a splendid creature. Much better looking than Lady Harden. Lady Harden was too pale by daylight.

"I say, Bess, what is Lady Harden's first name?"

"Dagny. Her mother's mother was a Norwegian, you know."

"Dagny," repeated Cleeve, slowly. "I never heard the name before. I like it; it suits her, somehow."

Alas for poor Mrs. Fraser, she was not clever.

Pausing in the game, she looked up.

"Mind you don't fall in love with her, Teddy," she said, sharply.

"What rot!" he answered, smashing the ball into a pocket. "Why should I fall in love with her?"

"Well, a good many men do. And she's frightfully attractive, and you're so—young."

He frowned. "I'm twenty-five, and—a fellow sees a lot by that time—if he's ever going to see anything. Play."

When Lady Harden came in from her ride, she found Teddy waiting for her.

"I've been warned against you," he said, abruptly, his blue eyes dancing.

"Against me?"

"Yes. Against falling in love with you."

The personal note was strong now. Lady Harden sank into a chair with a laugh.

"How perfect! Who warned you? *Dear* old Lady Carey? Did you tell her a man may not fall in love with his great-aunt?"

"I'm even not sure that yesterday I was not in love with some one who is five years older than you."

Her charming face, flushed with exercise, grew suddenly serious. "Oh! but that was—different."

"I don't see why."

"Why, because she is married."

Cleeve burst out laughing. "I may be an infant," he said, "but I'm not such an infant as to think that 'married or not married' has anything to do with the question."

She laughed, too. "You are a charming infant, at all events. Perhaps if you were a little older——"

"Well?"

"I might allow you to—do what you were warned against."

"Allow me?"

She rose, and went slowly to the foot of the stairs. Then she gathered up her habit and turned.

"Yes, allow you to."

"You grant a great deal by that remark. How about the old 'I had no idea of such a thing?'" he retorted.

She looked at him meditatively. "You know more than I had thought. How old are you?"

“Nearly twenty-six,” he answered, stretching a point. “Why?”

“Because my boy is only eleven. I am so curious as to how he will turn out. He is blond, too. Well, *au ’voir*. I must go and dress.”

If anyone had asked Dagny Harden, at that period, just what she wanted of young Cleeve, she would not have known what to answer.

She was a great flirt, but, at the same time, she was a very kind woman, and never willfully gave pain to anyone.

A careful study of the science of flirting and its masters and mistresses would probably prove that the greatest—in the sense of artistic skill—flirts are those people who have excitable brains and little imagination.

Dagny Harden had been fond of him in a mild, domestic, sincere way that satisfied both him and herself, and that had never faltered.

She had, however, a really remarkable dramatic talent, and this needing outlet, she interested herself with a series of gracefully conducted, scandal-avoiding flirtations, in which she appeared to each man as a very good woman, found by him personally to be more charming than she intended.

These men, some of them, suffered intensely during their term, but they had no bitterness for her.

And she, liking them all—for she was discriminating, and never let herself in for an affair with a dull man—had really no appreciation of their suffering.

When she had turned a victim’s mind and heart wrong side out; when she had watched the wheels go round; when all had been said that could be said without her nice scales of judgment being weighed down on the side of either too great severity or too great indulgence, it was good-by.

She was exquisitely ruthless, brutally enchanting, admirably cruel.

And she never talked of her victims to each other or to other women. She was, in a way, great.

“I wish,” said Teddy Cleeve, folding his arms as he sat on the low stone wall, and looking at her, “that I was clever.”

“Aren’t you clever?”

“No.”

“And if you were?”

“If I were, I’d know what you are thinking about.”

This, too, is a milestone on the Dover Road.

“What I am thinking about? Well, at that moment I was thinking about you.”

“Honor bright?”

“Honor bright. I was wondering what you will be like in fifteen years.”

“Why fifteen?”

She smiled, and prodded with her stick at a bit of moss in a crack in the wall. Somewhere below them there was a view, but it was far away.

“Well, because if you were forty you would be just my age.”

“You are thirty.”

“*Voilà!* That’s exactly what I said. A woman of thirty is as old as a man of forty. As it is, you are a child, and I a middle-aged person.”

Cleeve watched her for a moment. Then he said, slowly: “I’d give up those intervening years to be forty today.”

“Then you’d be an awful idiot!”

“I’d not be an idiot at all. You treat me like a child.”

“You are one—to me.”

“I’m not a child.”

“Very well—you are old. You are a padded veteran of sixty—like Mr. Blake. Do you like that better?”

He was silent, and after a pause they started slowly down the hill.

Two days passed since she had told him that Mrs. Fraser was in love with him. They had been much together, but never

alone until now, and she knew that he was furious with himself for letting the minutes slip unmarked by. Suddenly he burst out: “Will you wear that gray frock you wore the first night, to-night? And the low diamond thing in your hair?”

“Why?”

“Because—I want to see you again as I saw you then. I—I have lost my bearings. I can’t remember how you looked, and I—want——”

“I looked like a well-preserved, middle-aged lady. Please don’t begin to think me young, Teddy.”

Under her broad hat brim her eyes gleamed maliciously.

“You *are* young! I was an idiotic——”

She raised her head.

“Oh, don’t! Don’t fall in love with me; it would bore us both to death; be my nice adopted son.”

“Dear Lady Harden,” he returned, flushing, “I assure you that I have not the slightest idea of falling in love with you.”

“Thank Heaven! I adore boys, but a boy in love is really *too* appalling.”

He caught her hand and looked down at her, something suddenly dominating in his eyes.

“That is nonsense,” he said, shortly. “I am young, but I am not a child, and if I fell in love with you——”

“Well?”

“It would not be as a child loves. That is all.”

He released her hand, and they walked on in silence.

The extraordinary delight that most charming women take in playing with fire had ever been Dagny Harden’s, for the reason that she had never, in all her experiences, been in the slightest danger of burning her delicate fingers. Purely cerebral flirt that she was, her unawakened heart dozed placidly in the shadow of her husband’s strong affection for her.

Once or twice when the suffering she inflicted was plainly written on the face of her victim, her mind shrank fastidiously away from closer examination of pain she had caused, and the disappearance of the man was a relief to her.

As she descended the stairs that evening, in the gray frock and the diamond circlet, she smiled the little smile that meant pleased anticipation.

Teddy was a dear boy, and he had grown older in the last day or two. After dinner she would play on her fiddle and—watch the dear boy. Then there would be a rather picturesque good-by, for he was leaving at dawn, and—that would be all.

Fate, grinning in his monk’s sleeve, had settled things otherwise.

There was no music, and at half-past ten Lady Harden found herself in a little boat on the lake, one of several parties, alone with Teddy Cleeve. In the shadow of some willows he pulled in his oars.

His face was very white, his mouth fixed.

“Why have you done this?” he asked, abruptly.

She hesitated, and then, the obvious banality refusing to be uttered, answered, slowly: “It isn’t really done, Teddy, you only think it is.”

“That is—a damned lie.”

The woman never lived who did not enjoy being sworn at by the right man, in the right way.

“Teddy!”

“Oh, yes, ‘Teddy’! It *is* a lie. Why tell it?”

“I mean that—if it hadn’t been me it would have been—some one else. Your time had come,” she returned, nervously.

From across the lake came singing—some “coon song” anglicized into quaint incomprehensibility. Cleeve folded his arms.

“Don’t—look like that, Teddy.”

“I look as I feel. I am not—you.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that you looked at me at dinner as if——”

“Hush! Don’t say horrid things.”

“You looked at me as though you loved me. And if truth is better than lying, it was worse to look like that—without feeling it, than it would have been to really feel it.”

“You are talking nonsense. I am very nearsighted, and——”

He laughed harshly. “Can’t you play the game even for five minutes? I understood that it amused you to make a fool of me, but it didn’t end with that. You have made me really love you. Really love you, do you understand?”

As he spoke, they heard peals of distant laughter, and saw six or seven of the people who had been boating scampering across the moonlit lawn toward the nearest park gates.

“They must be going over to the Westerleighs’—we must go, too,” said Lady Harden. “Will you row in?”

Cleeve did not answer; he did not appear to have heard her remark.

After a pause he said, slowly: “You have made me really love you. I don’t know why you did it, for I surely had not hurt you in any way. However, you did it, and you must have had some reason. You found me a boy; you have made me a man. Well—you must love me, too.”

The boat had begun to drift, and was alone on the burnished water.

Lady Harden clasped her hands nervously.

“I must love you! What *rot!* Come, row to the landing, please. I am going back to the house, and you must go on to the Westerleighs’.”

“Dagny—I say, you must love me, too.”

“You are crazy.”

“I am not.”

“Well, I do not love you, and I never shall. Now let us end this melodrama.”

Cleeve took up the oars and rowed rapidly to the landing place. Then, as she stepped onto the platform, he took her into his arms.

“You *must*,” he said, looking down at her. “It’s all your own fault. You did it willfully. Now you must love me.”

His dogged persistency puzzled her and routed all her usual array of graceful phrases.

“Am I being invited to—elope with you?” she asked, laughing a little shrilly.

He flushed. “No. I—love you. But—you must feel something of this that is hurting me. Hurting? Why, it’s *hell*.”

“Hell! I am sorry—indeed I am——”

“Oh, *that* does no good. Words can’t help. You have got to suffer, too,” he returned, still holding her round the shoulders.

It was, in spite of the thrill of the unusual that she distinctly felt, absurd. It ought to be laughed at. So she laughed.

“How can you make me suffer, you baby?” she asked.

“Well, I can. Woman have their weapons, and men have theirs. You’ve made a man of me. I know a lot of things I didn’t know last week. Among others, I know that you couldn’t have been as you have been unless I had attracted you pretty strongly. You are”—he went on, with the green coolness that sat so oddly on his tense young face—“pretty near to loving me at this moment.”

“That is not true.”

“Oh, yes, it is, Lady Harden. It’s because I am young, and big, and—good looking. These things count for you as well as for us. And you are thirty. I read a book the other day about a woman of thirty. Thirty is young enough, but thirty-five isn’t, and—thirty-five is coming.”

Her eyes closed for an instant. “You are brutal.”

“Yes, I am very brutal. You were brutal, too. You see, I remembered that novel while I was dressing for dinner, and it taught me a lot. You and *it* have made me rather wise between you. Well, I love you,” he went on, suddenly fierce, “and you must love me. *Dagny!*”

Bending, he kissed her.

She herself had killed his boyish shyness, his youthful hesitation, all the boy’s natural fear of repulsion.

He was the man, she the woman. He dominated, she submitted; he was strong, she was weak; he was big, she was small.

“Oh, why——” she stammered, as he released her.

“Because—it is the only way. You could always have beaten me at talking——”

“You had no right to kiss me.”

“I think I had. If a woman has a right to torment a man as you tormented me, he surely has a right to take whatever means he can of—getting even. Women are so brutal——”

He had found, she felt, the solution to the Eternal riddle.

Her heart was beating furiously, but her voice, as she went on, was cool enough.

“Look here, Teddy, I will tell you the truth about all this. Will you believe me?”

After a second’s hesitation he answered, curtly: “Yes.”

“Well—you are right. I mean your—method is right. It never occurred to me before that—well, that turn about is fair play. Women are brutes—particularly, perhaps, the good ones who flirt.”

Cleeve laughed. “‘The good ones who flirt.’ Go on!”

“And I suppose you were, in a way, entitled to use against me the only weapons you had. You see, I am quite frank. Only—you used them too soon. I don’t love you. Probably, if we had been together a week longer, I should have, but—I do *not* love you at this minute.”

“Wait till I’m gone,” he observed, with his horrible young wisdom.

She frowned. “That has nothing to do with it. You leave here to-morrow morning, and on Friday you sail. And I do not love you. I am sorry for having hurt you. Believe this.”

“I don’t believe it. I’m not sorry, and I don’t believe you are. Listen—the others are coming. Run back to the house, and I’ll go and meet them. And first—let me kiss you again.”

The voices, still afar seemed discordant in the white stillness.

Cleeve opened his arms. “Come. Then I shall believe you.” Lady Harden took a step forward, and held her face bravely to his.

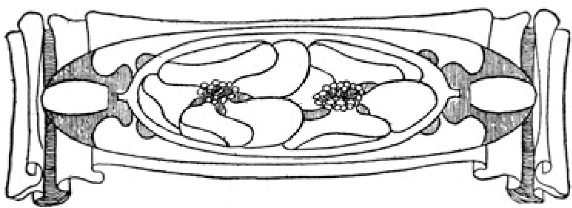
Then, just as he bent his head, she turned and hid her face on his arm. “I cannot,” she whispered.

The Boy-Man’s lips were set hard, his brows drawn down.

“Ah, Dagny, dearest,” he whispered, “and I must go to-morrow.”

She looked up. “You have won; I have lost; thank God you go to-morrow!” she answered.

A moment later she was speeding through the shadows toward the house, and Cleeve, lighting a cigarette, lounged down to the drive toward the laughing groups of returning frolickers.



A PRESENT-DAY CREED

What matters down here in the darkness?

’Tis only the rat that squeals,

Crushed down under the iron hoof.

’Tis only the fool that feels.

’Tis only the child that weeps and sorrows

For the death of a love or a rose;

While grim in its grinding, soulless mask,

Iron, the iron world goes.

God is an artist, mind is the all,

Only the art survives.

Just for a curve, a tint, a fancy,

Millions on millions of lives!

If this be your creed, O late-world poet,

Pass, with your puerile pose;

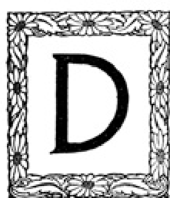
For I am the fool, the child that suffers,

That weeps and sleeps with the rose.

W. Wilfred Campbell.

BETWEEN THE LINES

By M. H. Vorse



Dramatis personæ—**Miss Paysley**, twenty-one, small, with a dignified carriage, when she remembers it, otherwise she is as impulsive as a little girl. She is pale, blond, blushes easily and has a way of looking at one with a straight, honest, gaze.

Mr. Jarvis, thirty, tall, well built. Has an easy-going, tolerant manner that is sometimes almost indifferent.

Scene—A lamplit piazza. The subdued light throws curious shadows on the thick growth of vines which screen the place from the street. Here and there where the vines are broken one may look out into the velvety blackness of the night. The piazza is furnished in the usual way. Rugs, wicker chairs, wicker tables. On the table a carafe with liquor and glasses. Litter of books, smoking things, etc.

Enter **Miss Paysley** and **Mr. Jarvis**.

Miss Paysley (*pulling aside the vines*)—What a sense of space darkness gives one! I feel as if I were looking into eternity!

Mr. Jarvis (*aside*)—-That sounds like Millicent. (*Aloud.*) Aren't you going to keep your promise?

Miss Paysley—Don't you feel the greatness of space around you in a night like this?

Mr. Jarvis (*reproachfully*)—And I thought you were a woman of your word. I didn't bring you out here to look into limitless space. I brought you out here to look into my hand.

Miss Paysley (*bringing her eyes to his, as if with effort, and blushing*)—You know I warned you! I'm awfully in earnest, and sometimes I say—well, things.

Mr. Jarvis—I want the truth, you know. (*Shakes up the pillow in the hammock.*)

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—He brought me out here to get me to hold his hand half an hour! None in mine, thanks! I'll show him! (*Aloud.*) No, here, please, *quite* under the light.

Mr. Jarvis—You'll be ever so much more comfortable in the hammock.

Miss Paysley (*with a malicious smile*)—You're so thoughtful! But light I *must* have. Now the table. (*Moves the table between them.*) Please let both your hands lie quite naturally on it.

Mr. Jarvis (*disappointed*)—On the table? Oh! (*Aside.*) At this rate palmistry won't be popular any more.

Miss Paysley (*bends over his hand, then raises her eyes suddenly to Jarvis*)—You know it makes me almost nervous to read your hand. I feel, with some people, as if I were listening at the door and hearing secrets I oughtn't to. (*Aside.*) I wouldn't do it for any one but Millicent. But I can't stand by and see that Orton woman—— How I hate engaged flirts!

Mr. Jarvis—I'm not afraid; if I had been, why should I have asked you?

Miss Paysley (*raising her eyes suddenly again*)—You may have had—your reasons.

Mr. Jarvis (*aside*)—That's a fetching way she has of raising her eyes. Wonder what she meant by that just now. (*Aloud.*) How becoming the pale green of the leaves is to your hair.

Miss Paysley—Turn your hands over, please. Now put your right one directly under the light. Oh!

Mr. Jarvis—What do you see?

Miss Paysley—What *strange, strange nails*. I've read about it, but I've never seen it before. Not so marked! It's the perfect type!

Mr. Jarvis (*interested in spite of himself*)—What does it mean?

Miss Paysley (*embarrassed, hesitating*)—It isn't pleasant.

Mr. Jarvis (*looking at her*)—Go on!

Miss Paysley (*reluctantly*)—Well, they mean—consumption! (*Aside.*) They'll make him serious—besides, it *is* the type.

Mr. Jarvis (*rising to the bait*)—Why, I haven't a consumptive relative. (*Aside.*) She is honest. And I was expecting the old Girdle of Venus gag. (*Aloud.*) What does this line mean, and why are the veins of my hands so red?

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—You don't catch this child this way. No compliments about your impressible temperaments from me. (*Aloud, meditatingly, slowly.*) Those red lines—sometimes—they mean insanity—but in your case——

Mr. Jarvis (*with sarcasm*)—Would you mind telling me at what age I am going to lose my teeth, or if I am in danger of breaking a leg? I had no idea palmistry was so pathological.

Miss Paysley (*undisturbed*)—Hold your fingers up to the light.

Mr. Jarvis (*aside*)—Now for the old "you let money slip through your fingers."

Miss Paysley—You don't know how to hold on to your fortune; you let the best thing in your life slip through your fingers.

Mr. Jarvis (*aside*)—Rather a good variant. (*Aloud.*) What do you mean?

Miss Paysley (*with impatience*)—How should I know what I mean? I'm telling you what I see. I don't know enough about you to have the answer to the riddle of your hand. Remember, we've only met twice.

Mr. Jarvis—Three times.

Miss Paysley—Twice, three times, half a dozen—it doesn't signify.

Mr. Jarvis—It does to me.

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—I'm sorry for you, Millicent. (*Aloud.*) You ought to know what I mean. Have you never been in danger of losing through your own carelessness—I mean, something you are fond of? (*Aside.*) That's pretty pointed. I hope Millicent won't give me away.

Mr. Jarvis—Have you ever heard about the expulsive power of a new—interest.

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—The pill. (*With reflection.*) I've heard of changing one's mind.

Mr. Jarvis (*holding up his hand, which is large and powerful*)—And my hand shows indecision of character?

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—He's jesting. They're all alike—men. Keen for praise. (*Aloud.*) I didn't say indecisive. You know what you want, but you often don't value what you have. You are ready to pay for a thing of lesser value with the one of greater.

Mr. Jarvis—So few things have a fixed value; it's what they seem worth to you. You can only measure the worth of any given thing by the pleasure it gives you.

Miss Paysley—The selfish man's creed. (*Glancing at his hand.*) You are abominably selfish, you know—selfish and self-indulgent! You will sacrifice anything to attain something you want, except your own comfort!

Mr. Jarvis (*with a fine air of impartiality*)—I don't think that's altogether true.

Miss Paysley (*studying his hand intently*)—Yes, and you will sacrifice not only anything but anybody!

Mr. Jarvis (*modestly*)—That is what has always endeared me so to my friends. I'm a sort of modern Moloch!

Miss Paysley (*raising her eyes suddenly*)—Don't joke about it. It may be true. (*There is a strained eagerness in her manner that is quite convincing.*)

Mr. Jarvis (*aside*)—Hanged if I don't think she believes this rot.

Miss Paysley—Please hold up your hands with the first fingers touching. I thought so.

Mr. Jarvis—What?

Miss Paysley (*with conviction*)—Your best impulses you never follow to the end, either in your life or your work. For instance, I imagine your studio is full of half-finished canvases, the best work you have done, but unfinished. The work you expose, your finished stuff, is what has let itself be finished easily!

Mr. Jarvis (*suspiciously*)—You guessed that from such of my work as you've seen.

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—That was a dead steal from Millicent! (*Aloud, coolly.*) I haven't the pleasure of knowing much of your work, Mr. Jarvis. Please put your right hand under the light. (*Aside.*) I'd better put him in good temper again. Queer how a man loves a chance of talking uninterruptedly about himself. (*Aloud.*) You have an exaggerated worship of strength in yourself and others.

Mr. Jarvis—Where do you see that?

Miss Paysley—In the whole character of your hand. (*Aside.*) Millicent said "strength and the admiration of strength is his keynote." (*Aloud.*) You must see for yourself that your hand isn't a weak one, and see how the lines are cut—as if with a chisel. (*Aside.*) He's purring already like a Cheshire cat.

Mr. Jarvis—What do you mean by an exaggerated worship of strength?

Miss Paysley—I mean you underscore strength too much among the other virtues.

Mr. Jarvis—Can one? A man, I mean?

Miss Paysley—And with that as the foundation of your character, it's astonishing what weak-minded things you do!

Mr. Jarvis—How graceful!

Miss Paysley—What else do you call all those unfinished canvases? The line of least resistance isn't strength.

Mr. Jarvis (*with pathos*)—One would think I were your Sunday-school class.

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—It's time to give him more toffey. (*Aloud.*) Your popularity has been one of the reasons of your not always following your creed of strength.

Mr. Jarvis (*modestly*)—Yes, my fatal beauty has always stood in the way of my living up to my ideals!

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—Oh, you may sneer, but you know you like it. Else you wouldn't be here. (*Aloud.*) There is something here I don't understand.

Mr. Jarvis (*aside*)—I was waiting for that to come. (*Aloud.*) Go on!

Miss Paysley—Please let your hand drop over from the wrist. How unusual!

Mr. Jarvis (*interested*)—I've never seen that done before.

Miss Paysley (*tranquilly*)—You have your fortune told early and often?

Mr. Jarvis (*undisturbed*)—As often as possible!

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—Of course you never lose a chance of talking about yourself! (*Aloud.*) You've a very unusual hand. You're two or three people, one at the top of the other.

Mr. Jarvis (*plaintively*)—One would think I were a ham sandwich.

Miss Paysley (*calmly*)—A layer cake, I should put it.

Mr. Jarvis (*aside*)—You can't feaze her. She's really prettier than Mrs. Orton. (*Aloud.*) What are my many characters? It's interesting. (*Aside.*) Now for the "You know the higher but follow the lower."

Miss Paysley—Fundamentally, beside your love of strength, you are simple, kindly, unaffected. You would be happy married to a girl kindly and unaffected like yourself. (*Aside.*) I mustn't give too pointed a description of Millicent.

Mr. Jarvis—The country—— Milking time? Love in a cottage? Baby's first step?

Miss Paysley—Laugh, if you like, but that's really what you like, and what would make you happy! That's the sort of atmosphere you do your best work in. You need for a wife some one not too self-assertive, and who believes in you. You need a certain sort of appreciation to work well—and wanting appreciation, you put up with flattery.

Mr. Jarvis—I just live on flattery.

Miss Paysley (*with conviction*)—You drink it in by the pailful! You don't mind if it's put on with a butter knife!

Mr. Jarvis (*who has gotten more and more interested*)—What becomes of my strength then?

Miss Paysley—Oh, you only live on flattery when you are starved for legitimate appreciation. (*Aside.*) I think I got out of that rather neatly. (*Aloud.*) You are really idealistic, with a good deal of sentiment, and, selfish as you are, you have a

heart.

Mr. Jarvis (*gratefully*)—Thank you for the heart.

Miss Paysley—You like to have people think you are cynical and light-minded. You only show your real self to a few people.

Mr. Jarvis—He sounds to me like a prig and a bore.

Miss Paysley (*with more warmth than she has shown yet*)—He's a charming and delightful person. It's the man of the world with the-smile-that-won't-come-off that's the bore!

Mr. Jarvis—Have you found me so?

Miss Paysley (*steadily*)—Not when I've read between the lines.

Mr. Jarvis (*looking at Miss Paysley searchingly*)—-I really think you're honest.

Miss Paysley (*returning his look*)—What did you think I came out here for?

Mr. Jarvis (*still looking into Miss Paysley's eyes*)—Apparently to give me your unvarnished opinion of me. Please go on.

Miss Paysley—I've described the first and second layers of the cake.

Mr. Jarvis—Isn't there any frosting?

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—They simply are insatiable for praise. (*Aloud.*) The frosting doesn't count. I've been eating the frosting ever since I met you.

Mr. Jarvis (*meekly*)—I hope you liked it.

Miss Paysley (*harking back to the last remark but one*)—This superimposed you has different tastes, likes different women—and is more easily taken in.

Mr. Jarvis—How more easily taken in?

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—I thought I'd get a rise. Now for the plunge. (*Aloud.*) I mean that in your own world, among the people who think as you do, you can tell the real ones from those who are only shams.

Mr. Jarvis (*quickly*)—Whereas, in the world represented by what we have agreed to call the upper layer of the cake, I don't know a lump of flour from a raisin?

Miss Paysley—Exactly.

Mr. Jarvis—May I ask if you are a real raisin—as I've given you the credit of being?

Miss Paysley—Oh! you should know what I am. I don't belong to the upper layer—the highly spiced one.

Mr. Jarvis—Would you mind telling me if there is any particular lump of flour now passing itself off on me as a raisin?

Miss Paysley (*with dignity*)—My good man, this is palmistry, not a life saving expedition! (*Aside.*) He's a little too quick.

Mr. Jarvis—It seemed to me to have something to do with the art of portrait painting.

Miss Paysley—I'm not responsible, am I, for the lines in your hand?

Mr. Jarvis—No, nor for your opinion of me.

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—You can't get a rise out of me that way. (*Aloud.*) No, nor for that, either.

Mr. Jarvis—Let's sift down the evidence. I'm in danger of losing something that is precious to me, or, rather, I'm in danger of paying with my gold piece for a brazen image. I don't follow my best impulses to the end. I'm a layer cake with a substantial piece of home-made cake for my under layer and an inferior article on top. Miss Paysley, would you kindly tell me if this cross in my left hand is a warning to avoid widows with pale, gold hair?

Miss Paysley—I wish you would tell me if you came out here with the honest intention of having your fortune told?

Mr. Jarvis (*aside.*)—She can give Mrs. Orton cards and spades. (*Aloud.*) Did you come out here with the intention of telling my fortune?

Miss Paysley (*slowly*)—I've done what I came out for!

Mr. Jarvis—And that was?

Miss Paysley (*rising and turning away*)—Something I foolishly thought I ought to do.

Mr. Jarvis—Foolishly? I think it was too lovely of you to take any interest in my affairs at all.

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—I've never seen anyone so insupportable, and he looks—nice! (*Aloud, with wide-open eyes.*) *Your* affairs! You don't suppose it's for *you?*

Mr. Jarvis—Eh?

Miss Paysley—I suppose you think that there is no such thing as real loyalty or friendship between girls?

Mr. Jarvis—Oh! (*They both are silent a moment, each measuring the other.*)

Mr. Jarvis (*steadily*)—Have you happened to hear of Millicent Holt's engagement?

Miss Paysley (*throwing down her hand*)—You oughtn't to ask her best friend that!

Mr. Jarvis (*calmly*)—To Bob Burke, I mean.

Miss Paysley (*entirely taken aback*)—To Bob Burke! She never did! Not Millicent! I could have sworn to Millicent!

Mr. Jarvis (*still calmly*)—So could I. So I did.

Miss Paysley (*with horror-struck eyes*)—But I don't understand!

Mr. Jarvis—I didn't, at first, either. It seems Bobby Burke's soul and hers are twins, or something of that kind. So where do I come in?

Miss Paysley—But when we were abroad together——

Mr. Jarvis—Please don't! I know I take a "lump of dough for a raisin," but——

Miss Paysley (*impulsively*)—Please forgive me. I thought——

Mr. Jarvis—That I was "doing your friend dirt," for the sake of a brazen image.

Miss Paysley (*bravely*)—What else was I to think?

Mr. Jarvis (*gravely*)—And for the sake of your friend you told me what you thought of me. (*Aside.*) I believe you at least do tell the truth.

Miss Paysley (*impulsively*)—I didn't tell you *all* the truth. I only told you the horrid part.

Mr. Jarvis—And why wouldn't you tell me the rest?

Miss Paysley (*in a humble little voice*)—Because I was fool enough to think you were spoiled enough already! (*Aside.*) How could Millicent—Bobby Burke—that purple ass. Think of throwing *him* over for Bobby Burke!

Mr. Jarvis (*aside*)—How pretty she is. (*Aloud.*) Life hasn't exactly spoiled me lately. (*Aside.*) And I've been wasting time on Mrs. Orton.

Miss Paysley (*impulsively*)—And now if I had your hand to tell over again, I would tell you all—the other things first.

Mr. Jarvis—It's not too late.

Miss Paysley—And I wasn't honest about another thing. We've met four times—I remember them all. (*Aside.*) I've been a beast to him. Mrs. Orton shan't have him to hurt. And Millicent—— All women are cats!

Mr. Jarvis—So do I. The first time you were nice to me, and the second time you were nice——

Miss Paysley—Because of Millicent.

Mr. Jarvis—And the third time—you snubbed me. I suppose that was because of Millicent, too.

Miss Paysley (*aside*)—It was because of Mrs. Orton. (*Aloud, with conviction and blushing.*) And to-night I've been—simply horrid.

Mr. Jarvis—To-night you've told me more of my fortune than you've any idea. (*Aside.*) She's adorable when she blushes!

Miss Paysley (*still red*)—I've been an impertinent, meddling thing!

Mr. Jarvis—You've taught me a great deal. I'm going to follow my good impulses to the end—beginning now. So please look quickly in your own hand and tell me if a man with a character like a layer cake has a great influence on your life?

Miss Paysley—I told you you followed the line of least resistance.

THE BABY'S CURLS

By Margaret Houston

A little skein of tangled floss they lie,

(You always said they should have been a girl’s.)

The tears will come—you cannot quite tell why—

They fall unheeded on that mass—his curls.

Poor little silken skein, so dear to you.

“’Twere better short,” the wiser father said,

“He’s getting older now.”—Alas, how true!

And yet you wonder where the years have fled.

“’Twere better short——” the while your fond heart yearned

To keep them still, reluctant standing by,

You saw your little angel, earthward turned,

Yet all unknowing, lay his halo by.

Soft little threads! They held you with such strength!

You knew the way each wanton ringlet fell,

You knew each shining tendril’s golden length,

How oft they’ve tangled, only you can tell.

In dusky twilight shadows, oh, how oft

You’ve seen their light along your shoulder lie.

You leaned your cheek to touch the masses soft,

The while you crooned some drowsy lullaby.

How often when the sun was dawning red

You bent above him in the early ray,

And from that glory round the baby head

You drew your light for all the weary day.

And now—you start—the front door gives a slam—

The hall resounds with little, hurrying feet,

He climbs upon your knee—the wee, shorn lamb,—

And dries your tears with kisses, warm and sweet.

You fold your sorrow from his happy eyes—

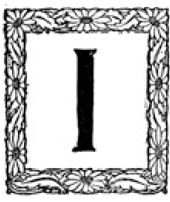
(You always said they should have been a girl’s.)

Half of his Eden sunlight buried lies

Amid the meshes of those baby curls.

BROWN BETTY

By Grace S. Richmond



It’s all right, Joe,” said Miss Farnsworth, rapidly drawing on a pair of heavy white gloves. “You needn’t be in the least afraid to trust me with the colts. And the station agent can find somebody to help him load the wagon for me.”

She sprang in and took her seat at the front of the big farm wagon—a most unusual and dainty figure there, in her crisp white linen. She gathered the reins deftly, said gayly to the people on the farmhouse porch: “When I come back I’ll show you unpatriotic persons how to keep Fourth of July in the country,” and would have driven off with a flourish but for one unforeseen and effective hindrance. Joe remained stolidly at the heads of the two restless black colts.

“You may give them their heads now, Joe,” said the girl, decisively.

“In jest a minute, miss.”

“Now. I’m in a hurry.”

But Joe remained stationary. He turned his head and eyed uneasily a window above the porch, murmuring: “Jest a minute, now——”

Miss Farnsworth waited half the designated period, then she said, imperatively: “Joe, be so kind as to let go of those horses.”

Joe pretended to have found something wrong with the bridle of the off horse. Miss Farnsworth watched him skeptically. And an instant later Stuart Jarvis appeared upon the porch, hat in hand, smiling at the driver of the farm wagon.

“May I go with you?” he asked, easily, coming up.

There was no reason why she should refuse, particularly with three middle-aged women, two elderly gentlemen, and four girls observing with interest from the porch. Neither was there good reason for refusing to allow Mr. Jarvis to take the reins, since he leaped up at the right side of the wagon, and held out his hand for them as a matter of course. But the moment they were around the first bend in the road Agnes Farnsworth attempted to adjust affairs to her original intentions.

“Would you mind letting me drive?” she asked. The words, though spoken with a silver tongue, had rather the effect of a notification than of an interrogation.

“Not in the least,” returned Jarvis, making no motion, however, to resign the reins, “provided you can prove that I am authorized to give up my charge.”

She looked at him as if she doubted whether she had heard aright. “You know perfectly well that I am accustomed to horses,” she declared, moving as if she intended to change places with him.

He looked full down at her, smiling, but he still drove with the air of one who intends to continue in his present occupation. The black colts were going at a spanking trot, making nothing of the decided upward trend of the road. Their shining coats gleamed in the sun; alertness and power showed in every line of them. They were alive from the tips of their forward-pointing satin ears to the ends of their handsome uncropped tails, and they felt their life quiveringly.

“There is no reason in the world why I shouldn’t drive,” said Miss Farnsworth, with the pleasantly determined air of a girl who intends ultimately to have her own way. “If you had not appeared just at the moment you did, I should have come alone.”

“Do you really think you would?” asked Jarvis, studying the left ear of the nigh horse.

“Certainly. Why not?”

“Because I told Joe not to let you go without me.”

She colored under her summer’s tan.

“May I ask,” she inquired, somewhat stiffly, “why you didn’t suggest to me an hour ago that you wished to get to the station?”

Jarvis smiled at this way of putting it. “Joe was intending to go with you,” he explained.

She looked puzzled.

“Five minutes before you left, Joe came and told me that an accident had happened to one of his men, and that he couldn’t go. He said he didn’t think the colts were safe for you. I’ve been here only three days—I don’t know anything about them. Joe does.”

“Oh—nonsense!” said the girl. “I’m not afraid of them.”

“They ran away day before yesterday.”

“That makes no difference.”

“They are crazily afraid of everything in the shape of a conveyance run by its own motive power, from a threshing machine to an automobile.”

“That makes no difference, either,” declared the young person beside him with energy. “Not the least in the world.”

“Possibly not—to you. It makes an immense difference to me.”

She looked away, although the words were said in a matter-of-fact tone hardly calculated to convey their full importance.

“Since you are here to take the reins away from me when I scream,” she said, with a curling lip, “it is perfect nonsense to refuse to let me drive. Mr. Jarvis——”

“Put it politely,” he warned her, smiling.

“Please change places with me.” She said it imperiously.

He looked steadfastly down into her eyes for an instant, until her glance fell. Then he asked, lightly:

“Have you driven them before?”

“No.”

“I wonder why,” he mused.

She was silent, but her cheeks burned with displeasure.

“I’m glad we’re to have a Fourth of July celebration,” said he, driving steadily on. His tone became casual, with a pleasant inflection, quite as if there had been no controversy. “It will do the natives good—stir them up. I took the liberty, after you had sent your order, of wiring the dealer to add rather a good lot of explosives on my own account. They will come along with yours. It’s lucky the wagon is big—we shall need it for all the stuff.”

But the girl would not talk about the Fourth of July. She sat erect, with her very charming head in the air, and let the miles roll by in silence.

Upon the platform of the small freight house at the junction stood several boxes, a long roll and two trunks—all due at the farmhouse. As the wagon drew up to it, the freight agent came leisurely out to attend to business. His eyes fell at once upon the black team.

“Pretty likely pair,” said he, with an approving pat upon the nearest shining flank. “Joe Hempstead’s, ain’t they? I heard he set considerable store by ’em. Well, they’re all right—or will be, when they’re a little older. I’ve got a mare now that I cal’late could show ’em a clean pair o’ heels. She’s round behind the station. I’ll bring her out.”

“Of course—that’s what we came to see,” observed Jarvis, as the man disappeared. “Getting our load is a secondary matter.”

“Other matters are always secondary to the sight of a good horse,” retorted his companion. She was leaning forward and Jarvis did not miss the opportunity to look at her. He gazed intently at a certain conjunction of curves at the back of her neck—a spot which always tempted him tremendously whenever he saw it.

The freight agent appeared round the corner of the station, leading an animal the sight of which made Jarvis’ eyes light with pleasure. Agnes Farnsworth caught her breath softly and leaned still further forward.

The brown mare was led back and forth before them, the colts requiring a strong hand upon the reins as she caracoled in front of their exasperated eyes. Jarvis was obliged to give them his whole attention. But the girl slipped down from the wagon. She went up to the mare and laid a coaxing, caressing hand upon the velvet nose—a hand so gentle that the animal did not resent it. She spoke softly to her; inquired her name, and called her by it in a voice of music—Betty. Presently she asked for the halter, and the freight agent, somewhat doubtful, but too full of admiration for the near presence of beauty to refuse, gave it to her. Then, indeed, did Miss Farnsworth prove the truth of her assertion that she was accustomed to horses. In five minutes she had made love to the mare so effectively that the shy and hitherto somewhat disdainful creature was following her with a slack halter and an entreating nose. Incidentally Betty had allowed the slender fingers to open her mouth.

“Of course you are not selling her,” remarked Miss Farnsworth, carelessly, as she walked away to examine her freight.

“Well—had an offer of two hundred and fifty for her last week.”

She looked around with an astonished face. “And wouldn’t take it?”

“Why—no. She’s wu’th three hundred if she’s wu’th a cent.”

“You won’t get three hundred for her,” said the girl.

“She’s as sound as a nut,” declared the freight agent, with indignation. Miss Farnsworth laughed.

“She’s a pretty creature,” said she, “but I have eyes. How did she hurt her left hind ankle?”

The freight agent stared. “Her left hind ankle! Why—there ain’t a sign of a limp in it. And her knee action’s perfect.”

“She was lame two weeks ago,” said the girl, and looked at him. Jarvis had brought his colts to a temporary stand-still, and was observing the little scene with amusement.

“Why—she got a stone in that left hind foot,” admitted the freight agent, walking the mare toward the corner of the building. “Any horse’ll do that. She ain’t lame now—wa’n’t then to amount to anything. But I’d like to know how you guessed it.”

She was still laughing. “I suppose you would let her go for two hundred and twenty-five, now, wouldn’t you?”

The freight agent led his mare away without deigning to reply, except by a shake of the head. He came back and loaded the freight into the wagon, leaving the trunks till the last. As he was shouldering the first of these, Agnes stopped him.

“Will you take two hundred and fifty for Betty?” she asked, with perfect coolness, except for a certain gleam in her eyes.

“You ain’t buyin’ horses yourself?”

“I asked you a question.”

“She ain’t no lady’s horse.”

“I asked you if you would sell her for two hundred and fifty dollars,” repeated the girl, and prepared to step up into the wagon. Jarvis was not getting down to assist her. The black pair were too restless for that.

“Why—I’d ought to have three hundred for her,” the man hesitated.

Miss Farnsworth set her foot upon the step and drew herself up beside Jarvis. She did not look toward the freight agent. Just as the horses began to swing about, the man upon the platform said, haltingly:

“Well—if you mean it, and can pay me cash——”

She looked at him once more, quite indifferently. “I s’pose you can have her. But she’s wu’th more.”

“Mr. Jarvis,” said the horse buyer, “can we lead her home?”

He shook his head. “Not behind the colts.”

She gave him one glance of scorn—the last of any sort he received from her for some time to come. “Have you a saddle?” she asked of the agent.

“Yes, ma’am. Not a very good one, but such as ’tis.”

“Will you ride her home for me?” she asked, over a cool shoulder, of the man beside her.

“Not while you drive the colts,” he answered, with a keen glance at her, in which she might have read several things if she had taken the trouble.

“Have you a side-saddle?” she demanded of the freight agent.

“Well—if you’ll wait five minutes—I ’low I can get one.”

As the man disappeared, Miss Farnsworth jumped down from the wagon once more. She produced a letter, and, from the letter a key. With this she opened one of the trunks, which yet stood upon the platform, lifted a tray, dived among sundry garments, and drew out with an air of triumph something made of dark green cloth and folded carefully. With this she walked away into the empty, country freight house.

When, after two minutes’ absence, she emerged again, she was holding up the skirt of a riding habit and carrying a bundle of something which she took to the trunk and hastily stowed away. She said nothing whatever to Jarvis, but stood awaiting the return of the freight agent with an averted cheek.

When the mare reappeared upon the scene she wore an old side-saddle of ancient pattern, and was clumsily bridled with headgear too large for her. Jarvis gave her one glance, and spoke with decision.

“If you will hold these horses a minute, I’ll look that affair over,” he said.

The other man grinned. “All the same to me,” he returned, amicably. “Like enough you’re more used to this sort of business than I be.”

Jarvis went at the big bridle, rearranging straps, getting out his knife and cutting an extra hole or two, tightening it and bringing it more nearly to fit the sleek, small head of the mare. Miss Farnsworth looked on silently. If she appreciated this care for her safety, she did not make it apparent. Only, as Jarvis finished a very careful examination and testing of the side-saddle and stood erect with a smile at her, she said: “Thank you”—quite as if she had no mind to say it. With which he was obliged to be content.

He silently put her upon the mare, held the animal quiet while he looked for the space of one slow breath gravely up into the girl’s face, meeting only lowered lashes and a scornful mouth, and let go the bits. An instant later brown Betty

and her rider were twenty rods down the road.

The two men watched her round the turn. Then Jarvis sprang to his place.

"Load the rest of the stuff in—quick," he said, and the other obeyed.

"Gee!" remarked the station agent to himself, watching the cloud of dust in which the wagon was disappearing. "Looks like he'd got left. He can't catch the mare—not with that load. Say, but her and Betty made a picture—that's right."

The road from Crofton Junction to the Hempstead Farms lay, for the most part, down hill. The black pair appreciated this fact. They had been trained in double harness from the beginning, and their ideas of life and its purposes were identical. They now joined forces to take the freight home in the shortest and most impracticable space of time.

Jarvis kept them well in hand. If he had had them in front of a light vehicle of some sort, unencumbered with a miscellaneous and unstowable lot of freight, he would have enjoyed letting them have their will. As it was, he was obliged to consider several conflicting elements in the situation and restrain the colts accordingly. His pace, therefore, was not sufficiently fast to allow him to gain upon the fleet-footed mare and her rider, and the winding road gave him no hint of their whereabouts. He did not belong to the household of boarders at the Hempstead Farms; his presence there just now was a matter of business with one of the elderly gentlemen who were taking their vacation upon the farmhouse porch—that and a certain willingness to attend carefully and unhurriedly to business which had brought him within sight of a certain girl.

It was a bit dull driving back alone. He was not familiar with the road; it was not the one by which he had come. Miss Farnsworth had not planned this outcome of the trip from the beginning—he gave her credit for that; neither could he expect a girl who had fallen in love with, and purchased, a saddle horse within the short space of fifteen minutes, to wait for it to be sent leisurely home. But it occurred to him that she might have been willing to let the mare trot lightly along the road just ahead of the blacks, where Betty's nearness might least disconcert Tim and Tom, and where she might now and then exchange a word with their driver over her shoulder—even that cool shoulder of hers.

All at once he caught sight of the brown mare. As he approached a fork in the road, Miss Farnsworth and Betty came galloping up the east split of the fork—the one which did not lead toward Hempstead Farms. He laughed to himself, for he perceived at once that she had taken the wrong road and was spurring to get back to the fork before he should have passed.

But in this she did not succeed. Jarvis reached the corner before her. He drew up a little to let her in ahead of him, for the road was narrow. But as she neared him she motioned him ahead, and to humor her when he could he went on, though he doubted the wisdom of letting the blacks hear Betty's sharp-ringing little hoofs at their heels.

"How do you like her?" he called, as he passed, managing a shift of the reins and an uplifted hat. He smiled at her quite as if he had nothing in the world against her, though he was feeling at the moment that the brute creation are not the only things which need a certain amount of taming.

"Oh, she's a dear," answered Miss Farnsworth, in a voice as sweet as a flute. "Isn't she the prettiest thing? She's a perfect saddle-horse—except for the tricks I haven't found out yet."

She was smiling back at him, all traces of petulance smoothed quite out of her face. Her cheeks were brilliantly pink, her hair blown by the breeze. She carried her wide-brimmed straw hat on the pommel of her saddle; evidently it had not proved satisfactory as a riding hat. Altogether, in the brief chance he had for observation, Jarvis was of the notion that there might be two opinions as to what creature was the prettiest thing on the Crofton road that day.

There was not much talk possible. There could be no question that Tim and Tom heard Betty coming on behind them, and were exercised thereby. The mare's stride was shorter than that of the colts; her hoofbeats reached them in quicker rhythm than their own. As a small clock ticking beside a big one seems to say to the latter, "Hurry up—hurry up"—-so Betty's rapid trot behind stirred up the young pair in front to greater valor.

If Betty's rider, being avowedly an expert horsewoman, recognized this, it did not appear in any pains she took to avoid it. Betty danced behind faster and faster; and faster and faster did the blacks strain to draw away from her.

There came at length a moment when Jarvis could not have boasted that he still had them in hand. About the most that he could do was to keep them in the road and on their feet. Two minutes before Miss Agnes Farnsworth appeared at the fork of the road the driver of the blacks could at any moment have pulled them with a powerful hand back upon their haunches and brought them to a quick-breathing standstill. Two minutes afterward neither he nor any other man could have done it.

And yet Jarvis did not make so much as a turn of the head to suggest to Betty's rider that she call off the race. This, of course, was what he should have done; it was obviously the only common-sense thing to do. Plainly, since he would not do it, there was still one more mettlesome spirit upon the Crofton road to be reckoned with that morning.

II.

Under such circumstances it was nearly inevitable that something should happen. It had seemed to Jarvis, as he was rushed along, that the only thing probable, since Miss Farnsworth had proved her ability to ride the mare, was that he himself should meet disaster in some form. The black team were, to all intents and purposes, and until the cause of their high-headedness should be removed, running away. They were nearing a place which he could see was likely to prove the rockiest and most winding of any part of this rocky and winding New England road.

But, as usual, it was not the foreseen which happened, but the unforeseen. A particularly vigorous lurch of the wagon displaced one of the two trunks from its position, and the next roll and pitch sent it off. The brown mare swerved, but she was so near the back of the wagon that her wheel to the right did not carry her beyond the trunk, itself bounding to the right. The unexpected sheer did not unhorse her rider, but the mare went down in a helpless sprawl over the great obstacle in her path, and the girlish figure in the saddle went with her.

Jarvis had recognized the fall of the trunk, and in the one quick glance back he was able to give he saw the mare go down. His team, startled afresh by the crash, leaped ahead. Although he had been using every muscle more and more strenuously for the last fifteen minutes, new power rushed into his arms. He used every means in his power to quiet the pair, and, after a little, it began to tell. The ceasing of the mare's hoofbeats upon the road behind withdrew from the situation what had been its most dangerous element, and at length, coming to a sudden sharp rise in the road, Jarvis succeeded in pulling the colts down to a walk. The instant it became possible he turned them about.

"Now," he said, aloud, to them—and his voice was harsh with anxiety—"spoil you or not, you may go back at the top of your speed," and he sent them, wild-eyed and breathing hard, straight back over their tracks. And as he neared the place where the mare had fallen, he held his breath and his heart grew sick within him.

It was an unfrequented road, and no one had come over it since himself. As he turned the bend he saw just what he had expected to see, and a great sob shook him. Then he gathered himself, with a mighty grip upon his whole being, for what there might be left to do for her.

The brown mare lay in a pitiful heap, her fore legs doubled under her. Beneath her, kept from being thrown over Betty's head by her foot in the stirrup, and caught under the roll of the mare's body, lay the slender figure of her rider.

"Oh—God!" groaned the man, as he threw himself upon the ground beside her. But as he fearfully turned her head toward him, that he might see first the worst there was, two dark-lashed, gray eyes slowly unclosed and looked up into his, and a smile, so faint that it was but the hint of a smile, trembled about her mouth.

In the swiftness of his relief Jarvis had to lay stern hands upon his own impulses. He smiled back at her with lips not quite steady. Then he set about releasing her.

When he had her out upon the grass she lay very white and still again. "Can you tell me where you are hurt?" he begged. Then, as she did not answer, he dashed off to a brook which gurgled in a hollow a rod away, and, coming back with a soaked handkerchief, gently bathed her face and hair. After a little her eyes unclosed again.

"I—don't think I'm—badly hurt. My shoulder and—my—knee——"

"I'll get you home as soon as you feel able."

She turned her head slowly toward the road. Divining her thought, Jarvis quietly placed himself between her eyes and the body of the brown mare. She understood.

"Is she dreadfully hurt?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Alive?"

He nodded. The girl lay still an instant, then she threw one arm across her eyes, and Jarvis saw that she was softly sobbing. He watched her for a little, then he took her other hand in his, holding it close and tenderly, as one would soothe an unhappy child.

"When I have taken you home," he said, very gently, "I will come back to Betty."

She drew her hand away quickly. "Take me home now," she whispered.

So Jarvis, as best he could, took her home. It was a hard journey, which he would have made easier for her if he could have got her to lean against him. But she sat erect, holding herself with a white face and compressed lips, and Jarvis, thinking things he dared not put into words, drove with as little jolt and jar as might be back to the Hempstead Farms.

Joe, coming across the barnyard, saw them, looked at them a second time, and strode hurriedly forward. Jarvis would have given the horses into his charge and looked after the girl himself, but she forestalled him, and it was Joe, the man of overalls and wide straw hat, who helped her to her room, the porch being for the moment mercifully bereft of boarders. It was the sunny hour of the morning there.

But presently she sent for him. He went at once, for he was preparing, with Joe, to go to the injured horse. Mrs. Hempstead took him to Miss Farnsworth's room, and stayed stiffly by while he crossed to the bed where the girl lay, still in her riding habit. As he came to her she held out her hand.

"Please forgive me," she said, with her head turned away. "I might have killed—you."

"No—you couldn't. I've something to live for, so I'm invulnerable—till I get it."

"Will you do something for me?" she asked. As she lay, with her head turned from him, the warm white curves at the back of her neck appealed to him more irresistibly than ever.

"Anything!"

She thrust one hand down under the folds of her skirt, drew out something heavy and shining which had lain there, and put it into his hand. Then she buried her face in the pillow. “Please——” she began—and could not finish.

Jarvis looked around at his landlady, standing by like the embodiment of propriety. He turned again to the girlish figure shaking with its passionate regret. Then he took the little revolver from her, bent and whispered, “I understand,” and went quickly and silently away.

When Jarvis returned to Joe Hempstead, getting ready the flat drag known in country parlance as a “stone boat,” his first words were eager.

“Joe, I don’t know that there’s the slightest hope of saving the mare, but I’d like to bring her home and try. It was out of the question to look her over much there. She went down on her knees—smash—and one leg was certainly broken below the knee. But I’ve a hope the leg I couldn’t get at may only be bruised.”

Joe nodded. “We’ll do the best we can by her—for the little girl’s sake,” he declared. “She’s a high-spirited young critter—the human one, I mean—but I guess she’s a-takin’ this pretty hard, and I’d like to help her out.”

So presently brown Betty, lifting dumb eyes full of pain at the sound of a caressing voice, found herself in the hands of her friends.

“Well—it’s a question, Joe,” said Jarvis, slowly, ten minutes later. He was sitting with a hand on the mare’s flank, after a thorough and skillful examination. Betty’s head lay in Joe’s lap, held firmly by hands which were both strong and tender. “It’s a question whether it wouldn’t be the kindest thing to end her troubles for her. I expect she’d tell us to, if she could talk. She’ll have to be put in a sling, of course, and kept there for weeks.”

“That there sprained leg——” Joe began, doubtfully.

“Yes—it’ll be about as tough a proposition as the broken one. But——”

The two men looked at each other.

“If you say so——” agreed Joe.

“Let’s try it,” urged Jarvis. “It’s a question of human suffering, or brute—and there’s a possibility of success. I shall be here a day or two longer—over the Fourth. I’ll play nurse as long as I stay—I’d like nothing better. I was born and brought up with horses—in Kentucky.”

“What I ain’t picked up about ’em I knew when I was born,” said Joe, with a laugh and a pat of the mare’s head. “All right—we’ll turn ourselves into a couple of amachure vet’rinaries—seein’ they ain’t none hereabouts.”

Between them they had soon bestowed the mare upon the stone boat in the best possible position for enduring the ride.

“Seems as if she understands the whole thing,” Joe said, at length, looking down into the animal’s face as her head lay quietly upon the blanket. “You’re a lady,” he said, softly, to Betty. The mare’s beautiful liquid eyes looked dumbly back at him, and he stooped and rubbed her nose. “Yes, you’re a lady,” he repeated, “and we’ll do our level best to deserve your trustin’ us—poor little wreck.”

In a roomy stall they put Betty. It was an afternoon’s work to arrange it for the scientific treatment of the broken leg. Joe, with the readiness of a surgeon—he was, indeed, an amateur veterinary, and was consulted as such by the whole countryside—set the leg and put it in plaster of Paris. The two men rigged a sling which should keep the weight of the mare off the injured legs and support her body. With the help of two farm hands, Betty was put into this gear in a way which made it impossible for her to move enough to hurt the broken leg. A rest was provided for her head, and her equine comfort was in every way considered. When all was done, the farmer and the electrical engineer looked at each other with exceeding satisfaction.

“She’ll get well,” said Jarvis, with conviction. “I never saw it better done than you have managed it.”

“Me?” returned Joe, with a laugh. “Well, say—I wouldn’t mind havin’ you for chief assistant when I go into the business perfessionally.”

Jarvis spent the rest of the day, more or less, in the box stall. The evening was occupied in assisting Betty to receive the entire houseful of boarders, whom the news of the accident had reached at about supper time.

At midnight, having tried without success for an hour to sleep, he got up, dressed and went out through the warm July starlight to tell the brown mare he was sorry for her. He found a man’s figure standing beside that of the animal.

“Well!” Joe greeted him. “You’re another. I can’t seem to sleep, thinkin’ about this poor critter, slung up here—sufferin’—and not understandin’. They like company—now I’m sure of it. It’s a good thing she can’t know how many days and nights she’s got to be strung here, ain’t it?”

His hand was gently stroking the mare’s shoulder, as if he thought it must ache. He looked around at Jarvis, standing in the rays of light from a lantern hanging on a peg near by.

“Go back to bed, Joe,” advised Jarvis. “You’ve plenty to do to-morrow. I’ll stay with the patient a while. I shall like to do it—I’m as bad as you, I can’t sleep for thinking of her.”

“Course you can’t,” thought Joe, going back to the house. “But you didn’t say which ‘her’ ’twas that keeps you awake. I

guess it's one's much as 'tis t'other."

It was about two o'clock in the morning that Jarvis, in a corner of the box stall, where the mare could see him, lying at full length upon a pile of hay, his hands clasped under his head, heard light and uneven footsteps slowly approaching across the barn floor. He was instantly alert in every sense, but he did not move.

"Betty dear," said a soft voice. Then a slender figure came into view in the dim light, walking with a limp and painfully. A loose blue robe trailed about her, and two long brown braids, curling at the ends, hung over her shoulders. She came slowly into the stall and stood and looked at Betty. Suddenly she put both arms around the mare's neck, laid her cheek against the animal's face, and spoke to her.

"Poor Betty," she said, pitifully. "Did you fall into the hands of a cruel girl, who hurt you for all the rest of your life? Can you forgive her, Betty? She didn't mean to do it, dear. She was out of temper herself, because she couldn't have her own way—when she didn't *want* her own way—Betty—can you understand? You were doing the best you could—she made you act such a silly part. Dear little Betty—she would stand beside you all night long, just to punish herself, if she could—but——"

She leaned against the side of the stall, and sank slowly down to the ground, with a hand pressed to her knee. Jarvis, on the hay, stirred involuntarily, and with a little cry of alarm the girl struggled to her feet again. At the next instant, as Jarvis spoke gently and his face came into view in the lantern light, she leaned once more, breathing quickly, against the side of the stall. Her face as she stared at him was like that of a startled child.

"You mustn't stand, you're not fit," he said, anxiously. "You ought not to have come. Let me help you back."

She gazed at him beseechingly. "Please let me stay a few minutes," she said. Was this meek creature the willful young person of the morning? "I can't sleep for thinking of her, and I want to make her understand that I'm sorry."

"I think she does. If she doesn't, she at least appreciates the tone of your voice. Even a horse might have sense enough for that. Let me bring you something for a seat, if you will stay."

He found an empty box, covered it with a new blanket, and set it by the side of the stall. She sat down and studied the arrangement of the appliances for the keeping of the mare in the quiet necessary to the healing of the broken leg. Jarvis explained it all to her, and she listened eagerly and attentively. But when he had finished she asked him abruptly:

"Did you hear what I said to Betty?"

"I could hardly help it."

"Then you heard me say that about being out of temper at not having my own way this morning—when I—really didn't want my own way." Her eyes were on Betty's patient little head.

"Do you expect me to believe that?" he asked, smiling.

"Did I seem to want it?"

"Very decidedly."

"Yet—if you had let me have it—do you know how I should have felt toward you?"

"I know how I should have felt toward myself."

"How would you?" she asked, curiously.

He shook his head. "I believe I'd better not try to explain that."

"Why not?"

"Dangerous ground."

"I don't understand."

"When you admit," he said, "that when you seem to want your own way, you really don't want it——"

"That was just in this instance," she interrupted, quickly.

"Such a thing never happened before?"

"Certainly not."

"How about the time you lost your slipper off under the table the night we were dining at the Dennisons' and you forbade me to get it? Then when you thought I hadn't——"

"Oh—that was a silly thing—don't mention it. This was different. You knew the horses weren't safe for me to drive——"

"You admit that?"

"For the sake of the argument, yes. But since you thought they weren't safe, it would have been a weak thing for you to have given in to me."

“Thank you—that’s precisely the way I felt.”

“But it doesn’t prevent—it wouldn’t prevent my wanting my own way—always—about everything——”

“When?”

She turned a brilliant color under the lantern rays.

He bent forward. “Are you warning me?”

“I’m trying to let you know the sort of person I am.”

“Well,” he said, leaning back again, and studying her with attention, noting the picture she unconsciously made in her blue robe, with the brown braids hanging over her shoulders, “I’ve been observing you with somewhat close scrutiny for about three years now, and it occurs to me that I’m fairly conversant with your moods and tenses. Perhaps I ought to be warned, but—I’m not.”

“I’ve always been told that sort of thing grows upon one,” she observed.

“What sort of thing? Having one’s own way?”

She nodded.

“You’re right there,” he agreed. “I’ve been wanting mine, more or less strenuously, for three years.”

“Elaine Dennison,” she observed—somewhat irrelevantly, it might seem—“is the dearest, most amiable girl. She loves to make people happy.”

“Yes—and doesn’t succeed. And you—don’t want to make them happy—and—could.”

She shook her head. “No—I never could. Anybody who had much to do with me would have to learn at once that I must have my own way.”

“And if he should chance to be the sort of person who always wants his own way, it would be disastrous. Yes—I see. And I comprehend your ideal. I saw such a man once. It was in a railway station. He stood at one side holding all the luggage, and his wife bought the tickets. She was larger than he—I should say about one hundred and fifty pounds larger. To take and hold such an enviable position as this woman held needs, I think, an excess of avoirdupois.”

He was laughing down at her, for she had got to her feet, and he had risen with her. One hundred and twenty pounds of girlish grace and slenderness looked even less beside one hundred and eighty of well-distributed masculine bulk. But it was only his lips which laughed. His eyes dwelt on her with no raillery in their depths, only a longing which grew with each jesting word he spoke.

“Will you let me carry you in?” he asked, as she moved slowly toward Betty. She shook her head. She laid a caressing hand on the mare’s smooth nose and whispered in her ear.

“Good-night, Betty,” she said.

“You ought not to walk, with that knee. You can’t fool with a knee—it’s a bad place to get hurt. I’m going to carry you.”

She stood still, looking up at him at last. “Good-night, Mr. Jarvis,” she said.

He came close. “See here,” he said, rapidly, under his breath, “I can’t stand this any longer. You’ve put me off and put me off—and I’ve let you. You’ve had your way. Now I’m going to have mine. You shall answer me, one way or the other, to-night—now. I love you—I’ve told you so—twice with my lips—a hundred times in every other way. But I’m not going to be played with any longer. Will you take me—now—or never?”

“What a singular way—what a barbaric way,” she said, with proud eyes.

“It may be singular—it may be primitive—it’s my way—to end what I must. Will you answer me?”

“Yes, I’ll answer you,” she said, with uplifted head.

“Look at me, then.”

She raised her eyes to his. Given the chance he so seldom got from her, he gazed eagerly down into their depths, revealed to him in the half light, half shadow, of the strange place they were in. She met the look steadily at first, then falteringly. At length the lashes fell.

In silence he waited, motionless. She tried to laugh lightly. “You’re so tragic,” she murmured.

There was no answer.

“We should never be happy together,” she began, slowly. “You’ve a will like iron—I’ve felt it for three years. Mine is—I don’t know what mine is—but it’s not used to being denied. We should quarrel over everything, even when I knew, as I did to-day, that you were right. I—don’t know how to tell you—but—I——”

She hesitated. He made no answer, no plea, simply stood, breathing deep but steadily, and steadily watching her.

“You’re such a good friend,” she went on, reluctantly, after a little. She was drooping against the door of the box stall like a flower which needs support, but he did not offer to help her. “Such a good friend I don’t want to lose you—but I know by the way you speak that I’m going to lose you if—I——”

She raised her eyes little by little till they had reached his shoulders, broad and firm and motionless.

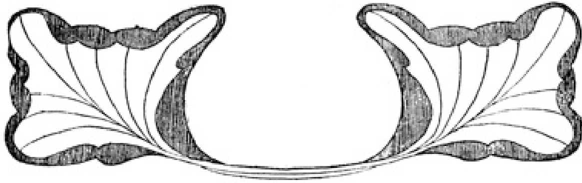
“Good-by, Mr. Jarvis,” she said, very low, and in a voice which trembled a little. “But please don’t mind very much. I’m not—worth it. I——”

She lifted her eyes once more from his shoulder to his face, to find the same look, intensified, meeting her with its steady fire. She paled slowly, dropped her eyes and turned as if to go, when a great breath, like a sob, shook her. She stood for an instant, faltering, then turned again and took one uncertain step toward him.

“Oh—I can’t—I can’t——” she breathed. “You’re the stronger—and I—I—want you to be!”

With one quick stride he reached her. “Of course you do,” he said, his voice exultant in its joy.

Behind them brown Betty watched with dumb eyes, wondering, perhaps, how so stormy a scene could be succeeded by such motionless calm. As for her, this new, strange way of standing, always standing, too full of pain to sleep, was a thing to be endured as best she might.



R. H.—A PORTRAIT

Not credulous, yet active in belief

That good is better than the worst is bad;

A generous courage mirrored in the glad

Challenging eyes, that gentle oft with grief

For honest woe—while lurking like a thief,

Peering around the corners, humor creeps,

Into the gravest matters pries and peeps,

Till grimmest face relaxes with relief;

A heart belovèd of the wiser gods

Grown weary of solemnity prolonged—

That snatches scraps of gladness while Fate nods,

Varying life’s prose with stories many-songed:

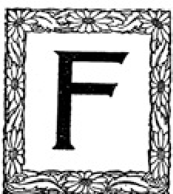
One who has faced the dark and naught denied—

Yet lives persistent on the brightest side.

Allan Munier.

THE FUTURE MRS. THORNTON

By Sarah Guernsey Bradley



From a worldly point of view there could be no question as to the wisdom and desirability of the match, and Miss Warren's family was worldly to the core.

It had been a crushing blow to Mrs. Warren's pride, and, incidentally, a blow in a vastly more material direction, that her two older daughters had made something of a mess of matrimony, pecuniarily speaking.

She was confessedly ambitious for Nancy—Nancy, the youngest, the cleverest, the fairest of the three. Position she always *would* have, being a Warren, but she wanted the girl to have all the *other* good things of this life, that for so many years had been unsatisfied desires. Not, *of course*, that she would want Nancy to marry for money, she assured herself virtuously; that, in addition to being an indirect violation of an article of the Decalogue, was so distinctly plebeian. But it would be so comfortable if Nancy's affections could only be engaged in a direction where the coffers were not exactly empty. In other words, money would be no *obstacle* to perfect connubial bliss.

And think of the future which awaited Nancy if she would but say the word! Even the fondly cherished memory of the Warrens' past glory dwindled into nothingness in comparison.

To be sure, Mr. James Thornton was not so young as he *had* been ten years ago—"What's a man's age? He must hurry more, that's all," Mrs. Warren was fond of quoting—nor, in point of girth, did he assume *less* aldermanic proportions as time rolled on, but there was such a golden lining to these small clouds of affliction, that he was very generally looked upon as an altogether desirable *parti*.

It must be admitted that, among other minor idiosyncrasies, Mr. James Thornton would now and then slip into the vernacular. Under great stress of feeling, in the heat of argument and the like, he had been known to break the Sixth Commandment in so far as the English of the king was concerned.

"You was," "those kind," "between you and I," would slip out, but these variations from the strictly conventional were looked upon as little eccentricities in which a man whose fortune went far above the million mark could well afford to indulge.

"James is so droll," the aristocratic Mrs. Warren would say comfortably, resolutely closing her eyes to the fact that James' early environment, and not his sense of humor, was responsible for his occasional lapses. For James' father, old Sid Thornton, as he was always called, could not have boasted even a bowing acquaintance with the very people who were now not only falling over each other in their mad anxiety to entertain his son, but were even more than willing to find that same son a suitable wife among their own fair daughters. Old Sid Thornton's homely boy, Jim, running away to sea, and Mr. James Thornton, back to the old town with a fortune at his disposal, and living in a mansion that was the admiration and envy of the whole county, were two totally different entities.

Temptingly did the mothers with marriageable daughters display their wares. But of all the number, and many of them were passing fair, Mr. James Thornton cast longing eyes on only one, and that was Nancy Warren. Frankly, he wanted to get married, settle down, perhaps go into politics when he had time; he wanted a mistress for that beautiful house on the hill, some one who would know how to preside at his table and dispense his hospitality; some one, in short, who would know, instinctively, all the little niceties which were as a sealed book to him, and the tall, fair, thoroughbred Miss Warren seemed ideally fitted for the post.

Encouraged thereto by the tactful Mrs. Warren, James had poured into her eager ears the secrets of his honest soul, and Mrs. Warren had listened with a sweet and ready sympathy that had caused James quite to forget a certain stinging snubbing he had received from the selfsame lady, because once, back in the dark ages—before Nancy had opened her blue eyes on this naughty world—when he was a gawky, freckle-faced boy of sixteen, he had dared to walk home from church with Mildred, the eldest daughter of the house of Warren.

That was long before Mrs. Warren had felt poverty's vicious pinch, and before her life had become one continual struggle to make both ends meet. Somehow, her point of view had changed since then—points of view *will* change when the howl of the wolf is heard in the near distance, and yet one must smile and smile before one's little world—and, all other things being equal, Mr. James Thornton's home, garish with gold and onyx, and fairly shrieking with bad tapestries and faulty paintings and ponderous furniture, seemed as promising and fair a haven as she could possibly find for the youngest and only remaining daughter of the house of Warren. As for any little jarring notes in the decorative scheme of the Thornton abode, Mrs. Warren knew that she could trust Nancy to change all that, if she were once established there as the bride of Mr. James Thornton.

Now, Nancy had her share of the contrary spirit, and although she did not look altogether unfavorably upon the wooing of the affluent James, she took very good care that her mother should not suspect her state of mind. Perhaps that one unforgettable summer, of which her mother only dimly dreamed, made her despise herself for her tacit acquiescence, and she salved her accusing conscience with some outward show of opposition.

"Mr. Thornton is most kind, but his hands are positively beefy, mother," complained Nancy, one day, her short upper lip curling a bit scornfully. Mrs. Warren had just finished a long dissertation on the virtues of Mr. James Thornton, and, merely incidentally, of course, had touched on the great advantages that would accrue to the girl who should become his wife.

"You *ought* to know, my dear," Mrs. Warren replied, blandly, "that the sun of South Africa has a *rather*"—Mrs. Warren's broad *a* had a supercilious cadence—"toughening effect on the skin. Hands or no hands, he has more to recommend him than any man of *your* acquaintance." Mrs. Warren refrained from adding in what respect. "He is very much taken with you. Let him slip through your fingers and he'll be snapped up by some one else before you can say 'Jack Robinson.' Effie Paul"—Mrs. Warren began counting the pining ones on her fingers—"would give her old boots and shoes if she could annex him—she's a calculating creature; I never liked her. Alice Wood needs only half a chance to throw herself at his feet just as she already has done at his head. *Her* conduct has been disgraceful." Mrs. Warren sniffed the sniff of the virtuous and blameless. "There's not a girl of your acquaintance who would not jump at the chance of becoming

Mrs. James Thornton."

"Did you ever read that story of Kipling's where he says, 'Regiments are like women—they will do anything for trinketry'?" inquired Nancy, calmly.

"Kipling may know a great deal about regiments, but he knows *nothing* about women," said Mrs. Warren, severely. "I am surprised to hear a girl of your age advocating any such idea! I have a higher opinion of my sex, thank Heaven!" She assumed the air of an early Christian martyr.

"Well, I think they're a pretty mercenary lot," said Nancy, stolidly.

"Not at all. People sometimes have a proper sense of the eternal fitness of things," her mother returned, with withering inconsistency. "Not, of course," she added, hastily, "that I would *consent* to your marrying Mr. Thornton if you didn't *care* for him."

Nancy's face was a study.

"I think too much of *him* for that." Mrs. Warren threw her head back proudly.

"He's a trifle unideal, mother; a bit different, you must admit," Nancy laughed. "To begin with, he has a regular bay window."

"Don't be vulgar, Anne," her mother said, sharply. "He inherits flesh."

"Yes, I remember once hearing dad say that old Sid Thornton looked exactly like an inflated bullfrog," Nancy laughed, wickedly.

"Your dear father had an unfortunate way of expressing himself." Mrs. Warren drew herself up stiffly. "And I must say, my dear, that you are much more like poor, dear Charles than you are like me." Mrs. Warren wiped away a tear, and Nancy wondered vaguely whether the tear was for her late and not too loudly lamented father or for the absence of *her* likeness to his relict.

The next moment Nancy, swiftly penitent, was at her mother's side, and, taking the still wonderfully young face between her hands, said softly: "Kiss me, Marmee. I'm a brute, I know I am. I know what an awful struggle it has been to keep up appearances. I—I'm sick of it all, too. Only—only, I must think, that's all. I must be perfectly sure—that I really *care*—for Mr. Thornton. Don't say anything more now, dearie," she pleaded, as her mother started to make some reply. "I'm going off to think." And, kissing her mother tenderly, this strange little creature of varying moods and tenses went up to her own room to have it out with herself. It was the one place where Nancy Warren felt that she could be perfectly honest with her own soul, where all shams and insincerities could safely be laid aside without fear of that arch-tyrant of a small town, Mrs. Grundy.

She opened her window, and, sitting down on the floor in front of it, her head on the broad sill, gazed, with curiously mingled emotions, at the imposing pile of gray stone on the hill, where Mr. James Thornton lived and moved and had his being.

Down deep in her heart of hearts, Nancy Warren knew that she was far more like her mother than that very lovely and very conventional woman dreamed.

She was a luxury-loving soul—things that were mere accidents to other women were absolute necessities to her. With a longing that almost amounted to a passion, she craved jewels, good gowns, laces and all the other dear, delightful pomps and vanities of this world, which only a plethoric purse can procure.

She reveled in the violets and orchids which, so sure as the day dawned, came down from the Thornton conservatories for the greater adornment of the house of Warren.

The rides in the fastest machines in the county, the cross-country runs on Mr. James Thornton's thoroughbred hunters, all these were as meat and drink to her.

Yes, Mr. James Thornton's offer was certainly tempting. It meant that everything in the world for which she most cared would be hers except—but that was singularly out-of-date. Nobody really married for that any more. To be sure, her sisters had, but she could not see that they were glaringly happy. And Mr. James Thornton was a good soul—everybody admitted that. And yet—for an instant the gray stone building in the distance, bathed in the golden radiance of the setting sun, grew misty and blurred. She saw another sunset, all pink and green and soft, indefinite violet, and above the deep, sweet, ceaseless sound of a wondrously opalescent sea she heard a man's voice ring clear and true with a love as eternal as that same changeless sea. She felt again that strange, sweet, unearthly happiness that comes to a woman once and once only. She buried her face in her hands to shut out the sight of that gray stone house on the hill, bathed in the significant, mocking, golden radiance of the setting sun. She heard again that man's voice, crushed and broken with a dull, hopeless despair. She saw his face grow pale as death as he heard her words of cruel, worldly wisdom. She felt again that same bitter ache at the heart, that horrible, gnawing sense of irreparable loss, as she had voluntarily put out of her life "the only good in the world."

"But we were too poor," she cried, passionately, jumping to her feet and throwing her head back defiantly. "It would have been madness—for me." She looked out of the window again at the gray stone house on the hill, and laughed mirthlessly.

Then she walked slowly away from the window, and stood irresolute for a moment, in the center of the room.

"This horrid, beastly poverty!" she burst out vehemently. "I'm sick of it all—of our wretched, miserable makeshifts. I'm

tired, so tired, of everything. It will be such a rest." She rushed excitedly to the door, and ran, with the air of one who knows delay is fraught with danger, downstairs to her mother's room.

"Mother"—Mrs. Warren looked up fearfully, as she heard her daughter's voice—"I have thought it all over."

"Yes?" said Mrs. Warren, weakly. The reaction was almost too much for her after the half hour of sickening suspense.

"You must see Mr. Thornton when he comes to-night, for I have a splitting headache and I'm going to bed." Her mother stared at her blankly. Was this the end of all her hopes? "To-day is Tuesday—tell him that I will give him my answer Friday night. And, mother"—her voice dropped in a half-ashamed way—"the answer will be yes."

"My darling child"—Mrs. Warren took her daughter in her arms—"this is the very proudest and happiest moment of my life."

"Yes, mother, I know," Nancy freed herself from the clinging embrace. "I'm happy, awfully happy, too"—she said it as one would speak of the weather or some other deadly commonplace. "I think Mr. Thornton will make a model husband. And—and it's an end to all our nasty little economies!"

"Anne, don't be so material," Mrs. Warren interrupted, in a shocked voice.

"I'm not, mother; only think"—Nancy's eyes glistened—"no more velveteen masquerading as velvet, no more bargain-counter shoes and gloves, no more percaline petticoats with silk flounces, no more *plain* dresses because shirring and tucking take a few more yards; no more summers spent in close, cooped-up hall bedrooms in twelve-dollar-a-week hotels; grape-fruit every morning, and cream always!" She laughed half hysterically. "And Mr. Thornton is *so* good! It's wonderful to be so happy, isn't it, Marmee?"

Mrs. Warren looked at her apprehensively for a moment. "You're sure," she faltered—"you're sure you're doing it all without a regret for—for anybody, Nancy?"

Nancy's nails went deep into the palms of her hands. "Without a regret, Marmee," she smiled, brightly.

"And that you think you will be perfectly happy with James?"

"Perfectly," said Nancy, evenly.

Mrs. Warren, reassured, was radiant. "My darling child," she breathed, softly, "this means everything to me."

"You'll explain about the headache, won't you, Marmee?" Nancy asked, moving hurriedly toward the door. She knew that she should scream if she stayed a moment longer in her mother's presence.

"Yes, indeed, and I'm so sorry about the pain." Her mother followed her to the door. "Take some——"

"I have everything upstairs, thank you, mother. Good-night."

"Good-night, my darling child." Those kisses were the fondest her mother had ever given her. "How I wish that your poor dear father could know of our perfect happiness!"

Nancy passed out into the hall, closed the door behind her, and leaned for a moment against the wall. Mrs. Warren's idea of perfect happiness would have received a severe shock, could she have heard Nancy murmur, brokenly: "Dear old dad! Pray Heaven you *don't* know that your little Nance is a miserable, mercenary coward!"

There is a certain sense of relief that follows the consummation of a long-delayed decision, no matter how inherently distasteful that decision may be, and Nancy's first feeling when she awoke on the following morning was one of thankfulness that the preliminary step had been taken.

All burdens seem lighter, everything takes a different hue, in the morning when the sun is shining and the birds are singing, and after the months of sickening indecision Nancy experienced such a delightful sense of rest, such a freedom from suspense, that she actually laughed aloud as she said to herself: "Oh, I guess perhaps it's not going to be so bad, after all!"

By the time that Mr. James Thornton's daily offering of violets and orchids had arrived, she had about decided that she was a rather levelheaded young woman, and when, an hour after that, she found herself seated beside the devoted James, in his glaringly resplendent automobile, skimming along at an exhilarating pace over a fine stretch of country road, she had come to the conclusion that that arch-type of female foolishness, the Virgin with the Unfilled Lamp, was wisdom incarnate compared to the woman who deliberately throws aside the goods the gods provide her. Oh, yes, Nancy was fast becoming the more worthy daughter of a worthy mother!

James Thornton, reassured by what Mrs. Warren had delicately hinted to him the evening before, exulted in Nancy's buoyant spirits. He had never seen her so attractive. She chattered away merrily, laughed at his weighty jokes and his more or less pointless stories, and even forgot to be angry when for one brief, fleeting instant his massive hand closed over her slim, aristocratic one. It seemed too good to be true that this fascinating bit of femininity was soon to be his.

When they finally returned to the Warrens' modest house, the wily chauffeur, looking after them as they walked along the nasturtium-bordered path that led to the porch, winked the wink of one on the inside, and smiled broadly as he murmured: "She's a crackajack! And if there ain't somethin' doin' *this* time, I'll eat my goggles!"

“Don’t you think, mother,” said Nancy, an hour or so later—they were sitting in Nancy’s room, Mrs. Warren, with unusual condescension, having come up for a little chat—“that it would have been rather nicer to have had dinner here Friday night, the eventful Friday night”—a queer little tremor ran over her—“instead of at Mr. Thornton’s?”

“Why, no,” said Mrs. Warren, complacently; “I think it will make everything easier for James if we are up there. You know he is inclined to be diffident, Nancy. A man always appears to better advantage in his own house.”

“And of course that is the only thing to be considered.” Nancy smiled half bitterly. She had lost a little of the buoyancy of a few hours before.

“Why, of course, my dear,” Mrs. Warren began, hastily, “if you prefer to——?”

“Oh, no, let it go at that,” returned Nancy, carelessly. “It will be all the same at the end of a lifetime.” She shrugged her shoulders as she spoke. “What shall I wear, mother?” she asked the next moment, with an entire change of manner. “My white, virginal simplicity and all that sort of rot; my shabby little yellow, or the scarlet? Those are my ‘devilish all,’ you know.”

“The white, by *all* means, Nancy.” Mrs. Warren’s tone was impressive; and for reasons of her own she chose to ignore the slang.

“Pink rose in the hair, I suppose, a *Janice Meredith* curl, bobbing on my neck and nearly scratching the life out of me, a few *visibly invisible* little pink ribbons, and any other ‘parlor tricks’ I happen to know——”

“Anne!” Her mother frowned angrily.

“Then be led into the conservatory”—Nancy paid no attention to the interruption—“have the moonlight turned on. Horrors, think of that artificial moonlight!” Nancy shuddered. “And then say yes! Heavens! I hope I shan’t say yes until it’s time. It would be awful to miscue at that stage of the game!”

Mrs. Warren rose abruptly from her chair, and without a word started for the door, quivering with indignation.

“There! I’ve been a brute again,” cried Nancy, penitently, dashing after her mother.

“Yes, I think you have,” blazed Mrs. Warren.

“I was only fooling, dearie; it’s all going to be lovely, and I’m going into that conservatory just as valiantly as the Rough Riders charged up old San Juan! Only, Marmee, don’t ask me to wear white—that would be *too* absurd! Frankly, I’m susceptible to color. You’ve heard about the little boy who whistled in the dark to keep his courage up?” Mrs. Warren smiled through her tears. “Well, I’m going to wear my red—red is cheerful, and not *too* innocent, and—and courageous—I mean,” Nancy explained, hastily, as she caught her mother’s look of wonder. “It always requires *some* courage for a girl to say she will marry a man, even when the circumstances are as—as happy as they are in this case. Didn’t you feel just a little bit queer when you told dad you’d marry him?”

“Why, yes, I suppose I did,” said Mrs. Warren, half doubtfully.

“Well, then,” said Nancy, logically, “you can understand just what I mean. I’ve a scrap of lace”—reverting to the burning question—“that I’m going to hunt up, that will freshen the red a lot, and some day, Marmee”—she took her mother’s face between her cool, slim hands, and laughed with a fine assumption of gayety—“we’ll have such closetfuls of dainty, bewitching ‘creations’ that we’ll quite forget we ever envied Mother Eve because she didn’t have to rack her brains about what to wear.”

Mrs. Warren laughed. Her indignation had vanished. Nancy had a winsome way with her when she chose that was irresistible to the older woman.

“Now you go take a nice little nap, Marmee”—she kissed her mother lightly on the forehead—“while the future Mrs. James Thornton ferrets out the scrap of lace which is to be the *pièce de résistance* of *Juliet’s* costume when she goes to meet her portly *Romeo!*” She laughed merrily, and with a sweeping courtesy ushered her mother out of the room.

As soon as the door had closed behind Mrs. Warren, Nancy, singing lustily, yet with a certain nervousness, as if to drown all power of thought, bustled about the room, peering into topsy-turvy bureau drawers and ransacking inconsequent-looking boxes, with a half-feverish energy, as though upon the unearthing of that particular piece of lace depended her hopes of heaven.

It seemed to be an elusive commodity, that scrap of rose-point; for twenty minutes’ patient search failed utterly to bring it to the light of day.

Suddenly, Nancy espied a big, important-looking black walnut box on the floor of her closet, half hidden by a well-worn party coat which depended from the hook just above it. It was a mysterious-looking box, delightfully suggestive of old love letters and tender fooleries of that sort, or *would* have been, had it not been the property of an up-to-date, worldly-wise young woman who knew better than to save from the flames such sources of delicious torment, such instruments of exquisite torture.

In an instant Nancy had dragged the box to the door of the closet, and was down on her knees in front of it, going through its contents with ferret-like eagerness.

Yes! Her search was at last rewarded! For there, down under a pair of white satin dancing slippers, in provokingly easy view, lay the much desired finery.

She put her hand under the slippers to draw it from its resting place, and as she felt the lace slip easily as though across some smooth surface, looked with idle curiosity down into the box. Instantly a sharp little cry rang through the room, and she withdrew her hand as swiftly as though she had unearthed a nest of rattlers. Her face was ashen, her breath came quick and short.

“Oh, I didn’t know it was there!” she gasped. “I had forgotten all about it. I thought it had been destroyed with all the rest. Why is it left to torment me now, now, *now?*” she cried, angrily. Then, with a swift revulsion of feeling, she murmured, brokenly: “Oh, Boy, Boy, is there no escaping you? No forgetting you just when I am trying to so hard?”

She sat very still for a moment. Then she put her hand into the box again and drew out, not the precious scrap of rose-point—that, to her, was as though it had never been—not a blurred, tear-stained love letter, not a bunch of faded violets, but a little, fat, bright blue pitcher, with great, flaming vermilion roses on either side, the most grotesquely and uncompromisingly ugly bit of crockery that one would find from Dan to Beersheba.

Have you never noticed that it is often the most whimsically inconsequent, the most utterly ordinary, the most intrinsically prosaic of inanimate things that, with a sudden and overwhelming rush, will call into being memories the tenderest, the deepest, the saddest? It may be a worthless little book, a withered flower ghastly in its brown grave clothes, a cheap, tawdry trinket; it may be something as intangible as a few bars of a hackneyed song ground out on a wheezy, asthmatic hand organ. But just so surely as one has lived—and therefore loved—one knows the inherent power to sting and wound in things the most pitiably commonplace. De Musset speaks of the “little pebble”:

/* But when upon your fated way you meet Some dumb memorial of a passion dead, That little pebble stops you, and you dread To bruise your tender feet. */

So to Nancy, coming suddenly and at the psychological moment upon that absurd bit of blue clay cajoled from a friendly waiter at a little, out-of-the-way Bohemian restaurant, one never-to-be-forgotten night, the bottom seemed to have dropped out of the universe. The things of this world seemed suddenly to lose their value, and to grow poor and mean and worthless. And she only knew that she was miserable, and heart-hungry, and soul-sick for one who never came, for one who never again *would* come, forever and forever.

With the little blue pitcher held tightly in her hand, she walked over to the window and looked up at the big gray stone house that was soon to know her as its mistress. And for the very first time the perfect realization of what it all would mean was borne in upon her. She stood there for several minutes motionless, then with a violent, angry shake of the head she cried out in a high, defiant voice: “No, no, no, not until—not yet, not yet!”

She walked rapidly away from the window, and put the little blue pitcher in a post of honor on the mantelpiece. Then, crossing over to the dressing table, she picked up her purse and carefully counted the money. The result must have been satisfactory, for a half-triumphant smile flitted across her face. After that, from the mysterious depths of that same purse, she unearthed a time-table and studied it earnestly.

Then, sitting at her tiny desk, she nervously scrawled these words:

> Dear Mother: I have gone to New York to spend the night with Lilla Browning—made up my mind suddenly, and as I knew you were asleep, didn’t want to bother you. Knew you couldn’t possibly have any objection, because you are so fond of Lil. Want to do some shopping in the morning, and thought this would be the best way to get an early start. Expect me home to-morrow afternoon on the 5:45. Best regards to Mr. Thornton. Have Maggie press my red dress; tell her to be careful not to scorch it. I found the lace. By-by. Nancy.

“All’s fair in love and war,” she murmured, softly, rising from her chair, and taking off stock and belt preparatory to a change of costume. She smiled happily as she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror. Her eyes were starlike, her whole expression was perfectly radiant.

“And you’re responsible for it all, you little imp!” She shook her finger at the fat, bright blue pitcher with flaming vermilion roses on either side, as it stood on the mantelpiece in blissful unconsciousness of its total depravity.

In less than twenty minutes Nancy was dressed for the street and on her way to the railroad station. Ten minutes later two telegrams flashed over the wires. One ran:

> Mrs. Jonathan Browning, West Seventy-second Street, New York City: Will spend to-night with you. Arrive about ten. Don’t meet me. Nancy.

The second one was more brief:

> Mr. Philip Peirce. Princeton Club, New York City: Dine with me to-night at Scarlatti’s at seven. Anne Warren.

Not until Nancy, after dismissing the hansom, found herself solitary and alone on the sidewalk in front of the gayly lighted little Bohemian restaurant, did she realize the foolishness, the craziness, of her undertaking. In fact, she had no very clear idea of what that undertaking was.

She looked after the retreating hansom, and a wretched, half-frightened homesickness swept over her.

Suppose Phil had not received the telegram! Suppose, receiving it, he had refused to come! She couldn’t blame him, although he had once said that, no matter what——

And then—in speaking of it afterward, Nancy always declared that it was a positive physiological fact that at that moment her heart was located somewhere in the roof of her mouth—some one caught both her hands in his, some one’s glad voice cried “Nance!” and in the twinkling of an eye the homesickness and the memory of the weeks of wretchedness had vanished, and all the misery of the past and all the uncertainty of the future were swallowed up in

the joy of the present.

“I’m so sorry to be late.” Phil’s voice was as remorseful as though he had committed *all* of the seven deadly sins. “I received your telegram just as I was leaving the club to keep an engagement. Took me ten minutes at the ’phone to break the engagement decently. Jove! but I am glad to see you,” he went on, enthusiastically.

“I hoped you would be, but of course I didn’t know.” It was not at all what Nancy had intended to say, but her heart thumped so furiously that she could scarcely think. She was mortally afraid that Phil would hear it pounding away.

“You know I told you that I should *always* be glad to see you, Nance.” Then, abruptly: “I hope you haven’t caught cold standing here waiting. It’s not warm to-night. Shall we go inside now?” Nancy nodded, and Phil led the way into Scarlatti’s.

She took the whole room in at a glance, and breathed a sigh of contentment so long, so deep, that it must have come from the tips of her toes.

There was the same absurd little orchestra in their same absurd “monkey clothes,” the same motley crowd of half foreign, wholly happy men and women, the same indescribable odor of un-American cooking—she even rejoiced in *that* —and, best of all, on the long shelf that ran around the four sides of the room were the same little, fat, bright blue pitchers with great naming vermilion roses on either side. To be sure, she knew that one was missing, but that was mere detail.

“Phil,” Nancy whispered, eagerly, pulling his coat sleeve violently as the waiter, with much bowing and scraping, started to lead the way in another direction, “*our* table is empty. Right over there—the tenth from the door. We always had that one, you know, under the picture of ‘The Girl with the Laughing Eyes.’ I always remembered that it was the tenth.”

“Surely, we’ll have the tenth, by all means.” Phil tapped the waiter on the back, and motioned in the direction of the empty table.

“I thought perhaps you’d rather not,” he whispered to Nancy, as they slipped into the old, familiar places. Evidently Phil had a memory for numbers, too. So often it is only the woman who can *count ten*.

“Now,” began Phil, as soon as the dinner had been ordered and other preliminaries attended to, “tell me how on earth you and I happen to be here together? Did you drop straight from the clouds? Or aren’t you here at all? Are you just a bit from a wildly improbable dream?”

“No,” said Nancy, glibly, her equilibrium restored; “I’m spending the night with Lilla Browning, and it suddenly occurred to me that it would be fun for us to have dinner together.” She paused a moment. “Once more,” she added, watching Phil’s face closely. “And isn’t it just like that other time—the last time we were here together?” Phil looked at her curiously. “The people, and the soft lights, and the funny little musicians, and my meeting you——”

“Oh-h!” said Phil, quietly.

“And—-and everything,” finished Nancy, lamely.

“Don’t you remember?” she went on. “The paper had sent you off on some pesky assignment, and you were just a wee bit late. And we had a sort of a tiff about it until I happened to look up at the picture over the table, and ‘The Girl with the Laughing Eyes’ was looking straight down at us? And then, somehow, I had to laugh, too, and we made up. Don’t you remember?”

Phil nodded. Did he not remember everything? Had he not *been* remembering ever since? That was the pity of it all!

“We were pretty happy that night, weren’t we, Phil?”

“Don’t, Nance.” Phil’s bright eyes had a curious, unusual brightness at that moment.

“And I made you—simply *made* you, you didn’t want to—get me one of those foolish little pitchers.” She pursued her theme relentlessly. “The waiter was so funny!” Nancy laughed merrily as at some droll recollection, “Phil, that was a whole year ago.”

“Nonsense!” said Phil, indignantly. “It’s ten years ago, if it’s a day! Before you grew to be a worldly-wise old lady, and before I had become a cynical old man.”

“You don’t look very old, Phil.”

“Well, I am; I’m as old as the hills. Do you know it has all been an awful pity, Nance?”

“What?” she asked, very softly, smiling adorably.

“Oh, everything——” He stopped short, the smile had escaped him. “Come,” he said, abruptly, “let’s talk about the weather, the—the—what a terrible winter it has been, hasn’t it? Did you have lots of skating up in the country?”

“Yes, lots—about two months too much of it, and it has been the worst winter I ever hope to live through; but really, Phil, I didn’t come to New York to talk about the weather.” The laughter died out of Nancy’s blue eyes. “I—I think I came to New York to ask your advice about something.”

“My advice?” echoed Phil, wonderingly.

"Yes, I *think* so. Phil, suppose there, was a girl whose father had lost all his money and then had gone to work and died, and had left her and her mother just this side of the poorhouse. And suppose she and her mother had had to pinch and scrimp to keep their heads above the water, until they were sick of the whole business. And suppose a man with shoals of money—a fat, sort of elderly man, who wore diamond rings, and said 'you was,' and did lots of other things you and I don't like, yet was very kind and good—suppose this man wanted to marry this girl. Now, what would you advise her to do, if her mother were secretly crazy to have her marry him?"

"And she didn't care for anyone else?" Philip's tone was coldly judicial.

"And she didn't care for anyone else." His coldness frightened the lie through her unwilling lips, but she went white as she uttered it.

Philip eyed her narrowly.

"I can't see why you want *my* advice," he said, dully.

Then, very suddenly: "Nancy, suppose there was a man who was rather poor, as things go nowadays, and who had once been very fond of a girl who had treated him pretty badly. And suppose there was a woman"—with swift jealousy Nancy remembered the engagement Philip had broken in order to dine with her that evening—"not a very young woman, who had shoals of money, as you say, who rouged a little, and helped nature along a little in several ways, and did a number of other things that you and I don't exactly like, but who at heart was a very good sort—would you advise this man to marry her?"

"And he didn't care for anyone else?" Nancy whispered.

"And he didn't care for anyone else," said Phil, steadily.

Nancy bit her tongue to keep from crying out. Oh, the mortification, the humiliation, of it all! She would have given a week out of her life to have been back home.

"Why, if he cared for no one else, I——" The words came with an effort. "Who is she, Phil?"

"I'll tell you in a moment. Who is *he*, Nancy?" he asked, sternly.

"James Thornton—you've heard of him. Oh, what a pair of worldlings we are!" She pulled herself together with a supreme effort, and, raising her glass of red Hungarian wine to her lips, said lightly: "Here's to my successor! May she forgive me for this one last evening!" Her hand trembled, and some of the wine splashed on her white waist.

"It looks like a drop of blood." She shivered slightly. "Champagne doesn't stain." Her mouth laughed, but her eyes were full of a dull despair. "When we are married we shall both be drinking that! Do you remember that foolish little song I used to sing, 'When we are married'?" She tried to hum it, but failed miserably. "We shall sing our songs with a difference, now. Oh, Boy, Boy, it has all been my fault, hasn't it?"

"What do you mean?" he asked, tensely.

"Oh, everything," she said, wearily. "The worldliness and the wretchedness, and now it is too late! 'Couldst thou not watch with me?' Boy, I'm afraid I'm going to cry." Her lip quivered pitifully.

"Nance, do you *care?*"

"Care? Of course I care!" She threw her head back defiantly, and her eyes filled with angry tears. "If I hadn't, I shouldn't be here to-night. I—I'd have been married two months ago. God knows I wish I had, before—before all this happened!"

"Then listen to me, Nance." Philip spoke very quietly, but his eyes burned into her soul. "There isn't any other woman, there never has been, there never could be. I love you, and love you only, with my whole soul, my whole strength——"

"But you said——" began Nancy, in a weak little voice.

"Never mind what I *said*," he answered, almost roughly. "I'd sworn I'd never trouble you again without some sign from you. Yet the instant I saw you, out there on the sidewalk, it was all I could do to keep from kneeling down and kissing your blessed little shoes. But I wouldn't have done it for fifteen thousand different worlds. Suddenly, when you were talking about that damnable man"—Phil ground his teeth savagely—"and his 'shoals of money,' that other idea occurred to me—a last resort, a final, forlorn hope that if you had a spark of feeling left for me you might show it then, and I made it all up out of whole cloth."

"Philip, you're a brute!" The tears were falling now, but the wraith of a smile hovered about the corners of Nancy's mouth.

"I know I am. I'm despicable, mean, cowardly, unmanly——"

"Hateful, paltry, contemptible." Nancy helped out his collection of adjectives, but, strange to relate, her smile deepened.

"And—happy!" finished Phil, triumphantly. "Nance"—-the tone was masterful—"you've *got* to marry me now, right off, to-night. I'm never going to let you get away from me again. I don't care for all the James Thorntons and all the filthy money in the world. Will you, Little Girl?" The masterful tone gave place to one of pleading tenderness. "Will you give it all up for the man who has never stopped loving you and worshiping you for one single instant since the blessed day

when you first came into his life?”

“Oh, Phil, Phil, you wicked, contemptible old darling, if you hadn’t asked me to pretty soon, I—I’d have asked you. I’ve tried to get along without you, and I just simply *can’t!*”

“Nance, you’re an angel!” cried Phil, rapturously. He leaned across the table, with a fine disregard of appearances, and kissed Nancy’s hands. But nobody noticed it at all—except the waiter at a respectful distance, secretly jubilant in the expectation of an unusually large tip, and he didn’t count. That is the beauty of those out-of-the-way Bohemian restaurants—people are so absorbed in their own love-making that they never have time to watch anyone else’s.

“You’re a perfect angel!” Phil declared again, fervently.

“I know I am; and I’m so happy”—Nancy’s swift transition from grave to gay was always one of her greatest charms—“that I’m afraid if I don’t get out of here pretty soon, they’ll have to call in the police, for there’s no telling what I may do! I feel like dancing a jig on top of this table!”

“I dare you,” laughed Phil, happily.

“Well, it’s only on your account that I don’t,” she said, airily. “Even though you are a liar, you look so respectable! And, oh, Phil,” she went on, irrelevantly, “I have so much to tell you. I’ll tell you all about everything—a certain fat blue pitcher I found the other day and that really brought me here to New York, about Mr. James Thornton and his artificial moonlight, and everything else—on our way to the minister’s. But I say, Phil”—here the Charles Warren, matter-of-fact strain asserted itself—“if we are going to be married to-night, we must hurry, for it’s after nine now, and I’ve got to be at Lilla’s by ten o’clock. I wouldn’t be late for anything. How surprised she’ll be when Mr. and Mrs. Philip Peirce sail in!” She looked up suddenly at the picture over the table. “Boy,” she said, very tenderly, “don’t you think ‘The Girl with the Laughing Eyes’ looks as though she approved?”

But Phil had no eyes save for the shining eyes across the table, so his answer cannot be described.

“Phil,” said Nancy, about a week later—they had just finished installing Phil’s few Lares and Penates in their new quarters—“isn’t this just the coziest little nook you’ve ever seen?”

“Absolutely,” said Phil, with conviction.

“I wish mother could see how——” The smile was a bit wistful. “Phil, I really think we ought to go up to see mother. Of course she’s furious—her not answering our telegram is proof positive of that. I’m scared to death at the thought of seeing her. She can look you through and through so, when she disapproves! I *do* think she might have written. We haven’t done anything so perfectly dreadful. You don’t suppose she is sick, do you?” she asked, anxiously.

“Why, no, Little Girl,” said Phil, soothingly; “we’d have heard in some way if there had been anything of that sort.”

“I think I’m getting nervous about her. Will you go up with me to-day, dear?”

“Why, certainly, Nance; whenever you want to go, just say the word. I’m having a holiday now!” Phil laughed like a happy schoolboy.

“All right, then, we’ll go to-day. And please be on your very bestest behavior, Philly-Boy.”

“Don’t worry. I’ll be the dutiful son to the queen’s taste.”

“And be sure,” adjured Nancy, solemnly, “to tell mother you’re really making quite a lot of money now, that we’re not starving, and that I’m going to have some new clothes the first of next month.”

Late that afternoon, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Peirce reached the Warren house. Three pulls at the bell brought no response, and all rattlings and shakings of the doorknob were without result. The door was as tightly closed as though it never expected to be opened again till the crack o’ doom.

At the back of the house the same conditions existed. Not a door, not a window, would yield.

Nancy was plainly vexed. “The Prodigal Son had a much better time than this when *he* came home,” she complained, ruefully.

She and Phil walked around to the front of the house again, and down the nasturtium-bordered path that led from the porch to the street. There was absolutely no sign of life anywhere.

Suddenly, Nancy heard the “touf-touf” of an automobile, and down the road at a rapid pace came Mr. James Thornton’s gorgeous machine, the chauffeur its sole occupant.

“Henry,” she said, walking to the edge of the sidewalk, “can you tell me where Mrs. Warren is?”

“No, miss, I cannot.” He drew himself up stiffly. Mrs. Warren’s daughter was evidently in his bad books.

“Is Mr. Thornton at home?” she asked, timidly.

“No, miss, he is not.” His lips clicked. Then, with sudden condescension, and head held very high, eyes looking straight ahead, he added: “Mr. Thornton is away on his wedding trip.”

"His *what?*" gasped Nancy, weakly.

"Him and Mrs. Warren was married yesterday," he said, proudly. "She's a fine, fine lady!" And, touching the visor of his cap, he started the machine down the street.

Nancy leaned against a tree, too stunned for words. Then, as the humor of the whole situation flashed over her, she began to laugh, and laughed until, for lack of breath, she couldn't laugh any longer.

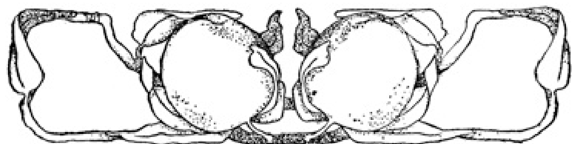
"Why, it's—the funniest thing—I've ever heard of, Phil!" she gasped.

"Well, it keeps the 'shoals of money' in the family!" said Phil, philosophically, and then he howled.

"Yes," Nancy mused, still panting for breath, "mother once said that if I let him slip through my fingers some one else would snap him up before you could say 'Jack Robinson." Her eyes danced. "I wonder if anyone said 'Jack Robinson'?"

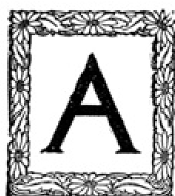
"No, darling, there wasn't time. But, at any rate, we've made our wedding call on our parents," said Phil, gayly, "and I think we might as well go back to 'little old New York'!"

Then, hand in hand, like two gladsome children, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Peirce retraced their steps toward the station.



THE LADY & THE CAR

By Churchill Williams



And, if you don't mind, old fellow, will you bring over the guns yourself?"

That had been Tony Rennert's parting charge as he bolted from the breakfast table at the Agawan Club for the dogcart which was scheduled to make connections with the eight-forty-five for the city. Two days before, after eighteen months of leisurely travel abroad, I had been met on landing with Tony's urgent message to join him in bachelor quarters at the Agawan, and with an alacrity born of the wish to get close again to one of the "old crowd," I had straightway come down to the club in the twenty-horse-power car which had carried me faithfully for six weeks over the French roads. Come down to find myself among a lot of men I did not know and for whom, to be entirely frank, I did not care.

Agawan had changed since last I was there. Then it was a big, comfortable shooting box, with a good cook, an old-fashioned barn, and, behind it, kennels for half a dozen clever dogs. Now it was triple its former size, rebuilt and modernized, with many bedrooms, a double-deck piazza and a dancing floor. The barn was gone, a fine stable had taken its place, and tennis courts and golf links occupied a large part of its one-time brush-grown pasturage and sloping meadows. In short, it was a country club, glaring in its fresh paint and with all the abominations which the name of that institution suggests to a man to whom knickerbockers and loose coats, a gun, a dog, a pipe and never the flutter of a petticoat the whole day long give selfish but complete satisfaction.

Tony had fallen into evil ways. I suspected as much as soon as I saw the manner of his living; I was sure of it when he informed me, with detestable glee, that there was to be a big house-warming dance the following evening, at which—well, Morleton, three miles away, had undergone a boom in my absence, and from the houses there and from the city, too, were to come—girls. Privately I made up my mind that the dance was a thing I would miss, and Tony must have read disapproval on my face, for he said no more about the festivities, and a little later proposed the shooting. There were woodcock left in the marshes; he had seen them—by accident, I guessed. He would send to the city for the guns, and we would put in a good day together. That sounded better, and I acquiesced promptly.

But before we had arisen from the table a waiter brought a telegram, and Tony's face fell into glum lines. It was an important business message and called him to the city over the next night. There was no help for it, he explained; but, as I had my car, he hoped I would worry it out alone till he got back. He would send down the guns by express against a further delay, and—there a lingering spark of his former affection for the twelve-bores glowed into life—would I personally see that they came over from the railroad station safely?

So it was that, a little after nine o'clock the following evening, in accordance with a wire from Tony, I drew up at the station platform just as the last train pulled in. A vibrator spring on the car was badly out of tune; I was bent over, testing it, when a voice exclaimed, joyfully, almost at my elbow: "Oh, there you are! What a scare I have had!"

I started and looked up. The impression I got was of a modish and very much up-tilted hat and of a veil which hid everything beneath its brim and the collar of a long, loose coat. These and nothing much besides; for the single post-lamp left the platform in semi-darkness. But I realized that this was a lady who addressed me, and that there was a mistake which I could not too speedily correct.

“I beg your pardon,” I said, “but you see——”

“Of course I do,” the voice interrupted. “If I had not, I dare say I would have sat on the station platform until—until you had finished fussing with that old machine of yours. Oh! I have heard all about your pet weakness. It was by the car I identified you. But I forgive you. You have waited a whole train for me. Go on with your tinkering. Only let me have a seat in the car, and tell the agent to bring over my trunk.”

“Trunk!” I echoed.

“Yes, trunk! But not a very large one—you see, it is only for a few days. It will go nicely in the—now, what do you call the back part of your car?”

“The tonneau? But, really——”

The hat tilted just a shade more, and I was silenced by the command: “Not another word! Positively, you would keep me standing here forever. I had no idea you were so—contentious. *Please* help me in, and *please* have my trunk brought over. Here is my check. Then, if you insist, we can discuss the propriety of trunks on our way to the clubhouse.”

I hesitated; but I gave her my arm, and, when she had settled herself in the seat beside the driver’s, I walked over to where the agent stood beside the guns and a steamer trunk of modest size. I picked up the guns and told him to bring over the trunk. Together we put it into the tonneau, the while I debated with myself what to do and what to say. As a matter of fact, there seemed to be small choice. The lady was plainly determined to listen to no explanations. Moreover, to attempt to make her mistake clear to her just now was to place her in an embarrassing predicament; for whoever was to have met her had failed to appear, and already the station master had began to extinguish the lights. I caught at her words “the clubhouse.” That could be none other than the Agawan. Well, I would take her there; the trip should be quickly made, and I would do my best to keep her in ignorance of my identity, at least until she was among friends.

“Now, this is very nice,” she said, as I threw in the high gear and we shot into the darkness. “I’ve never been in an automobile before; we have very few of them in”—she named a little town in the South. “You must explain everything to me.”

I welcomed the invitation, and promised myself to keep the topic alive as long as there was need for conversation. But I had hardly begun an enthusiastic exposition of the principles of a four-cylinder, gear-driven, twenty-horse-power, French touring car, when she checked me. “I forgot,” she said. “We have never met before. We must start fair. You are to call me ‘Margery’; I hate ‘Miss Gans’ from one who is really an old friend. And I shall call you—let me see?—yes, for the present, I shall call you ‘Mr. Page.’”

I started. Who would not have started? “Page” is my Christian name. And I was to call her “Margery”? For just the briefest moment I wondered if my first impression of my companion could have been amiss. But I rallied my self-command and such shreds of gallantry as my life and my convictions had left. Undeniably she was a pretty girl, despite the disguising veil.

“It is a bargain,” I said. “I shall hold you to it. But why the ‘*Mister* Page’?”

“Toll to convention,” she answered. “Besides, what would Edith say?”

That was a poser. Who in thunder was Edith? But I felt that I was on the right track. “As for Edith,” I returned, “I don’t believe she would object.”

She shook her head wisely. “Well, *per*-haps not. But even ten years’ friendship has its breaking point. And a wife——” She stopped there. She seemed to be considering the question.

“Doesn’t it depend upon who is the wife?” I interpolated. Now I should learn if it was really I who was married.

“Yes,” she admitted. “But *yours!* Oh, I know Edith! Better even than you do. I knew her long before you had even heard of her, and I could have told you things which would have been—useful to you—if only you had come to me first.”

The thought was alluring. “I wish I had,” I said, with more fervor than discretion.

She turned upon me quickly, and her face was very close to my own for an instant. Through the veil I managed to get a glimpse of her eyes. They pleased me immensely. “Why? Why? What do you mean?” she asked. There was a soft little lift to her voice which affected me queerly. I made sure that some part of me had made a short circuit with one of the battery wires. Then she lifted her chin. “But—nonsense!” she said. “How could you? I was in a convent school when you met and married Edith.”

“And you haven’t seen her since?”

“Since she was married? You know I haven’t, you goose! Why, it is tonight I make my *entrée* into the world of fashion?”

“At Agawan,” I hazarded.

She nodded. “Where else? And *you* are to dance with me many times. Remember, I know none of the men there.”

For the first time in my life I ceased to feel scorn for an accomplishment which I did not possess. But dancing, I reflected, was of the future, and the future must provide against itself. “Margery” was very much of the present. Then abruptly it occurred to me that the present would soon be of the past if we continued to travel as we were now moving; and I promptly cut down our speed by one-half. I explained that the rest of the road to the club was dangerous at night.

She gave a little shiver. “And there is no other road?”

I remembered that there was—a longer road—and at the first turn to the right I took to it. In a way it was a safer road, and if there was an accident—what would “Edith” say?

We slipped along in silence for a while. Then I asked her if she was warm enough. It was a balmy evening, with the faintest of air stirring. She laughed.

Her amusement stung me, but I had just identified a landmark, and knew the clubhouse to be less than a mile away. So I made another brilliant sally. “I am coming to that dance!” I announced.

She regarded me with an amazement which was obvious, though I could not see her face. And then, “Will you please to tell me,” she inquired, “just when you made up your mind to that heroic act?”

After-reflection convinced me that nothing less than a criminal mistake in the mixing of my Rhine wine and seltzer was responsible for my reply. “Since I saw you,” I answered, solemnly.

“Since you saw me?” Then something in the statement, of which I was not immediately aware, appeared to impress her with its humor. She laughed.

I gave the steering wheel a vicious jerk. We sheered dangerously. She uttered a little, frightened cry, and her gloved fingers closed upon my wrist. I was absolutely certain I had short-circuited a battery wire when, her hand still resting on my arm, she pleaded: “Forgive me for laughing. I remember now that Edith said you did not dance. You are coming this evening just for me, aren’t you?”

What reply was there but the one I made?

“You poor fellow,” she went on, and it seemed as if there were a soft pressure from her fingers. “You poor fellow. But—I tell you what we will do. We will watch the dancing together—as often as I can steal away. And we will have a long talk by ourselves, if-if——”

“If what?” I asked.

“If Edith doesn’t mind!”

“Damn Edith!” was on my tongue, but politeness, rather than common sense, transmuted the sentence. “Oh, Edith won’t mind,” I declared, with conviction. And thereat we both laughed—though why, I am not sure. But all at once we seemed to know each other much better. And then the lights of the clubhouse came into view across the lawn, and we turned into the big gates.

During the passage of the driveway I devised an explanation. It was intended to salve my conscience for not plumping out the truth. The Lord alone knows what I intended should ensue. One thing only was clear to me—-we would have that “long talk to ourselves,” if it could be contrived. So it was agreed between us that I was to come up to the dancing floor as soon as I had stabled the automobile and put on evening clothes. Our exact meeting place was a vague locality described by her as “wherever Edith is.”

With that understanding we parted at the door of the clubhouse. I heard an attendant direct her to the ladies’ dressing room, and him I commissioned to have her trunk conveyed where she might wish. As she disappeared within the doorway her hat brim gave me a saucy little nod of farewell.

When I was in my room the enormity of my offense and the absurdity of my position were forced upon me. Here I was impersonating another man and under promise to meet my victim in the very presence of the wife of the man I impersonated, perhaps face to face with the man himself. There could be no explanation, no palliation of the trick I had played, which would allow me to retire with a resemblance of countenance. Who would credit my statement of innocence, even was I willing to throw the burden of the mistake on the shoulders of—Margery? *Margery!* I pronounced the name aloud, but in a whisper, and liked the sound of it so well that I said it again.

Then I realized that I was standing in front of my shaving mirror, one hand clasping a collar, the other a tie, and that the glass reflected an expression positively disgusting in its rapture. I chucked the collar into a corner and sat down on the edge of the bed to think it out. At the end of twenty minutes I was where I had started in. But my mind was made up. At least she should not find me a coward. I would do exactly as I had promised.

I shaved and dressed. Half an hour later I was standing in the doorway of the dancing floor trying to discover where “Edith” was.

But “my wife,” if present, inconsiderately was concealing her identity in the faces and figures of half a hundred or more women, not one of whom I knew. Margery apparently had not yet come upon the floor, or—the horrid thought obtruded itself—she had discovered who I was, or, rather, who I was not. And what more likely? I had been an ass not to think of this before. And as to the consequences? Each possibility was a shade more humiliating than the one before.

Then, just as I was about to turn away to hide myself, to forget myself, anywhere, anyhow, I saw Margery; and, to save my soul, I could not have left without a lingering look by which to remember all the sweet lines of her face and figure. Bereft of that long coat and close veil, for the first time I saw what I had only guessed at before. She had stepped from

the shelter of a palm to lay a detaining hand upon the arm of an older woman; and as she stood there, with bright eyes regarding the dancers, her head tilted back, the thought of flight fled from me.

The woman she stood beside was not “Edith,” but Mrs. “Ted” Mason—the wife of one of the best fellows I ever knew, and a stanch friend of mine. Instantly my resolve was made. Mrs. “Ted’s” loyalty should be put to the supreme test. She should be my confessor, and, unless I was mistaken, the counsel for my defense. I started on my way around the hem of promenaders.

Twice I was delayed by the incursions of dancers, and when I reached the side of my prospective ally she was alone. Out on the floor a slender figure in lavender was smiling in the face of her partner—a man I knew I was to dislike exceedingly when I should meet him.

Mrs. “Ted’s” eyes grew big when I stood before her. And when she spoke it was with the air of a tragedy queen. “Do I see aright? Is it you? Or is it your wraith? Is this Page Winslow? And is this scene of revelry—a dancing floor? Oh, Page, Page! In my old age to give me this shock is cruel—unlike you—utterly cruel, I say!”

My face burned for the shame I could not conceal, but I was beyond the point where any attack was to divert me. I explained—lies came so readily now. I was present to-night by promise to Tony Rennert, I said. Only by engaging to show myself at the dance had I been able to persuade him to give me his company for a day’s shooting. And Tony was detained in the city, and I was here alone, unprotected, liable at any moment to be seized with stage fright and to swoon. Such a thing would be disgraceful and embarrassing as well to all my friends—in other words, to herself. No, I corrected myself, that was not quite true. There was *one* other person present who might remember me—a Miss Gans——

“Margery Gans!” Mrs. Ted’s amazement left her speechless for a moment. Then, while the first words of my confession stuck in my throat, she burst out: “And you of all men! Why, she is just out of a convent school! Tonight is her first! How on earth——?”

It was harder than ever now to say what I was trying to say, and she gave me small opportunity. “Why? Why?” she resumed, and suddenly her voice took on a gravity which her mischievous eyes belied. “My dear Page, do you believe in the instrumentality of coincidence?”

My confusion was patent, and she went on. “Because, whatever you have believed, you must believe in it from this night. Do you know what has happened to Margery Gans?”

“What?” I gasped.

Mrs. “Ted” studied me from beneath lowered lids. “Oh!” she said, and “Oh!” again. Then she linked her arm in mine. “There are chairs behind this palm,” she suggested.

We sat down. “Page,” she said, “I would not have believed it of you if you had not told me yourself.”

“What?” I asked, but her gaze was disconcerting; and when she smiled wisely, I did not repeat the question.

She laid her fan across my hand. “I wonder,” she remarked, reflectively, “I wonder how and when you and Margery met. But, no, that is unfair. Don’t tell me. I am very glad you did meet—that is all. And I was nearer to the truth than I thought when I asked you about coincidences. This is what I was going to tell you. Margery is the guest to-night of Edith Page—Mrs. Stoughton Page. At the last moment Edith’s baby was taken ill with the croup, and she sent word she could not leave home. She asked me to act as chaperon. Soon afterward Stoughton Page arrived in his car with Margery, and must have hurried home at once when he heard the baby was sick, for I haven’t been able to find him. I have told Margery that Mrs. Page was detained at home, but I have not told her the details, and I don’t wish you to. She would think it more serious than it is, and it would spoil her evening.”

I nodded.

“And now,” she went on, “the affair is up to you and me. I am chaperon, and you are one of the few men she appears to know. What are you going to do about it?”

A minute before I would have replied: “Tell her the whole truth.” But now a way out of the immediate complications seemed to present itself—a way beset with difficulties, but still a way. I made the one reply which seemed to be safe. “Do?” I said. “Do all I can to give Miss Gans a good time. I don’t dance, you know, but——”

“But what?”

“But I’ll hang around and talk to her and take her into supper—if she’ll let me—and—all that sort of thing.”

“You dear!” cried Mrs. “Ted.” “You dear, self-sacrificing thing!” With this last she cocked a supercilious eye.

“But not if you’re going to bait me, or make fun of me afterward,” I qualified.

“I wouldn’t think of it,” declared Mrs. “Ted.”

“And you promise not to mention my name to her, not even to allude to me? This sort of thing is altogether out of my line.”

“You surprise me,” she said, but she promised.

So it happened that, a little later, in one of those nooks which the genius of decorators devises, and the man of

discernment discovers, Margery and I were having that talk—“all to ourselves.” It developed that we had an affinity of tastes. It was her ambition to travel—she had never traveled. She delighted in long tramps—heretofore she had found no one to be her companion. She was sure that automobiling was “just the best sort of fun,” judging from the one ride she had had. And so time slipped by, and I had utterly forgotten “Edith” and the other “Mr. Page,” and everything else except one thing, when Mrs. “Ted’s” voice, just outside the barrier of foliage which hid us, complained that Miss Gans could not be found anywhere.

Margery heard, and flushed. “Come on,” she said. “This is disgraceful.” She rose.

“But——” I objected.

“No buts,” she insisted. “Have you forgotten Edith?”

“For the time being,” I admitted.

She brushed past me. Her bearing was one of indignant scorn. But, over her shoulder, she remarked, as she looked back: “What a nice place this would be to eat supper.”

I replied judiciously that whoever selected it for that purpose should anticipate the supper hour by early occupation. I added that it was my intention to pass the intervening time in the smoking room—alone.

She declared that I smoked too much. In Edith’s absence, she supposed, it was her duty, etc. Supper was at twelve o’clock; eleven-thirty seemed to be about the right hour to resume occupation of the bower.

Mrs. “Ted” saw us coming to her, and waited. Margery presented me. Mrs. “Ted” was properly grave. She remarked that she had had the honor of knowing the gentleman so long that sometimes she forgot to put the “Mister” before his name. It was a contagious habit, she had observed.

I withdrew. Mrs. “Ted’s” variety is infinite, and I was afraid she would forget—promises.

In the smoking room I got a corner to myself. But, not for long. Three men came and sat down near by; and, in company with long glasses filled with ice and other things, told stories. Most of these were of people of whom I knew nothing. But the mention of one name caught my attention. It was “Stoughton Page.” It appeared that he had met with an accident early in the evening. His automobile had broken down on the way to meet the seven-fifty train, and he had footed it to the railroad station, only to find that whoever he was to meet there had not come down. He had crawled back to the club, and somebody called “Bobbie” had towed him to his home.

As I flung away my cigar and left the smoking room, I was more than’ ever of the opinion that Mrs. “Ted’s” conclusions upon the instrumentality of coincidence had excellent premises. But I was wary of another meeting with that lady, and so it wanted only a few minutes of twelve when my maneuvers brought me, unnoticed, I hoped, to the bower of my seeking. Only to find it empty. Nor was my search of the floor rewarded by a glimpse of the lavender gown. It was at this point that I began to call myself names, and it must have been that I spoke one of them aloud. If not, then mental telepathy had a remarkable demonstration.

“I would hardly call you a ‘fool,’ Mr. Page,” said a laughing voice just behind me. “But, really, you *are* just a little shortsighted, aren’t you?”

“I am sure I have been looking everywhere,” I answered, reproachfully.

“For how long, and for whom?” she inquired.

“Let us discuss it in the bower,” I suggested.

“How very improper!” she remarked. But she led the way in, and, for the hour that followed, the world began and ended for me just where a little semicircle of palms drew its friendly screen about Margery and me. I believe I ate something; I know I made two forays upon the supper table and hurried back just in time to come upon Mrs. “Ted,” who made a most exasperating face at me, but said nothing. And I remember recording a mental note of Margery’s fondness for sweetbreads *en coquille*. But of the rest my recollection retains only the picture of a slender girl in the depths of a big, cane chair, a slipper impertinently cocked upon the rung of another chair, the soft light which filtered through the leaves throwing into tantalizing shadow the curves of a mouth and the hide-and-seek play of blue eyes which were successfully employed in supplying me with an entirely new set of sensations.

This experience, absorbing to myself, apparently was not without its diversion to the other party, for there was just enough left of “Home, Sweet Home” to identify the air when Margery suddenly slipped from the chair, and I, perforce, followed her. “I will be ready in ten minutes,” she told me. “Meet me downstairs.” Then she turned—to run into the arms of Mrs. “Ted.”

I waited by. There was no alternative; Mrs. “Ted” held me with a glance that definitely said: “Flight is at your peril.”

She asked Margery a question. I did not catch the words, but Margery’s reply was unmistakable. “Why, of course, Mr. Page will take me home. Edith expects me, you know.” And with that she passed into the dressing room.

Mrs. “Ted’s” perplexity would have been comic from another point of view than mine. To me it was like unto the frown of Jove. There was a little pause before she spoke. “Was there ever such another man?” she said. “If it was anyone but you, Page, I would tell that girl the truth at once. Mr. Stoughton Page has not come for her, and has sent no word. I see why, now, though I don’t understand it all, by any means. But—well, I am going to trust the rest to you, only —*remember!*”

I never liked Mrs. “Ted” as I did at that moment, and my liking was not altogether selfish, either. As for her “Remember,” it was—significant.

But when she had followed Margery, and I was walking slowly down the stairway, an appreciation of my own position began to obscure every other feeling. A trickle of something cold seemed to pass down my spine, and I am not accounted timid. In a haze I blundered over to the table. There I had the sense to sit down and try to fit together the few facts which must guide me.

The proposition shaped itself something like this: Given an automobile and a young woman who believes you to be the husband of her dearest friend—which you are not—how are you, without chaperon or voucher, to deliver her, safely and without destruction of her faith in you or of the good opinion of others for herself, into the keeping of this other man’s wife—residence unknown—at three o’clock in the morning?

I took up the premises separatively. First, the automobile. I lighted the lamps and cranked the engine. The motor started sweetly, and mentally I checked off the first item. Second, the young woman. I recalled my experience of the evening, and decided that, as Mrs. “Ted” trusted me, Margery would have no reason to distrust me. So far so good. Third, “the safe delivery.” That depended upon knowledge of the place we were to reach, and of the roads thereto.

I hunted up a stableman, and asked him for the shortest and best route to Mr. Stoughton Page’s place. He gave me directions. I made him repeat them. As the repetition was a little more confusing than the original information, I thanked him and decided to stake my chances on the apparent facts that the traveling was excellent and the distance only eight miles. The devil of it was there were four turnouts. I suspected that, before I was through, Mr. Stoughton Page’s reputation as an automobile driver would not be undamaged in the estimation of at least one person. But for that and for what must be when the crisis arrived—well, it was inevitable. I threw in the clutch and drew out of the stable. At any rate, there were the hours back of me, and Margery was—Margery. There was sweetness in this thought, and infinite anguish, too.

She met me at the steps, hooded and veiled, and, with a pretty air of possession which made my heart leap, instructed the doorman to have “the trunk put into the tonneau, please.” A minute later we were off, Mrs. “Ted” watching our departure and calling out: “*Remember!* I consider myself responsible for Miss Gans until she is with Mrs. Page!”

“Miss Gans” and “Mrs. Page”! Even to my dull comprehension those formalities conveyed their warning. A quickened sense of how I stood toward the slender girl, nestled so comfortably in the seat beside me, stimulated my determination to do nothing, to say nothing, which she could recall to my shame when—when the time came.

I must have administered my intentions with strictness; for, presently, she said, suppressing the suspicion of a yawn: “Are you so *very* tired? Am I such *dreadfully* slow company?”

“Neither,” I said, with emphasis, and stopped there.

She laughed. “You meant to say both. But the automobile *does* make one silent, doesn’t it? And contented, too. I shall look back on this evening for a long time to come.”

“Thank you.”

“For what?”

“For the pleasure of your company.”

She became very grave over my statement. “If you really mean that, I am very glad,” she said. “For I like you, Mr. Page, ’deed I do. And I will confess you are very different from the picture I had made of you—for myself.”

“For yourself?” I began, quickly, but caught myself and added, with unimpeachable politeness: “I am flattered that I should improve on acquaintance.”

“You surely do,” she replied. “Yet it is not so much that you do not look exactly as I had imagined. It is not that. But, you see, all I had heard of you came from Edith, and she—she nearly made me loathe you in advance by her continual singing of your praises. I had—yes, I had about decided to stay away to-night, when I thought it would be better to come and see for myself.”

“And you aren’t sorry?”

“Of course not. Haven’t I told you?”

“Margery!” I cried. Duty and discretion slipped my mind. Anyhow, I reflected, a woman who would make a fool of a man as “Edith” had done deserved no consideration. “Margery!” I repeated, very earnestly, and something in my voice must have warned her.

She uttered a little “Oh!” and drew away from me. But I leaned toward her, and spoke her name again.

And just then we struck a hummock on the side of the road, and the jolt threw me violently against the steering wheel. Margery clutched at me and held on. We came to a dead stop, and she sank back into the seat.

For an instant afterward I wavered between saying what it was in my heart to say and silence. But my pose was not heroic, and, to speak the entire truth, I was having some difficulty in regaining my breath. So I got out of the car slowly and explained. Something was wrong with the machinery, probably a ground wire, broken by the shock. It was nothing at which to be alarmed. Was she hurt?

She assured me she was not and that alarm was furtherest from her. I began my investigation, but the broken ground wire was not the only trouble. It I promptly repaired, and still the engine would not respond to my cranking. There were spasmodic explosions, but they came to naught. Nor was the trouble due to any one of the half dozen primary accidents for which, in turn, I made tests. There was a fine, fat spark at the plugs, the vibrator buzzed properly, the gasoline feed appeared to be adequate, the carburettor was performing its duty, and the engine did not seem to be overheated. The manifest fact was that the motor would not run. A few irregular beats, I say, I got out of it by almost winding my arm out of its socket with the crank, only to have the thing die away before I could regain my seat in the car. In my desperation I advanced the spark to a point which resulted in a "back kick" so tremendous that I was nearly thrown into the air.

Margery was patient and sympathetic through it all. She sat very still and watched me. When at last I came upon the real trouble and she understood from my pause and silence that I was puzzled by it, she asked: "Will you do something for me?"

"Anything," I answered.

"Then, take all the time you need. It doesn't matter in the least about me. I am very comfortable, and only sorry I can't help you."

"But you *do* help me," I said; "you help me a great deal. If you only knew how much, you——"

"Tell me about it," she put in quickly—"what it is that has made us stop."

I obeyed reluctantly. "It is this little spring." I held it up. "You see, it closes the valve, and the end of it is broken, and the valve does not act as it should. The worst of the thing is that I have no substitute with me."

"And you can't mend the spring?"

"I'm going to try. But I must keep you waiting—perhaps quite a while."

"And that is all that is worrying you? Won't you forget I am here?"

"The one thing I cannot do," I answered. I dropped the spring and stepped to the side of the car. "Margery!" I said. "Margery, don't you understand? I can't forget."

"But you have forgotten!" she interposed instantly. "You have forgotten Edith."

"Edith!" I ejaculated, in exasperation. "Edith may go to the devil for all I care!"

"Mr. Page!" she cried. There was no trace of raillery in her voice. I had hurt her, and I knew, even in that moment, that for this she would never forgive me, unless—unless——

I told her the truth. "I am not Mr. Page," I said, bluntly.

She leaned forward and gazed at me in blank amazement. But what she was able to see of my face must have convinced her that I spoke the truth. "*Not Mr. Page?*" she echoed, faintly, and shrank from me.

"No," I said; "my name is Winslow. And I am not married to Edith, or to anyone else. Mr. Stoughton Page, so far as I know, is at home and has been all evening."

I waited for her to speak, but she sat very still, her hands dropped in her lap, her head turned from me, and I thought that I knew a little of what she was thinking, and every second, which passed made it harder for me to have her think this.

"Let me tell you something," I said at last. "It was a mistake, and it was all my fault. I did not know who you were when I first saw you. I only thought of taking you quickly to the club and leaving you there before you should find out that I was not the person I let you think I was. But on the way to the club I—I—it seemed to me as if I must have known you all my life. And then—I saw Mrs. Mason, and she has been my friend for so long, and—everything helped me. So, when no one came to take you home, I could not bear to give you up that way and maybe never see you again. And I did—what I did. And—that is all."

She had not moved while I spoke and her face was denied me. But now she looked up. The veil hid her eyes; I could only guess at what was in her mind.

"You let me call you 'Mr. Page'?" she said, after a moment.

"Page is my first name," I answered.

She gave a little gasp. Somehow, I felt that my case was not so nearly hopeless. "And Mrs. Mason—did she—was she also helping to deceive me?" she asked.

"She thought it was Mr. Stoughton Page who brought you to the club. She never knew, until we were leaving, that you did not know who I was. Oh, it was all my fault, all my fault, I tell you!" I finished, as she regarded me in silence. "I let you think everything you did—I never tried to help you out, after the first, because I couldn't. I loved you, Margery."

"You took a strange way to prove it," she returned.

Her head was thrown back, her gloved hands pressed together. "Oh! oh! I hate you! It was contemptible! To take advantage of my trust! To lie to me! How could you do it?"

I turned away miserable, bitter with myself. And all the while I worked on the valve, stretching the spring so it would do its work and replacing the part, she said nothing. Even when I had started the engine and found it to work smoothly and climbed back in the car, she was silent. But she drew away from me with a movement which was unmistakable.

The east had begun to lighten long since, and there was a white streak along the horizon, streaked with the clearest of amber and rose, as we came to a crossroad, a mile on, and I got a glimpse of a signpost. If its information was correct, I had made the turns in the road aright, and we were within half a mile of our destination. A minute later we topped a slope, and I marked down a large, stone house which answered the description I had from the club stableman. It was approached by a driveway bordered with trees and shrubbery.

I brought the car to a stop at the gates. “I believe this is Mr. Page’s place,” I said.

“Yes,” she said. It was the first word she had spoken since she knew who I was.

“And before we go in,” I went on, “I thought you might wish to tell me who I am to be.”

“I have nothing to do with that,” she answered. “Please take me to the house.”

“But,” I insisted, “they will probably ask questions. If they do not, they will wonder. And I can hardly be a stranger to you—under the circumstances.”

“You will please take me to the house,” she repeated.

I started up the driveway, and once or twice it seemed to me she was about to speak. But she did not, and at the steps I got down and rang the bell. It was a matter of five minutes before there was response. Then there came the faint sound of footsteps from within, and the door was opened. A tall man, in dressing gown, candle in hand, sleep in his eyes, replied to my inquiry. Yes, this was Mr. Stoughton Page’s house, and he was Mr. Page. What did I want?

Before I could explain, a voice spoke at my elbow, and Margery stepped into the flickering circle of light. “Only to ask you for shelter,” she said.

The man in the dressing gown stared at her, then recognition sprang into his face, and he put down the candle hastily. “Margery Gans!” he cried.

“None other,” she answered. “Margery Gans, at your service, or, rather, at your door, and, with her, Mr. Page Winslow, to whom she owes her presence here and an evening of experiences besides. We are just from the dance at the club, at which, sir, you failed me. Is it a welcome, or must we go further?”

He held the door open and began to explain. Presently he realized that I was standing by, and urged me to come in. But I said no, I must return to the club, and all the while I looked at Margery, hoping for some little sign.

But she kept her face resolutely upon her host, and said nothing. Then, as I turned to go, she laid a hand upon his arm. “Oh!” she exclaimed, “I had almost forgotten my trunk! It is in the car. Could you find some one to bring it in?”

“Of course,” he said, and turned back into the house. She threw a swift look over her shoulder, raised her veil, and stepped to the doorway. She held out both her hands.

I took them in mine. What I did concerned only us two. “Good-by, Margery,” I said at last.

“No, no, not really good-by,” she answered. “Just good-by for a little while——” She faltered.

“Page,” I prompted.

“My ‘Mr. Page,’” she repeated, softly, and, at the sound of returning footsteps, slipped from me into the dimness of the hall, and was gone.

THE GIFTS OF GOLD

Desire of joy—how keen, how keen it is!

(Oh, the young heart—the young heart in its Spring!)

There waits adventure on the road of bliss—

A challenge in each note the free birds fling;

The spur of pride to dare us climb and kiss—

Desire of joy—how keen, how keen it is!

Desire of tears—but this is sweet, most sweet!

(Oh, the young heart—the young heart in its Spring!)

That sits a little while at Sorrow's feet

And tastes of pain as some forbidden thing,

That draught where all things sweet and bitter meet—

Desire of tears—ah me, but it is sweet!

Desire of joy and tears—ah, gifts of gold!

(Oh, the young heart—the young heart in its Spring!)

Once only are these treasures in our hold,

Once only is the rapture and the sting,

And then comes peace—to tell us we are old—

Desire of joy and tears—ah, gifts of gold!

Theodosia Garrison.

ON LOVE TOKENS

By Frank S. Arnett

Recent excavations outside Pompeii's Stabian gate brought to light the bodies of a hundred hapless fugitives smothered two thousand years ago within actual sight of the fleet that came to save them. Necklaces were still borne on the charred but once beautiful necks of the women, and bracelets encircled their slender wrists. Thrice around the skeleton arm of one wound a chain of gold, and priceless stones were set in rings that still clung to the agony-clinched fingers of those that there had faced the fatal fumes of Vesuvius.

As one reflects upon these discoveries, he is at first inclined to philosophize on the slightness wrought by time in woman's nature. For were not all these blazing gems and precious metals but proof that the jewel madness that burns in her veins to-day has coursed through woman's veins throughout the ages?

But such a reflection is only partly correct. Among those bracelets, chains of gold and sparkling rings were many that proved no love of luxury, no mere desire for barbaric bedecking. Surely some were tokens of love, seized at that last moment when a hideous death approached; seized, too, when the choice lay between objects of far greater intrinsic value and these precious trinkets—precious because speaking with silent eloquence of long gone throbs of ecstasy, and of a bliss such as these women, even had they escaped, could never again have known. Glance around the room in which you are now seated, and, whether you are gray haired and dignified, or with youthful happiness are anticipating to-night's cotillion, dare you deny that the supposition is probable? Is there not somewhere near you, in sight, where occasionally your hand may touch it with regretful love, or hidden in some secret drawer whence you rarely trust yourself to take it—is there not a jewel, a scented glove, a bit of ribbon, a faded violet, or a lock of hair? Whatever it is, in time of a catastrophe—hastened flight—would it not first be seized in preference to your costliest treasure?

If you have no such possession, doubtless you are more peacefully content than those of us that have, but you have missed the supreme and most agonizing happiness with which the race is cursed.

For long before those Pompeiian days, when *Nydia* would have welcomed renewed blindness in exchange for one glimpse of *Glaucus*, or of some token of his care, men and women have cherished the gifts of those they loved. True, not all have valued them, nor have all had the power so to do. The beautiful Valois, quivering beneath the brand of the red-hot iron because of her madness for the cold, white diamond, knew nothing of the secret bliss in possessing purely as a token of love either a diamond or a rose. Nor did Maria Louisa, leaving her Jove-like husband to his fate, and escaping

to Vienna with the crown's most costly jewels. Nor, I am afraid, did the majority of the American women competing in the attempt to eclipse royalty itself in their display of gems at the coronation of King Edward.

There have been others, too, that knew nothing of the love token—others whose ignorance of it was less deserving of censure. None was exchanged by Dante and Beatrice, even though from their first meeting, as he has told, "love lorded it over my soul!" Nor do I recall that any passed between Petrarch and Laura, even though at her death he wrote that "there is nothing more left me to live for"! But these were examples of the super-ideal love, such as is seldom known on earth, and such as, doubtless, would be unsatisfying to you or to me. We of a generation that demands, above all, the tangible in everything, whether financial or flirtatious, of the heart or of the stomach—we must have, must we not, real kisses, warm from the mouth, and actual love tokens, freely offered by or passionately pleaded from the hand of her we love?

In this we are far from original—although, as I hope to show, men, at least, are to-day more influenced by such keepsakes than ever before in the history of the world. The great majority of the human race, from peasant girls to empresses, and from shepherd lads to omnipotent tyrants, have known, to some extent, the sadness and the joy of the love token. The ballad that the lover-poet addressed to one who was "just a porcelain trifle, just a thing of puffs and patches," but who was, just the same, his adored—the ballad love token pleased even that unemotional doll. "And you kept it and you read it, *belle Marquise!*" Silly or supreme, all are vulnerable.

Therefore it is with no lack of authority that you learn that the human race has known it for some centuries—this love token. It took the form of birds among the ancient Greeks, although as for this purpose the birds were sold in the Athenian public market, the token lost its chief charm—secrecy. The Romans had a better—the ring, which, as the symbol of eternity, like the Egyptian snake touching its mouth with its tail, was the ideal emblem of love, which, too, should be, even if it seldom is, eternal.

Of course there were times, ages ago, when the love token had no place. When man was universally polygamous, and when the form of marriage was by capture, it can scarcely have existed. Nor could it have known the days when the *jeunesse dorée* of Babylonia and Assyria assembled before the temple where twice a year all marriageable girls were brought together to be sold. Probably, also, the bride of early Britain never heard of one. As she was not permitted to refuse an offer of marriage, how could she ever have given a token of love?—at least to the man that became her husband.

But in time even the British maiden knew the love token. An ancient manuscript found in the Harleian library says that it was decreed that when lovers parted their gifts were to be returned intact or in an equivalent value, "unless the lover should have had a kiss when his gift was presented, in which case he can only claim half the value of his gift; the lady, on the contrary, kiss or no kiss, may claim her gift again!" Surely the first part of this was needless; was a love token, given in person, ever unaccompanied by a kiss? "However," continues this ordinarily quite sensible decree, "this extends only to gloves, rings, bracelets and such like small wares."

I protest against "wares" in such association. It sounds something too commercial for so fragile and fleeting a thing as love. And, too, it is an error to speak of a glove as though it were of less value than an automobile. In a lover's eyes the merest trifle is the most cherished token of love. Her *carte des dances*, for instance—for has not that dainty program and its tiny pencil been suspended by its silken cord from her soft, white arm? Or—but certainly this is no trifle—a satin slipper, absurdly small and with adorable curves.

Above all others, however, the miniature is the typical token of love. There lives no woman whose breath comes more quickly at the sound of some man's voice, or whose fingers tremble with happiness as they open his longed-for letters; no man whose hand, at a word lightly spoken of the one most dear to him, would instantly seek, were it still worn, the sword at his side; no one even faintly remembering the days of youth and longing and sweet unrest, whose heart does not respond to the mere mention of the miniature. The old family portraits, in their heavy frames of gilt, are very precious; even the hideous crayons must not be hidden in the garret, although we may wish they never had been drawn; and in the ancient baronial homes of England are portrait galleries of which the owners are justly proud.

But these are works treasured largely because of inherited arrogance. At best they are a part of the furnishing, at times almost a part of the very architecture. How different the miniature! Whereas the family portrait is for show, here we have that which proverbially in secret has been cherished. Quickly it has been thrust next a fair, lace-covered and fright-panting bosom; it has been the sole souvenir of a stolen happiness, an almost voice-gifted reminder of dear, dead days of the long ago; it was the pledge of his return given in the hasty or hard-fought flight of the daring youth whose image it is; or perhaps it bears the lady's face, and has been found on the breast of a warrior slain in battle; or, dearer than holy relic, was still caressed by the poet troubadour, even though he knew his mistress long ago proved faithless. More than one queen, for reasons of state, placed at the side of a mighty king, has gazed each night in hopeless adoration at the miniature of some one far from the throne, yet who, supreme and alone, reigned in her heart.

No token of love permitted by Venus has been the recipient of half the secret kisses the miniature may boast; none has so frequently been washed in tears. Almost, in fact, the tiny bit of color set in bijou jewels might be hidden by a single pressure of the lips, and one tear would be to it a bath of beauty. Indeed, its very name reveals it as the love token, for it comes to us from a certain word of French having in English the most velvet sounding and most endearing meaning in our somewhat limited language of passion.

Miniatures, to be sure, are the love tokens of comparative maturity—and, unfortunately, of comparative prosperity. Professor Sanford Bell, fellow in Clark University, who has the somewhat dubious honor of being the pioneer in the scientific treatment of the emotion of love between the sexes—I dislike that line intensely, but, really, I see no way out of it—has discovered that "as early as the sixth and seventh year presents are taken from their places of safekeeping, kissed and fondled as expressions of love for the absent giver." This is very beautiful and, doubtless, very true, but at the presumable age of the reader—anywhere from eighteen to eighty—one would kiss a miniature rather than a bird's nest or an apple, however rosy the latter may have been last winter.

Miniatures, flowers, handkerchiefs, gloves and ribbons, then, ever have been the favorite love tokens. We in the America of to-day are inclined to substitute houses and lots or steam yachts. But this is a temporary error. In time we will return to the glove, which means the same as the honestly outstretched or lovingly clasping hand; and to the flowers, the significance of each of which was perfectly understood by the old time Greek and Roman, himself gathering the chaplet that was to grace his sweetheart's brow. Better a thousand times than the wretched watch chains of hair worn by our fathers would be the embroidered handkerchiefs tucked triumphantly in their hats by the gallants of Elizabeth's day. That, to be sure, was a bit flamboyantly boastful; to exhibit a love token is as criminal as to boast of a kiss. The actor-lover is alone in clamoring for the calcium.

In this secrecy, so essential to the love token, our writers of romance have found salvation. Even Fielding, to whom we owe the birth of the English novel, could not overlook it—although we are almost asleep when we reach the point where *Billy Booth*, about to depart, is presented by *Amelia* with a collection of trinkets packed in a casket worked by her own fair hands. It wasn't the least bit like it, was it?

The fact is, we must turn to France for the real thing, and to whom more satisfyingly than to Dumas and his reckless musketeers, each of whom, as well as the author, dwelt in "a careless paradise," and constantly at hand had some reminder of her who, for the moment, was the one woman on earth. We scarcely have a bowing acquaintance with these three worthies before the valiant *D'Artagnan* makes the almost fatal but well-intentioned mistake of calling the attention of *Aramis* to the fact that he has stepped upon a handkerchief—a handkerchief *Aramis*, in fact, has covered with his foot to conceal from a crowd of roisterers; a love token from *Mme. de Bois-Tracy*—a dainty affair, all richly embroidered, and with a coronet in one corner.

Again, surely you are neither too old nor too young to remember this:

> At the moment she spoke these words a rap on the ceiling made her raise her head, and a voice which reached her through the ceiling cried:
>
> "Dear Madame Bonacieux, open the little passage door for me, and I will come down to you."

Melodramatic? Certainly. Cheap? I'm not so sure—in fact, no! not to any man whose heart is not far grayer than his beard. For then commenced as pretty a race as ever was—*Athos*, *Porthos*, *Aramis* and *D'Artagnan* speeding from Paris to London, *D'Artagnan* bearing a letter; each in turn to take it as they are killed by the cardinal's hirelings—all this to save the honor of *Anne of Austria* by bringing back the love token given by her to the *Duke of Buckingham*, who keeps it in a tiny chapel draped with gold-worked tapestry of Persian silk, on an altar beneath a portrait of the woman he loves.

D'Artagnan's part in that adventure is the most gallant deed known in all the literature of love tokens. There have been similar gifts that were more tragic; what was the famous diamond necklace but a hopeless, mad love token from the Cardinal de Rohan to Marie Antoinette? And there have been those that were more sad; recall the great Mirabeau, dying amid flowers that were themselves death, drinking the hasheesh that was poison, placing on his forehead the tiny handkerchief drenched with the tears of the one beautiful woman that disinterestedly had loved him; the one that, forced from his last bedside, had refused a casket filled with gold and had left behind this final, mute and eloquent token of her love.

The poets, of course, ever have had a greater affection for love tokens than have the novelists. With some this has been real; with others "copy." Keats, who, through all his brief life, knew the consummate luxury of sadness, had on his deathbed the melancholy ecstasy of a letter from his love—and this he lacked the courage to read, for it would have anguished him with a clearer knowledge of all the exquisite happiness he was leaving on earth; his love, like his art, having been beautiful in its immaturity. And so this last token of love, unread, was placed at his own desire beside him in his coffin.

Decidedly we are less touched by Tom Moore, who desired that, at his death, his heart should be presented to his mistress:

> Tell her it liv'd upon smiles and wine
>
> Of the brightest hue while it lingered here.

Which fact must have been a great comfort to the recipient of this final love token.

But Byron was the man for love tokens. To "Mary" on receiving her picture, to "a lady" who sent him a lock of her hair braided with his own, and to scores of others, he wrote still living lines. Several such verses seem now more ludicrous than lovely. To her who presented him with the velvet band that had bound her tresses, he vowed:

> Oh! I will wear it next my heart;
>
> 'Twill bind my soul in bonds to thee;
>
> From me again 'twill ne'er depart,
>
> But mingle in the grave with me.

This was written in 1806. He was then eighteen. Think of the love tokens "binding his soul," and otherwise encumbering him, during the eighteen years that followed, and of all those, if he kept his promises, that now "mingle in the grave" with him! Fortunately, however, the poet had the happy facility of disencumbering himself. His love tokens to one unfortunate were a chain and lute. The gifts were charmed, "her truth in absence to divine." The chain shivered in the grasp of any other that took it from her neck; the chords of the lute were mute when another attempted to sing to her of his love. And how in his element was Byron when he could write to her:

’Tis past—to them and thee adieu—

False heart, frail chain and silent lute.

But, despite Moore’s insincerity and Byron’s vagaries, the man of to-day more frequently, and longer than woman, cherishes his tokens of love.

How often do men bring breach of promise suits? Women—none possibly that you or I personally know—will calmly enter the courtroom and brutally exhibit their love letters and love tokens—the most sacred things on earth, are they not?—to indifferent jurors, gleeful reporters and the gloating public.

Compare such a courtroom scene with the floral games of the Toulouse of long ago, and the legendary origin of the golden violet. Imprisoned by her father because of her love, the girl threw from between the bars a bouquet to her lover—a bouquet of a violet, an eglantine and a marigold. In a later siege, the lover saved the father’s life, but lost his own. Dying, he took the flowers from his bosom and implored that they be returned to his sweetheart. The maiden’s death followed quickly. All she had on earth she left, in memory of her love token, to the celebration of the floral games, and the golden violet became the troubadours’ most cherished prize.

There are still such girls—but they are not often met with, and, once met with, are likely to have changed on a second meeting. “Pale ghosts of a passionate past come thronging,” at times, to them perhaps; more likely they join with their companions in cynically singing:

But now how we smile at the fond love token,

And laugh at the sweet words spoken low.

This phase of woman’s character is not particularly novel. Poor Sir John Suckling, long curled, arrayed in velvets and satins, a princely host, seemingly the typical gallant, yet secretly devoured by melancholy, a suicide at the end, doubtless knew whereof he spoke when he said:

I am confirmed a woman can

Love this, or that, or any man:

This day she’s melting hot,

To-morrow swears she knows you not.

The twentieth century girl, of the rare, real sort, cherishes her love tokens not, perhaps, with the same, but with an equal, affection as she of troubadour days. Her tokens, to be sure, are different:

Your boxing gloves slyly I’ve fastened

Out of sight in the corner, right here.

I’d put them up high, but I “dassent,”

You see it *would* look rather queer!

And that the twentieth century girl of this sort, even if boxing gloves are love tokens with her, is just the same dear, old-time girl we all love, she proves by her ultimate confession:

Dear old chap, I’m not given to gushing,

You know, but I’m tired to-night.

. . . . .

I think I am centuries older,

Yet if you were here I dare say,

I should put my head down on your shoulder

And cry—you remember my way!

Despite this up-to-dateness, this true good fellowship, or perhaps because of it, many women still living there are that have known the anguish of a love token that should have been destroyed in the long ago—in the long ago when the heartbreak had come—and gone, as they thought. There have been women of supreme beauty and of brainy splendor, dressed to descend where the words were to be spoken, “Until death do you part”—who at that last moment of freedom have seized with a curse and angrily torn into shreds the cherished souvenir of a love of—oh, when was it? Other brides there have been, arranged for the sacrifice, that have locked the door while there was yet time, and, kissing the love token of that long ago, have thrust it into their bosom, that their heart might beat against it even while, kneeling at the altar, they whispered, “I will.”

You don’t believe it? Oh, very well; some day this madness, that is rearoused by a faded violet or a time-stained ribbon, may enter into even your life. But I hope you may be spared it.

A man? Ah, how often when he has grappled sturdily with duty, with honor—how often has the love token, with divine

promise, stared him in the face and cried like Clarimonde returned from the grave:

> If thou wilt be mine, I shall make thee happier than God himself in His paradise; the angels themselves will be jealous of thee. I am Beauty—I am Youth—I am Life—come to me!—together we shall be Love. Our lives will flow on like a dream—in one eternal kiss.

Has enough been said to cause you to wonder why no one has written the history of the love token? Such a stately and wondrous work it should make! Why has no one honored it with even the rambling lightness of an essay? Elia could have done that much—and Leigh Hunt have done it even better. Lamb, it is true, has talked with quaint airiness of valentines, which are a sort of love token, and has admitted, poor old bachelor! that the postman's knock on St. Valentine's Day brings "visions of love, of Cupids, of Hymens!—delightful, eternal commonplaces; which, having been, will always be."

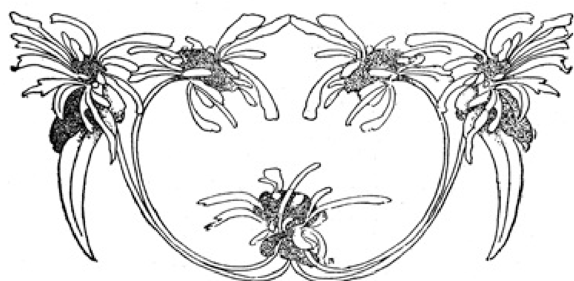
But this, while, perhaps, the essence of the love token, is not its history, and I shall hazard a guess as to why that is not written. The reason is that it is not only the cherished token of a woman's love, but is also the irritating reminder of her equality with man. At the altar she unhesitatingly swears to love eternally—an oath sometimes beyond her power to keep; but in increasing numbers she refuses to make the promise of obedience—a promise always possible to fulfill. With the freedom that in this generation is hers, even before marriage, has come a fierce desire for monopoly, and to such a one the token of a single love has lost its tenderness. She keeps such tokens by the score, with all the pride of a Sioux warrior in his array of scalps. The man lovingly cherishes a single one. To her he is an incident in life's story. To him she is its climax.

With this increased freedom permitted in woman's conduct, the love tokens she gives have become even more treasured, for the liberty she now possesses has turned her love tokens into fertilizers of a slumbering jealousy. As they were unknown when woman had no choice, was bought or captured, so they became again unknown in the one-time commonplace of domesticity, wherein there was no more room for the preservation of love tokens than there would be in a seraglio under lock and key. Non-possession, or, at least, uncertainty, is for the love token a perfectly safe endowment policy in the insurance company of passion. Thus it is that the liberty to-day given woman in American society has made the love token more treasured than ever it has been in all the history of the world. Yet no one writes its history; not only because of the angering equality it bespeaks, but also, and chiefly, because the men that could write it best are those that mingle something akin to a curse with the kiss they secretly press upon some trifling souvenir, men to whom it has brought suffering, or to whom only a hopeless longing after ideal love is represented by the token—which is rarely the evidence of triumph, but rather of regret, the reminder of something lost or unattained.

But even those that suffer most at sight of some such trifle, those to whom it would be anguish to write its history, would not for a throne part with it. And yet you, perhaps, are one of those that will have no conception of the meaning of all that I have said. Do you know what it is never to have felt the supremity of the love token? Are you so engulfed in the greed for gold that it could not touch you even were it to be slipped into your grasping fingers—so keen for power or so lustful for fame? Or you may be of those that believe romantic love to belong to the abnormal. But, in either case, even to you, like De Maupassant's horror-stricken youth dragged to the threshold of the priesthood, the day may come when you will shriek:

> To never love—to turn from the sight of all beauty—to put out one's own eyes—to hide forever crouching in the chill shadows of some cloister—to visit none but the dying—to watch by unknown corpses!

For that is what it is to live without touching your lips to a token of love—even of a love that is lost.



TIMON CRUZ

Oh, lovely is the quinta in the warm and sunny morn,

Acequima's ripple softly to the coming of the dawn;

Fresh breezes toss the branches green, the chill of dusk is past,

Sheer joy of living fills the world! Rare hour, too sweet to last!

The roses fling their petals wide, their fragrance fills the air;

It mingles with the orange buds which blossom everywhere;

The birds chant loud their matins; all the earth seems newly born.

Ah, happy is the quinta in the warm and sunny morn.

Oh, lovely is the quinta in the quiet afternoon

When hushed and calm the breezes lie; the earth in lang’rous swoon

Receives the sun’s hot kisses; and the watchful hawk on high

In breathless ether lonely hangs; faint rings the parrot’s cry.

The stillness is idyllic. As the slow sun swings round

One feels earth’s pulses beating; hears them throbbing through the ground,

The grass where drowsy insects hum, the eaves where pigeons croon;

Ah, lovely is the quinta in the tranquil afternoon.

Oh, lovely is the quinta in the gorgeous tropic night,

When earth is drenched with sweetness, and the moonshine glimmers white

Across the path, ’mid shadows wide, and outlines, too, the wall

Where stand the broad banana trees and lemon flowers fall.

A whisper low beyond the wall, a name below the breath—

For Life is full of treachery, yet Love is Lord of Death—

The tinkle of a gay guitar, a cry, a horse in flight—

Ay Dios! guard the quinta in the gorgeous tropic night.

Augusta Davies Ogden.

AT HER WINDOW

(*Serenade.*)

By Frank Dempster Sherman

Come to thy window, Love,

And through the lattice bars

Show me a fairer sky above.

With two more lovely stars;

So shall the summer night

Know new depths of delight,

And I in dreams grow wise

Remembering thine eyes.

Come to thy window, Sweet,

And wide the lattice swing,

That vagrant zephyrs may repeat

What words my lips shall sing

Unto your ears anew,

Up from the fragrant dew,

That all your dreams may be

Like those that gladden me.

Come to thy window:—soft!

Thy footstep light I hear.

About me silence, but aloft

A melody most dear.

It is thy voice that fills

The night’s blue cup and spills

Into the air the word

A rose breathes to a bird.

Come to thy window:—so,

I glimpse the gleam of grace.

Rose of all roses now I know

Featured in thy fair face:

Now all love’s joy is mine

Save one heart that is thine.

Dearest, my dream is this—

Thy heart’s beat and thy kiss!

THE LATE BLOSSOMING OF ELVIRA

By Harriet Whitney Durbin

In the house of Lawrence there were many daughters, and the eldest thereof was Elvira.

At the age of thirty-two Elvira, to the budding younger Lawrences, was hopelessly aged and sere, and Eulalie, in particular, a lately opened blossom of eighteen, made it a matter of daily duty to keep Elvira’s soul from closing its eyes, even in the briefest nap, upon this fact.

Elvira had grown into her spinsterhood without rebellion and with the quietude of mind conferred by an even disposition. She had been a trifle old-maidish in her youth. That was in the era of bangs and frizzes and heads of hair that resembled ill-used dish mops.

“Gaudy but not neat,” had been Elvira’s comment, and she let her light brown locks lie softly close to her head, undipped and unkinked. And mankind, with eyes accustomed to the ever present moppy snarls and curls, vaguely supposed Elvira to be behind the times, and amiably passed her by.

Later, Elvira developed the spinsterly accomplishment of darning her own delicate silk stockings to finished perfection, and was promptly importuned by all the young Lawrences to darn theirs. She consented—and her doom was pronounced.

When twenty-five years of life had deepened the smooth pink of Elvira’s cheek and amplified the lissome curves of her figure, her next younger sister, Hazel, a girl of twenty-two, had asked her to sit in the drawing room and play propriety on the evenings when the younger sister received callers, and she had done so.

When the matrimonial destiny of Hazel was fulfilled, Marion was coming forward to be chaperoned; then Rosamond; and now—thorniest bud on the Lawrence family tree—Eulalie was fully blown, and quite alive to the beguilements of dress and the desirability of beaux.

Eulalie’s exactions were upsetting to the tranquil mind. Eulalie wanted—not possession of the earth, but to *be* the earth, and to be duly revolved around by friends, relatives and countless planetary lovers. Elvira’s days grew turbid and her nights devoid of repose.

There had been no comforting maternal support to nestle against since the birth of the youngest Lawrence flower, and the paternal bush towered out of reach in an aloof atmosphere of bonds and rentals and dividends. One old-fashioned point of view he enforced upon his children’s vision: the elder daughter must supervise and chaperon the younger ones to the last jot, and it must be done without disturbance of the business atmosphere.

So Elvira warred with her daily briers alone. Reproach and appeal alike spattered off Eulalie's buoyant nature as a water sprinkler's steadiest shower rolls in globules from the crisp, unmoistened leaves of the nasturtium.

"Spinsters are so fussy," she deplored, comfortably. "Just because they have no beaux themselves, they can't bear to see a girl have a caller now and then."

"My dear, keep up a slight acquaintance with truth," besought Elvira; "a caller now and then would give me a chance to mend my stockings and to get to bed by nine o'clock a few nights in the week. As it is, I have to idle my time away evening after evening, sitting and grinning at your flocks and herds of young men until I am so sleepy I have to go and coax pa to drop a big slipper on the floor overhead, to indicate that it's bedtime. Hazel and Marion and Rosamond encouraged only a moderate number of beaux, and them only until they naturally paired off with the right ones and could scat the rest off. But you hang on to them all. There is hardly an evening you don't have from one to five on hand, though you surely can't want them."

Eulalie giggled joyously.

"I do want them—every tinker of them. Poor old girl, you never knew the fun of keeping a lot of men in a continual squirm. However, I think possibly what you call the 'right one' is bobbing up."

"Most fervently do I hope so," sighed Elvira.

The strain of excessive chaperoning was wearing upon her.

"Your sister looks tired," a late acquisition of Eulalie's made observation, compassionately, one evening, seeing Elvira nod over her uncongenial Battenberg-ing by the piano lamp.

"Yes—she's such an early-to-bed crank," Eulalie cheerfully replied, "and I suppose it isn't a lot of fun to sit over there alone doing Battenberg with us chatting just out of good hearing range."

Hugh Griswold had been blessed with a good, old-fashioned mother, and among the precepts bequeathed her son had been one not so distant of kinship from the Golden Rule:

"Treat everybody well."

"Suppose we move into good hearing range, then?" he suggested.

"Oh, you can go, if you want to." Eulalie's eyebrows curved into brown velvet crescents. "I'm very well satisfied here. Did I tell you Major Yates was going to bring me a pair of guinea pigs to-morrow?"

The next time Hugh Griswold called he brought his uncle, an elderly widower, with a bald, intellectual forehead and large billows of whisker. The uncle beamed upon Eulalie with fatherly benignance, and then established friendly communication with Elvira.

"I thought it might brisk things up a little for Miss Elvira to let him come." Hugh's apologetic tone seemed, somehow, the result of Eulalie's upward-arching eyebrows.

"Oh," said she—a cool little crescendo.

II.

A demure black bow in Elvira's hair drew Eulalie's inquisitive glance at dinner the next evening.

"Since when have you taken to vain adornments?" she asked, an edgy emphasis on the pronoun. "It's miles out of style, you know."

Elvira received the information with tranquillity.

"Since when have you taken to observing what I wore? Same old bow that has decked me for some weeks. I never regarded it as the latest importation."

"Oh! I didn't know but you fancied Mr. Griswold's uncle was coming again."

"Not having learned to fish in my youth, I should hardly begin now." Elvira partook peacefully of her soup.

Mr. Griswold's uncle came again. When it was time to depart his nephew had to remind him of the fact.

"Your sister's conversation is so deeply engrossing," he apologized, blandly, to Eulalie.

"Is it?" Eulalie asked, languidly remote.

Several new varieties of thorn outcropped in Elvira's daily walk. So small a point as a new stock collar, sober gray though it was, occasioned one.

"No doubt Mr. Griswold's uncle will find it 'so engrossing.'" Eulalie's voice was sourly satirical, and her soft eyebrows made sharp angles.

Elvira stared in hopeless amaze at her grasping sister.

"She had two new young men yesterday—can it be possible she wants Mr. Courtenay, too?" wondered the harassed

elder.

A loosening of the tension on Elvira's strained nerves came with the visit of Marion, the third daughter of the house, for this fact dovetailed neatly with a request from Hazel, the second daughter. She was not very well; was run down, and needed the tonic of companionship from home. Would Elvira come for a while and be the medicine? Possibly a change would do the latter good, and prove a reciprocal tonic.

"Tonic! It would be a balm of Gilead—an elixir of life—a sojourn at the fountain of youth and happiness for me to get away from the chaperoning of Eulalie for a while," Elvira admitted.

"Then go." Marion settled the question for her with kindly dispatch. "I'll look after the minx, and tell her some useful truth now and then, too."

III.

"Bless your scolding curls—you look as pretty and sweet and out of style as a fashion plate of '65."

Hazel had raked Elvira's hat off and was weaving her fingers through the flat, brown bands of her sister's hair.

"A neat pompadour, with an empire knot, would make an up-to-date etching of you."

Then she caught her by the shoulder and pulled her up in front of a mirror, snuggling her own face down beside Elvira's. "Look there—I've a mind to pinch you; you're three years older than I. What do you mean by looking at least eight younger, and just like a big peach, at that—hey?"

"Maybe it's because I don't frazzle up years of good vitality over little everyday snarls," Elvira replied, serenely, but added, more meekly, "I've been very near to it lately, though, with Eulalie and her young men."

"Eulalie—yes; she ought to be cuffed a time or two; I know her. Look here, Elv, you've simply got to let me fix you a pompadour and have your seams made straight. You'd have a presence to eclipse us all if you'd spunk up to your dressmaker and not let her put off crooked gores on you. I'm going to fix you."

"I thought I came here to nurse you."

"Oh, well, you can coddle me sometimes, when I think I'm getting yellow and peaked. But it's a whole lot of potions and powders just to have you here. All the same, I had another little nail to drive in importing you. I've got an old boy picked out—the baron we call him. He's a worthy soul—upright and straight walking as you please, so it needn't be any obstacle to you that he owns a whole bunch of mills a few miles out. He isn't here now, but soon will be, looking after the mills, and you've got to see him. He's quite a bit older than you, but that's no odds. His name is Courtenay——"

"Erastus?"

"How did you come by it so glibly?"

"One of Eulalie's planets has an uncle named that. He brought him to the house a few times, to brighten up my desert island."

"Oh, sweet innocence! So you know him! Then the romance is already cut and basted."

"There isn't a rag of romance about it. Mr. Courtenay hasn't tendered me his heart and his mills; I should not take them if he did so. Besides, I have a glimmer that Eulalie has her eye upon him."

"Did you ever know of a breathing man Eulalie did not have her eye upon?"

"Barring tramps, not one. Still, Mr. Courtenay might distance the field. Besides, again, Mr. Griswold says he—the uncle—vowed long ago to remain forever true to the memory of his first wife."

"Yes," reflected Hazel, "that is so final! But you'll let me pompadour your hair?"

"Oh, I don't care—if you don't pomp it too loudly."

Two weeks later Hazel wrote a letter to Marion, containing this item:

> Elvira has lost the little up-and-down worry wrinkle between her eyes—the only one she had; she looks about twenty-two. Mr. Erastus Courtenay has come to Lindale to inspect his mills, but he hasn't seen the inside of one of them yet. He is here a great deal.

And this postscript was appended:

> Tubs wouldn't hold the roses Mr. Courtenay squanders on Elvira.

Marion incautiously read the letter to Eulalie, and a tempest was at once put to steep in a teapot.

"Oh, brag to me about your modest, self-sacrificing spinsters! Mighty agreeable and willing was Miss Elvira to go and be a tonic to Madame Hazel—and, incidentally, be handy for a rich mill owner to waste roses on! The pair of them! Didn't know anything about it until she got to Lindale? You're green enough for sheep to eat if you think she wasn't planning it all ever since she heard of Hugh's uncle. She knew he would be going to Lindale soon, and mighty easy it was for her and Hazel to cook up a plot to have her there when he came. 'Oh, my, such a surprise to meet you here, Mr.

Courtenay!'" Eulalie gave an imitation of Elvira's imagined giggle. "She's got to come straight home again—that's what she has."

"My stars, Laly," besought Marion, "don't beat up a tornado about it. What is it to you if Elvira does marry Hugh's uncle, or anybody she sees fit?"

"She has no business—it's absurd at her age."

"Thirty-two isn't decrepit."

"It's too old for such didoes. And she knows that Mr. Courtenay has vowed never to marry again, and that Hugh will inherit the mills if he doesn't."

"Oh, that's the snag! But you are not engaged to Hugh, are you?"

"No, not yet."

"Did Elvira know you had intentions that way?"

"She might have known I'd take him when I got ready if she kept her webs away from that old donkey of an uncle."

"What mortal, do you presume to say, could divine which one of your ninety and nine misguided admirers you were going, when you get good and ready, to favor with the empty husk of your frivolous little heart? And if anyone could tell, what law or statute have you against Elvira's equal right to the mills, provided she loves the miller?"

"It's scandalous!" Eulalie flew back to her grievance, unmindful of Marion's logic. "She's got to come back where I can keep an eye on her. And if the old guinea comes after her, I'll cut her out and marry him."

IV.

Those tubs of roses Hazel had touched upon buried their thorns sharply in Eulalie's memory. That any son of Adam could see her bewildering self and then give roses to Elvira was preposterous—besides, the mills would follow. An end must be to the folly.

She invoked Hugh Griswold's assistance. He ought to see that the roses might crowd him away from his inheritance.

"I'm afraid I ought to tell you something," she regretted, amiably. "I hear Elvira is plainly fishing for your uncle."

Hugh grinned comfortably.

"If there is any fishing doing, I rather reckon it's on uncle E.'s side of the pond," he said, easily.

"She has no business to let him, then!" Eulalie's eyes began to sparkle out blue fire. "A sly old minx she is! She——"

Hugh was looking intently at her, as if he saw her in some weird, new light. She tapered off suddenly, and grew plaintive.

"I want her back here, anyway. I'm not well, and Marion is cross to me."

"I'll stop and tell her so as I go through Lindale, on my annual camping tramp—shall I?"

"Oh, yes, do—please do," Eulalie pleaded, sweetly.

During the few days before his departure she grew pale and languid, and reminded him frequently of his promise.

"Be sure and send her right home," she urged. "Tell her I'm sick and miserable, and Marion doesn't treat me well."

V.

"Is Laly's illness a matter of doctors and drugs, or is it a becoming little paleness in a pink tea-gown?" wrote Hazel to Marion, after the arrival of Eulalie's ambassador, with her royal message. "If it is at all serious, Elvira will go home at once. If it isn't, I would like to keep her a while. She has refused the man of the mills, but I think he is trembling on the brink of another proposal, from which I hope a different result."

Marion wrote back:

"Tell Elvira to stay as long as she likes. Laly's pallor came out of her powder box. She eats rations enough for two."

When Hugh returned Eulalie made bitter moan about her hapless lot.

"I've been so hunted and harassed by autumn dudes that I didn't want, and their bleating autos, I haven't had the peace of a cat. And you stayed away so, and Elvira has utterly abandoned me. She never came home."

"Your sister Hazel wouldn't let her," said Hugh, looking inquisitively at Eulalie's healthful bloom.

"Oh, I got along. And I suppose those roses went to her head, poor old dear; it's such a new thing for her to have them given her. Didn't she chant pæans over them?"

"You couldn't notice any pæans," said Hugh, "but several fellows were trying to chant proposals to her besides uncle E.

Ginger! but you ought to see Elvira now, Miss Eulalie; she's all dimply and pink, and her hair isn't slick, like it used to be, though it isn't messy, either; it's kind of crimpled up high, some way, like you'd raveled out a brown silk dress and piled up the ravelings. She wears new kind of things, too—dresses with jig-saw things—you know what I mean, frilly tricks that make you think of peach blossoms, or pie plant when it's cooked and all pink-white and clear. Why, it's true as preaching. I never knew her until I met her there at Lindale."

"So my prim, old-maid sister has turned butterfly since she went gadding?"

"No, she isn't a butterfly; she's too well supplied with brains for that; she couldn't keep that bunch of old worldlings hypnotized as she does if she hadn't a pile of original ideas of her own, though the dimples and frillicues may have caught them in the first place."

"Huh!" commented Eulalie, shortly. "I wonder how you happened to get so well acquainted with her, just passing through Lindale."

"I couldn't have," Hugh owned; "takes time to learn to appreciate a girl like that. If it hadn't been for your message, I suppose I never should have gone beyond the preface of her character; but when I saw the whirlwind she had stirred up among the dry leaves of the elderly boys' hearts, I concluded to postpone the tramping trip and watch the fun a while. Honestly, she was a new experience to me."

"I'm surprised to hear of her frivolity." A slight, shrewish flavor crept into Eulalie's smooth voice. "The way she used to persecute me for having a few beaux——"

"Oh, she doesn't want them, nor encourage them," Hugh quickly explained. "She just stays still, like a lamp, you know, that shines out soft and clear because it can't help it, and they go bumping along and sizzle their wings. It isn't her doings. They're mostly all too old for her—why, do you know, Miss Eulalie, I had supposed she was older than I, and I discovered she was two years younger?"

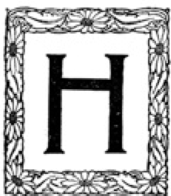
"I hope that won't prevent her being a good aunt to you," mused Eulalie, with restrained spite.

Hugh laughed, cheerily.

"She won't be any kind of an aunt to me—to uncle E.'s disgust. I did think he deserved a free field, because he discovered her in the chrysalis—when he came here with me; and he got it, so far as I was concerned. But he admitted to me that he thought it folly to keep on butting your head against a perfectly immovable wall, alluring as the wall might be; that he should go back to his mills and his former resolution and keep off the battlefield of love forever after. So then I concluded to give up my tramp entirely for this year and see if I could make a go with Cupid—and—a—Elvira is having a wedding dress made, and is going to accept me as a wedding present."

THE NEIGHBOR'S DOG

By Una Hudson



Half an hour after the new tenant had taken possession of the house next door, Miss Clementina Liddell looked out of her parlor window and saw a small, brown dog making himself very much at home on her front lawn.

Now, though the dog himself was small, his feet were not, and he was industriously digging a hole in the middle of Miss Clementina's bed of scarlet geraniums.

Miss Clementina was indignant. But for her unwillingness to speak to a gentleman to whom she had not been properly introduced, she would have promptly crossed the strip of grass between the two houses and demanded that the intruder be forced to return to his own lawn.

As it was, she went out and attempted to "shoo" him off. But the little brown dog would not shoo. He stopped digging, and, with much waving of his stubby tail and a friendly bark or two, launched himself at Miss Clementina.

She stepped hastily backward, but not before the front of her neat, pink morning gown had been hopelessly soiled by the dog's muddy feet.

"You bad, bad dog," she scolded, energetically, emphasizing her words by a lifted forefinger.

The little dog barked cheerfully and circled twice around her. He was so frankly, so joyously irrepressible, that Miss Clementina did not know whether to feel amused or vexed.

"Oh, well," she compromised, "I dare say you *mean* well. And we can fill up the hole you've dug, but I do hope you won't

do it again."

She looked him over critically.

"You're thin," she decided, mentally; "shockingly thin. I'm afraid your master doesn't feed you enough. He probably has an absurd notion that a dog shouldn't be fed but once a day. I've heard of such things, and I think it's positively inhuman."

Miss Clementina glanced furtively toward the house next door. No one was in sight. She bent over the wriggling brown dog.

"You poor thing," she whispered, "come around to the kitchen. For once in your life you shall have all you can eat."

It was a rash promise, and the keeping of it involved the chops for luncheon and all the milk in the house.

"He's rather a nice dog, don't you think?" Miss Clementina said to the maid, as she watched him eat. "But he has a dreadful appetite. I think we'd best tell the butcher's boy to bring some dog's meat; chops are so expensive."

II.

Mr. Kent Maclin took his hat and stick and started for his customary after-dinner stroll. On the front porch he found a small, brown dog busily engaged in reducing the doormat to a pulp.

Mr. Maclin recognized the dog as one belonging to the next door neighbor; he had seen him earlier in the day digging in a bed of scarlet geraniums. If people *would* keep dogs, Mr. Maclin thought they ought at least to teach them to behave. Still, if the lady who owned the dog could stand it to have her flower beds ruined, Mr. Maclin supposed he ought not to mind a chewed-up doormat.

The dog was only a puppy, anyway. His manners would probably improve as he grew older. Mr. Maclin stooped and patted him kindly on the head. The stubby brown tail thumped the floor ecstatically, and a red tongue shot out and began licking the polish from Mr. Maclin's shoes.

"Jolly little beggar, aren't you?" said the gentleman. But he backed hastily away from the moist, red tongue.

III.

Mr. Maclin ordered a new doormat every three days, and kept a package of dog biscuits in the drawer of the library table. He dealt these out with a lavish hand whenever the little brown dog saw fit to call for them, and was not without hope that a cultivated taste for dog biscuit might in time replace a natural one for doormats.

Mr. Maclin would have been glad to make the acquaintance of the supposed owner of the little brown dog, but didn't quite know how to go about it.

But one day, as he watched the little brown dog digging as usual in the geranium bed, he had an inspiration.

He paid a visit to the florist, and came back with a long pasteboard box tucked under his arm. It was filled with a glowing mass of red geraniums.

The composition of a suitable note to accompany the flowers was a task requiring much time and mental effort.

Finally, in sheer desperation, Mr. Maclin wrote on one of his cards, "To replace the flowers the dog has dug up," and dropped it among the scarlet blossoms.

He had hesitated between "the dog" and "your dog," but had decided against the latter, being fearful that it might, perhaps, be construed as conveying a subtle hint of reproach. Mr. Maclin's lawn also was defaced by many unsightly holes.

Miss Clementina wondered a little that the article "the" should have replaced the possessive pronoun "my." But on reflection she decided that one might not unreasonably object to confessing in so many words to the possession of a dog who so persistently did all the things he ought not to do. And, anyway, it was nice of Mr. Maclin to have sent the flowers.

Miss Clementina wrote a charming note of thanks, and earnestly assured Mr. Maclin that she didn't object in the least to the little dog's digging up her lawn.

Mr. Maclin smiled at the *naïveté* of the little note, and tucked it carefully away in his pocketbook.

Thereafter the two bowed soberly when they chanced to meet, and occasionally exchanged a casual remark concerning the weather.

And once, when Miss Clementina was picking the dead leaves from what was left of the geranium plants, Mr. Maclin paused to remark that the little brown dog seemed very fond of her.

"And of you, too," Miss Clementina had quickly returned. It couldn't be pleasant, she thought, for Mr. Maclin to feel that his pet had deserted him for a stranger.

"It's the dog biscuits I give him," Mr. Maclin explained, confidentially.

“Oh,” said Miss Clementina, “is he fond of them? I’ve always considered meat much more nourishing.”

“I dare say it is,” Mr. Maclin agreed. “But dog biscuits are handier to keep about. And he comes for them so often.”

Then, covered with confusion, he beat a hasty retreat. He hadn’t intended to hint at the voracious appetite of Miss Clementina’s pet.

IV.

Miss Clementina looked with dismay at the much battered object the little brown dog had just brought in and laid at her feet. It was all that remained of Mr. Maclin’s best Panama hat.

Miss Clementina picked it up gingerly. She crossed the strip of lawn between the two houses and rang her neighbor’s doorbell.

“I’m so sorry,” she said, extending the hat to its owner. “It’s really *too* bad of the little dog.”

“It’s of not the very slightest consequence,” returned Mr. Maclin, gallantly.

“Oh, but I think it is,” Miss Clementina insisted. “He’s a very bad little dog, really. Don’t you think perhaps you ought to whip him—not hard, but just enough to make him remember?”

“Whip him! Whip your dog! My dear Miss Liddell, I couldn’t think of such a thing.”

Miss Clementina’s eyes seemed very wide indeed.

“But he’s not my dog at all,” she protested. “Isn’t he *yours*, Mr. Maclin?”

“I never laid eyes on him,” said Mr. Maclin, “until I moved here. The first time I saw him he was digging in your geranium bed.”

“Oh!” said Miss Clementina, and began to laugh.

“And to think,” she said, “of all the outrageous things he has done! And neither of us daring to say a word because we each thought he belonged to the other.”

Mr. Maclin laughed with her. “I think,” he said, “that from now on the little brown dog will have to reform.”

V.

But the little brown dog did not reform. With unabated cheerfulness he continued to dig in Miss Clementina’s geranium bed, and to chew Mr. Maclin’s doormat.

“He’s hungry,” said Miss Clementina; “you should give him more dog biscuits.”

“He has too much to eat,” retorted Mr. Maclin. “He digs holes in the geranium bed to bury the bones you give him.”

The little brown dog was fast becoming a bond of union between the lonely man and the lonelier woman.

“*Your* dog has chewed up my new magazine,” Miss Clementina would call to her neighbor. “Do take him home.”

“Oh, no,” Mr. Maclin would call back. “That is not *my* dog. *My* dog is chasing a gray cat out of the back yard.”

But one day the little brown dog disappeared. Mr. Maclin laid down a new doormat, and said he was glad it needn’t be chewed up right away.

Miss Clementina filled in the holes in the geranium bed, and set out some new plants. She gathered up a bone, two old shoes and a chewed-up newspaper, and expressed the hope that once more she might be able to keep the lawn tidy.

Twenty-four hours later the little brown dog had not returned. Mr. Maclin went out and gave the unoffending new doormat a savage kick. Then he put on his hat and went down the street—whistling. It was not a musical whistle. On the contrary, it was shrill and ear-piercing. It was, in fact, the whistle that the little brown dog had been wont to interpret as meaning that Mr. Maclin desired his immediate presence.

Once, when Mr. Maclin paused for breath, he heard faintly: “Dog, dog, dog!”

It was thus that Miss Clementina had been in the habit of summoning the little brown dog.

Mr. Maclin turned and walked in the direction of her voice. Folly, like misery, loves company.

“The little brown dog,” said Miss Clementina, when Mr. Maclin had overtaken her; “*where* do you suppose he can be? I’ve called until I’m hoarse.”

“And I have whistled,” said Mr. Maclin, “but he doesn’t answer.”

“I can’t believe that he ran away,” said Miss Clementina; “he was so fond of us.”

“And I’m sure he wasn’t stolen,” said Mr. Maclin. “He wasn’t valuable enough to steal.”

“I thought,” said Miss Clementina, “that I was glad to have him leave. He certainly did mess the place up terribly. But I miss him so, I’d be downright glad to have him come back and dig a hole in the geranium bed.”

“I’ve a new doormat waiting for him,” said Mr. Maclin. “Miss Clementina, where *do* you suppose he is?”

“I don’t know,” said Miss Clementina. “I only wish I did. Why, there’s a little brown dog now. Perhaps——Here, dog, dog!”

Mr. Maclin’s whistle supplemented Miss Clementina’s call, but the brown dog took no heed.

“It’s some one else’s dog,” said Miss Clementina. “Don’t you see, he has on a collar?”

But Mr. Maclin had seen something else—a small, brass tag attached to the dog’s collar.

“Miss Clementina,” said he, “do you suppose the little brown dog’s tax was paid?”

“Tax?” questioned Miss Clementina.

“Yes, the dog tax, you know.”

“I didn’t know there was a dog tax,” said Miss Clementina.

“I’m afraid,” said Mr. Maclin, “that the dog-catcher has caught the little brown dog.”

To Miss Clementina’s mind the dog-catcher suggested awful possibilities. “Oh!” she said, “what *can* we do?”

“I shall go at once to the pound,” said Mr. Maclin, determinedly, “pay his tax and take him out.”

VI.

At the end of an hour Mr. Maclin returned. With him came the little brown dog. He wriggled joyously, and planted his dirty feet on Miss Clementina’s trailing skirts.

“His manners are just as bad as ever,” she said. “But I’m *so* glad to have him back. Was it the dog-catcher?”

“It was the dog-catcher,” said Mr. Maclin. “But it won’t happen again. I’ve paid his tax and bought him a collar. See, there’s a place on it for his owner’s name. But, of course, I couldn’t have it engraved, for he seems to have no owner. Miss Clementina, don’t you think it a pity for so nice a little dog not to belong to some one?”

There was that in Mr. Maclin’s voice that brought a faint flush to Miss Clementina’s cheek.

“I suppose,” went on the gentleman, “when he’s digging in your geranium bed he thinks he’s *your* dog, and when he’s chewing my doormat he’s probably laboring under the delusion that he’s *my* dog. Miss Clementina, it would be so easy to make him *our* dog. Don’t you think we’d better?”

“I—I don’t know,” faltered Miss Clementina.

But the words were muffled against Mr. Maclin’s coat, and he took the liberty of assuming that she did know.

LOVE AND YOUTH

Butterfly,

Your little day flit on;

Youth drifts as gayly by,

And soon as you is gone.

Wayside flower,

Be darling of the day;

Youth shares your sunny hour,

And with you slips away.

Woodland bird,

Hush not one fervent strain;

Love’s voice with yours is heard,

Then neither heard again.

John Vance Cheney.

THE DRAMATIC SEASON'S LAST MOMENT

By Alan Dale

Going—going——

Just as, with a sputter and a flicker and a last expiring tremor, we had begun to realize that the going season was, indeed, nearly gone, something happened. There was a rally, and a brief return to animation. The corpselike season sat up and waved its hands. An electric current, applied to its extremities by one admirable actress and one enterprising manager, was the cause of this surprising change, and the writing of epitaphs was temporarily postponed.

The return of the season to a semblance of interesting activity was due to the arrival in our midst of Miss Marie Tempest, who came from England just as the sad troupe of her unsuccessful countrymen had returned to that land. Miss Tempest, with a woman's daring, and the true spirit of "cussedness," took every risk, and, though even the enthusiastic and misinformed London papers have been obliged to avoid pet allusions to the "furore created in America" by the unfortunate English actors who failed here this season, the admirable little comedienne had no qualms.

Nor had her manager, Mr. Charles Frohman. It is pleasant, at times, to record managerial enterprise that cannot possibly be a bid for pecuniary reward. Mr. Frohman, whose name is often unfortunately mentioned in connection with the sad, cruel, oppressive, commercial speculators in dramatic "goods," belongs absolutely and utterly to another class. It is ten thousand pities that the enthusiasm and real artistic fervor of this undaunted, farseeing manager should be shadowed by this association. Mr. Frohman actually sent Miss Marie Tempest and her English company over from London for a short stay here of four weeks, merely to let us sample her new play, "The Freedom of Suzanne," that had been so well received in England.

Those who try to tar Mr. Frohman with the commercial brush will readily perceive their error. Had Miss Tempest packed the Empire Theater at every performance, the enormous expenses of this undertaking could never have been defrayed. The manager did not quiver. The actress—viewing the return of her countrymen, with flaccid pocketbooks, from the land of dollars—had no misgivings. She came, and she saw, and she conquered.

Miss Tempest, in "The Freedom of Suzanne," was worth waiting for. She was worth suffering for. We were perfectly willing to admit that the season was over, and we were not sorry, for it was one of the worst on record. But to the Empire we trooped to sample this last offering, and it was so good, and so delightful, that it flicked the season back for a month. Miss Tempest had a first-night audience that gave the "among-those-present" chroniclers quite a tussle. It seemed like early September, when theatrical hopes run high, and the demon of disillusion is not even a cloud as big as a man's hand.

Since Marie Tempest left musical comedy—that sinking ship—to its fate, and devoted herself to the development of her own unique gifts as a comedienne, her husband, Mr. Cosmo Gordon Lennox, has been the tailor that made the plays fit. If a playwriting husband can't fit his own wife, then his capabilities must surely be limited. Mr. Lennox proved, in "The Marriage of Kitty" last year, that he quite understood the eccentricities and idiosyncrasies of the clever little actress, and knew exactly how to make them salient. Although English, nobody could accuse Miss Tempest of being a "bread-and-butter miss." The most vivid imagination could never associate her with a white muslin gown, a pretty blue sash, a Christmas-card expression of surprised innocence, and the "prunes and prisms" attendant upon those luxuries.

Mr. Lennox had to trip across the English Channel, which is a nasty, "choppy" crossing, to find material that would suit his wife. That is always a troublesome thing to do, because the "goods," when bought, must be well soaked overnight, in order to remove the sting. This was the policy he pursued with "The Marriage of Kitty." The tactics were very similar in the case of "The Freedom of Suzanne," which was cut from the cloth of "Gyp's" novel, "Autour du Divorce." According to the program, the author "wished to acknowledge his indebtedness for certain passages in the play to a novel by the Comtesse de Martel." The "Comtesse de Martel" sounded nice and swagger, though "Gyp" is anything but that in her novels.

The comedy was very light, and frolicsome, and jolly, and—er—naughty, and—er—respectable. You had to stay to the very end, which was not bitter, in order to discover that it *was* quite respectable. That is where the English playwright always seems to improve upon the French. In London, a heroine may be volatile, and saucy, and unconventional, and iconoclastic, and spicy, and shocking, and quite horrible, but in the last act the adapter allows you to discover that she is really a very good, nice, whole-hearted woman; that she loves her husband in a faithful, wifely way, and that she will live happily ever afterward, a perfect picture of all the domestic graces. The curse has gone! It is the triumph of deodorization.

So in "The Freedom of Suzanne," while *Suzanne* danced a veritable *can-can* through two acts, she was brought back to a sedate English jig in the third. It was a play that could not stand, and that did not need a close analysis, for it was just a vehicle by means of which Miss Tempest could let loose the matchless bag-o'-tricks among which her art may be said to lurk. *Suzanne* gave her the finest acting part that she has ever had. It was an intellectual treat to sit and watch the

really exquisite, delicate work that she embroidered upon the diaphanous theme of the amusing little comedy.

Suzanne was terribly tired of her husband, and *Charles* did seem a bit of a bore. He was the type of "married man" who can no longer see graces in the woman who belongs to him—because she belongs to him. *Suzanne* chafed, and wanted her freedom. She clamored for a divorce, but there were no grounds upon which to obtain it. She yearned for the right to select her own associates; to do what she liked; to have a good time, and to be responsible to nobody. There was a mother-in-law in the case, of course, and, although the brand has become tiresome, this particular lady was necessary in order to emphasize *Suzanne's* apparently hapless plight.

Miss Tempest's success was assured when, in the first act, she recited the story of her own scandalous doings, with the divorce in view. As a piece of acting, this was worth the attention of every theatergoer. The actress sat on a sofa, and ran through the list of episodes in an amazing way. Some of her story she told with her eyes, with her facial expression, with gestures; the rest she set down in words freighted with every variety of intonation. Not once did she rise from that sofa. The other people were grouped around her, and all they had to do was to display astonished horror. They made a framework.

You were held in a grip of admiration by the telling effect of this scene. No other actress could have played it as Miss Tempest did. Her every meaning leaped over the footlights. Not a word, or the inflection of a word, escaped attention. It was an absolutely flawless piece of comedy. The artistic comedy of Réjane lacked the richness and unction of Miss Tempest's methods. Those who failed to see "The Freedom of Suzanne" missed a rare treat.

There was very little plot, of course. *Suzanne* got her divorce by collusion, in a manner that was a bit surprising in view of the fact that *Charles* was portrayed as a man of culture and refinement. In order to please *Suzanne*, he gave her a good shaking in the presence of a witness—as grounds for divorce! It was while waiting for the decree to be made "absolute" that *Suzanne* naturally discovered her love for him, and her rooted objection to the attentions of the three blackguards who were kowtowing before her. This assuredly was not new. It was merely the popular divorce twist of French playwrights.

In the last act of the play, *Suzanne* and her husband were reconciled, and all the improprieties of the earlier acts carefully smoothed away. "The Freedom of Suzanne" itself, however, did not matter very much. Sledge-hammer criticism could pulverize it. Poor little play! It did not merit any obstreperous handling, for it kept its audience in a state of unreasoning merriment, and it encased Miss Tempest like the proverbial glove. There is nothing more fascinating than perfect comedy acting. It is a tonic, the exhilarating effect of which is invaluable.

Miss Tempest brought over her London leading man, Mr. Allan Aynesworth, a remarkably good actor of drawing-room rôles. The ease and polish of the "thoroughbred"—and "thoroughbred" is a term that should replace the played-out "gentleman"—were convincingly shown. G. S. Titheradge was the other popular London name in the cast. The rest were adequate, but by no means extraordinary. They taught no lesson of artistic excellence, but at the fag-end of the season, we were not clamoring to be taught anything at all. Lessons were the very last thing in the world that we hankered for. Our desire for light entertainment was amply realized. "The Freedom of Suzanne" was a delightful wind-up.

Mr. Frohman, it is said, announced this enterprise as the result of a wish to do something "to be talked about." We are willing. We are willing at any time to talk about anything that can give us as much undiluted pleasure as this production did. We will even chatter and frivol, if Mr. Frohman will repeat the operation. And by-the-bye, I think that I have done both. My enthusiasm led me away. Let me extinguish it.

From the diminutive to the enormous leads us easily in the direction of that tremendous combination of high spirits and massive corporeality, Miss Alice Fischer. This actress, who has been before the public for a good many years, may be looked upon as one of those curious metropolitan figures that have acquired more popularity off the stage than on it. Miss Fischer has dominated feminine clubs, has associated herself with "movements," and has posed as advocating a National Theater, even while she did a dance every night in a classic gem entitled "Piff, Paff, Pouf!" She has "starred" occasionally, but never with much success. As a "good fellow" and a delightful acquaintance, Miss Fischer has always been unsurpassed. This rôle, not unusual among men, is unique among women.

Possibly you have heard of actors noted as wits, good fellows, *bons-vivants* and horse show figures. Their apparent popularity has invariably led you to believe that a "starring" venture would be stupendously successful—that their legions of friends would gather round them, and "whoop" them toward fortune. Such, it has frequently been proved, has not been the case. That cold, critical, money's-worth-hungry assemblage known as the "general public" has intervened, after a rousing "first-night" that has seemed like a riot of enthusiasm, and has stamped its disapproval upon the proceedings. Some of the strangest failures on the stage have been achieved by those who were brilliantly successful off the stage.

Hitherto this has been the fate of Miss Fischer. Many admired her, but that many were not included in the general public, that has no pronounced predilection for club men or club women. Fortunately—and it is a great pleasure to announce it—in her latest venture at Wallack's Theater, a new old comedy, and a clever one, by Stanislaus Stange, called "The School for Husbands," Miss Alice Fischer succeeded not only with her friends, but with the great unknown. She proved herself to be an actress of exceeding vitality and force, and she made not only a popular but an artistic hit.

Of course she was bound to do it sooner or later. We may not have indorsed her previous productions, but we always liked Miss Fischer, with her bouncing good nature, her intelligent outlook, her curious untrammeled demeanor, always suggestive of a huge schoolgirl suddenly let loose; her capital elocution and her agreeable way of insistently seeming at home. In "The School for Husbands," these qualities appeared quite relevantly. This strange season, now over, which has snuffed out so many poor, feeble little stars, has been very kind to Miss Fischer. She "came into her own."

Mr. Stange's play was an amusing comedy, dealing with domestic infelicity—of the tit-for-tat order—in the "old" style. That is to say, it did not flaunt in our faces a fracture of the seventh commandment, or drag in a series of epigrams

modeled upon those of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld and Oscar Wilde. Mr. Stange went in for what we call the “artificial,” but it all occurred in 1720. The eighteenth century covers a multitude of sins that are naked and unashamed in the twentieth. We were disarmed in our frenzied analysis when we were confronted with such purely imaginary and entertaining types as *Sir John* and *Lady Belinda Manners*, *Lady Airish*, *Lady Speakill*, *Lady Tattle*, *Lord Foppington* and *Lord Drinkwell*.

We were back again amid the “old comedy” characters, of whom we always talk with sycophantic admiration. Sometimes we loathe them, but we never say so. There has been a sporadic revival of one or two of these “old comedies” this season, accomplished with that “bargain-counter” atrocity—a sop for vulgar minds—known mischievously as the “all-star-cast.” It has been amusing to watch the cold, dispiriting and almost clammy reception accorded to these “classics,” compared with the cordiality extended to Miss Alice Fischer in her “imitation” classic, “The School for Husbands.” Yet, if a well-read, modern playwright cannot improve upon the eighteenth century, with his sublime knowledge of all that has occurred since—then he must indeed be rather small potatoes.

Mr. Stange made these improvements. While the revived work of the late Oliver Goldsmith and Dion Boucicault languished, the “old comedy” of the twentieth century triumphed. If you saw it, you will understand why. There were episodes in “The School for Husbands” that were very clever and enlivening. All the characters were puppets, but they danced with the latest electric improvements, and their gyrations entertained. Blood they certainly lacked, but nobody cared. It was a relief to watch this amusing but thoroughly refined tomfoolery, and to know that no problem lurked beneath it. It was the Eden Musée, suddenly galvanized into life and pirouetting in all its color and brilliancy.

With Arthur Forrest, who is a fine, distinguished, subtle, convincing actor; with Miss Grace Filkins, Jameson Lee Finney and Mrs. Ida Jeffreys-Goodfriend, Miss Fischer managed to beat any “all-star-cast”—the refuge of the destitute. The star herself was so irresistible, so dominant and so largely vital, that hundreds of people who had merely heard of Alice Fischer were glad to meet her. This “venture” firmly established her, and the establishment was conducted by such legitimate means that the event was unusually interesting.

Oh, I’m tired of stars. I am—I am! Last month I devoted myself almost exclusively to them, and now I find that the cry is still “they come, they come!” To be sure, Miss Marie Tempest and Miss Alice Fischer both achieved success, but now I see before me the plaintive figure of poor little Miss Annie Russell, who didn’t. Miss Russell came to the Criterion Theater with a Zangwill play. It sounds well, doesn’t it?—but I can assure you that the sound was most misleading.

Nothing quite so drab, so despondently dreary, or so damply dismal as “Jinny the Carrier” ever asked for a hearing and got it. Zangwill has lectured upon the drama, and paid pungent respect to its incongruities, but he has proved himself to be infinitely worse than the various playwrights whom he ridiculed. “The Serio-Comic Governess,” thrust upon Miss Cecilia Loftus, was bad enough, but “Jinny the Carrier” went far below it, and stayed there all the time.

It was an “idyll” of Frog Farm, near London, and Frog Farm seemed to be a trifle less amusing than Hunter’s Point, near New York. It introduced us to rural types of deadly monotony, among them being a “village patriarch,” suggesting cheap melodrama; a veterinary surgeon, a postman, a village dressmaker and *Jinny* herself, who “ran” a wagon, and who subsequently fell in love with a rival who tried to drive her out of the business. There were four acts of cumulative hopelessness, and by the time *Jinny* was ready to get married, the audience seemed just as ready to die of fatigue.

The humor was supplied by the village dressmaker, who owned a mustache, and who clamored for a depilatory! This pleasing, refined and frolicsome bit of originality failed to awaken people from their torpor. There was a good deal of talk about pigs and horses, while tea, cucumbers and marmalade graced the dialogue incessantly; but the amazed audience could not indorse this rural festival. *Jinny*, amid the pigs, horses, tea, cucumbers and marmalade, talked in Mr. Zangwill’s best style—a style replete with wordplay or pun—but her setting killed her, and she was soon “done for.”

Perhaps “Jinny the Carrier” was a joke. Who shall say? It is a bit “fishy”—I forgot to say that a real, dead fish was among the débris of this comedy—that two such bad plays as “Jinny the Carrier” and “The Serio-Comic Governess” honored New York to the exclusion of London. It is all very well to say that New York is so generous, so appreciative, so alive to all the good points of clever writers—it is all very well to say that, and sometimes it reads very well—but the fact remains that these plays *had* no good points. London would have laughed at them in immediate derision. We need feel no pride in the circumstance of their original production in New York. Instead, we should feel perfectly justified in feeling extremely sorry for ourselves. We might even say that both of these plays were foisted upon us in a spirit of “Oh, anything’s good enough for New York!”

I don’t say, and I don’t believe, that this was the reason we suffered from this Zangwill rubbish. Our ill luck was due to the fact that playwrights and plays, owing to the grinding theatrical dictatorship that has absolutely pulverized the healthy God-given spirit of competition, by which alone an Art can be kept alive, are few and far between. The manager takes what he can get, and he can get precious little, for the incentive is lacking. He is obliged to produce something, because he has an appalling list of theaters to fill. It is perfectly inconceivable that “Jinny the Carrier” should have been even rehearsed. It is a sheer impossibility that anybody could have anticipated success.

Miss Annie Russell, a sterling little artist, deserved all our sympathy. It was sad to see her in these surroundings, battling against the inevitable. Miss Russell can succeed with far less material than many actresses need. Give her half a fighting chance, and she is satisfied. It is pitiful to think of this clever young woman freighted with affairs like “Brother Jacques” and ”Jinny the Carrier,” but it was wonderful to watch her genuine efforts to do the very best she could. There can be nothing sadder in the life of an actress than this struggle with a forlorn hope. When that actress is intelligent, well-read, artistic and up-to-date, as Miss Annie Russell surely is, her plight is even more melancholy. One can scarcely view, in cold blood, this reckless waste of fine talent.

May I pause for a few moments, and say something about the Hippodrome?

The Hippodrome was such a stupendous affair, and its opening took place at such a singularly opportune moment, that

a wave of enthusiasm swept over this island. Every dramatic critic in town went to the opening of the Hippodrome, while many of them crept into the “dress rehearsal,” in order to get their adjectives manicured and be ready to rise to the occasion. This in itself was quite unique. As a colossal American achievement, the Hippodrome loomed. It combined spectacle, ballet, specialties, acting, singing, novelty.

In its ballet, particularly, it invited and received the admiration of every lover of art. Nothing more beautiful than “The Dance of the Hours” has delighted the eyes and the ears of this metropolis, that fell in love, at first sight, with its magnificent staging, as the excuse for the lovely music of “La Gioconda.” The Metropolitan Opera House never offered anything so sumptuous. It appealed irresistibly to the artistic instinct. It exploded the fatuous policy that causes the appearance in this city of those senseless, antiquated spectacles—food for neither adult nor juvenile—known as “Drury Lane pantomime,” a form of entertainment that in its native land has begun to languish.

The ballet at the Hippodrome was a revelation, for this city has never taken kindly to ballet, probably for the reason that it has never seen one of genuine artistic merit. A capital performance entitled “A Yankee Circus in Mars” was not a bit less “dramatic” than the alleged comic operas and tiresome musical comedies that have afflicted us with such drear persistence, and it was certainly infinitely more plausible. It had novelty, sensational features and a superb equipment. In addition to all this, there was a wonderful aquatic arrangement, in which the huge stage suddenly sank and gave place to an imposing body of water, wet and ready to receive the plunging horses and riders, as they swam across in the pursuit of their dramatic story.

Two young men, Messrs. Thompson and Dundy, newcomers among the jaded and throttled amusement purveyors of the big city, were responsible for all this, and the greatest credit is due to their “nerve” as well as to their astonishing executive ability. The enterprise at first seemed like some amazing “pipe-dream,” from which there must be a rude awakening, but the opening of the Hippodrome was such a bewildering success, and so unanimously acclaimed, that the croakers were silenced. One of these was exceedingly amusing. He had declared that the Hippodrome must fail. Its colossal results, however, so overwhelmed him that he forthwith announced his belief that New York would patronize two Hippodromes, and his intention of building a second.

The promise that Mr. Kellett Chalmers held out to us in his play of “Abigail,” with Miss Grace George, evaporated in a sad farce, or comedy, entitled “A Case of Frenzied Finance.” We had been flattering ourselves that we had discovered a new “outlook,” and we came a bad cropper. The simian antics of an impossible bell boy, in an impossible hotel, and his maneuvers in the arena of finance, were the “motive” of this extremely invertebrate contribution. There was an “Arizona Copper King”; there was his daughter; there was a gentleman from “Tombstone, Ariz.,” and there were some tourists drawn after the Clyde Fitch style, but with none of his lightness of touch.

It was almost impossible to follow the grotesque proceedings, and utterly impossible to find a gleam of interest in them. One of the characters drank incessantly through two acts, and indulged in the luxury of what is politely called a “jag.” We might have been pardoned for envying it. There are worse conditions, when it comes to the contemplation of such a “comedy” as “A Case of Frenzied Finance.” One suspected satire occasionally, but it was mere suspicion. One was anxious to suspect anything, but I always hold—and I may be wrong—that the best thing to look for, when one goes to the theater, is a play. Perhaps that is an old-fashioned notion.

This strange affair took us back to old times, when we were less sophisticated, but it is not at all likely that “A Case of Frenzied Finance” would have passed muster in the days when we approved and laughed at the works of the late Charles H. Hoyt. There was generally something salient in the Hoyt farces—some happy touch or some hit that “struck the nail on the head.” In the farce at the Savoy, there was much of the frenzy that is usually associated with the padded cell, and that is not, as a rule, enlivening to the outsider.

Mr. Douglas Fairbanks, a very “fresh” young actor, was the heroic bell boy, a very bad advertisement for New York hostelries. He worked harder than any bell boy has ever been known to do, and it seemed a shame to waste so much effort on alleged “drammer.” Mr. Fairbanks might possibly have made more of a lasting success in a real hotel than he will achieve in the spurious affair that was staged. A number of others, in an extremely uninteresting cast, labored ineffectively. Mr. Chalmers completely routed the good impression he had made in “Abigail,” and I should recommend him to “bide a wee” before hurling further manuscripts at susceptible managers—not for their sake, but for his own.

Mr. Paul Armstrong was luckier with “The Heir to the Hoorah.” How true it is that one can live down anything! It should be an inspiring and consolatory thought to Mr. Kellett Chalmers. Mr. Armstrong lived down “The Superstitions of Sue,” which, one might have thought, would have proved to be a veritable old-man-of-the-sea. This is, happily, a forgetful and unprejudiced public, and hope is rarely extinguished.

Although “The Heir to the Hoorah” was freighted with a title so prohibitive that people who attach importance to names might be excused for fighting shy of it, it proved to be a play with so many real laughs in it that criticism was disarmed—one always says that as though criticism started armed, which is absurd!—and joined in the somewhat irresistible mirth. It was a “Western” play, of course. “The Heir to the Hoorah” couldn’t be Eastern. But, by means of the West, Mr. Armstrong was able to get in some amusing episodes that appealed exclusively to the East. Much of it was devoted to parody of that sublime institution known as “evening dress”—popular on Third Avenue as the “dress suit.”

There is nothing really funnier. Of course we are accustomed to it. Our souls may rebel at its exigencies, but unless we happen to be millionaires, we cannot afford to flout the conventions. We wear the “evening dress” because we have been taught that it is respectable and seemly. In “The Heir to the Hoorah” a number of miners and “rough diamonds,” in “a mining town east of the Divide,” were portrayed in their struggles with civilization.

It was very droll. *Dave Lacy*, *Bud Young*, *Mr. Kelly*, *Bill Ferguson*, *Lon Perry* and *Gus Ferris*, all gorgeously uncouth, as far as externals go, made an admirable onslaught in the direction of the “dress suit.” “Immaculate evening dress,” as we call the garb of a man who is rigged up in imitation of the elusive but energetic restaurant waiter, has rarely been more humorously attacked. This feature went much further than did the story of the play. But it served to put an

audience in such a good humor that the somewhat trivial play itself seemed better than it really was. Certainly no European playwright could have seen the ludicrous possibilities of evening dress as amusingly as Mr. Armstrong did. Perchance Mr. Bernard Shaw might have done so, but his cynicism would have marred the prospect. There was no "pose" in the humor at the Hudson Theater.

The play had the advantage of being well acted. We often complain that leading actors cannot wear evening dress gracefully. This time they had to do their worst for it, and were asked to wear it as ungracefully as they could. They were able to do it. Most of them were comparatively unknown, but they were none the worse for that. John Drew or William Faversham or Kyrle Bellew could not possibly have pilloried evening dress as did the actors in "The Heir to the Hoorah."

"The Firm of Cunningham" succeeded "Mrs. Temple's Telegram," at the little Madison Square Theater, but did not prove to be a worthy successor. It was from the pen of Mr. Willis Steell, who rushed in where angels fear to tread; or, in other words, invented a couple of complex ladies, and then tried to explain them plausibly. There is no more difficult task. One lady was a skittish matron, addicted to betting on the races and to allowing a nice looking boy to kiss her; the other was a white-muslin girl from Vassar, who fell in love with that boy at remarkably short range.

It was very unsatisfactory. One woman was a cat, with whom we were supposed to sympathize; the other had many of the characteristics of a fool. Why label Vassar for the latter? It was, however, the married woman who was the "heroine," and a key to her character was never supplied. I like a key to complex ladies, and am not a bit ashamed to admit it. I want their motives a-b-c'd for my use, in the case of plays like "The Firm of Cunningham." When complex ladies figure in masterpieces, than the key is unnecessary, and what you don't understand, you can always ascribe to the "psychological."

Miss Hilda Spong, a clever actress who is always miscast and who is rarely able to display her fine qualities, was this contradictory "heroine," while Miss Katherine Grey, usually assigned to dark melodrama, was the white-muslin girl with the Vassar mis-label. William Lamp, as the boy who kissed, was possibly the best member of the cast, that also included William Harcourt and Henry Bergman. "The Firm of Cunningham" scarcely seemed built for "business."

A SEA SHELL

Behold it has been given to me

To know the secrets of the sea,—

Its magic and its mystery!

And though, alas, I may not reach

The clear communicable speech

Of men, communing each with each,

I have such wonderment to tell,

Such marvel and such miracle,

I needs must strive to break the spell.

Hence do I murmur ceaselessly;

And could one but translate me, he

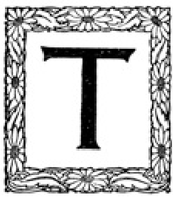
Might speak the secrets of the sea!

Clinton Scollard.

FOR BOOK LOVERS

By Archibald Lowery Sessions

Two recent books that deal with a theme familiar enough to novel readers, but always stimulating. "The Garden of Allah," by Robert Hichens, and "The Apple of Eden," by E. Temple Thurston. Charles Carey's "The Van Suyden Sapphires" a good detective story. Other books.



Two recent books are worthy of something more than casual notice for reasons entirely unconnected with the question of their literary merits, for they afford some material for reflection upon the curiosity of coincidences and for speculation as to the value of the priest in love as a character in fiction.

It is not to be supposed that undue significance is given to these aspects of the appearance of the books in question, for no important deductions are to be drawn from their nearly simultaneous publication; it is not especially remarkable as a coincidence. It is, however, an interesting fact that two novelists as gifted as the authors of these two books have shown themselves to be should have been working out the same theme in very much the same manner, and presumably at approximately the same time.

The opportunity of the cynical critic is, of course, obvious, and he will, if he thinks of it, lose no time in exclaiming that the most remarkable thing about it is that the books should have found publishers at all, and add, sourly, that if all similar coincidences were brought to light by publication, the condition of English fiction would be more hopeless than it is.

But the cynic would be wrong, as usual. If it is admitted that the new books of Mr. Hichens and Mr. Thurston are not “epoch-making,” it still remains a fact that they are as nearly so as any of the books of the year; they narrowly miss the standard which entitles them to be genuine and permanent representatives of English literature.

No one needs to be reminded that love stories, in which the lovers are required to surmount all sorts of obstacles, are common enough; one of the chief difficulties in supplying the demand is to create obstacles of the sort that will stand the test of plausibility and yet add a reasonable means by which the hero and heroine may overcome them, for the distracted couple must live up to what is expected of them, and their romance must be molded by the practical maxim that nothing succeeds like success—success meaning that their final happiness must be in conformity with the necessities of conventional morality; their union either blessed by the church of their faith or confirmed by law. And it might be added that the reader, in the majority of cases, will be conscious of a sense of uneasiness unless the happy outcome is effected not only with his own approbation, but with that of the conscience of each of the lovers. If any question of right and wrong is left unsettled for them, the reader remains dissatisfied, no matter what consideration of principle he may himself feel justified in disregarding.

A man devoted to celibacy, by vows voluntarily made to the church which he looks upon as his spiritual director, who finds himself in love with a woman, in the nature of things presents an attractive problem to a novelist—probably because the solution is so difficult; to be sure, the theme is not altogether new, but it possesses an interest that is never wholly satisfied; it suggests all sorts of dramatic possibilities; it supplies material for an intense climax, and it provokes discussion.

People will differ about what a man’s duty is under such circumstances, and the question will be asked whether his allegiance is due to the church or to the woman who returns his love, overlooking what may perhaps be the fact that it is not so much a question of loyalty to the church as of loyalty to conscience; a foolish consistency, possibly “a hobgoblin to little minds,” but, nevertheless, one to be weighed in the consideration of the story’s artistic merits.

Whatever the outcome of the conflict between conscience and inclination, whether the old conception of duty is confirmed or is abandoned for a new one, there remains the same difference of opinion. Is the man weak or strong? Is his decision in conformity with the familiar facts of human nature? Is it natural that his love for his church should outweigh his passion for the woman? And is the woman likely to acquiesce in the destruction of her hopes?

It is discouragingly seldom that a book comes to the reviewers’ hands, which, by its virility and its honest merit as literature, in the old and true sense of the word, rises as high above the average as does “The Garden of Allah,” which Robert Hichens publishes through the Stokes Company; and it is because it truly possesses these qualities that it gives promise of a life of appreciation which will outlast many other volumes in the year’s crop of fiction.

In the consideration of such a book the motive power, the plot, is hardly of moment—it is the workmanship, and what one might term the self-conviction of the novelist, that counts. After all, the story of the renegade monk and his earthly love, culminating in marriage, is not unusual; one foresees the ultimate solution of this problem—his renunciation of the world and his return to his monastery. It is a theme which has engaged the pen of writers time out of mind—but it is safe to say that never has the theme been handled with such mastery, with such keenly sympathetic character delineation and analysis, as that with which Mr. Hichens has handled it. His craftsmanship, his insight into and understanding of human nature and the forces that mold it—the intangible forces of the earth and air, the minute happenings of one’s daily life that, in themselves, are too likely to pass unregarded, but work so powerfully and well-nigh irresistibly upon the spirit of men and women—all this is superb and thorough.

His literary generalship amounts almost to genius approaching that of the great masters of fiction. Indeed, if any fault can be found with the book, it is that it is too painstakingly complete; nothing is left to the imagination—or, rather, the imagination is forced by the essence of eternal truth that seems to form each phrase and sentence, to comprehend all, down to the least detail; and a thorough reading of the book leaves one with the sense of physical fatigue, as if the reader himself had experienced the violent and terrible ordeals of the soul that were the portions of the actors in this drama of the African desert.

Whether or not it would have been wiser for Mr. E. Temple Thurston to have published his new book, “The Apple of Eden”—Dodd, Mead & Co.—under a *nom de plume*, is largely, if not wholly, a commercial question. Those who have shown a disposition to belittle it on account of the interesting but irrelevant fact that he is the husband of the author of “The Masquerader,” have exhibited small powers of discrimination and missed an opportunity to do justice to a remarkable book, for such it unquestionably is.

The book is a very keen study of character; one of the sort that could be made only by a close observer of human nature, accustomed to the analysis of motives and to the due apportionment of their elements.

It is the story of the evolution of a young priest from an inexperienced celibate to a fully developed man, by which phrase is meant spiritually and intellectually developed by the desperate method of temptation.

Father Everett embraced the priesthood and committed himself by irrevocable vows with all the enthusiasm of ignorant youth and without the slightest comprehension of the significance of his manhood. He naturally, under such circumstances, never questioned his fitness to advise and rebuke and absolve sinners. But with the appearance of the woman, another and hitherto unrecognized side of his nature began to stir, and his torture was prepared. That his love for Roona Lawless was reciprocated, instead of bringing them joy, only added to the horror of their situation, and it was well for them both that the man had access to the shrewd kindliness and the worldly wisdom of his vicar, Father Michael.

The old priest showed his surprise when the climax of his curate’s confession brought out the fact that the latter’s transgression was limited to the exchange of a kiss, and when the young man exclaimed: “Glory be to God, wasn’t it enough?” the other replied, dryly: “Faith, it’s well you found it so.”

It is, to be sure, an old enough story. But its merit is that it is told with a vigor and a dramatic insight that makes it read like a narrative of actual fact. If it has any fault, it lies in rather unnecessary multiplicity of physiological details.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Chesterton, who has recently confessed to a weakness for reading detective stories, may be able to get a copy of Charles Carey’s book, “The Van Suyden Sapphires,” just published by Dodd, Mead & Co., for in it he will find all the diversion that he needs, and possibly some information as to the art of plot construction—if indeed it is an art and not a science.

It is a little bit uncertain as to whether or not Mr. Carey intentionally emphasizes Miss Bramblestone’s rather abnormal intuition, or whether he is trading, for the purpose of his story, upon the popular superstition—maybe it is not a superstition—that this faculty is essentially feminine. But it is not a matter of the highest importance whether he has or not; it is not even worth while to be hypercritical in a discussion of the artistic quality of the story; it would be a waste of time and space to undertake to throw doubt upon the probability of any of the story’s episodes, for when one is forced to make the acknowledgment that Mr. Carey has written a book that will not surrender its hold upon the attention until the last word is read, what more need be said in its praise?

It is as good an example of the peculiar fascination exercised by so-called detective stories as we know of; and besides this it contains—as most of these stories do not—a lot of people who command both our interest and sympathy, from the heroine to the self-confessed criminal, Harry Glenn, who is, in spite of his wickedness, a very captivating young man, as Miss Bramblestone found out, and as her lover, Captain McCracken, was finally forced to admit.

“The Unwritten Law,” by Arthur Henry, A. S. Barnes & Co., is extremely interesting, and written in a curiously circumstantial style, so explicitly worked out as to details of scenery, location and so forth, that it constantly produces the effect of fact rather than fiction.

Various seamy sides of society are shown up in pretty plain colors, and the author does not hesitate to draw conclusions from them, too strongly convincing to be questioned by his readers. The old engraver, Karl Fischer, his wife and two daughters, are typical products of the time, especially the pretty and sensual Thekla, whose physical exuberance and innocent carelessness of social decencies are such a manifest result of her environment.

These four form the nucleus of the plot, and have to do with the destinies of other characters, all equally pronounced types. Adams, the young lawyer, is interesting in his defense of old Karl, on trial for counterfeiting; the Vandermere and Storrs families might be portraits drawn from our own acquaintance; more’s the pity.

But the story is, nevertheless, far from commonplace. It will not make us laugh, yet will keep us absorbed till the last page, and we lay it down feeling that we have seen certain phases of life with some intense lights thrown upon them.

Baroness Von Hutten’s poor little “Pam,” Dodd, Mead & Co., with her contradicting intensity and innocence, and her distorted notions of matters social, is as interesting a study as can be found in recent fiction. It might be as well not to leave her in the path of conventionally-brought-up young persons who have not her antecedents—but their elders will understand her as a product, and perhaps even perceive that she points a moral while adorning a tale. Pam is the child of a mercenary English girl, well born, who has fled to the Continent with her lover, an opera singer, who has left his wife. Contrary to the usual result of such unions, the two are completely happy in one another; too much so to bestow any special attention on Pam, except the explanation to her, in most explicit terms, of her social limitations as their offspring. Her wanderings from one situation to another with a maid and a monkey, her shrewd childish distrust of the conventional virtues, her slow awakening to the absorbing passion for the man she loves, and her final realization of the barriers which stand between them, make a strong story, absorbing in its interest.

Two more detective stories are “The Amethyst Box” and “The Ruby and the Caldron,” by Anna Katharine Green, the latter published in the same volume with another short story, “The House in the Mist,” by the same author.

The two volumes are the first of a series which the publishers—Bobbs-Merrill Company—call “The Pocket Books,” designed to represent “the three aspects of American romance—adventure, mystery and humor.”

They are happily named, for they are small volumes, which can be conveniently slipped into the pocket and read at odd times.

“The Amethyst Box” and “The House in the Mist” are tales of mystery of rather a grim sort, for there are violent deaths in both, but, as in all of Mrs. Rohlfs’ stories, justice is finally executed upon the guilty, and the reader’s sense of the fitness of things is satisfied.

The only unpleasant feature of “The Caldron and the Ruby” is that suspicion of theft is directed toward an innocent person; but inasmuch as, in order to make a detective story, the innocent must be under suspicion and must be ultimately vindicated, this cannot be considered in the light of a defect.

Of quite a different character is the tale of Morley Roberts’ “Lady Penelope,” L. C. Page & Co. The reader spends most of his time, as it were, in the wake of a gaseous motor car. Such audacious defiance of the conventionalities on the part of the heroine, such mystery and scandal as to her matrimonial ventures, such “racing and chasing” and automobiling, such varying suitors—all individually represented by full-page illustrations—such a precociously impudent boy of fourteen meddling with the plot and acting as Penelope’s prime minister, such mixed-up situations and harum-scarum talk, cannot be found between ordinary lovers, but the result is amusing, to say nothing more. The best character in the book is the old duchess, for whose mystification Penelope’s scheme is planned, and who only at the climax discovers, like the rest of us, which of six men her niece has married, though all of them lay claim to that honor.

“Return,” by Alice MacGowan and Grace MacGowan Cooke, L. C. Page & Co., is a new version of the taming of a shrew, though in the case of Diana Chaters, the cure is effected without the intervention of a Petruchio.

This is the pith of the theme of the story, very briefly put, for, as she is introduced to us in the opening chapters, she is, with all her beauty, as hopeless a termagant as can well be conceived, and when she bids us farewell at the end of the book, the transformation has been made complete.

The book is filled with color and action, the background of which is the rather motley life of colonial Georgia, or rather of the time during which Georgia was being established as a colony for insolvent debtors through the efforts of General Oglethorpe. The suspicions and uneasiness existing in the midst of the heterogeneous population attracted to the new colony, the constant state of alarm from the threatened incursions by the Spanish from the South and the presence of Indians and negroes, furnish plenty of material for an exciting tale of which a high-spirited and refined young woman is the central figure throughout. That she should suffer humiliations at which she bitterly rebelled is not to be wondered at, and, in spite of her arrogant pride, one cannot help sympathizing with her in her troubles and rejoicing with her and with Robert Marshall in their reunion.

The material used in the book is peculiarly difficult to handle on account of its complexity, but the authors are to be sincerely congratulated on having constructed out of it a very interesting and coherent tale.

Mr. Harris Dickson has furnished another demonstration of the fact that a man can do two things—though, perhaps, not at the same time—and do them well. It is safe to assume that his professional life has been a busy one, for a lawyer who attains a judicial distinction, as a rule, has to work hard, but in spite of it he has found time to write an exceedingly good story.

“The Ravanels,” published by Lippincott, is a characteristically Southern tale; Southern in setting, in character and in action. Whether justly or not—probably not—it is more or less widely accepted as a fact that less regard is shown for the value of human life in the South than in the East, and it may reasonably be said that a defect in Mr. Dickson’s story is that, in some measure, it tends to give color to this opinion, for its theme deals chiefly with one of the feuds of which we read so much.

Stephen Ravanel, the hero and a scion of a distinguished Southern family, grows up cherishing a bitter resentment against his father’s murderer, Powhatan Rudd, who has escaped punishment for the crime. His earliest recollection is that of his dead father, whose body is shown to him by his aunt.

After he has reached manhood, the spirit of revenge still alive, Rudd is killed under circumstances which point to Stephen as the slayer. It is the trial of the young man on the charge of murder that supplies a most exciting and dramatic episode in the story, and it is extremely well done, for all the essential particulars are produced without undue emphasis.

There is, of course, a love story, a very attractive and convincing one, of which the heroine, Mercia Grayson, is a characteristically fascinating Southern girl. It is a tale of which the author may well feel proud to have written.

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.
    - esscape changed to escape

- mys-mystery changed to mystery
- alwas changed to always
- reutrned changed to returned
- he changed to she
- here changed to her
- fète changed to fête
- declassé changed to déclassé

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AINSLEE'S, VOL. 15, NO. 6, JULY 1905 ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

• You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

• You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

• You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

• You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE

TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state’s laws.

The Foundation’s business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation’s website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.