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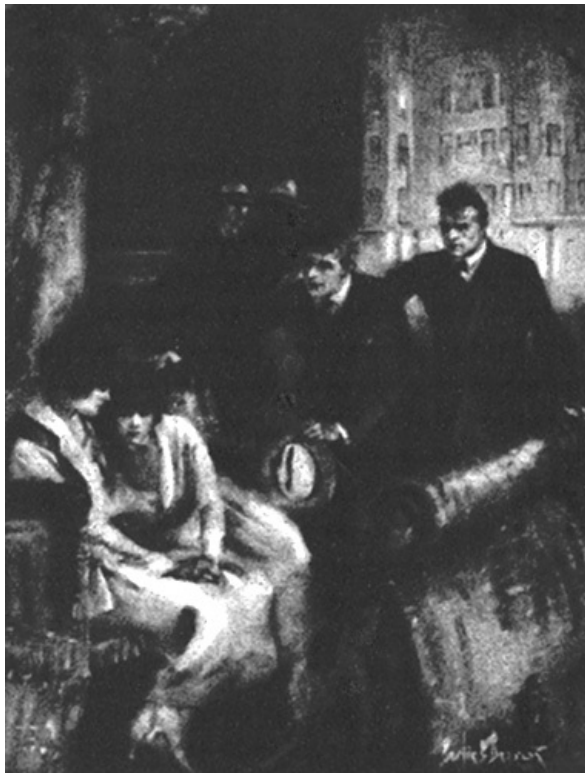
*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BLUE-GRASS AND BROADWAY ***

Transcriber's note

A Table of Contents has been created for this version.

Minor punctuation errors have been corrected without notice. Printer errors have been changed, and they are indicated with a mouse-hover and listed at the [end of this book](#). All other inconsistencies are as in the original.

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"We are all going to stand by, little girl"

BLUE-GRASS AND BROADWAY

BY

MARIA THOMPSON DAVIESS

Author of "THE MELTING OF MOLLY," "THE GOLDEN BIRD," "THE TINDER BOX," etc.

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CHAPTER I

[3]

The need of a large sum of money in a great hurry is the root of many noble ambitions, in whose branches roost strange companies of birds, pecking away for dollars that grow—or do not—on bushes. And it was in such a quest that Miss Patricia Adair of Adairville, Kentucky, lit upon a limb of life beside Mr. Godfrey Vandeford of Broadway, New York. Their joint endeavors made a great adventure.

"There's nothing to it, Pop; either pony girls will have to grow four legs to cut new capers, somebody will have to write a play entitled 'When Courtship Was in Flower,' requiring flowered skirts ten yards wide with a punch in each furbelow, or we go out of the theatrical business," said

[4]

Mr. Vandeford, as he shuffled a faint, violet-tinted letter out of a pile of advertising posters emblazoned with dancing girls and men, several personal bills, two from a theatrical storage house and one from an electrical expert, leaned back in his chair, and prepared to open the violet communication. "We dropped twenty thousand cool on 'Miss Cut-up,' and those sixteen pairs of legs cost us fifteen hundred a week. We might be in danger of starving right here on Broadway, if we hadn't picked a sure-fire hit in 'The Rosie Posie Girl.'"

"Ain't it the truth," answered Mr. Adolph Meyers, as he glanced up from his typewriter with a twinkle in his big black eyes that were like gems in a round, very sedate, even sad, Hebrew face. "Bare legs and 'cut-ups' is already old now, Mr. Vandeford. It is that we must have now a play with a punch." [5]

"The law won't let us take anything more off the chorus, so we'll have to swing back and put a lot on. Costumes that cost a million will be the next drag, mark me, Pop," Mr. Godfrey Vandeford declaimed with a gloomy brow, as he still further delayed exploring the violet missive.

"A hundred thousand it will take for costuming 'The Rosie Posie Girl,'" agreed Pop dolefully, from above the letter he was slowly pecking out of the machine.

"For furnishing chiffon belts, you mean, not costumes, if we go by Corbett's clothes ideas," growled the pessimistic, prospective producer of the possible next season's hit in the girl-show line.

"You have it right," answered Pop, sympathetically.

"If I hadn't promised to let old Denny in on my Violet Hawtry show for the fall I'd be tempted to throw back everything, even 'The Rosie Posie Girl' and go gunning for potatoes or onions up on a Connecticut farm; but the show bug has bit Denny hard and I'll have to be the one to shear him and not leave it to any of the others. I'll be more merciful to his millions; but asking him to put up half of a cool hundred and fifty thousand is a bit raw. Wish I had a nice little glad play with an under twenty cast for him to cut his teeth on instead of the 'Rosie Posie.'" [6]

"It's six plays on the shelf now for reading," reminded Mr. Meyers, eagerly, for to him fell the task of weeding all plays sent into the office of Godfrey Vandeford, Theatrical Producer, and his optimistic soul suffered when he discovered a gem and found himself unable to get Mr. Vandeford to read so much as the first act unless he caught him in just such a mood as the one in which he now labored. "Now, I want that you take just a peep, Mr. Vandeford, at that new Hinkle comedy for which I have written already five times to delay—"

"Can't do it now, Pop! Don't you see that I have got to read this purple letter and that is all the business I can attend to for this morning?" answered Mr. Vandeford, as he pushed a slim paper cutter along the top edge of the purple missive. [7]

"But, Mr. Vandeford, it is that I have—"

"Express. Sign here!" was the interruption that put an end to Mr. Meyers's immediate supplication. The parcel that he deposited upon his chief's desk with forceful meekness was a play manuscript.

"Great guns, Pops; I'm seeing purple!" exclaimed Mr. Vandeford, as he let the violet letter fall upon the violet wrappings in which the express intrusion was incased. "Exact match! This looks like some sort of a hunch. Open it, Pops, and run through the layout while I tackle the violet letter and see if anything happens." And with great interest both grown men plunged into the excitement of the chase of the hunch.

Mr. Vandeford's letter contained the following, delivered in bold words and script:

HIGHCLIFF.

My dear Van:

This is to remind you that it is now July fifth, and my contract sets September twenty-third as the last date for my opening on Broadway in a new play under your management. "The Rosie Posie Girl" will be a huge undertaking and worthy of my every effort, but I do not feel that you are up to producing it properly. I regret your losses in "Miss Cut-up," but I did my best with a vehicle that was not worthy of my ability. The success of "Dear Geraldine" was entirely due to the comedy bits I wrote in to suit myself, and I had to be costumer and producer and the whole show. In justice to myself I feel that I ought to pass under the management of a more forceful person than yourself. And anyway I don't think you would be able to get a theater to open on Broadway in September. Remember that over a hundred good shows died on the road waiting to get into Broadway last winter, and I won't play anywhere else. Now Weiner wants to buy "The Rosie Posie Girl" from you and open his New Carnival Theatre with me in it on October first. You must sell it to him. He will make you a good offer. You can't use it without me, and I want him to produce it. Please see him immediately. You know that you owe your reputation as a producer to me, and don't be selfish. I'll expect you up on the evening train to talk over the final arrangements. I'll meet you in the runabout and we can go out to the Beach Inn for dinner. Bring me some brandied marrons, a large bottle of rose oil and a stick of lip rouge from Celeste's. [8]

[9]

Hurriedly,

VIOLET.

July fifth.

P. S. Of course you are to go on loving me just as usual. I couldn't do without that. How much money have I in the Knickerbocker Trust?

After Godfrey Vandeford had read the last violent purple line on violet, he dropped the letter on his desk and looked out of his office window with serious eyes that gazed without seeing, down the long canyon of Broadway, up and down which rushed traffic composed of green cars shaped like torpedoes, honking, darting motors, skulking trucks and jostling, tangled people. Flamboyant signs, waving flags, and gilt-lettered window panes made a Persian glow in a belt space up from the seething sidewalks to the sky line, and above it all the roar and din rose to high heaven. But Godfrey Vandeford was blind to it all and deaf, as he sat and brooded above the furious landscape. His blue eyes, set deep back under their black, gray-splashed brows, failed to take in the lurid spectacle, and his narrow, lean face was flushed under the bronze it had acquired for keeps from the suns of many climes. His lean, powerful body seemed fairly crouched in thought. Once he shifted one leg across the other, and as he settled back in his chair he tossed the violet letter over to Mr. Meyers without seeming to know that he did so. Then he plunged back into his absorption without seeing his henchman read rapidly through the missive, look at him once with a gem-like keenness, and again begin to read the purple-covered manuscript.

[10]

"And we picked her out of a vaudeville gutter over beyond Weehawken just five years ago, Pop," Mr. Vandeford finally interrupted the flip of the manuscript pages to say, with a deep musing in his flexible, sympathetic voice.

"You taught her to eat with the knife and the fork," growled Mr. Meyers from behind his violet barricade as he ripped over another page. "Mick!"

[11]

"Oh, not as bad as that, Pop," laughed Mr. Vandeford, with a glance of affection at the young Hebrew delving in the corner for a jewel for him. "She's just—oh, well, they are all children—and have to be spanked. She wants to sell me out to Weiner after I've spent five nice, good years in building her into a little twinkle star, but I don't think it will be good for her to let her do it. I'll have to use the slipper on her, I'm afraid. I believe in hunches and I believe I'll just use that purple manuscript you're chewing to let her set her teeth in. She needs one good failure to tone her up. What's the name of the effusion in ribbons?"

"The Renunciation of Rosalind," murmured Mr. Meyers, as he bent once more to the pages which he had been reading with eagerness when interrupted by his chief.

"We could call it 'The Purple Slipper.' About what will the cast figure?"

[12]

"Three thousand per week if you use Gerald Height at five hundred as per contract with him. But, Mr. Vandeford, sir, I would say for a play this is—"

"That's not much money to waste on a purple hunch. A nice, judicious, little second-hand staging out of the warehouse and a few weeks' road try-out for the failure will cost about ten thousand. I'll let Denny have five thousand worth of fun musing around with it to cut his eye teeth, and then we'll clap Violet into 'The Rosie Posie Girl,' weeping with gratitude to have her face saved after being slapped first. Get the parts out to-morrow and you and Chambers begin to cast it. I'll see actors here from three to five Friday. I'll open it September tenth. Now I've got to go and chase those confounded marrons. The last I took were put up in maraschino and were not welcomed. I'll be in the office—"

"And about the author, Mr. Vandeford, and the contracts?" questioned Mr. Meyers, with both dismay and energy in his voice.

[13]

"Oh, I forgot about the author. She won't amount to much. A woman, I judge, from the ribbons. Offer the usual five, rising to seven and a half royalties, and explain carefully that you mean five per cent. on the box office receipts under five thousand, and seven and a half on all over that. Also go into the moving picture rights and second companies with your usual honesty, but offer her only a two hundred and fifty advance to cover a two years' option. She won't know that it ought to be five hundred for six months, and what she doesn't know won't hurt her. Besides, it will all be over for her and her play before October."

"She says in the letter which was pinned to the first page of the play, that the article about you in the 'Times Magazine' made her know that you were the one producer to whom she could trust her play," said Mr. Meyers, reading from a neat little cream-white note in his hand.

"Sweet child!" murmured Mr. Vandeford, as he took up his hat and stick. "Don't encourage her in any way in your letter, Pop. We don't want her rushing to the scene of action when we butcher her child. Pay the two thousand to Hilliard for the option on 'The Rosie Posie Girl' until January first, and tell him I am going to produce it in November. 'Phone me at Highcliff to-morrow if you want me. I'll be clearing the deck for the—spanking."

[14]

"I wish you good luck," said Mr. Meyers feelingly.

"What do you judge that play is about from reading the first act, and what is the author's name? I

might have to produce a little concrete information in the fracas," the eminent producer paused to inquire just as he was closing the door.

"It is written by a Miss Patricia Adair of Adairville, Kentucky, and it has in plenty of ruffles and romance that is in a past time of a Colonial Governor and his wife alone at home with him in Washington."

"That sounds about right for the weapon of castigation for Violet Hawtry, *née* Murphy. I have always believed in hunches, and that accord in color was meant to mean something. Better send me a copy special in the morning. If Mr. Farraday calls me before I get him tell him the Astor at one to-day. What did I say? Marrons, lip stick, and—" [15]

"Rose oil," prompted Mr. Meyers, with just the trace of a sneer in his voice.

"Right O! Rose oil it is. By!" And the door closed on Mr. Vandeford's graceful figure in its gray London tweeds.

Thus a great adventure was undertaken in all levity. And with his chief's complete departure a change came into the mien of Mr. Adolph Meyers. He told the stenographer in the outer office to engage two girls to copy a play that afternoon and evening, to keep him from being interrupted until six, and to muffle the telephone unless in cases of emergency. Then he seated himself in Mr. Vandeford's deep chair, put his feet on the desk, lit a fat, black cigar and plunged into "The Purple Slipper," *née* "The Renunciation of Rosalind." For two hours he read with the deepest absorption, only pausing to make an occasional note on a pad at his elbow. Then after he had laid down the manuscript with its purple wrappings and ribbons, he sat for a half hour in a trance, out of which he came to seat himself at the typewriter to indite a portentous letter, which he put in an envelope, sealed and directed to: [16]

MISS PATRICIA ADAIR,
Adairville, Kentucky.

The contents were:

My dear Madam:

I have carefully read your play entitled "The Renunciation of Rosalind," and have decided to make you the following offer for the production rights. I will give you two hundred and fifty dollars for all rights of production, including moving picture rights and supplementary road companies to extend over a period of two years from the date of signing the contract, and will agree to pay you in addition five per cent. of all box receipts up to five thousand per week and seven and a half on all exceeding that sum. If you agree to this proposition, I will send you a formal contract covering all points in legal terms. Please let me know at your earliest convenience your decision about the matter, as I now intend to produce it in September with Violet Hawtry in the title rôle. [17]

Believe me, my dear Madam,

Very truly,

GODFREY VANDEFORD.

The above epistle from a strange outer world found Miss Patricia Adair, attired in a faded gingham frock, planting snap beans in her ancestral garden. It was delivered to her by her brother, Mr. Roger Adair, from the hip pocket of his khaki trousers, upon which were large smudges of the agricultural profession. His blue gingham shirt was open at the throat across a strong bronze throat, and his eyes were as blue as his shirt and laughed out across big brown freckles that matched his chestnut hair.

"Here's a letter I brought over from the post-office, Pat, along with a sack of meal and fifty cents' worth of sugar. Mr. Bates said Miss Elvira Henderson stopped in and told him to send it to you by the first person coming your way," he said as he threw the reins of the filly, whose chestnut coat matched his hair exactly, over the gate post, and proceeded to take from the pommel of the saddle the two bundles of groceries mentioned. "Mr. Bates sent you this bunch of tomato plants and head lettuce to set out along the back border of your rose beds, and I'll spade it all up for you right now if—" [18]

"Oh, Roger, listen, listen!" exclaimed Patricia, as she sprang to her feet from her knees upon which she had rested as she read the letter he had handed her. "My play, my play, it's sold!" And as she sparkled at him over the letter of Mr. Adolph Meyers held clasped to her gingham bosom, wild roses bloomed in her cheeks and tears sparkled in her gray eyes back of their thick black lashes.

"What play?" demanded Roger, stolid with astonishment.

"The one I wrote last month and the month before, when Mr. Covington said that the mortgage must be paid—or give up Rosemeade. I knew it would kill Grandfather to move him away from the house he was born in, and I couldn't think of anything that would get money quick but coal oil wells and gold mines and plays. It costs money to dig up oil and gold, but it is easy to write a play." [19]

"Oh, is it?" Roger questioned, with a twinkle in his eyes above the freckles. In his arms he still held the meal and the sugar, and his interest was an inspiration to Patricia to pour out the whole story in a torrent of tumbling words.

"You know those love letters I have of our great grandmother's that she wrote to her husband while he was in Washington consulting the President about the first constitutional convention, the ones about the Indian raid and the battle at Shawnee. You remember the day I read them to you up in the apple tree in the orchard years ago, don't you?"

"Yes, I remember the day," answered Roger, with another twinkle turned inward at the memory of his seventeen-year-old scorn of Patricia's eleven-year-old sentimentality. [20]

"Well, those letters are the play," announced Patricia triumphantly. "I read a lot of Shakespeare and other old English dramas I found in Grandfather's library to see exactly how to make one. It ends when he comes back expecting to find her killed and she is dancing at a dinner she has given her lover as a bet that he would come back by that night. It's wonderful!" As she thus laid bare the skeleton of her play child, Patricia took from doubting Roger the sack of sugar.

"Shoo, that's not a play," hooted Roger, with a decided return of his seventeen-year-old scorn in his thirtieth summer.

"Read that," answered Patricia with dignity, as she handed him Mr. Godfrey Vandeford's letter, written and signed by Mr. Adolph Meyers.

"Whew—uh, Pat, two hundred and fifty dollars!" Roger exclaimed, as his manner dissolved quickly from affectionate derision into respectful awe. [21]

"Oh, that's just a trifle for a beginning; those royalties may be worth several hundred thousand. In the 'Times Magazine' article that I read about Godfrey Vandeford and his plays, it said he had paid the author of 'Dear Geraldine' more than a hundred thousand dollars in royalties. That is what made me write the play."

"Say, let me take it sitting down," said Roger as he sank upon the grass beside a rose bed that had a row of spring onions growing odoriferously defiant under the very shower of its petals, and laid the sack of precious meal tenderly across his knees. "Now go on and tell me."

"You see, Roger, I had to do something to get the money to keep the house for Grandfather. You know we couldn't get any more mortgage money, because it had closed up or something, and—"

"Did Covington tell you he was going to foreclose after I—that is, right away?" demanded Roger fiercely, with a snap in the blue eyes above the freckles. [22]

"No," said Patricia, as she settled herself on the grass beside Roger, with the valuable sugar balanced tenderly upon her knee. "He told me that he would let it stand just as it was for three months until October first, but after that we would have to—to tell—Grandfather and move," a quiver came into Patricia's soft voice that had in it the patrician, slurring softness that can only come from the throat of a grand dame sprung from the race which has dominated blue-grass pastures. "Doctor Healy says it won't be long but—but now he'll—he'll die in his own home that Grandmother built where he fought off the Indians. Her play has saved us."

"I had fixed it to run until I make my crops," said Roger, with a choke in his voice that was a rich masculine accompaniment to Patricia's.

"The play will have been running six weeks by that time, and I can pay most of it off. A hundred thousand a year is almost ten thousand a month and—" [23]

"But all plays don't succeed, Pat, honey, and—"

"The 'Times Magazine' said that Godfrey Vandeford had never had a failure, and didn't you read that he wants to star Violet Hawtry in it? She was 'Dear Geraldine.' How could it fail?" Patricia was positively haughty toward Roger's timorousness.

"That's so," admitted Roger, convinced. "And we can easy get by on the two fifty until October, especially with the garden I am going to raise. I'm no Godfrey Vandeford, but I'm a first-class producer—of potatoes and onions and cabbage and turnip greens and corn. In these war times a potato producer ranks with any old producer."

"But I won't be able to leave all of the two hundred and fifty to use this summer. I'll have to take some of it with me."

"With you where?" demanded Roger.

"To New York. Do you suppose even Mr. Godfrey Vandeford would undertake to produce a play without the author there to help him?" Patricia's scorn of Roger's lack of sound reasoning about theatrical matters was hurled at him pitilessly. [24]

"Of course not," admitted Roger hurriedly. "You can take the whole two hundred and fifty and I'll look after the Major and Jeff."

"I don't know what I'd do without you, Roger," said Patricia, as she cuddled her cheek for an instant against his strong, warm shoulder under the gingham shirt. "I'm afraid of New York. I know you'll take care of Grandfather; but who'll look after little me—I don't know what I'll do all

by myself. Maybe I won't have to—"

"Certainly you'll have to go," Roger interrupted with comforting assurance. "Go to the Young Women's Christian Association, and if anything happens to you telegraph me and I'll come get you."

"I hadn't thought of the Y. W. C. A. Of course I'll be all right there. I'll get Miss Elvira to write a special letter to the secretary about me," exclaimed Patricia with the joy lights back in the great, gray eyes. "And it's so cheap there that I can leave a lot of the money at home. I'll only be gone about six weeks." [25]

"No, I think you had better take all the two fifty with you," said Roger. "You know you have to spend money to make money and you mustn't be short. I'll look after the Major and Jeff. Don't you worry, dear."

"Will you let me buy you a big silo and a tractor plow when I get all the money? You are the greatest farmer in the world and you only need a little machinery to prove it." Again the young playwright rose to her knees and with letter and sugar in her embrace she entreated to be allowed to spend the money that was to be hers from "The Renunciation of Rosalind," which she did not know was being cast in New York as "The Purple Slipper."

"Certainly I'll let you help me, Pat. Hasn't what's yours and mine always been ours since we set our first hen together?" laughed Roger, as he rose to his feet and dragged Patricia to hers beside him. "Come on and let's break it to the Major. You may need me to stand by if it hits him on the bias," and they both laughed with a tinge of uneasiness as they went down the long walk of the garden which on both sides was sprouting and leaving and perfuming in a medley of flowers and vegetables. [26]

As they walked slowly along Roger cast an eye of great satisfaction over the long lines of rapidly maturing peas and beans and heavy-leaved potatoes, and in his mind calculated that a year's food for the small family at Rosemeade was being produced right at their door under his skilful hoe which he wielded at off times when he could leave the negro hands to their work out on Rosemeade, their ancestral five hundred acres of blue-grass meadows and loamy fields. Roger had for the summer quit his slowly growing law practice in Adairville, enlisted as a doughty Captain in the Army of the Furrows and was as proud of his khaki and gingham uniform with their loam smudges as of his diploma from the University of Virginia which hung in the wide old hall, the top one in a succession of five given from father to son of the house of Adair. The whole county was farming under the direction of Roger, and he had been obliged often to work Patricia's garden by moonlight. [27]

"I'm almost afraid to tell Grandfather," Patricia interrupted his food calculations to say as they came around the corner of the wide-roofed old brick house with its traceries of vines that massed at the eaves to give nesting for many doves, and beheld the Major seated in his arm chair on the porch which was guarded and supported by round, white pillars around which a rose vine festooned itself. A faded, plaid wool rug was across the Major's knees in spite of the fact that the evening was so warm, and about his shoulders was a wide, gray knitted scarf. A bent, white-haired old negro stood beside him filling his pipe for him and serving as a target for the words issuing from beneath his waxed white mustache that gave the impression of crossed white swords. [28]

"War! What do they know about war, Jeff? We killed our first Yankee before we were seventeen, and now they fight behind guns located six miles away by squinting through double-decker opera glasses. War, I say in these days—"

"Yes, sir," assented Jeff, in soothing interruption of what he considered debilitating heat in the Major's words. "We whipped them Yankees in no time but they jest didn't find it out in time to stop killing us 'fore it all ended. Now, I'm going to help you to your room and make you comfortable for I—"

"I see Patricia and Roger approaching and I'll wait to talk to them for a few minutes, Jeff," answered the Major with a slight note of entreaty in his voice.

"Jess a little while, then, jess a little while," consented the old black comrade nurse as he shuffled into the house and back to his kitchen to complete his preparation of the simple evening meal for his little household. As he crisped his bacon, scrambled his eggs and browned his muffins he muttered to himself: [29]

"He's gitting weaker every day—help him Lord, and me to keep care of him."

Just as he was turning the fluffy yellow scramble into a hot, old silver dish he paused and listened to the musketry of the Major's deep voice which was huge even in weakness, then he shook his head and began to hustle the food together to be able to use the announcement of the meal as an interruption to the harmful excitement, whose scattering words he was at a loss to understand.

"Impossible! Impossible that my granddaughter should barter and trade in the theatrical world, a world into which no lady should ever set foot. No! Do not argue, Patricia! Roger and I understand, and it is not needful that you should," were the words of the assault and counter-charge that so puzzled old Jeff over his skillet and baker. [30]

"I'm not going to act in the play, Grandfather. I wrote it and I'm going to show them how I want it

acted and then come right home," soothed Patricia, looking to Roger for help and reinforcement.

"She'll stay at the Young Women's Christian Association, Major, and she'll be perfectly safe. I am going to write to Dennis Farraday, who graduated with me at the University, and ask him to look after her if she needs anything."

"Ah, that puts another face on the matter," said the Major, with a degree of mollification coming into his keen, old face and weakly booming voice. "Of course, the Adairs have always been geniuses of one kind or another, and it is not surprising that my granddaughter should have produced a great American Drama. If she has the interest and protection of a gentleman who is a friend of her brother's, and a safe retreat in a woman's organization I will have to permit her to superintend the placing of her great work before an appreciative public. Of course, she will not be thrown with any of the theatrical world socially, and in a few weeks she will return to her own home, leaving that world better for having had a brief glimpse of her. You may go, Patricia. Jefferson!" Fatigue showed very decidedly in the Major's weak call to the old negro, who came immediately and rolled his chair away with an indignant cast of his eyes at the two young people. [31]

"Wh-eugh, that was a battle, and if I hadn't thought of old Denny to bring up as a support to the Young Women's Christian Association I think it would have sure gone the other way." And Roger laughed with the twinkle above the freckles as he leaned against the rose vine around the pillar and fanned himself with his hat.

"Is there any Denny?" questioned Patricia weakly, from the top step upon which she had sunk when the Major was wheeled away. [32]

"Certainly, and he's a jolly good fellow," answered Roger. "I had a letter from him year before last. I'll write him all about everything and he'll look after you for me. I'd trust Denny to do his best for me if I hadn't seen him for fifty years. I lived with him our Junior and Senior years and I know him. But I must go. I have to go back to the grocery again to get a plow point."

"Please don't go until after supper," pleaded Patricia. "I want to think out loud to you. It has just struck me that I will have to have some clothes. What will I do about it? I can't go to New York in a gingham dress."

"In such a crisis as that I think Miss Elvira will be a better target for your thoughts than I can be. I'll stop and tell her the news and send her over," teased Roger with his engaging twinkle. [33]

"I can't think to anybody like I can to you," said Patricia, as she came and stood beside him.

"I really have to go, honey child, to see about the ploughing in my South meadow, but I'll come back to be in the finish of the dimity confab," answered Roger, as he patted Patricia on the shoulder and went rapidly away.

And a dimity confab was a good name for the conference that was held in the July moonlight on the front porch of Rosemeade for several silvered hours that night. Miss Elvira Henderson, modiste, who was the guide, philosopher and friend, in the matter of costuming as well as in all other matters, of the feminine population of Hillcrest, had hurried down the street to the Rosemeade gate as soon as she had consumed her spinster baked apple and toast supper, and on her way had collected pretty Mamie Lou Whitson and progressive Jenny Kinkaid, who formed a thrilled chorus to her interested and joyful conversation with Patricia. [34]

"The eyes of the world will be on you, Patricia, and nothing short of a silk tailor suit will be suitable for you to wear to sustain yourself in such a position," declared Miss Elvira, with a positive degree of finality in her voice.

"And you'll have to have at least three evening dresses, Pat, for that same article about Mr. Godfrey Vandeford said that Broadway only woke up at night. And you know it said he was the best known man on Broadway. Of course, he'll take you to lots of Cafes and dances, and midnight frolics and—and things," bubbled Mamie Lou very unwisely.

"Patricia is to stay at The Young Women's Christian Association, and I am sure they will expect her to be in bed before any midnight foolishness," said Miss Elvira, with a severe glance at the frivolous Mamie Lou. "I shall, of course, make her an evening dress or two, one especially to wear when the multitude calls her before the curtain to express their admiration of and enthusiasm over her play, but I shall trust Patricia not to let them lead her into any undue frivolity. The theatres all close at eleven o'clock." [35]

"The article said that was the time that Broadway woke up, and—" Jenny began, as she hid behind Mamie Lou as if expecting a volley from Miss Elvira. But Miss Elvira was too much absorbed to notice her in any way. Miss Elvira was also in the throes of conceptive genius.

"The last 'Woman's Review' had a colored plate of a suit that I can see on you, Patricia," she mused under her breath. "It was queer blue, with—"

"In that big trunk of your great grandmother's up in the garret there's a blue silk that she wore in Washington that is that curious new blue color, Pat, and a lot more of—" Mamie Lou was saying with great executive ability when Miss Elvira seized on her idea and made it her own with the avidity of real genius.

"We'll make over all of old Madam Adair's dresses for you, Patricia," she decreed. [36]

"They've always been kept kind of sacred and—" Patricia began to remonstrate with uncertainty in her voice.

"And rightly so—but at the presentation of her play it is proper for them to emerge," Miss Elvira further decreed. "Get a lamp and let's go look at them and decide to-night," she further commanded.

And from the result of that resurrection in the garret of Rosemeade, Adairville, Kentucky, later Broadway, even Fifth Avenue, New York, got a decided and unwonted thrill.

"The clothes are all right, Roger. Miss Elvira is going to make me a lot out of great-grandmother's clothes she wore in Washington to dance with Lafayette," Patricia confided to Roger as they stood under the rose vine in the moonlight at the late hour of ten-thirty that evening after she had helped him transplant a lot of sturdy tomato vines. [37]

"Little old New York will sit up and take notice when it sees you in party dimity, Pat," he said as he smiled down into the eager, gray eyes that were raised to his, beaming through their long black lashes.

"Oh, I hope I'll make friends, Roger," Patricia answered the warmth in his voice as she clung to the warmth and strength of his arm as if in foreboding.

"Of course New York will love you, Pat. Hasn't everybody always loved you?" he asked tenderly as he put his work-worn hand over hers on his arm.

"Yes," answered Patricia, with her head suddenly held high. "If anybody don't like me, I'll make them."

At about the same hour that this challenge to his world was flung from the lips of the beautiful and talented Miss Patricia Adair upon the moonlit and mockingbird trilled air of the Bluegrass State Mr. Godfrey Vandeford was engaged in about the twenty-fifth round of the spanking of Miss Violet Hawtry in the State of New York, and he was having a hard time accomplishing his purpose. [38]

"It's just like your selfishness to try to put me into a piffling play by some unknown author with every risk to be run, when Weiner wants to buy your contract and put me into 'The Rosie Posie Girl,' which is a play by Hilliard that gives me scope for all of my ability. He is willing to give you a fifth interest in it and that's all you deserve. I'll show you whether or not you can sacrifice my career, you —! —! —! you!" And with which tirade the beautiful Violet stormed up and down the veranda of Highcliff in front of the supine figure of her manager, which was clad in immaculate white flannel, suede and linen, with a blue silk scarf knotted at the base of his lean, bronze throat, which matched the blue of his keen eyes under their gray-sprinkled brows, as the only bit of color in his irreproachable costuming.

"You've read neither play, my dear Violet. You may like 'The Purple Slipper.' In which case you get the same salary and I get all the profits instead of the one-fifth our friend Weiner is offering me for letting you act in my other play," he answered his star's outburst in an easy, mollifying drawl. [39]

"Everybody knows that a Hilliard play is a *play*, and I'm not going to try out a new playwright just to put money in your pockets. Why should I?" demanded the star virago, in a fury that made her snapping Irish blue eyes, tall, strapping, curved body, and pale tawny hair combine into a good semblance of the jungle queen on a prey quest.

"No reason except your contract entered into in all lawfulness," answered Mr. Godfrey Vandeford. "You know what the Courts are, and if you like I'll meet you there and fight it out instead of by these sounding sea waves in this delicious moonlight. Come here and kiss me and do let our lawyers settle it all for us." As he spoke he rose lazily and attempted to take the taut young cat into a pair of listlessly desirous arms. [40]

"Not on your life you big loafer, you, just because you put one over me when I was a starved stage door drab don't think I am that same kind or that sort of thing goes with me now." She spit the words at him as she half yielded to his nonchalant embrace and half repulsed it.

"Be accurate, Violet, my dear: did I demand your heart until I had managed you and my own affairs to the point where you could buy Highcliff or any other trifles you wanted? There are other ladies to love in the world besides you, aren't there? There are other gentlemen besides me and you've had five years—and a wide hunting grounds. I've got you under only one contract—business and not—pleasure."

"God, I don't know whether I love or hate you most," were the words of the conciliating purr that he got as she turned to put herself back under his caressing.

"Hate, I wager," he laughed softly, as he drew away from her and seated himself on the railing of the veranda which hung out over the old ocean so that its hungry waves seemed to be leaping up to engulf him. The gray peaks and gable of the Hawtry cottage massed themselves back of him and in the silvering moonlight he looked like a white eagle perched on an eyrie. [41]

"Don't make me play that play; give me over to Weiner," the star of many such an encounter as well of "Dear Geraldine" coaxed, as she followed him and put bare, white, glistening arms around his neck and attempted to draw his head down against a bosom that still tossed with the storm of

anger that she had put out of voice and face. "You know how last year nobody could get a theatre for love or money, and the producers who owned theatres put on all the plays and coined money. It will be worse next year. You have no theatre and Weiner has three. He offers to let us open the New Carnival. It'll be a sure thing; while your play will have to take its chance for a New York theatre and maybe get none. Please, Godfrey!"

[42]

"Well, you see I had agreed to let Dennis Farraday in on this play, and it would sell him out to Weiner too," answered Mr. Vandeford, as he very gently but determinedly took the white arms from around his neck and refused the pillow of the storming breast.

"Dennis Farraday?" Violet asked, and Mr. Vandeford shot a quick glance of question at her as he felt the tautening of the muscles in the white arms that he had in his grasp of untangling. "You are not going to trim him, are you?"

"No, not if you make a hit in 'The Purple Slipper,' answered Mr. Vandeford, as he gave her another appraising glance while he lit a cigarette.

"Has he read the play?"

"He's putting his money on Hawtry in a play of Vandeford's selecting and producing," was the slap administered with the soft drawl. And as he slapped he watched the reaction.

"What did you do with that copy of the play that fellow Dolph sent out this morning?" was what he got with an entire change of purpose in the beautiful, stormy face that had calmed in an instant.

[43]

"It's in your room on the table by your bed," answered Mr. Vandeford, as he rose, stretched, yawned and in other ways indicated his desire for sleep in the primitive manner that a man uses in the bosom of his family.

"I'm going to read it if you don't mind," the Violet said with a smile of pleasure instead of the frown of anger which had so lately rested on her fair face. Mr. Vandeford laughed inwardly; she was about as transparent as a very young kitten in its eagerness for a saucer of cream.

"Good girl," answered Godfrey, as together they entered the dark house. Together they climbed the steps, and with a kiss executed by the Violet he left her to turn into the door of her room while he went on to his just beyond.

Out of her sight the lazy, care-free manner left his lithe body, and in an instant every muscle stiffened to action. The smoulder of anger in his eyes blazed. He looked at his watch.

[44]

"Thirty-five minutes to catch that eleven-fifteen train to town. Never again. I'm done!" he murmured and looked about him at his belongings strewn around his room. "I'll send Dolph out to pack to-morrow. A jump into tweeds and a sprint down the beach will make it."

And after vigorously suiting his actions to his words for twenty minutes he was running swiftly down the beach well ahead of the time of the eleven-fifteen train. Just as the headlight cast a red ray down the long track he stepped on the platform and in ten seconds more he was being whirled away from the moonlight and sands and white arms, having accomplished his purpose of the spanking, cut forever chains that galled, and was well content with himself and the world.

Back at Highcliff the beautiful Violet had been undergoing the rites of retirement, assisted by her very well-skilled maid, deep in an exciting dream of conquest. As she let her soft, perfumed, silken garments be taken from her one at a time until her pearly body was exposed to the brisk sea air, for which tonic Susette had thrown wide both broad windows, she was weighing in her shrewd little gutter-gamin mind the advantages of the road to the right against the turn to the left. The Hilliard "Rosie Posie Girl" in the fall produced by Weiner with all his trained staff, command of a big new theatre and three others, and following road prestige appealed strongly to her cupidity, which had been well trained in getting dimes from tight pockets in cheap cafes and ten, twenty and thirty theatres, but she had seen a grouping of Dennis Farraday's name in the paper a few days ago with the names of some young New York multimillionaires in a National Commission, and she knew that he and his "pile" were worthy of the effort of her charms. Also she had seen big, broad, breezy, gallant Dennis himself at luncheon with Mr. Vandeford in the Astor not ten days before, and her designs had been decidedly set in his direction. To her thinking, big, broad, breezy, gallant men were always easy. As Susette enveloped her rosiness from the sea air in a soft white cloud of chiffon and embroidery, removed the rose mules from her feet, helped her in between the fragrant linen sheets that were as soft as rich silk, threw over her a rose-colored puff of silk and lace and down, turned on her reading lamp, upon whose shade wanton fauns and nymphs sported, piled her pillows high and left her, the scales were about going down on the side in which was placed "The Purple Slipper," Mr. Dennis Farraday—and Miss Patricia Adair, who at that time was the unknown quantity which Fate often throws in any balance.

[45]

[46]

With a luxurious sigh and flexing of her long, supple body the Violet picked up the business-like copy of the Violet manuscript which Mr. Adolph Meyers had sent her instead of the beribboned, purple "Renunciation of Rosalind," and began to read the first page when the telephone beside her bed rang with a soft tinkle. She picked up the ivory receiver and into it murmured a softly tentative:

[47]

"Yes?"

.....

"Oh, Mr. Farraday! How are you?"

.....

"Yes, this is Violet Hawtry."

.....

"Deliciously well, thank you."

.....

"Yes, he's here, but the gay young thing has gone to bed hours ago."

.....

"Most interesting for me, but I have to submit."

.....

"Oh, lovely. Do come. I'll adore having him routed out for you. Of course we'll go with you. I had forgot that Simone was to dance at the Beach Inn to-night."

[48]

.....

"No indeed, I have not undressed at all. I was going to study a part to-night."

.....

"I'm sure Godfrey can be dressed in half an hour, and it will take even your Surreness that time to get here. Take the beach road; it's fine. Good-by then. In half an hour."

.....

With which ending and beginning the Violet hung up the ivory receiver and rang for Susette. The summons was answered by Mrs. Aline Hawtry, *née* Maggie Murphy the first, an embarrassing but in a manner cherished relict of the Hawtry past life in Weehawken.

"Sure, and the little Frinchy is a-bed, Mag! What be ye wanting? The night is after sneaking out the back door of the morning." Mrs. Hawtry, once Murphy, was a big bonny edition of the Violet grown into a cabbage rose and her voice was also of the same rich texture.

[49]

"Rout out Godfrey, Ma, and then stir up Susette with a hot stick. Mr. Dennis Farraday is coming down to take us over to see Simone dance at the Beach Inn. I want him to see me instead of Simone. Hurry!"

"The poor dear boy, after a hard day in the cruel hot city. Alack!" moaned Mrs. Maggie as she billowed across to Mr. Vandeford's door and knocked. Then she paused and knocked again. From neither knock did she receive an answer as the moment was just about the one in which he had boarded the New York bound train a half mile up the beach down which Mr. Dennis Farraday was racing.

When a search of the unresponsive room had convinced the Violet of his flight, for a moment her eyes were stormy, then her face cleared with a smile of delight, and as she padded back to her room and the waiting Susette, to herself she purred:

"Nobody can beat my luck."

CHAPTER II

[50]

There is a certain kind of man over whom all other men smile inwardly. The tone of voice in which they speak of him has an affectionate growl, which, once heard, cannot be mistaken. Such a man is apt to cherish what other men call "impossible ideals about women," and it behooves his masculine friends to watch out for him carefully lest he come a cropper. Mr. Dennis Farraday was such a man among men, and Mr. Godfrey Vandeford loved him deeply. They had met when they were both twenty-three, on board a tramp steamer, bound for adventure in South Africa, and in the seven years that had elapsed since then they had spent periods of time together, in various kinds of sports. Killing time on Broadway was about the only sport that they had not tried together. By very solid banking and brokering Mr. Vandeford enjoyed and increased for himself and an aristocratic, Knickerbocker-descended mother a few ancestral millions. Incidentally, he took care of the sole hundred thousand dollars of which Mr. Vandeford's high financiering on Broadway had left him possessed. Mr. Farraday and Mrs. Justus Farraday represented the sole family ties possessed by Mr. Vandeford, and he considered them both most valuable. In fact, the maternal regard of Mrs. Justus Farraday was looked upon by Mr. Vandeford as his chief treasure and sheet-anchor in times of the high winds of life.

[51]

"What makes you do it, Van?" questioned Mr. Farraday, as he sat with Mr. Vandeford in the early morning in the latter's rooms after the tumult of the first night of the unsuccessful "Miss Cut-up."

"Excitement," answered Mr. Vandeford, as he put his bare heels, protruding from his Chinese slippers, up on the edge of the mahogany reading-table in his living-room, and began to pull at a long, evil-smelling, briar pipe. "Nothing like it." [52]

"Do you really care for all that noise, those explosions of chorus girls, sweating stage hands, cursing director and cursing star, paint, powder, electricity, paper walls and furniture, call-bells and hand-clapping from boozy critics in front?"

"I do," answered Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, with a glint in his eyes deep back in his head. "And so would you if you had bet about twenty thousand on that combination and could see the people begin to eat it up right before your eyes as you sat in a box and watched 'em. When you've backed your own combination of inferno on riot, it gives you a thrill to stand before the box-office and watch a line of people that stretches to the next block plunk down dollars that they have earned at their own particular combinations of life to see the combination you have made of yours. Why, tears come into my eyes when I see some little, old, dried-up seamstress pay a dollar to sit in the roost to see Gerald Height love the powder off of Violet while she is cursing him under her breath for so doing, and it tickles me under my ribs to see some fat, jolly, lonely, old party buy a front seat two days hand-running to sit and watch Mazie Villines dance over her own head and take the child out to supper afterward in all propriety. It does him good all over after selling white goods in Squeedunck, Illinois, eleven and three-quarter months of every year. It's all to the good, Denny, and I wish you could get the drag of it." [53]

"Perhaps it would be well if I could," agreed Mr. Farraday, as he rose and shook his big, lithe body with the agility of a frolicsome puppy who knows he is going into mischief, and looked cautiously at Godfrey. "Is backing the life of the Violet sport, too?" he ventured.

"Best I know. Took nothing and made it into something in five years. If it bites my hand that's all in the game."

"Same force could beget and train about eleven small Vandefords into pretty good American citizens," Mr. Farraday snapped out, and then backed away. [54]

"Absinthe cocktails ruin the taste for sweet milk. Don't talk about things you know nothing about; thank God for that same ignorance," Mr. Vandeford commanded. "Go to bed and sleep like the cherub you are, while I expiate here with my pipe."

From that conversation it was natural to man nature that the demand for a half-interest in the next Hawtry show would have been made by Mr. Dennis Farraday of Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, and acceded to with the brotherly reservations already related. The eye-teeth of Mr. Dennis Farraday were very precious to Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, and he had the intention of taking great care that their edges should not be dulled. It was well that he did not know that the eleven-fifteen train he had taken in his flight to New York passed the huge, eight-cylinder Surreness of his beloved Jonathan in its race up the beach for the home of the Violet. [55]

Now, when all is said and considered, a large admiration is due and much should be forgiven Miss Violet Hawtry, who, as half-starved Maggie Murphy, had darted out of the gutter into the back stage-door at the age of fifteen, snapped her huge violet eyes with their fringes of black, trilled a vulgar, Irish street song in accompaniment to sundry provocative swayings of her lissome, maturing young body, and thus had made enough impression on her world to hang on by the tips of her fingers until she dropped into the outstretched arms of Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, who was prowling around Weehawken and the vicinity for just such ripe fruit as she when he was casting his first musical girl-show for the purpose of some violent excitement after a snowed-in winter in the Klondike.

He had taken her to an old stage-mother he knew, had her thoroughly washed, combed, manicured, dressed, schooled, and had given her the benefit of his respect for five years while she worked up into the star of "Dear Geraldine" with all the might of the Irish eyes and lissome figure and cooing, creamy voice. He had then built Highcliff in the artist's colony of the Beach for the joint domicile of mother and daughter. However, it is easier to bathe, comb, manicure, and luxuriously clothe a body than it is to renovate a soul, and within the Violet Maggie dwelt in all her gutter vigor. It is also safe to say that perhaps it was no little part of the Maggie that the beautiful and haughty Violet threw across the footlights to draw to her the primitive in the hearts of her vast audiences. It was to some extent the wisdom of Maggie that the Violet was using as she prepared for her first encounter alone with Mr. Dennis Farraday as he raced down the moonlit beach to her. [56]

"Not the violet and jet, Susette, but that white embroidered lisle, and take time to sew three inches of tulle around the top of the bodice in front and put folds five inches deep across the back. Let it come just below the shoulder," she commanded, as she commenced the whirlwind of a toilette with which, she had assured the hurrying Dennis, she was already adorned. [57]

"*Mais, Mademoiselle*—" Susette began.

"He'd shy at too much omitted clothing when we are alone. I'll have to introduce him to myself gradually," she answered the protest, laughing as she tossed her pale, yellow mane high on her head, and dabbed a little curl against her cheek with the rose oil, and made a skilful use of the lip-stick brought by Mr. Godfrey Vandeford from the famed Celeste's.

"He will behold that Mademoiselle Simone dance with very few garments *alors*," Susette pouted

as she laid in the folds of modest tulle.

"But he won't be alone in the moonlight with her, that is, if I can help it," answered the mistress, as she further perfumed and painted the lily of her beauty. "Don't worry, Susette; I'm going to give monsieur the time of his life." [58]

"That is without saying, *Mademoiselle*," answered Susette, as she slipped the silky fluff over the Violet's head, and fastened the one or two hooks that held it in place over the filmy undergarments in which the Violet stood waiting for its veiling. "*Mon Dieu*, what a beauty it gives you, and that placing of the tulle is *ravissant*."

"That is what I meant it to be," laughed the Violet. "There's his car! Bring me that orchid wrap when I ring for it." And leaving the admiration of Susette, the Violet hurried down to drink from the cup of the same vintage she was sure would be offered her by Mr. Dennis Farraday. It was offered.

"It's awfully good of you people to help a poor lonely dub to a pleasant evening," were the words with which the victim greeted the Violet, while his eyes offered the expected portion of admiration as he beheld her bathed in the radiance of the moon. [59]

"Sure the pleasure is ours—or rather mine, poor old Van," she answered, with not a little trepidation well hidden under her rich voice.

"Couldn't you wake him up, the old scout? Let me get to him. I have a way with him I learned in the Nova Scotia woods." Mr. Farraday laughed a big laugh, which had in it the tang of the breeze in the tops of pine-trees. But the Violet was ready for him.

"He's not there for your torture. The poor darling got a telephone message just twenty minutes ago to come back to New York to-night. I've just motored him up the beach to catch the eleven-fifteen train. Some day that tiresome Dolph will follow Van about some play snarl into—into Paradise."

"He did that to-night, didn't he?" asked Mr. Farraday, with a merry laugh as he ruffled his red forelock up off his broad brow, and made himself look like a huge, tame lion.

"Away with your blarney, boy!" laughed the Violet, in return, using her Maggie Murphy form of speech with telling effect, as she often did. "He left a thousand apologies for you," she added, slipping back into her veneer of the—for Maggie—upper world. "And you've had your race down for nothing; poor Simone!" [60]

"Oh, I say, can't we just go on over to supper at the Beach Inn? The Clyde Trevors asked me, and we can have supper with them. Wouldn't you like that? We can tell them about poor Van." He was as eager as a boy in his friendly efforts to mend what he thought must be a broken evening for her.

"I'd love it," answered the Violet, with a flash of her white teeth and violet eyes at him.

After a summons Susette appeared with the alluring orchid garment, and a white film of seed-pearls for her mistress's hair. She assisted the Violet's discreet Japanese butler to put them into the big car, which Mr. Farraday was driving himself, and then stood for a minute watching them hurl themselves away across the white sand. [61]

"*Quelle vie!*" she muttered to herself as she turned back into the darkened house.

The Beach Inn was aglow and *atwinkle* and in full laugh as they ascended the steps of the wide veranda hung out over the ocean, where members and guests were having supper at small tables lit with shaded lamps. Men and girls, in bathing suits that were lineal descendants of the scant fig-leaf, were eating and drinking together sparsely because of their intention of taking a midnight plunge in the breakers under the hot moon, while other women in radiant evening garb were almost as scantily attired, though attended by stuffily garbed men. Most of the parties turned and called a laughing greeting to the Violet, for they were the men and women of her world disporting themselves away from Broadway, and Clyde Trevor, who had written the book for "Miss Cut-up," rose and came over to claim his guests.

"Lost Van?" he questioned, as he led them to their seats beside Mrs. Trevor, who had danced fifty thousand dollars out of New York the winter just ended. His voice held a hint of irony, which the Violet got and Mr. Dennis Farraday missed. [62]

"Not quite yet," she said, with a coo at which Trevor smiled, and under his breath he gave her the word, "Good hunting!"

"Thanks."

"Old Van had to hop back to New York on the eleven-fifteen, but we came on to glad with you anyway," Mr. Farraday was saying to Mrs. Trevor, with an ingenuous smile.

"Go to it, baby," commanded Trevor to his wife, as a rich negro melody began to fling its invitation against the roaring call of the ocean, and at his word Simone rose from the seat of Mrs. Trevor and slid out into the cleared space at the head of the steps.

"Just in time," commented Mr. Farraday under his breath, as he turned his chair to watch her drop her silk coat, and float out on the waves of sound just as she would later float on the waves [63]

of the ocean after she had plunged from the steps to lead the midnight bathing in the surf, for which the management of the inn paid her the sum of two hundred dollars per plunge.

All of this gaiety and amusement was just a prelude to the ride home in the moonlight, which the Violet took with good Dennis Farraday and during which she discovered that there is such a thing as honor among men about poaching on other men's preserves, and during which, also, the fate of Major Adair, Patricia, Roger, and old black Jeff hung in the balance.

"Just what are we racing?" she questioned as they flew along the beach with rubber tires that just skimmed the hard, white sand.

"A bit fast?" asked Mr. Farraday, with a protective laugh, as he slowed down the flight.

"Let's loaf and talk a while," the Violet answered, with a tentative note of invitation in her voice.

"I had thought you and Van and I would have a great powwow over the play this evening, and it's fierce that he had to get back to that furnace a night like this, but we can limp along on a few ideas without him, maybe. What do you think of 'The Purple Slipper'?" As he set the car at an easy pace he turned and looked down at the lovely face so near his shoulder with a great and extremely boyish enthusiasm, which was very delightful and very irritating to the Violet. [64]

"What do you think about it? You tell first," she said with a smile that answered his enthusiasm adequately and which served to cover with agility the fact that she had not read the play.

"Well, at first it seemed a queer kind of vehicle for you, but as I read on I could see you queening it in all those furbelows of dress as well as adventure and sentiment. It's a little serious in situation, but it is full of comedy adventure in line, and I can just see the audience eat you up in it. I told Van so, and I bought in before I had read more than half the second act. I don't feel as though I could wait to see you in that dinner scene while you hold the enemies of your spouse confounded. I agree with Van that your emotional qualities may exceed your comedy." [65]

"Does Van back my emotional acting against my comedy?" the Violet asked, with barely concealed surprise in her voice.

"He does. He says that 'The Purple Slipper' is going to be the sensation of Broadway for the early fall, and I agree with him. Do you feel as sure of it as he says you are?"

"Yes," answered the Violet, and by her assent in premeditated ignorance of the contents of the play manuscript she put the second cross on the production which made it a double on the fate of Mr. Dennis Farraday as a theatrical producer. However, that fact may have been balanced by the fact that it was the third cross on the fate of Miss Patricia Adair. Crosses on fates in the world of Broadway go in singles, doubles, and threes, and no man can tell their exact significance. [66]

"Good!" answered Mr. Dennis Farraday, with another and still broader smile of gratification and admiration of the Violet as an artist—a smile which further infuriated, but equally inspired her. "And what a grand time we'll all have putting it across! I'm going to help Van see actors for the cast on Friday, and I'm going to sit in on rehearsals straight through. I'm due a month's vacation, and I'm going to have my mail from the office relayed back to New York from the yacht off Nantucket so that bunch of money grubbers can't find me. Think of having the honor of being co-producer for Violet Hawtry for my first shot!"

All of which enthusiasm and admiration went like wine to the head of the Violet, though it left her heart uncomfortably cold; and beautiful, cool moonlight heats the heart of a fair woman when it is not more than two feet away from that of a brave and fair man. [67]

"Sure I'll make it a success for you, man dear!" Maggie Murphy in the Violet made an attempt to put a glow into the situation, using the brogue that was like rich cream poured over peaches, as she snuggled her bare shoulder, from which the orchid wrap had slipped, with a natural little shiver against good Dennis's wheel arm.

"You and Van are trumps to take me in for the fun, and I'm no end grateful to you both," was all she got for her manœuvre.

"Yes—Van is a dear," she hedged in a matter-of-fact voice.

"Yes, and I suppose after my co-first night with him the old scout will stop baiting me about blinking the white lights. I always have been obliged to beat Van at any game before I could rest in peace." And at the thought of getting in at his David big Jonathan laughed heartily just as he began to slow up the car for the turn along the sea-wall that led under the porch of Highcliff.

"Have you ever competed with him in the biggest game of all?" the Violet asked softly, as the car swept into the shadow and stopped by the broad stone steps. [68]

"What do you mean?" demanded Mr. Farraday, with a countenance so open and a voice so hearty that the Violet, used to artifice from everybody, suspected that they could not be real, and this suspicion made her give up the game for the time being. She laughed with a mocking sweetness as she sprang out of the car and to the top of the steps before he could help her.

"Some day I'll tell you what I mean," she mocked from the dark doorway. "Good-night!" And while he stood at the bottom step looking up at her, she vanished into the darkness of the house, leaving him out in the cool moonlight, a fate very different from what she had been planning for him for several hours.

"Just as old Van said, they are nothing but children, and I blame him about trifling with her more than I thought I did; she's a dear thing and a little pathetic in her anxiety to make good for him. Scout has just got to do something about it all. She's a fine and devoted woman. And beautiful—whee-ugh!" The big thirty-year-old boy ended his soliloquy with a whistle, which showed that in a measure he had appreciated the dangers of the last hours. One of the eternal questions is how can a mere man be so wicked—or so good as he is often discovered by temptation to be? [69]

"I'll have to be publicly and finally severed from Van before I annex him, the boob," was the soliloquy of the Violet as she prepared for her slumber of beauty. Another question is how thin a veneer of feminine beauty weathers indefinitely the wash of circumstances.

Then after that moonlit night in August Fate spun her web, which she called "The Purple Slipper," rapidly, and for a number of the people involved life became very hectic. The center of the whirl was Mr. Adolph Meyers, though he was safely functioning with power behind the throne occupied by Mr. Godfrey Vandeford's nonchalant and elegantly clad figure. [70]

"But Mr. Vandeford, sir, it is never before that you have produced a play without a reading," he remonstrated on the morning of the day set for the picking of the cast from those probably suitable chosen by Chambers, the invaluable agent of the great army of those theatrically employed. "Actors will be here from twelve o'clock even to six. How will a choice be made?"

"I'm trusting to your hunch about the purple manuscript falling on the day of the Violet letter, Pops," answered Mr. Godfrey Vandeford. "Make out a little memorandum against each name that tells me what to pick. I like the idea of going it blind that way: it may be lucky. And, Pops, split that five-thousand-dollar check of Mr. Farraday's in three ways. Pay Lindenberg two-fifty as his advance on the scenery for 'The Rosie Posie Girl,' provided he furbishes up something that will do for the little road sally of Violet's spanking-machine, to be emblazoned as 'The Purple Slipper' on the cheapest black bills ever run off in New York. Give Hugh Willings a thousand advance for the music of 'The Rosie Posie Girl,' but make him write as many as six waltz songs even if you are sure the first is a hit; it is good to make people, specially any kind of artists, work for the money you pay 'em. The other fifteen hundred you had better put off by itself as a starter on the Violet's gowns. She likes to pay an Irish woman with a French name three hundred dollars for six dollars' worth of chiffon sewed with seventy-five cents' worth of silk." [71]

"What is for costumes for the 'Purple Slipper'?"

"Oh, any old dolling up will do for that. The women can wear what they've got and the men borrow or rent." With a wave of the cigarette in his hand, Mr. Vandeford dismissed the scenic effects of the play for whose début Miss Elvira Henderson was concocting a dream costume to adorn the author for receiving triumphal plaudits. [72]

"But, Mr. Vandeford, sir, it is a costume play of a period," the humble power behind the throne pleaded.

"Oh, is it? Then rent the nearest layout to its date that Grossmidt has for all of 'em in a lump, and make him give you a bargain. Tell him they won't be worn more than two weeks. I guess Violet will be in line by that time." With which significant order Mr. Godfrey Vandeford turned from the anxious Mr. Meyers to answer the tinkling telephone at his elbow. In a second he was speaking to the most eminent stage director on Broadway.

.....

"Yes, this is Godfrey Vandeford, Bill."

.....

"Yes. Called to know if you would like to stage a little show for me right away."

.....

"Yes. I'm going to give Hawtry a little canter before 'The Rosie Posie Girl.' New line for her, and doubtful. Like to take hold for a pittance?" [73]

.....

"Oh, yes, that three hundred a week for the 'Posie Girl' goes, of course, but this play is just a Hawtry whim that I have got to let her get out of her system. One hundred a week is my limit, and you ought to do it for seventy-five. You can sit in your chair all the time for all I care."

.....

"Now you get me—a hundred it is. Let her have her head and work off steam before we start 'The Rosie Posie.' Yes, Willings is doing the Rosie songs for us. They'll be hot stuff."

.....

"Yes, Corbett's making sketches for 'The Rosie Posie' scenery now. We'll start 'The Purple Slipper' on Monday. Yes, that's its blooming name. By!"

"Is it William Rooney to stage 'The Purple Slipper'?" asked Mr. Meyers, with a shrug of his narrow shoulders as he began pecking out on his machine the notes that were to guide his chief in picking the artists who were to embody the characters in the play founded on the life romance of that old grandame Madam Patricia Adair of colonial Kentucky. [74]

"Why do you reckon Samuel Goldstein likes to build up a reputation for himself on Broadway by the name of William Rooney, Pops?" inquired Mr. Vandeford, with the idle curiosity of a free and untroubled mind.

"It is the prejudice against Hebrews for a reason," answered Mr. Meyers, with a glint in his gem-like eyes and a wave of color flushing across his high, scholarly forehead.

"Well, the top crust of the whole show business is Hebrew, and I should think the bunch of you would be proud of the fact. I'm even proud that a man named Adolph Meyers runs this whole company, and me included," said Mr. Vandeford, without taking the trouble to note the wave of gratified pride, devotion, and embarrassment that swept over the countenance of his faithful henchman. "Now I'll get a little booking for your 'Purple Slipper,' and that is all you need expect me to do, except shoulder all the loss I haven't shunted on Denny." [75]

"It is to be a win, not a loss," murmured the loyal Adolph under his breath, with a glance of affection at the absorbed Mr. Godfrey Vandeford.

This vow of Mr. Adolph Meyers shows that it is as dangerous to arouse the affection and loyalty of one genius as it is to incur the anger of another.

The casting of "The Purple Slipper" was a joy to Mr. Dennis Farraday. He was to pay well for it in the future, but it was conducted in pure glee. He sat beside Mr. Godfrey Vandeford in the latter's long, Persian carpeted, soft-tinted, and famous-actor-photograph-bedecked, private office beside that eminent producer, and watched the strong light from over their shoulders reveal the points of the men and women who came in to exhibit themselves. From the moment they entered the door, through the walk or waddle or lope or saunter with which they approached their fate to the expressions of joy or disappointment which their emotions showed under Mr. Godfrey Vandeford's grilling, Mr. Farraday was deeply interested. [76]

"You know, Bébé, it is not necessary to put on more than a hundred extra pounds when in training for the heavy mother," he genially admonished a very large lady of uncertain age—an age artfully covered with rouge, powder, pencil, and lip-stick—who sank into the chair facing him with a pathetic remnant of the former lissome grace which had got her as far as being a dependable leading woman to any star who could go her a few points better.

"Well, it's not from living on large salaries from you that I have put on the pounds, Mr. Godfrey Vandeford!" she answered with a jovial laugh.

"Still eating half of old Wallace Kent's salary checks?" Mr. Vandeford demanded. This seemed a lack of delicacy to Mr. Dennis Farraday, who blushed with a color equal to that which rose in the cheeks of the old beauty as her eyes snapped and she rose to her feet. [77]

"As you know, he's feeding a squab chicken at Rector's to get her into the broiler class. Good-day, sir," and she prepared to sweep out of the office with all the fire she had used in many a queenly situation.

"Good old Bébé," Mr. Vandeford said, as he rose and put a restraining arm around her broad waist. "I was just teasing to see what was smouldering. How'll seventy-five a week, with costumes of frills and powdered hair, do you? Thirty sides and the center of the stage four times." "Sides," meaning single sheets of dialogue, puzzled Mr. Farraday, but he made a mental note to seek enlightenment.

"I haven't had a part this winter, Godfrey," she laughed, and sobbed on Mr. Vandeford's shoulder. "I'm living in a suitcase at Mrs. Pinkham's." [78]

"Stop and get a twenty-five check from Dolph, and be on the job Monday at the Barrett Theatre. Now run!" Mr. Vandeford gave Miss Bébé Herne's two hundred pounds of avoirdupois a gentle shove toward the door, which hint she took with an alacrity that had in it a great deal of left-over grace.

"Supported a lot of big guns for years. Knows her business better than any actress on Broadway," said Mr. Godfrey Vandeford to his horrified confrère as the door closed behind the old beauty. "Picked up Wallace Kent when he was a piffling, faded juvenile, and taught him to be a good elderly support worth his hundred to any director. He's left her flat for a pony in the Big Show, old hound!"

"Pretty raw," observed Mr. Dennis Farraday, with a great deal of emotion very poorly concealed in his sympathetic voice.

"Oh, she's had her fling in life! Dopes a bit, but can be depended upon. Next!"

This time there entered a husky, young brute of a boy with shoulders broad enough to run a double-decker plough. His hair was long and sleeked close to his well-shaped head, but his fine mouth and chin sagged, and his eyes were bold and sophisticated. In costume he was the glass and mould of Broadway fashion. [79]

"Reginald Leigh," he announced himself in a nice voice, and, as he spoke, took from a case a card and laid it on the edge of Mr. Vandeford's desk.

"Experience, Mr. Leigh?" asked Mr. Vandeford, still standing and with not an atom of encouragement in his whole body from head to toe.

"College dramatics and last summer in stock at Buffalo. I've worked in two pictures for the Universal."

"Heavy juvenile at fifty a week," offered Mr. Vandeford, with an indifferent glance up from the paper in his hand prepared for his guidance by the indefatigable Mr. Meyers. The word "handsome" was typed in the offer from which Mr. Vandeford made to Mr. Leigh. [80]

"My price is a hundred, Mr. Vandeford," answered Mr. Leigh, very pleasantly, and he took a grip on his hat and stick that was meant to convey the idea of immediate departure.

"Sorry," answered Mr. Vandeford, with a finality that staggered Mr. Dennis Farraday; for the youngster's looks and charm were so evident that it pained him to see "The Purple Slipper" lose them. "Costumes historical, furnished," added Mr. Vandeford, with increased indifference.

"Oh, in that case—" murmured the boy, almost, but not quite, unleashing his eagerness.

"Just leave your telephone number with Mr. Meyers in the outer office, please. Good-morning, Mr. Leigh," was the answer his concession got along with the dismissal in the "good-morning," which was spoken in such a tone that it was obeyed in short order.

"That is a find," said Mr. Godfrey Vandeford to the gasping Mr. Dennis Farraday. "Handsome young chaps who have any kind of manliness are hard to find these days. Too busy to be actors." [81]

"Why didn't you engage him?" further gasped his partner in the adventure of "The Purple Slipper."

"I'll let him cool his heels, to get some of the know-it out of his system. Dolph will make him come around and beg in less than twenty-four hours."

"See here, Van, these people are artists to whom you are trusting your money and reputation as a producer, and you treat them like—"

"The foolish children that they are," interrupted Mr. Vandeford. "Next!" and he pressed a button under his desk that buzzed for Mr. Meyers's ears alone.

The next three applicants were girls, who respectively giggled, glowered, and simpered. Mr. Godfrey Vandeford chose the two who glowered and simpered and got rid of the giggler by referring her telephone number to Mr. Adolph Meyers. [82]

"That second that you sent away was the prettiest of the bunch," commented Mr. Dennis Farraday, with interest that had survived to that point with undiminished intensity.

"Not at home under that little cocked hat. That giggle was the whole bag of tricks," instructed Mr. Vandeford. "Got any men out there, Pops?" he asked through the telephone to Mr. Adolph Meyers.

Immediately there entered a debonair, very handsome, and sleek gentleman of uncertain age.

"Hello, Kent, want to support Béb  in a costume play for a hundred a week?" asked Mr. Vandeford, with not an instant's greeting in answer to that gentleman's cordial good-morning.

"In New York or on the road?" questioned Mr. Kent, with an assurance that he tried to make bold.

"To the devil if I send you there," was the answer he got straight off the bat.

"A hundred with costumes?" [83]

"With costumes."

"Done."

"See Dolph; but not over ten-dollar advance to save your hide."

"He's giving fifty."

"To whom?"

"B b ."

"He did that because he knew that you'd get half of what he gave her. Ten's your limit."

"All right. Good-morning!"

"Barrett on Monday morning."

"All right!"

With which Mr. Kent rapidly made his exit.

"Old reprobate! But he does feed the lines to his opposite, and B b  happy is worth twice B b  in

a grouch. You see what the whole blamed thing is like and—" Mr. Vandeford was interrupted by the tinkle of the telephone at his elbow.

.....

"Godfrey Vandeford speaking."

.....

"When did you get in?"

.....

"Not busy at all."

.....

"The Claridge?"

.....

"Right away."

.....

"Haven't seen or heard from him in two days."

.....

"Right over. By!"

.....

From overhearing, as he was forced to do, this one-sided conversation, how could Mr. Dennis Farraday imagine that Violet Hawtry had come into sultry New York seeking him to devour and that his keeper was rushing away from his presence to his defense?

"You and Pops engage the rest, Denny. You see the trick now. Nothing left important but what Dolph puts down on this paper as 'woman support for character parts with looks.' Try your hand, old man, and if you pick a flivver there are plenty more to cast in and her out. By!" And before Mr. Farraday could protest he was left alone in the inquisition-room. And as Mr. Godfrey Vandeford went down in an elevator on his way to the Claridge to deliver the next instalment of the spanking of Miss Violet Hawtry, he passed a live wire going up opposite him and met one walking down Forty-second Street, neither of which he could be expected to recognize, as he had never seen either.

[85]

The first of the two dynamos walked into the office of the Vandeford Producing Company and failed to thrill Mr. Adolph Meyers in the least, a fact for which he could never afterward account. He motioned her into the inner office, and left her to her fate and Mr. Dennis Farraday.

"Good-morning, Mr. Vandeford," she said in a queer, throaty kind of voice that had in it a "come hither" of unusual quality, which suggested that in her production a Romney woman might have loved a Greek dancer well. She stood at ease before the long desk with a grace that was unmistakably that of complete assurance.

[86]

"I'm not Mr. Vandeford, but his—his partner, Dennis Farraday. Er—er, won't you be seated?" and with the happy, considerate manner of his that he had always used to all women, he offered her his own chair and appropriated the one of authority that Mr. Vandeford always occupied.

"Thank you," answered the young woman, with an ease equal to his own. And then they both waited while regarding each other seriously. Finally the tension relaxed and Dennis Farraday gave a big, jovial laugh while he made his admission:

"I don't know a thing about the play business. I'm just sitting in with Mr. Vandeford for the fun of it."

"An angel?" asked the girl, with a laugh that somehow accorded with his.

[87]

"That's it. He's gone out and left me to—to cut my eye teeth."

"On me?"

"Looks that way," and again they both laughed.

"Maybe I can help you," volunteered the girl, after the laugh. "I am Mildred Lindsey, and Mr. Chambers sent me in to see if I could support Miss Hawtry."

"Er—er, what experience?" Mr. Dennis Farraday managed to ask by fishing into his impressions of the last two hours.

"Five years in stock on the Pacific coast, two years in towns between, and two weeks in a flivver here on Broadway early in the spring. Dead broke, hungry, and about ready to make good for some manager." As the answer was fired point-blank at him, Mr. Dennis Farraday seemed to see a fire of psychic hunger blaze as high as that of wolfish, physical agony in the girl's eyes.

Mr. Dennis Farraday eagerly searched on the paper of guidance in casting made out by Mr.

Adolph Meyers for the benefit of Mr. Vandeford and found "woman support," and opposite the item of salary, seventy-five dollars. He doubled. [88]

"How would a hundred and fifty a week with costumes do for salary? You can have a couple of weeks advance right now if you like," he said in an easy, nonchalant manner as much like that of Mr. Vandeford as he could muster, for those fires of hunger in the girl's eyes were searching holes in Mr. Dennis Farraday's pocket.

"It would save my life—but—but could you tell me a little about the part? I might not be able to play it." There were both hope and fear in her compelling voice.

The question found Mr. Dennis Farraday unprepared by any precedent established in the two foregoing hours, for between the artists and Mr. Vandeford there had been alone the matter of salary to be settled and not one of them had inquired whether they were being engaged to play a Billy Sunday or an Ethiopian slave. But in another way it found him better prepared than would have been Mr. Godfrey Vandeford. He had read the manuscript of "The Purple Slipper" and Mr. Vandeford had not. [89]

"Well, to my uninitiated way of thinking, the supporting part is about as good as the leading one," said Mr. Dennis Farraday, and forthwith he launched out on an eager, enthusiastic resumé of the plot and atmosphere, even quoting lines of "The Purple Slipper." And as he talked Mildred Lindsey leaned across the table toward him and fairly drank in his words.

"I see—it's wonderful how she keeps his enemies at bay during the first half of the banquet—while she waits. It's great!" Her enthusiasm expressed in her wonderful voice urged Mr. Dennis Farraday on and on to a fuller exposition of the play and its beauties.

"You see, the sister is really the one to carry the plot. It is on her that Rosalind leans, and she has to be all there in her quiet way." [90]

"Yes, I see, and it can be made—" At this juncture the eye of Mr. Adolph Meyer was inserted to a crack of the door and then removed as he shook his head in puzzled doubt. He had intended to intrude to the rescue of his co-employer's inexperience, but he decided that the time was not ripe by one glance at Mr. Farraday's eager face, surmounted by its rampant, red leonine locks.

"I have pity for Mr. Farraday," Mr. Meyers remarked to himself as he seated himself at his machine, not knowing that in a very few minutes the second live wire would arrive in the office and this time he would get a shock himself.

For a half-hour he wrote on, while the animated voices boomed and purled and bubbled in the office beyond the crack of the door he had left open to observe the first lull that might call for relief. Then he got his shock.

The office door opened timidly, and somebody entered so quietly that she stood beside Mr. Adolph Meyers before he had lifted his head. [91]

It was the author of "The Renunciation of Rosalind," now "The Purple Slipper," and she looked every inch of it! Miss Elvira, the genius guided by "The Feminist Review," had done her best with the blue-silk suit, and Fifth Avenue could have done no better.

"May I see Mr. Vandeford? I am Miss Patricia Adair," she announced in a rich and calm Southern voice and manner.

Mr. Adolph Meyers sprang to his feet with the impact of the shock.

"Mr. Vandeford is not in the office, Madam, at present," he managed to gasp. Then he followed her big, gray eyes as they rested on the crack of the door through which the boom of Mr. Dennis Farraday's voice mingled with the excited chime of Miss Lindsey's laughter, and noticed as though for the first time that it had emblazoned upon it in large, gilt letters, "Mr. Vandeford. Private." [92]

"It is Mr. Dennis Farraday, the partner of Mr. Vandeford, engaging actors, Miss, in his absence. Will you walk in?" and in almost the first panic in which he had ever indulged Mr. Adolph Meyers showed the proud young author into the sanctum sanctorum from which he had barricaded many an enraged virago who had threatened his life if he kept her from an appeal to the manager.

"It is Miss Adair, the author of your play, Mr. Farraday, would speak with you," he announced across the long room, bowed in a way he had never done in his life, and shut the door behind Miss Adair.

It is interesting to wonder how it would have affected the end of the whole matter if Patricia Adair had walked in behind the giggler when Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, with all his experience with authors, was seated on the throne instead of poor inexperienced Dennis Farraday, enjoying "The Purple Slipper" with his newly engaged, supporting lady. [93]

"By jove, Miss Adair, it is little bit of all right that you should come in and catch Miss Lindsey and me chewing joy-rags over our—your play. Let me introduce Miss Lindsey, who is to support Miss Hawtry in the part of Harriet." And Bonnie Dennis, the angel, beamed with pure joy at the good time he was having as a producer. At the very sight and sound of him poor Patricia, who for half an hour had been wandering up and down Forty-second Street, looking for the tallest building on it, took both comfort and delight, and her sea-gray eyes with stars in their depths returned the

beam of his eyes.

"It's so wonderful that you like my play and are going to produce it—and you to act in it, Miss Lindsey," she said as she seated herself in the chair Mr. Farraday had drawn up for her. She looked at them both with respectful awe in her eyes and in her cheeks a flush of color that came and went as she spoke, in a way that at first puzzled Miss Lindsey as to its brand and then in turn awed her as she decided it was the real thing. The blue-silk triumph of Miss Elvira and "The Review" also puzzled her for a moment, but she put it down to some little Fifth Avenue shop that only débutantes and authors of plays could afford, and took it in with delight at its exquisite detail. [94]

"I think it is a dandy play, as Mr. Farraday has been telling it to me. Crooks and—and cut-ups are about done for," said Miss Lindsey. She gave a quick glance at Mr. Farraday, to see if he resented the allusion to Mr. Vandeford's recent failure.

"Right-o!" agreed Mr. Farraday, with a sympathetic smile at her allusion, which passed over the head of the lady from Adairville, Kentucky.

Then ensued more than a half-hour of the most enthusiastic discussion of plays in general, and Miss Adair's in particular. Both Mr. Dennis Farraday and Miss Mildred Lindsey were impressed with the fact that the author of "The Renunciation of Rosalind" had learned her business from the most erudite sources, and they talked Shakespeare and Fielding until they at last wound themselves up into a complete pause. [95]

Miss Adair broke the strain.

"I'm awfully hungry, and I don't know where to go to get something to eat," she said, with exactly the same tone of confidence she had used in asking old Jeff for a cold muffin in between the meals of her eighth summer.

"By Jove, we are all hungry! You girls come with me," exclaimed Mr. Dennis Farraday, as he jumped to his feet and looked around for his hat.

"Thank you, but I think I had better go home to—to see about—" Miss Lindsey was faltering with the embarrassment of those who are both proud and hungry, when food is offered them socially.

"Nonsense! You are coming over to the Claridge with Miss Adair and me for a bite. Then you can come back by here and see Dolph.—Dolph, make out a check for Miss Lindsey's advance. Shall we say one or two hundred, Miss Lindsey?" Dennis Farraday was in his element when doing the breezy protective to two girls at once. [96]

"One hundred, please," answered Miss Lindsey, with color mounting to her cheeks that underpainted that already there. She smiled with amusement at the surprise that manifested itself for an instant on the round face of Mr. Meyers that an actress should not "grab" all offered her and then plead for more. "But I really do feel that I had better not—go to luncheon, for I am —"

"Please do! I'd rather you would," the eminent author urged, and she clung to the show girl in a way that showed Dennis Farraday, accustomed to the women of her world, that vague proprieties were hovering beside the gates that were opening for Patricia from her old world into her new.

"You'll have to come, Miss Lindsey, to celebrate, or we shall think you are not all for the play," Mr. Farraday said with a finality in his voice that settled the matter.

And the three of them scudded along a few blocks of the sun-steamed streets into the coolness of the Claridge, also into the heart of a situation that had been seething for an hour between Mr. Godfrey Vandeford and Miss Violet Hawtry. [97]

"How wonderful of you, Van dear, to find me such a play at the eleventh and three-quarters hour!" had been the volley that Violet had fired at him.

"Glad you like it," he had parried, feeling sure that she was jockeying with him for position for the clinch.

"Dennis Farraday told me that you were backing my emotional handling even more than my comedy scenes. Could you for once be playing square with me and really looking forward to my development in getting this—this rather remarkable kind of a play for me?"

"I've done my best for you for five years, Violet," he quietly answered the insult, as he looked across the empty white tables that stretched away from Violet's favorite and reserved seat in the black and gold dining-room. [98]

"'Miss Cut-up,' for instance?"

"There were several ways to put that play across. You had your way in every particular. Mine might have succeeded," was his calm answer.

"The really amusing thing about you is that you don't at all know how little brains you have," was the polite broadside delivered him as Violet began to sip the clear coffee from her cup.

"Same to you," was the reply she received. Godfrey spoke in a good-natured tone of voice. "Now, what did you come to town to talk about—'The Purple Slipper'?"

"Why did you leave Highcliff like a thief in the night?"

"Did you read the deeds Dolph gave you when he went up to pack my personal effects?"

"Yes, thanks! I suppose you consider Highcliff the price of your freedom?"

"And cheap at that."

"Then why not turn me over to Weiner?" Violet asked in a dangerous tone of voice that made Mr. Vandeford glance around with apprehension to see who would witness the explosion if it occurred. [99]

"I tried to buy Denny off yesterday, but you fastened 'The Purple Slipper' firmly in his head, maybe his heart, the other evening, and it would be like taking candy from a child. Maybe you can—can influence him to let go—if I give you the chance." There was something coolly insulting in his voice that told Violet he had surmised her intentions and the failure of her assault on his big Jonathan.

"Your usual impertinence! I'll get him yet, just to spite you. I'll go in and play that 'Purple Slipper' to win, and—"

"Again Miss Adair breaks in on enthusiasm for her play." Dennis Farraday's big voice boomed right at the elbows of the embattled pair. "Look who's here, Van!"

Mr. Godfrey Vandeford looked up quickly, and as quickly rose to his feet. And with one glance into slate-gray eyes behind long black lashes—eyes filled with awed, worshipful gratitude to him—his heart rose in his breast and all but flitted out upon his sleeve. [100]

"Miss Adair, Mr. Vandeford, the producer of your play," good Dennis flourished. "And Miss Violet Hawtry! In fact, the whole happy family!"

CHAPTER III

[101]

Now, by all rules of the game, it was the prerogative of Miss Violet Hawtry to take charge of a situation in which the star of a play meets the author; but she missed her cue, and the gutter instinct within her sat dumb and dumfounded before the lady from Adairville.

"I'm charmed to meet you, Miss Hawtry," Miss Adair assured her, with a glance of such admiration and friendliness that even Violet's narrow-gage soul expanded into a variety of graciousness all its own, and she smiled back into the eyes of the young author with a radiance that had the semblance of warmth.

"And this is Miss Lindsey, whom we have chosen to support you in our play, Miss Hawtry," Mr. Dennis Farraday continued, with a glance of respectful awe at the Hawtry, which matched that given her by the author a second before and obtained for Miss Lindsey a cordial enough recognition of the introduction only slightly to frappé her instead of freezing her entirely. "We are all hungry," he added after the change of civilities. [102]

"You are all having luncheon with me," Mr. Vandeford found his voice to say. Ignoring Violet's glance of indignation at this skilful avoidance of a climax of her scene with him, he had three extra covers laid at the corner table devoted to the services of Miss Hawtry.

"I warned you that we were hungry, Van," said Mr. Farraday, as he began to search through the menu for an article of diet safe to pour in quantities into a girl who had long been empty. "How'd rare steak and fresh mushrooms do?" he asked, and he looked away from what he was sure would be in the eyes of Miss Lindsey, and which was there.

"Wonderful!" she murmured. [103]

"Right-o, for you and Miss Lindsey, but what about nightingales' tongues for my author?" laughed Mr. Vandeford, with an interested note in his rich voice, which caused Miss Hawtry to look at him sharply and Miss Adair to repeat the blush to such a degree that Miss Hawtry, as Miss Lindsey before her, was forced to admit that it was native and not imported. The flush did not pass unnoticed by Mr. Vandeford, as he laughed again with a question as to her nourishing.

"I want something that I don't know what the name means," calmly returned Miss Adair, with delighted excitement at the thought of adventuring into a land of strange food. "I know steak and ham and eggs and chicken and turkey."

"Will you trust me?" asked Mr. Vandeford. There was an eagerness in his voice and smile that again made the Violet glance at him and then at Mr. Dennis Farraday. The latter was beaming with mirth at the dilemma of feeding the young author who was so frankly scattering her hay-seeds on the metropolitan atmosphere. At that instant Miss Hawtry made a momentous decision. [104]

"Trust Mr. Vandeford and you can't go wrong," she advised with peaches and cream in her voice, and for some unknown reason Mr. Vandeford would have been glad to twist the creamy throat from which issued the creamy voice. Instead, he turned, calmly summoned the head waiter, and went into a conference with him in a few very discreet words, which the rest could not hear,

though there was no sign of any intention of keeping the consultation from them.

"I think it will be wonderful not to know until I taste it and maybe not then!" exclaimed the author, with another of her sea-gray, long-lashed glances of worshiping admiration at Mr. Vandeford, the eminent Broadway producer who was putting a great star into her play based on the adventures of an ancestress.

Of course the situation was dangerous to both Mr. Vandeford and his author, but who was to blame? [105]

And the jolly, impromptu luncheon-party was not the kind of episode that could soon be forgotten by any of the guests. The unknown food for the author was served by the head waiter himself, and he refused to answer questions as to its origin or component parts, even when urged by Mr. Dennis Farraday. The expression on Miss Lindsey's face after her encounter with the steak and mushrooms, served with an exalted baked potato, was one of decided relaxation. The look of affection in her eyes as she glanced at the author who had dragged her into this food situation rivaled the suddenly rooted admiration which beamed in the eyes of Mr. Dennis Farraday and which put Miss Hawtry alertly on watch, so much so that Mr. Godfrey Vandeford was privileged to lean back in his chair behind a mist of cigarette-smoke and let his eyes gleam where they listed.

"Now tell us just how you happened to think of all the wonderful things in your play, Miss Adair, specially that dinner situation," Mr. Dennis Farraday urged. He was lighting Miss Hawtry's cigarette, to the intense, though concealed, interest and astonishment of Miss Adair of Adairville, Kentucky. He thus asked sincerely and interestedly the usual question that the unsophisticated fires at an author at the first opportunity and which the author, no matter how sophisticated, really enjoys answering. [106]

And thereupon followed the story of the old letters in the trunk, with the mortgage only so lightly and proudly alluded to that the hearts of the listeners were decidedly touched, told by the author with the delighted enthusiasm that their sympathy warranted.

"And so you see, since it couldn't be oil-wells or gold mines it had to be the play," she ended, quoting herself in her conversation with the faithful Roger, who was at that moment following his plow with his mind on the straight furrows and his heart in New York. [107]

"You are a precious darling, and your play *must* succeed!" said Miss Lindsey impulsively at the end of the recital, and then she quickly glanced at Mr. Godfrey Vandeford to see if he resented her taking this affectionate liberty with his distinguished author. She found that eminent producer not at home to her glance; he was lost in contemplation of tears that hung on the long black lashes that veiled Miss Adair's gray eyes and a little quiver that manifested itself on her red lips. Then she shook off the tears by lifting those long lashes so that she could look straight into his eyes with a smile of absolute confidence in his intention and ability to remove from her life forever all of her distress, which was alone poverty in the concrete, by being the successful producer of her wonderful play. Men of Godfrey Vandeford's type admit many strange fires and their votaries into the outer temple of their hearts, but they keep the inner shrine tightly surrounded by asbestos curtains. However, there is always one, and one only, closely guarded entrance through which the ultimate woman must slip in an unguarded moment. Mr. Godfrey Vandeford would never have thought of being on any particular guard against the author of a play in purple ribbons entitled "The Renunciation of Rosalind," but he knew almost instantly that something dire had happened to him as he sat and writhed at the thought of his plans for the extinction of that piece of dramatic art, which he had not even read. The whole sophisticated world has decided that there is no such thing as love at first sight, except the biological scientists and they know and can prove that such a thing does exist and that it is a worker of wonders. And dire pain is one of its reactions. [108]

But all agony comes to an end and so did Mr. Vandeford's. Miss Hawtry, who had been so busy in her own mind with her own schemes that she had no time to listen to Miss Adair's, picked up her gloves from beside her final coffee-cup, and pulled the fine-meshed veil down over her beautiful, though slightly snubbed, nose as a signal for a separation of the group of feasters. [109]

"May I motor you to your hotel, Miss Adair?" she asked very sweetly. Of course Patricia did not know that she had got in her invitation at the first signal of the feasters' disintegration, which she herself had given, for the purpose of forestalling a similar invitation from Mr. Farraday, whose Surreness she knew must be moored somewhere near. "Where are you stopping?" she asked with very little interest, and received an answer that almost upset her equanimity.

"I'm staying at the Young Women's Christian Association," calmly announced the author of "The Purple Slipper," with no sense of embarrassment in either voice or manner. "Thank you for offering to take me there, but Mr. Farraday is going to take Miss Lindsey and me to buy a hat at a place which Miss Lindsey knows of. She is going to buy one, too, now that she is going to play in our play." [110]

"The Y. W. C. A.! Great guns!" muttered Mr. Vandeford under his breath, while the Violet leaned back in her chair and fanned herself.

Then very suddenly Mr. Vandeford sat up and looked at Miss Mildred Lindsey keenly for half a second.

"We'll have to go back to the office to get that check for Miss Lindsey before we go hat-hunting," announced good Dennis, with a calmness that made Mr. Vandeford suspect that he had met the fact of the eminent author's abiding-place before and had got used to it. "You and Miss Hawtry going over to the office, Van, or will you come with us, if she has other folderols to follow in a different direction?"

"I am to see Adelaide about my costumes for 'The Purple Slipper' at two-twenty, so must forego the pleasure of—of hat-hunting this afternoon," Violet murmured faintly. "But I know Mr. Vandeford will adore going with you." Miss Hawtry felt that safety lay in numbers, and she preferred to leave the unsophistication of Miss Adair with both Mr. Godfrey Vandeford and Mr. Dennis Farraday than with either of them alone. [111]

"I wish I could get out after the hat, but you people must remember that I am putting on 'The Purple Slipper,' and I have to be about Miss Adair's business while old Denny buzzes about hat roses, free and equal with her," answered Mr. Vandeford. His envy, apparent in his voice, of the care-free state of Mr. Farraday was very real, though none of the others could guess its meaning. "I'll see all of you later. By!" and with a sign to the head waiter, which tied tight Mr. Farraday's purse-strings, Mr. Vandeford left them while the going was good. So determined was his exit that Miss Hawtry could not keep him back for the finish of the fight.

And Mr. Vandeford was in a mortal hurry. He had much to do and undo. He arrived at his office, three squares away, slightly out of breath. [112]

"Did you see her, Pops?" he demanded of Mr. Adolph Meyers.

"I did, Mr. Vandeford, sir, and here is a carbon of the letter I sent her, not with any encouragement to come to New York at all," and in self-defense he handed out to Mr. Vandeford a copy of the letter Roger had delivered to Patricia among her roses and young onions and string-beans.

"Take it away," commanded Mr. Vandeford, seating himself at his desk and wildly shunting papers and letters about.

"Mr. Vandeford, sir, I am sorry for that young lady and I ask you to have a heart," Mr. Meyers ventured to say to his chief with a boldness which he himself could not understand, but with which Mr. Vandeford was strangely patient. He ended with, "It will be a nobleness for you to not produce a cold show for her, but pay a small damage sum for such a beautiful lady and call it all off." [113]

"My God, Pops, I'd give half the 'Rosie Posie' to be able to do it! But Denny and Violet and that girl they engaged for support have already filled her full of success dope about the play, and if I call it off arbitrarily, where shall I stand with her?" Ignorance of the completeness of his own capitulation to the faith and tears in the sea-gray eyes, and the genuine, grown-on-the-spot blush from Adairville, Kentucky, showed in the consternation with which he asked the question of his henchman.

"Stand with her!" repeated Mr. Meyers, with a consternation that matched his chief's, but was of different origin. "You had no such fear when you called off from rehearsals in the second week the comedy of Mr. Hinkle, and a fourth of the damages paid to him will to her be—"

"Get to work under your hat, Pops, get to work! The 'Purple Slipper' has got to go on Broadway and go big. I followed that purple hunch for pure cussedness against Violet, and now watch it lead me by the nose. You get Gerald Height on the wire as soon as you can, while I talk to Rooney." [114]

"But, Mr. Vandeford, sir, it is not a Hawtry play, and—"

"Get busy, get busy, Pops! Put a copy of that manuscript on my desk where I can lay hands on it the minute I get a chance. Get everything going for a week later than I first called the show and —"

"Here we are!" exclaimed Mr. Dennis Farraday, as he burst into the outer office, ushering as a wedge before him Miss Patricia Adair and Miss Mildred Lindsey. "Got that hat-check, Pops? Money, I mean, for Miss Lindsey, not a pasteboard for your own lid from some hotel."

For a minute Mr. Vandeford lost himself in the depths of the worshipping, gray eyes that seemed to have been lifted to his for all eternity in that terrible faith and gratitude. Then he went into action as captain of the ship which was to come into the port of Adairville, Kentucky, with all sails set, loaded or bearing his dead body. [115]

"You and Miss Adair extract money from Pops with a can-opener while I discuss a few details with Miss Lindsey, in the office," he commanded coolly, ushered Miss Lindsey into the sanctum and softly closed the door.

"Mr. Vandeford," Miss Lindsey began rapidly, "I knew it wasn't fair to make any definite arrangements with Mr. Farraday, and of course I will take whatever salary you—"

"Where do you live, Miss Lindsey?" Mr. Vandeford interrupted to ask with a totally unwarranted

interest on the part of a manager in the affairs of an actor he has engaged. Miss Lindsey, for the second time that day, underpainted her own cheeks and laughed as she answered:

"I wouldn't blame you if you didn't believe me, but I also live at the Y. W. C. A., though I give Mrs. Parkham's as my address for letters and telephone calls. It's cheap and—and I have done dining-room work there for a month, waiting—waiting for—for a part in a play." [116]

"Great guns, how that hunch works!" exclaimed the well-known producer, as he sank into his chair from positive weakness. "You take in this situation, don't you?" he demanded with a quick recovery.

"I think I do," answered Miss Lindsey. Then she lifted her big black eyes, in which shone the psychic hunger, though that of the body had been appeased. "I've got to make good, Mr. Vandeford, and I'll do anything you want me to. I've got every right—to live at the Y. W. C. A., and a right to hand food to—to that child in there. You can trust me."

"I believe I can," Mr. Vandeford answered, after looking at her keenly for a few seconds with the glance with which he had picked his winners or failures in the human comedy for many experienced years. "Stop your dining-room work at the nunnery and see that she has a good time, just you and she together. I'll send you matinée tickets to shows I want her to see, and Mr. Farraday and I'll look after the other amusement. I want her to meet only the people I introduce her to, and the Y. W. C. A. is the best place to live in New York—for her. Understand?" [117]

"Yes."

"Find out how much money she has."

"I know now; she told me. She's got a ticket home, good until October first, and a hundred dollars to last until—until the royalties come in from the play. Those royalties have got to come in, too, or her grandfather—" Miss Lindsey's voice was positively belligerent as she began to put the situation up to Mr. Vandeford, whose heart, as that of a theatrical manager, she felt, must be hard by tradition.

"Yes, I know all about that. You get what money you want from Mr. Meyers out there, and fool her about what things cost as much as you can—until the royalties come in. Let me know when things don't run smoothly for the two of you. Of course, this is worth money to you and—" [118]

"I don't want money for—for—looking after her."

"How much did Mr. Farraday offer you for your part?"

"He doubled it when he saw that I was—was hungry, but I know a hundred and twenty-five is right and that's all I expect."

"The one-fifty stands. If all goes well I'll see you get your chance on Broadway this winter. We understand each other now; don't we?"

"Yes."

"Then get the hat quest going. I'm busy."

"Five dollars is her outside limit."

"Can't you juggle?"

"I'll try, but she's—well, you know what a girl like that is."

"Go to it!" With which command Mr. Vandeford led the way into the outer office. A brief aside put the situation he had just adjusted into the willing ear of his co-producer, who beamed with satisfaction at the idea of the joint nesting of these first two theatrical experiences he had captured at the outset of his quest for adventure in the white lights. He immediately began counting Miss Lindsey's advance into her hand, thus giving Mr. Vandeford a word alone with his eminent author, beside Mr. Adolph Meyers's big window. [119]

"Miss Lindsey tells me that she also lives at the Y. W. C. A.," he said with a curious paternal glow in his solar plexus that he had never experienced before.

"Oh, I'm so glad! I know that is foolish of me, but I am a little frightened. I don't know anybody in New York except you and her and—I've never been in a big city before, and only in Louisville a few times with my aunt. I'll enjoy it if she will take me places and bring me back and forth to rehearsals," and the gray eyes beamed with relief and anticipation of being led forth from the Y. W. C. A. into the gay world by a competent guide. "Can we go to some of the *thè dansants* in the afternoon, and maybe to the Metropolitan and the Aquarium?" [120]

"Yes, all those places and more," assented Mr. Vandeford, with a suppressed smile at the diversity of amusements his charge had planned in her sallies from the Y. W. C. A. "You see, it is both the duty and the pleasure of a producer of a play to see that his author has a good time while in the city." It was a surprise to Mr. Vandeford to find himself thus stating the case inversely.

"Oh, but I mean to work hard to help with 'The Purple Slipper,' so I'll be too tired to bother you much to take me places. And I know how hard you work, so don't have me on your mind, will you, please, sir?" The lifted curl of the black lashes and the reverential note in the soft, slurring, Blue-

grass voice almost upset the staid deference with which Mr. Vandeford was conversing with the author of his new Hawtry play.

"Oh, play producing isn't so hard on the producer and the author, so we'll have lots of time to frolic," he hastened to assure her, though an uneasy little pang shot into his heart as he thought of just what befell the average author at the rehearsals of his or her play, and he took an additional vow of protection. "Shall I come to take you to dinner and to a show to-night?" [121]

"Oh, I'd love it," she answered, and again the color came up under the gray eyes. "It would be wonderful to have you show me Broadway the first time. I could never forget that."

Then a thought delivered a blow that laid the producer of "The Purple Slipper" low. The afternoon was half gone, and there were dozens of wires that he must manipulate since he had had a change of—heart, concerning "The Purple Slipper," and dinner-time and evening were the only hours that some of the most important could be found.

"Oh, but I can't ask you to do that," he exclaimed, and for almost the first time since the day of his graduation he felt color rise up under his own tanned cheeks. "I have to see the stage director and a lot more people about some things connected with your play. Still, I can't bear to have anybody else get that first night on Broadway away from me. I think it is due me." Being herself entirely sincere, Patricia recognized the utter sincerity of the distress in the voice of her producer where any other woman would have been doubtful of the ready excuse coming immediately after the invitation. [122]

"Then I'll just go to bed early and rest up from the trip, so that I can go with you whenever you get the time to take me. You are working for us both about the play, and if you had rather I waited for you, that is only fair," Miss Adair hastened to assure him with a sincerity equal to his own.

"You are one good sport," was the reply that he made her straight from the shoulder, for the thought of a perfectly beautiful girl going to bed in the Y. W. C. A. and covering up her head and ears from the bright lights of her first night in old Manhattan just to give a strange and revered man the pleasure of introducing her to the old city made a profound impression upon him. "To-morrow night we'll wake up things on Broadway. I'll telephone you in the morning to let you know how the play is going and to see if there is anything I can do for you. Now you must all go and let me get busy." [123]

"Yes, this is just about the hour that hats begin to bite well," assented Mr. Farraday, as he removed the girls down to his car with no thought or question as to whether his services would be needed in the enterprise in which he had embarked with Mr. Vandeford.

"Now for it, Pops!" said Mr. Vandeford as the door closed behind his co-workers in the production of "The Purple Slipper," whose work at that moment was to play at a distance from his labor. "I'm going to read that play, and nothing short of something that will injure its prospects if neglected by me must disturb me. When I'm done I'll make plans with you. It will take me several hours, and you stand by every second of the time. Get me?" [124]

"Yes, Mr. Vandeford, sir," answered Mr. Adolph Meyers, and he shut his door into the outer office just as Mr. Vandeford closed his own with a bang.

Then for three hours or more, while the sun sank behind the Palisades and the white lights flashed up from Broadway beneath his window like bits of futile challenges to the dying light of day, Mr. Godfrey Vandeford went through the supreme agony of a long life on Broadway, and was paid in full for every double-cross he had administered to a confrère. He read "The Purple Slipper" and groaned aloud from page to page. He began its perusal sitting erect in his chair, and he ended it hunched over its pages spread on his desk with his head in his hands, his fingers desperately clutching his shock of gray-sprinkled hair. Then in a complete collapse he flung himself back in his chair, elevated his feet to the edge of the desk, and began literally to devour the smoke of a small black cigar. For half an hour he sat motionless, as was his habit when fighting all preliminary battles, and his eyes seemed to be seeing the big old monster city open its thousand gleaming eyes and change its roar of the day to an incessant purr of a night-stalking beast, but in reality he was seeing and hearing a month into the future, and the spectacle thus pre-visionsed was the first night of "The Purple Slipper" on Broadway. Then very suddenly he came back into his conscious self and went into action. He rang the buzzer for Mr. Adolph Meyers. [125]

"Pops, get Grant Howard on the wire and ask him to come around here as quick as he can make it. If he talks straight wait an hour for him, if he's thick-tongued go after him yourself. Get him! Now put me on the wire with Rooney if you can find him, and make appointments with Lindenberg for scenery at eleven in the morning. Ask Corbett to send an artist to talk costumes for a period play at eleven-thirty, and have Gerald Height here at twelve sharp. Don't forget to engage that good-looking youngster—Leigh, I think is the name—even if you have to give him a hundred advance. That's all for the present. Get Rooney for me." Mr. Vandeford turned to his desk and began making rapid notes on a pad with a huge, black, press pencil. For five minutes he spread his thoughts upon the paper in great smudges; then his telephone rang, and he took up the receiver: [126]

.....

"Yes, this is Mr. Vandeford speaking. Hello, Billy!"

.....

"That new Hawtry play is beginning to promise something. I'm delaying it a week, and I want you to come into it with your sleeves rolled up. We may make a sure-fire hit of it."

.....

[127]

"Oh, no, I'll keep right on getting 'The Rosie Posie Girl' in shape, and shunt Hawtry into it as soon as she cinches the public in this play—or fails."

.....

"That was just what I was going to hand you—you get four hundred a week for this show, but you'll have to go in and earn it. It's a departure, and you may not like it. You'll have to hammer it a lot, but I'm not signing a single 'Rosie Posie' contract until I see this in shape."

.....

"I mean it. A stage manager has to take my stuff all hot even if he thinks some of it is cold. Get me?"

.....

"That's good. I'll give you the completed manuscript Saturday so you can pound and set it for Monday next."

.....

"That's good. By!"

[128]

With which short, but sure, wire-pulling Mr. Vandeford opened his campaign to double-cross his own original plans. He had hardly stopped fixing Mr. William Rooney when Pops looked in upon him and announced Mr. Grant Howard, the eminent playwright.

"Hello, Grant," was Mr. Vandeford's short and unenthusiastic greeting to the small, black-haired person with weak, pink-rimmed, blue eyes, who sauntered into the sanctum and dropped sadly into a chair with his back to the light. A cigarette hung from the left corner of his upper lip, and his hands trembled. "Been hitting 'em up?"

"Yes," answered the playwright, laconically.

"Broke?"

"Pretty bad."

"Want to doctor a play for Hawtry for me by Friday next for a thousand dollars cash?"

"Cash now?"

"Cash Friday."

[129]

"Would have to lock myself up in my apartment to do it; but Mazie's been crying for gold-uns for a week."

"Send Mazie to me, and I'll fix that, and hand you the thousand on Friday. Here, take this manuscript over in my other office and be ready to talk it over with me by ten o'clock. I'll see Mazie in the meantime." Mr. Vandeford placed the precious "Purple Slipper" in the hands of a man who at that very moment had two successful plays running on Broadway, his interest in both of which he had sold out for a mess of pottage to be consumed in the company of Miss Mazie Villines of the "Big Show."

"Dolph had better order me up a little cold wine to start on," said Mr. Howard, as he rose languidly to incarcerate himself at the bidding of Mr. Vandeford. The same scene had been enacted between the two bright lights of American drama several times before with very good results. Mr. Howard's brain was of that peculiar caliber which does not originate an idea, but which inserts a solid bone construction as well as keen little sparklets into the fabric of another's labor, and makes the whole translucent where before it may have been opaque. On Broadway he was called a play doctor, and Mr. Vandeford was not the first manager who had shut him up with quarts of refreshment to tinker on the play of many a literary, dramatic, bright light.

[130]

"Dolph will give you scotch and soda to your limit, no further," answered Mr. Vandeford, without graciousness. "I'll be here waiting for your talk-over at ten-thirty o'clock."

"All right. Have Mazie come for me after her show?"

"Yes."

With which the eminent playwright betook himself to a small private office which opened into the lair of Mr. Adolph Meyers. After he had entered that retreat Mr. Meyers softly rose from his typing machine and as softly locked him in. Then he proceeded to hunt for Miss Mazie Villines until he got her into conversational connection with Mr. Vandeford. They conversed in these words with great cordiality:

[131]

.....

"Want to earn a nice little two hundred for keeping Grant Howard working at doctoring a play by next Friday for me?"

.....

"I'm giving him a thousand if it's delivered Friday."

.....

"Two hundred to you."

.....

"Not three!"

.....

"There's Claire Furniss. Grant had her at supper last night at Rector's. She's a beauty, you know."

.....

"Two fifty."

.....

"Goes!"

.....

"Good! Come get him here at my office at eleven-fifteen. Get a taxi by the hour at your stage-door—on me—and come by for him."

.....

"Good girl! By!"

[132]

"What a life!" Mr. Vandeford muttered to himself, then rang his buzzer for Mr. Adolph Meyers.

"Pops, it's eight o'clock. Go get us a couple of slabs of pie at the automat, and then I'll go over to see Breit at the booking office."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Vandeford," Mr. Meyers acquiesced, and departed in search of provender for the lion and himself. Left to himself, Mr. Vandeford fell into another trance, from which he was dragged by another tinkle of his telephone.

"There'll be a wireless to my grave," he muttered as he took down the receiver and snapped into it:

"This is Mr. Vandeford talking."

.....

"Oh, Miss Adair. Anything the matter?"

.....

"Speak a little closer into the phone. Miss Hawtry has asked you to supper to-night? Mr. Farraday? And myself?"

.....

"Did she say I was to come for you?"

.....

"Do you know, I feel like a brute, but I'm going to tell you to go to bed as per promise. I've got two big guns from Broadway putting licks on the production of 'The Purple Slipper' until the small hours to-night, right here in the office. I'll tell Miss Hawtry about it, and you can—go to bed."

.....

"Oh, yes, she'll understand. It's her play too, you see."

.....

"No, you can't help me to-night, thank you just the same. How's Miss Lindsey? Would you like me to send my car to take you girls for a little spin in the park to cool off before you go to bed?"

.....

"Her hair's wet? And so is yours? I didn't know it was raining."

[133]

[134]

.....

"Oh, a mutual shampoo? Bless you both!"

.....

"No, you don't interrupt me when you call me. You are to call me any time you are willing to do it, if it is every five minutes."

.....

"No, I mean it."

.....

"Very well then—good-night and good dreams."

.....

"Can you beat it?" Mr. Vandeford smiled to himself as he hung up the receiver. "Those two peachy girls washing each other's hair in the Y. W. C. A., within ten blocks of the 'Follies' is to laugh—or cry. Good little Lindsey! I wager she could have got 'em both forty-seven-eleven dates." Then a thought delivered a blow just above his belt in the region of his heart. "So it's Violet's game to use her as a decoy-duck for Denny?" he questioned himself, then gave his own answer in a soft voice under his breath. "Damn her!"

[135]

Furthermore he did not communicate with Miss Hawtry to give her Miss Adair's answer to her invitation. He answered it in person, but only after much had happened in the three hours intervening.

The hours from eight to nearly ten Mr. Vandeford spent in slowly munching the refreshment retrieved from the automat by Mr. Adolph Meyers and thinking out loud to that dignitary who took down his thoughts on paper in cabalistic signs of shorthand. They were all notes of what could and must be done in the next few days in the fight for the good fate of "The Purple Slipper."

[136]

"I want to see that fellow Reid about that new lighting he provided for the new Sauls show in May. I liked it in some ways and—" Mr. Vandeford was saying when a banging on the door of the private office in which was incarcerated the eminent playwright interrupted him.

"Did you give him the right amount of booze, Pops?" Mr. Vandeford asked.

"Entirely right," answered Mr. Meyers, with his pencil still poised over his pad. The knocking continued.

"See what he wants, Pops, and give him a little more if you have to," decided Mr. Vandeford, as he lit a new cigar and turned to the whirlpool of his desk while he waited for Mr. Meyers's return.

"Say, do you expect me to cast a Sunday School charade into a play in six days, Vandeford?" was the storm of words hurled at him as the released and infuriated doctor of plays hurled himself and his sheaf of manuscript into the door ahead of Mr. Meyers.

[137]

"Is that what you think of it?" calmly questioned Mr. Vandeford, as he swung around in his chair. "Sit down and tell me what you intend to do for it."

"I'm going to rewrite the whole blamed mess for fifteen hundred dollars, that's what I'm going to do," announced Mr. Howard with both belligerence and excitement in his voice and in the flash of his sick little eyes.

"Is it as good—or as bad—as all that—money?" questioned Mr. Vandeford. "You'll have to show me," he added calmly, though in the vitals of his heart he was relieved that Howard still spoke of "The Purple Slipper" as a carcass on which to operate.

"It's got a perfectly ripping, basic, sex-comedy idea that climaxes the third act; the rest is piffle."

"I thought some of the character drawing, and one or two of the sentimental bits were—actable," Mr. Vandeford ventured, determined to save as much of the hair and hide of Miss Adair's child as possible, enough at least to help her to recognize and claim it later.

[138]

"Oh, we can leave enough bits to anchor the author's name, if that is what you mean," the playwright admitted impatiently. "How about fifteen hundred? I won't do it for less."

"Goes," answered Mr. Vandeford, with the greatest ease with which he had ever dispensed five hundred dollars in all his life. "Now shoot me your layout of the whole thing before Mazie gets here to take you and lock you up."

"I'm going to take that dinner scene where the wife holds her husband's enemies and her lover at bay to see if he gets back home on a sporting-chance bet with lover, and write Hawtry both back and front of it; write her in as the virago she is and give her a chance to act herself for once."

"Good idea," admitted Mr. Vandeford. "But you'll have a hard time writing a gutter girl into a grand dame, won't you?"

[139]

"Women are all alike, and the worst viragos are the grand dames. It takes a gutter girl to play one let loose, as they do only on rare occasions. I've got 'em in my own family. That's the reason

I'm a black sheep turned out. Got a sister that's worse than me, only respectable and fashionable. See?"

"Yes, I see," again admitted Mr. Vandeford. "You'll keep all the atmosphere and minor stabs in, you say?"

"Sure. They are pretty good staggers, some of the minor stuff. Lots of it is good talk—only wandering. That woman may write something some day if she breaks loose and goes to the devil for a while."

"She won't," said Mr. Vandeford, positively.

"Never can tell," answered Mr. Howard, with indifference. "What did Mazie say?"

"She's due here for you now," answered Mr. Vandeford, looking at his watch. [140]

"Great girl, Mazie. Cooks me dandy rice and runny eggs, and sits on the neck of every bottle in New York while I dig. Couldn't do without her. Say, tell her you are just giving me five hundred, will you?"

"She knows it's a thousand," answered Mr. Vandeford, truthfully. "But I'll keep the extra five hundred you are extracting dark for you."

"That's good, and I'll tell her that I haven't got any—"

"Tell her that you haven't got any money, as usual," were the words which Mr. Howard's fair lion-tamer used to finish his sentence of appeal to Mr. Vandeford for his co-operation in fraud. She had entered past Mr. Meyers with his full approval, for he felt a great relief at the sight of her and her guardianship.

"How's Mazie?" asked Mr. Vandeford, as he rose and, with all the ceremony he would have used for a grand duchess—or Miss Patricia Adair—offered a chair to the pert little person with her funny, good-humored, rather pretty face and her very smart clothes. [141]

"Kicking along, Mr. Vandeford, thank you," was the answer. "Gee, but I did kick the limit to-night, that's sure. I put some shady shines over what Grant wrote into a let-down in my part for me last night in great shape. They et it up, darling." Her naughty face beamed on Howard. "Hawtry was in a box, left. Had a gink in soup to fish with her that looked like real money. Have you rented her out?"

"You folks get along and stop that taxi meter you've got running on me," Mr. Vandeford said, answering the sally with a laugh; but it surprised him that there was a cold space in his vitals at the insult that the little trollop handed him with such comradery, guiltless of any knowledge that it was an insult.

"What was that about touching pitch?" he asked himself as he walked rapidly up four blocks to the theater where Mazie had told him he would find the Violet with her prey. He was just in time to meet them in the lobby. Denny was in the gorgeousness of his "soup to fish," Mazie's and her world's term for evening attire, and the Violet in every way matched his good looks. [142]

"Why, where is Mademoiselle Innocence?" asked Hawtry, with a little frown, as she perceived that Mr. Vandeford was alone and not in regalia.

"Asleep at the Y. W. C. A.," he answered shortly.

"Sure?" asked the Violet, with a little laugh for which he could have killed her.

"Why, she promised Miss Hawtry to go to supper with us and see a midnight show," Mr. Farraday exclaimed, and there was disappointment in his voice as he looked at Mr. Vandeford.

"I couldn't get away from the office until just this minute, and I didn't think I could get away this soon. Miss Adair sent her apologies to you both, and I came over to bring them."

"Evidently we are not to be trusted with the author, Mr. Farraday," laughed Violet, with what good Dennis took as good nature and what Mr. Vandeford knew to be rage. [143]

"Well, bless the child and her beauty sleep, but don't let that kill our evening joy. Come along, Van, and we'll go some place sufficiently disreputable to admit a crumpled person like yourself if you wash your hands. We can have a good powwow over the play. I want to know what you have been doing while I was off the job chasing a hat for the author." And the big, stupid Jonathan linked his arm in that of his anxious and hovering David and drew him along towards the Surrenese, which stood across the street, at the same time guiding the steps of the Violet's satin slippers in that direction.

While the three walked across the narrow street Mr. Vandeford made some rapid calculations and a decision in his mind. He saw plainly that he could not undertake to guard Mr. Dennis Farraday from the Violet and at the same time fend Miss Patricia Adair from her wiles. He'd have to choose between them, and in the twinkling of an eye he chose Patricia. It is said that there is a love between men "that passes the love of women," but nobody has ever witnessed it. [144]

"You people go on to your show—I'm all in," he capitulated as they stood beside Mr. Farraday's car; and the heart of the Violet rejoiced within her.

"I'm sure Miss Adair is getting caught up on sleep so she can go with you to-morrow night. She's a perfect dear, and we'll put her play across," Hawtry cooed to him in her rich voice, and he knew that she felt she had struck his price and bought him off.

"If Denny falls for her he'll fall far; but I can't help it. A girl's a girl, specially from the country," Mr. Vandeford said to himself, as he stood and watched them drive away into the white-lighted cañon of Broadway. Then he went home and to bed.

A man may put out his night light, stretch himself between his sheets with the perfection of fatigue and still not sleep. There are various combinations of reasons that prevent his slumber. Mr. Godfrey Vandeford was still awake when Mr. Dennis Farraday let himself into his apartment with a key that had been presented to him five years before when Mr. Vandeford had installed his Lares and Penates in the tall building on Seventy-third Street, some of these Lares and Penates being Mr. Farraday's extra linen and clothes. [145]

"That you, Denny?" Mr. Vandeford asked as he switched on his light and took a hurried glance at a clock on his mantel which registered the hour of 2 A. M.

"Yes," answered Mr. Farraday, as he came to the door of Mr. Vandeford's sleeping apartment. "A thought suddenly struck me, and I stopped in to explode it at you and sleep here."

"Fire away!"

"My mater is coming to town the first of the week to have her glasses changed, and I'm going to telephone out to her to-morrow and ask her to write Miss Adair to have dinner with us informally at the town house while she is here. You know mater's mother was from old Kentucky, and she'll adore the child. Think that's good thinking?" [146]

"Fine," answered Mr. Vandeford, with a glow under his ribs about which he said nothing. Men are vastly inarticulate, but they have various means of communication, and Mr. Vandeford now felt that in his care of his author Mr. Dennis Farraday would understand.

"You know I am on new ground, old chap, but—but how about asking Miss Lindsey, too?" Mr. Farraday questioned, with great diffidence.

"Fine!" agreed Mr. Vandeford, with accelerated glow under his ribs that Miss Lindsey had been proposed when Miss Hawtry might have been invited. "Get to bed, can't you, you Indian, you? Night!"

"Good-night!" answered Mr. Farraday, as he departed to his own room.

And still Mr. Vandeford did not sleep. [147]

Flat upon his back he lay and faced, analyzed, and card-indexed his situation and himself.

"Five years of myself given to that gutter girl and I never even cared; let her annex me for purposes of parade and publicity, and thought it funny sport. Wasted? Something to be deducted for pleasure in artistic success of "Dear Geraldine," but what will it cost me if I have to stand by and see her make old Denny hate himself as I do myself, or worse? She'll not stop short with him, and how do I know what he'll do? The money don't matter, but the—cleanliness does. If I go in to save him, she gave me notice to-night that she would go for that gray-eyed girl. What can she do to her? First, kill her play, no matter what I do to build up a success for the kiddie to cancel that mortgage. Second: do something, say something that will kill that look in those gray eyes when they lift to me. Never! Take Denny, Violet, and the Lord help him; I can't. You've bought me. Washing her hair in the Y. W. C. A.! God bless that institution and—" [148]

At last Mr. Godfrey Vandeford slept.

After his ten o'clock awakening Mr. Vandeford displayed a marked eccentricity in his demeanor. That morning was unlike any morning he had ever experienced, and his conduct surprised himself. A daybreak shower had fallen on the hot and baked city, and it was as fresh as a suburb. Arrayed in the coolest of white silk, linen, and suede, Mr. Vandeford had his chauffeur drive him not to the whirling office but to the most sophisticated Fifth Avenue florist, where he purchased the most unsophisticated bunch of flowers at the highest price to be obtained in New York.

"The Young Women's Christian Association," he commanded the obsequious young Valentine who drove the big Chambers. Mr. Vandeford was never sufficiently unoccupied of mind to pilot a car in and out of New York traffic. For half a second the young Frenchman hesitated. [149]

"I don't know where it is—Find out," commanded Mr. Vandeford, and again he had the foreign experience of feeling the blood burn the under side of the tan on his cheeks.

Valentine consulted the tall man in uniform at the door of the flower shop, and this menial consulted some one within, who must have consulted a directory, judging from the time it took to obtain the correct address. With his eyes straight in front of him, as a chauffeur's eyes should always be, he then drove rapidly down the avenue.

And on that beautiful morning Mr. Vandeford's luck was with him. Valentine whirled expertly up to the curb in front of the large, hospitable building which had emblazoned over its door the impressive Y. W. C. A. letters, letters that send a beacon all over the known world as they did to Mr. Vandeford in little and unimportant New York. Mr. Vandeford got out of the car with hurried grace in his long limbs and, with actual trepidation, went in through the door, into a world he had [150]

never even thought of before. He had entered many an African lion jungle with less fear. He glanced with awe at the natty young woman in white linen who presided at the desk, and wanted intensely to put his flowers behind him and back out of the door rather than approach and ask for the lady to whom he wished to donate them. In fact, he might have accomplished such a retreat if again luck had not come his way.

"Oh, Mr. Vandeford, how glad I am that you got here before we went out to the museum," exclaimed a fluty, slurring young voice just behind him, and he found that the gray eyes with the black lashes were just as unusual as he had decided they could not possibly be in the interval that had elapsed since he had looked into them. "Oh, how lovely!"

The last exclamation was made over the edge of the bouquet, which he had tendered Miss Adair as silently as a school-boy hands out his first bunch of buttercups to the lady for whom he has picked them. [151]

"Did you come for me to go to help work on the play?" was the energetic question that brought him out of his trance.

"No, not right now," he answered haltingly, and when he realized how many times he would have to put her off with words to that same effect, his trance became a panic.

"When are you going to need me?" Miss Adair asked him with a direct and business-like look right to his eyes. "I am ready for work now."

"Now what'll I do?" he demanded of himself.

CHAPTER IV

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"I thought of a lot of new things for my characters to say, while I was coming up from Kentucky on the train, and I want to put them in." Miss Adair further tortured Vandeford.

"This morning I am going to talk to the electrician and the costumer and the scene painter." Mr. Vandeford answered by telling her the truth, because, with her very beautiful and candid eyes beaming into his, showing both interest and consideration, he had not the power to make up any kind of lie to put her off the trail of "The Purple Slipper."

"I am so glad that I got up early and am ready to go with you! I can tell them about what my great-grandmother really wore when it all happened, and it will be such a help to them!" Miss Adair exclaimed with great business acumen shining in her eyes. Mr. Vandeford gave up the fight, piloted her into his car, and gave the command, "Office!" to the very decorous, but very much interested Valentine. [153]

As they were skimming back up the avenue and about to turn into Forty-second Street, an inspiration came to Mr. Vandeford.

"Didn't you keep some of those costumes of the period of the play hid away in an old brass-nailed leather trunk in your garret?" he asked Miss Adair, with desperate eagerness shining in his eyes.

"Yes," Miss Adair answered readily. Then she hesitated, and the genuine blush rivaled the one in the northeast corner of the bouquet at the waist of the very chic, blue-silk suit. "That is, I did have some—"

"Have they been destroyed?" questioned Mr. Vandeford, with the greatest anxiety.

"No, not exactly," answered Miss Adair, with a distressed tremor at the corner of her curved mouth that rivaled a rose of a deeper hue in the southwest corner of the bouquet. [154]

"I see," answered Mr. Vandeford, with great relief. "You are not just sure where they are. That's great! You can have a talk with Mr. Corbett, who is to design the costumes, and then hop right back home in a day or two, as soon as you are rested and we've had a little bat on Broadway, and find them for him to use in his designs. The management will pay all the expenses and you can—"

Mr. Vandeford cast around in his mind for some other business in connection with "The Purple Slipper" that would keep the author thereof busy and contented in Adairville, Kentucky, out of the clutches of Violet and out of the way of his stage director until it all was running smoothly.

"How about your getting a lot of photographs of the house in which it all happened?" he went on. Vaguely he felt photography must be a slow process in Adairville, Kentucky. [155]

Also, in his heart he was forced to acknowledge that his inspiration for getting the author out of the way of her own play while it was being murdered was not entirely original. Tradition had told him, whether truly or not, that at a certain crucial moment in the butchering and rehearsal of "The Great Divide" the poet-author, Moody, had been sent West to hunt a genuine war costume for a great Indian war-chief, his favorite written character, and on his return with the trophy had found the Indian cut entirely and forever from the play.

"Those dresses would be the greatest help you could give us now," he urged with an inward

chuckle at the thought of the trick on the great poet, which froze in his heart as he observed two tears balanced on the black lashes of the lovely sea-gray eyes lowered away from his.

"What's the matter?" he gasped, in desperate fear that the Moody Indian story had penetrated to the wilds of Adairville, Kentucky. "You'd only be gone a few days, and everything could wait until you came back. I wouldn't turn a wheel without you, and—" he committed himself deeper and deeper at every step. [156]

"I've had the dresses all made over, and this is one. I've hurt my play just because I wanted to look pretty in New York! I'm humiliated with myself. As if anybody cared how I look; and the play—" The soft little slurs stopped and the beautiful old-blue-silk-clad shoulder trembled slightly against his shoulder as a little ghost of a sob came to the surface and was suppressed while the home-made color faded from beneath two tears that fell from the black lashes.

"Oh, please forgive me, child! It doesn't matter at all, and—"

"You oughtn't to forgive me," the voice trembled on. "Miss Hawtry would have been wonderful in that dinner dress my grandmother wore, and I—I've had two made out of it! I can give them to her and tell her how to put them together again with—" [157]

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" fairly snapped Mr. Vandeford. Then he broke the record in his own thinking processes and decided for the second time to tell the whole truth to this country girl with her mixture of hay-seeds and patrician airs. He directed Valentine to Central Park and made a clean breast of it. It is a pleasure to record that at the Moody Indian story Patricia laughed until two other tears ran down her cheeks, but this time they did not wring Mr. Vandeford's heart, for they coursed over the accustomed roses and were a great pleasure to him.

"I'll go home if you want me to," the talented author of "The Purple Slipper" offered, with a small snap in her eyes, mingled with the accustomed veneration of Mr. Vandeford, her producer. "I don't want to be in anybody's way. I thought I had to come and spend all my money. I want to see the Metropolitan and the Aquarium and Brooklyn Bridge and Trinity Church, ... and ... a Midnight Frolic, because Mamie Lou Whitson, at home, is expecting me to go to one even if Miss Elvira said I ought not to. Can I see just one Frolic before I go home?" [158]

"If you go home now the whole 'Purple Slipper' will go into cold storage until you come back," Mr. Vandeford growled at her, and the effort it took not to hold on to her with bodily fingers was a great strain. "I told you the usual situation because I felt that you were clever enough to make the best of it and help the play a lot. No author ever has seen a play produced as he wrote it, and he has to stand seeing everybody take a whack at it, from the producer to the man who takes the tickets at the front door. I've got a good playwright shut up until Friday rewriting 'The Purple Slipper'; then I'm going to work at it myself and let Miss Hawtry write in all the things she wants to say, and cut out all the things she doesn't. After that, I'm going to turn it over to Bill Rooney, who was born in a barrel down on the wharf and educated in the gutter, but who is the best and highest-priced stage director in New York. He'll do innumerable things to it while he's 'setting it,' as he calls getting it ready for rehearsals. All the actors and actresses will be allowed at times to butcher and scalp their parts and everybody will stab. And if you are a plucky girl you'll sit still and see it done. There will come lots of times that everything you suggest, even very timidly, will be thrust down your throat; but if they are vital they will get under the hide of Bill and opening night you'll see that your pluck has put a lot into the whole thing and that the mutilated and dressed-up play is still your child. Will you trust me and sit in with me and help me make 'The Purple Slipper' go?" [159]

"I do! I will!" answered Miss Adair, with her head in the air and the Adairville roses flaunting themselves in her face. And as she spoke she offered him her slim, long-fingered, white little hand that his completely engulfed as, answering a signal, Valentine turned the car back toward Forty-second Street. "If I've got to have thorns stuck in me and then cut out I'm mighty glad you'll be there." [160]

"Yes, I'll be there," he answered her softly, as he released her hand at least two seconds sooner than he was really obliged to, though he himself could not have said why he did it. He felt like a grown person who frightens a child with a bear tale to make it cuddle to his own strength in the firelight.

Then followed a day in the offices of Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, Theatrical Producer, which, up to that time, could not have been duplicated on Broadway and perhaps never will be, though the results may have the effect of—but that was all in the future of the theatrical business at that time.

"Mr. Meyers," said Mr. Vandeford, as he ushered the author of "The Purple Slipper" into the outer offices, where he found Pops soothing and controlling about seven enraged experts in different lines of dramatic production, "Miss Adair will have the small office from now on to work in when she is not in consultation with me. Please take her in and see that she is made at home while I run through my mail. Yes, Mr. Corbett, I will be ready for you in a few minutes. Sorry to detain you, all of you," with which apology to the body of assembled experts Mr. Vandeford bowed, went into his sanctum, and firmly closed the door, just as Mr. Adolph Meyers bowed the author into her sanctum and as firmly closed her door. Mr. Gerald Height, who had been sitting looking indifferently out of Mr. Meyers' window, looked after the disappearing author as if a perfumed breeze had suddenly blown across his brow, and whistled softly. [161]

"Say, Pops, who, by thunder is—," he was questioning Mr. Meyers with extreme interest, when Mr. Vandeford's buzzer sounded and Mr. Meyers was forced to answer it before he could attend to Mr. Height's question.

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Mr. Meyers found Mr. Vandeford pale, but determined.

"Pops," he said, and Mr. Meyers could have sworn that the voice of his beloved chief trembled, "I'm in the devil of a fix, and you have got to throw me a line to pull out; in fact, you'll have to cast in a drag-net if you want to land me."

"If it was a submarine I would make a rescue of you, Mr. Vandeford, sir," the faithful henchman assured the panic-stricken producer.

"She's worse than any submarine ever floated, and I'm rammed—in a corner, Pops. To make a story that is going to be long in acting, short in telling, I've had to put Miss Adair on to what is usually handed out to the authors of plays, and then to stop her wails, offered to let her sit in and watch her play baby hacked up. Her office-hours here and at rehearsals will be from ten mornings to midnight, and what are you going to do about it?" Mr. Vandeford questioned Mr. Meyers with a kind of forlorn hope in his eyes, for Mr. Meyers had often seen him through the crooks of his trade.

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"I advise to make it straight to her, Mr. Vandeford, sir, and she will come out all right or otherwise go home. That young lady has the look of a horse on which I won seven hundred at the last Gravesend. Besides, we have not time for play-acting about that 'Purple Slipper.' It is a cold bird and we must be in a hurry about putting pep into it for a success."

"Right-o, Pops! I'll ask her in here, and when I buzz send in Corbett. The poor kiddie!" With which lamentation over the fate he was about to mete out to Miss Adair, Mr. Vandeford dismissed Mr. Meyers and opened the door which led from his sanctum into that which had been so recently assigned to the author of "The Purple Slipper."

That eminent playwright was discovered in the height of fascination, looking down upon the uproar of Broadway.

"I saw a taxicab run over a man and not kill him," she exclaimed with both horror and joy. "I started to call you, but it was all over in a second."

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"That's all right. I've seen that hundreds of times, even when they were killed." He reassured her about neglecting to share the excitement with him. "Are you ready to take up the matter of costumes with Corbett?"

"Shall I have to tell him—about my making over—"

"No; just listen to me handle him, and I'll tell you when to break in. I'll give you a lead. Please come into my office." And with coolness of manner, but trepidation of heart, he led her into his office and seated her in a chair beside his at the far side of the desk,—the very chair in which had sat Mr. Dennis Farraday on the day previous, when he had received his initiation into the world of theatricals. Then he buzzed his signal to Mr. Meyers.

Immediately Mr. Corbett entered.

"Morning, Corbett.—Miss Adair, the author of the play I want to talk to you about.—Want to take on a costume play of early Kentucky?" Mr. Vandeford made no pause in which to allow Mr. Corbett to acknowledge his introduction to the author, and Mr. Corbett seemed to bear no resentment for the omission. His astonishment at meeting an author when the costuming of a play was being discussed was profound.

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"What date?" he inquired, looking carefully away from Miss Adair.

"What date, Miss Adair?" asked Mr. Vandeford in exactly the same crisp tone in which he was conducting the negotiations with Mr. Corbett.

"1806, I think. It was just before they began to wear—" Miss Adair was beginning to say with a delighted smile that entirely failed to make an impression on Mr. Corbett.

"Good date for costuming," the artist interrupted the author to say, with the easy assurance of a person fully informed. "Styles were distinctive. I dressed 'Lovers' Ends' for E. and K. in 1789, and the costumes kept the piffling play alive for two months. How many dolls and how many boots?"

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"How many men and how many ladies in the play, Miss Adair?" Mr. Vandeford questioned her with delight at getting a question to fling to her and also translating for her Mr. Corbett's query.

"Twenty in all," answered Miss Adair. "There are eleven ladies with the—"

"Split even," Mr. Corbett took the words out of her mouth. "Want sole leather or tissue paper, Mr. Vandeford?" Miss Adair caught by psychic sympathy the fact that he was asking if the play was to be costumed as one intended to survive. Consequently her very soul hung on the answer Mr. Vandeford must make to Mr. Corbett's question.

"To play about thirty, I should say," answered Mr. Vandeford after a two minutes' calculating.

"Only a month?" gasped Miss Adair, then colored home-made pink in the height of embarrassment.

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"Weeks." Mr. Vandeford answered her gasp without looking at her, but taking the vow gallantly, considering that he felt Mazie Villines to be his sole dependence for a winning manuscript version of "The Purple Slipper."

During this question and answer Mr. Corbett was also calculating.

"About seven thousand if Adelaide makes the Hawtry layout," he finally announced.

"Five hundred advance for the sketches, and a week's option," Mr. Vandeford offered calmly.

"A thousand advance for models of costumes made up," answered Mr. Corbett, just as calmly and firmly. "Have to hunt in museum for materials to go by. Takes experts on fabrics."

"I can give you pieces of silk and things that are cut from the costumes of that period." Miss Adair had learned, and she cut her remark into the conference with precision and decision. [168]

"Genuine?" questioned Mr. Corbett.

"Worn by the characters about whom the play is written."

"Then seven hundred and fifty for made-up models, Mr. Vandeford," Mr. Corbett offered.

"The pieces will be large enough to make the models," Miss Adair said with a curt firmness that was a combination of that used by both Mr. Vandeford and Mr. Corbett and which both startled and delighted the former.

"Six hundred for models, Corbett," he said with finality and with an inward chuckle.

"Six-fifty, Mr. Vandeford," Mr. Corbett answered with equal finality, and for the first time he stole a glance at the author.

"Goes! When?"

"Two weeks?"

"Goes! Good-morning, Mr. Corbett!"

Mr. Corbett's exit was immediate. [169]

"I'm glad Miss Elvira made me put all the pieces of my dresses in my trunk to patch with in case I tore anything. They saved us four hundred dollars, didn't they?" Miss Adair said to Mr. Vandeford with gratified business acumen shining in the sea-gray eyes. "I wasn't much in the way, was I?"

"You were a great help, and that was the first time I ever succeeded in jewing Corbett," answered Mr. Vandeford with satisfactory enthusiasm. Something of relief over the guarding of his author showed in his voice, which second note, however, he sounded too soon as the next ten minutes proved to him. "Now we'll discuss the sets for the production with Lindenberg and then it'll be time for luncheon, and we'll go—"

"Mr. Vandeford, sir, Mr. Height would like to be in next," Mr. Meyers interrupted his chief, just a second too soon, or rather just in time, for if Mr. Vandeford had settled Miss Adair's luncheon plans in that second the fate of "The Purple Slipper" might have been different. [170]

"Show him in, Pops, and have the rest come back at two-thirty," Mr. Vandeford commanded.

Mr. Gerald Height entered.

For five successive seasons on Broadway, with brief dazzling flights into the provincial towns of Chicago, Boston, Washington, and Philadelphia, Mr. Gerald Height had been the reigning beauty, and he well deserved it. He was both slender and broad, with the grace of a faun in young manhood, and with the devilry of a satyr of more advanced age in his yellow-green eyes, which tilted under high black brows that were arched penciled bows across his forehead. His lips were full and red, but chiseled like a youth's on a Greek frieze and they were mobile and tender and hard by turns. His red-gold hair clung to his head in burnished waves, and this head was set upon his broad, strong shoulders as a flower is set on its parent plant, and his smile was a conquering triumph. He poured it all over Miss Adair as Mr. Vandeford introduced them, and took the chair opposite the producer and the author, with the light from the window fully revealing all of his charms. [171]

"New Hawtry play on, Height, by Miss Adair." Mr. Vandeford began the conversation with his usual directness, and somehow his voice was crisper than usual, for he seemed to get a shock from the radiance of the stage beauty before him that pushed him, with his white-tinged black hair, well forward into middle age.

"Dolph was telling me, and I ran through a synopsis he had on the machine. Powder and furbelows!" As he spoke Mr. Height smiled at Miss Adair with appreciation of herself and got in return a smile of the same degree of appreciation of himself, both smiles not at all lost on the psychologically aging Mr. Vandeford.

"That clause in your contract that lets you out of all costume plays is perfectly good, you know," Mr. Vandeford heard himself saying when he had intended to bluster that same clause aside if the favorite had tried to stand on it, because he well knew that to see Gerald Height in silk stockings and lace ruffles a quarter of a million women might be counted upon to pay two dollars [172]

per capita and so assure at least a fifteen per cent. certainty to the box-office receipts of "The Purple Slipper," whose fate had mysteriously come in the last few hours to mean so much to him. "Mr. Meyers has a youngster that we can whip into lead, I think. Now thank me for letting you out, and run along."

"Oh," ejaculated Miss Patricia Adair, and the little exclamation of dismay hit both men at once and made them both sit up straight in their chairs. Also they both looked for a long minute at Miss Adair, and both were aware of the other's scrutiny. Mr. Height broke the tension.

"I might see how buckskins and powdered wig would go," he said, with a tentative glance across the table, which began with Mr. Vandeford and ended with Miss Adair.

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"I think you would be perfectly beautiful, and I hope—" Miss Adair paused, and Mr. Height was as competent as either Miss Hawtry or Miss Lindsey had been to judge of the home-made color under the gray eyes. Also he was as much, perhaps more, affected by it, though in the presence of Mr. Vandeford he was wise enough to dissemble his delight.

"Want me to try, Mr. Vandeford?" he questioned with greater deference than he had ever shown a mere manager in the last five years of his triumphant career.

"Of course, it would be a fifteen-per cent. drag if you are willing," answered Mr. Vandeford with managerial delight and manly rage.

"Can I have until to-morrow to decide?" asked Mr. Height. "You see, I haven't read the play or heard the layout," he added to the author of "The Purple Slipper," with deference in his rich voice that had thrilled its millions.

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"Could you make it this afternoon if Mr. Meyers goes into it with you? My other man has a big picture offered him at a good figure," Mr. Vandeford answered, with both fear and joy at the prospect of pressing the star into retreat.

"Dolph has told me all he knows about it, which is nothing. He hasn't taken out any parts and seems to have lost the manuscript forever. I hope you kept a copy, Miss Adair." And again the two young things smiled at each other to Mr. Vandeford's devastation.

"Why couldn't I tell Mr. Height about the play while you see the electrician and the other people, Mr. Vandeford?" Miss Adair questioned, her candid gray eyes shining with such a sincere desire to be useful in the crisis that Mr. Vandeford could not suspect her of any adventurous motive. "We could go over in—into my office and you can call me any minute if you need me."

"Great!" exclaimed Mr. Height. "Then I could let you know right away if I thought I could do the part justice, Mr. Vandeford."

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"Goes!" answered Mr. Vandeford, as he motioned them into the inner office, which had been conferred upon the author of "The Purple Slipper," and rang his buzzer for Mr. Meyers.

"Find Mr. Farraday and ask him to come around here immediately if he is anywhere near, or to come at four if he can't get here in ten minutes," he commanded. "Heard from Mazie?"

"Mr. Howard is in a good working soak, is her report, Mr. Vandeford, sir, and I have the wire that Mr. Farraday is on his way here," was the double answer Mr. Meyers returned to Mr. Vandeford.

"Good! Give me my letters to sign," Mr. Vandeford answered.

Mr. Meyers brought in a sheaf of letters, and Mr. Vandeford was in the act of setting pen to paper when the door of the inner office opened after a gentle knock and Miss Adair entered, followed by Mr. Height.

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Mr. Vandeford looked up quickly and found Miss Adair close beside his chair, looking down upon him with her beautiful reverence and confidence in him entirely unimpaired.

"Mr. Height wants me to go and have luncheon with him and tell him about the play. He's hungry, and so am I. Can you spare me if I'm working while I'm eating? May I go?"

Mr. Vandeford rose to his feet quickly, and a great Broadway star was in closer danger of descending head-first from a six-story window upon that thoroughfare than he ever knew. Then "The Purple Slipper" rose and demanded its chance of success with Gerald Height as "drag" and the tragedy was averted.

"Run along, children, and don't spill your milk on your bibs," he answered them, with a dissembling smile that would have done credit to Mr. Height himself when upon the boards with Miss Hawtry. They departed in great spirits, and Mr. Vandeford noticed that Mr. Height had not been at all concerned as to how his manager's inner man would be served.

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Thereupon Mr. Vandeford propped his feet upon the desk, got out one of the most evil of the cigars he kept in a drawer of his desk for just such crises, and went into communion with himself for ten minutes. Upon that communion broke Mr. Dennis Farraday, who got the full force of it.

"I came to pick up you and Miss Adair to go out in the park to luncheon. It's cooler there. Where is she?" were the words with which Mr. Vandeford's partner in the production of "The Purple Slipper" greeted him.

"She has gone out to luncheon with a damned tango lizard," was the disturbed and disturbing

answer his courtesy received.

"What do you mean?" demanded Mr. Farraday, bristling.

"She met Gerald Height a half-hour ago, here in this office, and then went out to luncheon with him," was Mr. Vandeford's answer to Mr. Farraday's bristling. [178]

"Without consulting you?"

"No! I consented all right enough."

"Why didn't you tell her if you didn't want her to go with him?"

"See here, Denny, I want to ask you if anything in my past life makes you think that I am a proper old hen to have a downy little chicken thrust right under my wing for safe keeping, whether I hatched her or not?" Mr. Vandeford demanded, and his rage was so perfectly impersonal and perplexed that Mr. Farraday sat down to go into the matter to his rescue.

"What do you mean, Van?" he asked in a calm voice and manner that were most grateful to Mr. Vandeford.

"Just this: Here's a girl come up here, from a place where a girl is guarded like a pearl of great price, into the muck and excitement of the getting together of a Broadway production in which she is directly interested. I don't know what to do. If I spend my time hovering over her, her show will go cold and break her. She's poor. I told her as much of what she is in for as I dared and still she wants to stay and see it all through, demands to stay and be let in for the whole thing. What'll we do?" [179]

"Suppose she'd go with me up to visit the mater and be motored down to participate in—in expurgated moments?" asked Mr. Farraday, as he ruffled his hair into a huge plume on the top of his head.

"She would not. She's got a taste of it and she'll thirst for more. And, for all that unsophistication, she is a clever kid. She'll get Height into a costume play before luncheon is over and that'll go a long way to cinch a hit for 'The Purple Slipper.' He's made a fad of not playing costume, and all the women in New York will flock to see him in velvet and lace. She bargained that fish Corbett out of four hundred dollars in the preliminary costume deal, and if anybody has to send her home it will have to be you. I can't do it." [180]

"Well, just gently warn her about Height and things of that kind, can't you?"

"I cannot! Would you tell a woman who is walking a tight rope that the ground sixty feet below her is covered with broken champagne bottles?"

"Then she's got to go home," decided Mr. Dennis Farraday, positively.

"How'll you make her?"

"You've got to do it. She's got awe of you planted six feet deep in her soul. Anybody could see that. You've got to send her."

"Can't be done," growled Mr. Vandeford in desperation. "Wish I were married to six respectable women and then I could make 'em all chaperon her in turns, while I feed her fool play to the public."

"You'd only have to strike out the syllable 'un' before 'married' by a little trip to the City Hall to have one mighty fine wife," Mr. Farraday said with a straight look into Mr. Vandeford's eyes, which was so deeply affectionate that it gave him the privilege of opening the door to any holy of holies. [181]

"Violet and I are all off, Denny, and it ought never to have been on," was the straight-out answer he got to his venture, an answer that Miss Hawtry would have felt smoothed greatly the path of her present adventures in life.

"Poor girl! I knew she was hurt somehow, but I thought—forgive me, old man." With a tenderness in his voice that both alarmed and puzzled Mr. Vandeford his big Jonathan closed the subject and snapped a lock on it. "Come over to the Astor with me for a cold bite."

"Goes!"

The cool, green-leafed Orangery at the Hotel Astor is the oasis in the desert days of rehearsal for all early fall plays, and beside its tinkling fountain and under its tinkling music can be found at luncheon all of the theatrical profession who are not around the corners at the equally cool, white-tiled Childs restaurants. Beside and around the green wicker tables careers of managers, artists, actors, playwrights, electricians, and scenic artists are made and unmade in the twinkling of some bright or heavy-lidded eye. Each and every feaster watches each and every other feaster with the quick, wary eye of a jungle being consuming its food before it is snatched from him or her; and gossip reigns over all. [182]

"Gee, look at the swell dame Gerald Height has got cornered over there!" exclaimed Mazie Villines, as she looked up from a frappéd melon, which a "heavy" moving picture man was "buying" for her consumption. "The way them society queens do fall fer him!"

"Put your blinkers on, Mazie, put 'em on, and don't take a shy at Height over my knife and fork! Let him eat what he pays for and me the same," growled the huge man. "I let you put up that drunk Howard for a week, and that's rope enough."

"I'd like to feed him the green in his 'runny' eggs; it makes me sick to open for him," was the adored Mazie's way of speaking of her eminent playwright. [183]

"Well, get his wad first," was the heavy's advice.

Just at this moment Mazie had the delight of seeing Mr. Godfrey Vandeford enter with his "soup and fish" friend Mr. Dennis Farraday. As they both had to pass directly by the table at which sat Miss Adair and Mr. Height, of course they both paused for greetings, which included the introduction of Mr. Height to Mr. Farraday.

"I could hardly eat in this beautiful cool place when I thought that maybe you would work on in the hot office with nothing with ice packed around it for your luncheon," said Miss Adair, as she raised her eyes to Mr. Vandeford's with the adoration still intact after at least three-quarters of an hour assault upon it by Mr. Gerald Height's disturbing personality. "I wanted to go back for you, but Mr. Height said that Mr. Meyers fed you cold pie when you were busy, and that you roared dreadfully if anybody interrupted you when you were eating it!" [184]

"He does," Mr. Farraday interjected, smiling down at her in a way that it was unwise to do in the Orangery at noon; and it lighted a fuse he little suspected. Miss Violet Hawtry caught the smile in mid-air and then promptly turned her back and became all charming attention to the gentleman with whom she was having luncheon, who was no other than the celebrated Weiner, who had built three theatres in two years and was building more. He was of the bull-necked type of Hebrew and not of the sensitive, exquisite type of the sons of the House of David to which belong the E. & K.'s, and the S. & S., as well as the great B. D.

"When will the new theatre be completed, Mr. Weiner?" Miss Hawtry asked, as she turned over an iced shrimp and tore at a lettuce leaf with her fork.

"October first," answered Mr. Weiner, past a mouthful of Russian herring. [185]

"What will the opening show be?" asked Miss Hawtry, with indifference, though there was a glint under her thick lashes lowered over her snapping Irish eyes.

"The Rosie Posie Girl," answered Weiner, and he swallowed his herring and gave her a shrewd glance at the same time.

"Vandeford will never sell it to you," Miss Hawtry announced calmly, as she ate the shrimp and the torn lettuce leaf.

"Maybe!" answered Weiner with equal calmness. "What are his plans for his new show that he is tearing up Forty-second Street about?"

"Road from September fifteenth until New York October first."

"What theater in New York?"

"I don't know." As she made this answer Miss Hawtry looked up and caught a snap in Weiner's small black eyes, perched on each side of the hump of his red nose.

"Has the show got goods?" he asked.

"I'm going to put some into it," answered Miss Hawtry calmly. [186]

"Why?"

"I like Mr. Dennis Farraday, who's Vandeford's angel. I don't want to see Van take the money out of his pocket and get away with it." Miss Hawtry was dealing in half-truths to a lie expert.

"Hooked Farraday yet?"

"Not quite."

"No use bargaining with a woman when she's fishing for a man, but if he slips the hook come to me and I'll show you a new bait. When do you open?"

"Twenty-third of September, at Atlantic City."

"I'll be there."

"I hope you will, and—" but the rest of Miss Hawtry's remark was cut off by Mr. Dennis Farraday's genial greeting, backed by Mr. Vandeford's more restrained pleasure at happening upon her and her co-plotter, to whom she introduced Mr. Farraday.

The exchange of amenities was as brief as it was cordial, but as Mr. David Vandeford and Mr. Jonathan Farraday passed on to a table which the discreet head waiter had reserved in case of the unexpected and tardy arrival of just such personages as Mr. Godfrey Vandeford and his friend, Mr. Farraday, Miss Hawtry had answered a low-voiced question from Mr. Farraday with a sadly tender smile and the words: [187]

"At eight?"

"The Claridge got me a box for the Big Show and a table at the Grove Garden for to-night, Van," remarked Mr. Farraday, as he unfolded his napkin. "It is the coolest place in town, and we might as well let the kid get just one good peep before she goes back into the shell ... if she goes. I'll take Miss Hawtry on and leave the box number for you and Miss Adair."

"Right-o," answered Mr. Vandeford, with a growl. For the life of him he could not understand just why Mr. Gerald Height should have the privilege of feeding his author alone, while he seemed to be always forced to enjoy her company in the presence of others. He looked across the room, met the gray eyes laughing at him over a glass that was plainly iced tea, and was forced to exchange smiles with his downy little chicken, who was delightedly peeping out of her shell. [188]

"I think Mr. Vandeford is the most wonderful man I ever met," confided Miss Adair to Mr. Height, with no suspicion of the incitation such a remark would be to the ardor of the beloved of many women.

"He's a great producer; had three big hits hand-running and fell down on 'Miss Cut-up' because he wouldn't stand up to Hawtry, and let her cop the whole show," answered Mr. Height with great generosity, for in reality Mr. Height had the very poor opinion of Mr. Vandeford that it is the custom of all actors to hold in regard to their respective managers. However, he was sugar-coating the pill he was determined to administer to Miss Adair without delay. "He ought to marry Hawtry and get a bit in her mouth and the spurs on."

"Is—is he in love with Miss Hawtry?" asked the author of "The Purple Slipper" with great interest, and the home-made color rose several degrees, that were not warranted by the calm gossip of the situation. [189]

"That's the noise he makes, but who can tell?" answered Mr. Height, reveling in the Adairville roses and no more aware of their origin than was their owner. "He meets bills, but nobody gets in behind his window-boxes." And Mr. Height raised his glass of Tom Collins, perfectly contented with the thought that he had enlightened Miss Adair about the private life of Mr. Vandeford. As a matter of fact he had failed utterly to do so, as she had not understood a word of his Broadway patois. "There's the great B. D. and beloved son-in-law," and Mr. Height nodded and smiled at a white-haired man and his companion who were seating themselves at the table next to them.

"B. D.?" questioned Miss Adair.

"Benjamin David," answered Mr. Height. "He and his son-in-law are putting on a great new show. Offered me a lead and—but I think I'll stick by 'The Purple Slipper.'" His eyes were so ardent as slightly to disturb Miss Adair and very greatly disturb Mr. Vandeford, who caught the warmth across several tables, and ground his teeth. [190]

However, Miss Patricia Adair was fully capable of handling such a situation, for ardor is ardor, whether encountered on Broadway in New York or Adairville in Kentucky, and Miss Adair had met it many times—and parried it.

"I've really got to leave this perfectly lovely place and hurry down to the Y. W. C. A., to get some costume samples for Mr. Corbett," she said calmly, as she began to draw on her gloves and pull down the veil that reefed in the narrow brim of the jaunty hat Miss Lindsey and she had by a great stroke of luck discovered on a side street the day before.

"Y. W. C. A.?" questioned Mr. Height, in stupefaction.

"Everybody looks that way when I say it!" laughed Miss Adair, with a dimple flaunting above the left corner of her mouth. "Will you take me there or put me on something or in something that will let me off very near?" [191]

"I'll take you," answered Mr. Height tenderly and heroically, as he held the blue-silk coat for her to slip into.

As the two of them stood together the great Dean of American Producers looked upon them with interest, and rose and offered his hand to Mr. Height.

"Well, how about it?" he asked, with a smile under his beetling white brows.

"Mr. David, please meet Miss Adair, the author of Mr. Vandeford's new Hawtry play," Mr. Height said by way of beginning an answer to the question put to him. "At last I'm going into wig and ruffles; the play is of colonial Kentucky."

"I am delighted to meet you, Miss Adair," said the Broadway Maximus, "and you are fortunate to have Mr. Height for your play. I covet him, but I'll wait until next time." [192]

"Oh, thank you for not taking him away!" said Miss Adair, with a displaying of the roses which the great B. D. noted with pleasure. "Will you come and see our play and tell us what you think about it?" Miss Adair made her request, which was against the traditions of conventions on Broadway, with the unabashed air with which she had invited the reigning Governor of Kentucky to have dinner with her and Major Adair at the state fair the year before.

"Ask Mr. Vandeford to invite me to a dress rehearsal," answered the great one, and Gerald Height beamed with pride, while Miss Adair displayed only gratitude and delight as they took their departure.

In their exit they passed Mr. Vandeford's table and stopped to speak to him and Mr. Farraday.

"That's Benjamin David Mr. Height introduced to me, and he's coming to help us at the dress rehearsals of 'The Purple Slipper.' It's wonderful!" Miss Adair exclaimed, as Mr. Vandeford rose and stood beside her. "Mr. Height is going down to the Y. W. C. A. with me, and we'll be right back to the office with those pieces of silk for the costumes. Mr. David wants him for lead, but he's going to be in 'The Purple Slipper' and go to Mr. David next. Isn't that fine?" and without waiting for an answer to her question the busy playwright departed on important business connected with the costuming of her play. [193]

"Somehow, Van, I don't see why we should worry," Mr. Farraday said, as he looked at the retreating figures of the pair whose beauty was attracting no little attention in the feasting Orangery. "She's getting along all right, eh?"

"Remember you've been in the business about forty-eight hours, Denny, and never forget that every knife here is sheathed in a smile and everybody carries a rubber stamp with double X on it," answered Mr. Vandeford, with gloom, as he pushed back his coffee-cup. "She's tasted blood now and that ends it. She's with us, and the Lord help her! I can't!" [194]

"Well, come on and let's get to the office," answered Mr. Farraday, with a cheerful lack of sympathy with his friend's anxiety for the talented budding playwright.

"Everything all O. K., Mazie?" asked Mr. Vandeford, as he passed the table where the Miss Villines and the heavy movie man were finishing their bottles of cold beer.

"Soused and scribbling," answered Mazie, cheerfully.

"Remember, Friday."

"Remember your check-book."

"Goes!"

Shortly after Mr. Vandeford and Mr. Farraday reached the office of Mr. Vandeford, Miss Adair, accompanied by Mr. Height, appeared with a neat little parcel in their possession. Also Miss Adair had another, very conventional, corsage bouquet in the place of the one Mr. Vandeford had given her in the morning and which at luncheon had begun to look the worse for wear. [195]

"Now what shall I do?" she asked Mr. Vandeford, with great energy.

"Go right down and get in my car and go back to the Y. W. C. A., to take a long nap. I'll call for you for that Broadway eye-opener at eight o'clock to-night, so get 'em well rested," he answered, and he smiled when he noted that the expression in her eyes that he had begun to look for with desperate eagerness still held. Mr. Meyers had engaged Mr. Height with a contract, and Mr. Farraday had been an interested spectator to the tussle. Producer and author were alone.

"Mr. Height asked me to go to see Maude Adams, but I told him I couldn't go anywhere at night until you could take me," said Miss Adair with sparks of joy in the sea-gray eyes. "I'm so glad it is to-night."

"Did you really tell Height that?" demanded Mr. Vandeford, with youth swelling through his arteries.

"Yes."

"Go, child, go and get a nap," Mr. Vandeford laughed, as he opened the door for her and started out to descend and deliver her into the keeping of faithful Valentine. [196]

"I'll put her into the car, Van," offered Mr. Farraday. "They need you here in this fight."

And again his author was snatched out of Mr. Vandeford's clutches.

Several hours later a very interesting scene was enacted in two tiny adjoining rooms under the roof of the Y. W. C. A., with Miss Adair and Miss Lindsey as the principals.

"If you take away all that net there won't be any waist left to the dress. Don't!" pleaded Miss Adair, as Miss Lindsey stood over her with determined scissors.

"I'm making it absolutely perfect, and you can't tell by looking down on it. You'll have to trust me," answered Miss Lindsey, with pins in her mouth, as she snipped away a funny little tucker of common new net with which Miss Elvira Henderson of Adairville, Kentucky, had for the sake of her spinster convictions ruined a triumph she had accomplished directly out of "Feminine Fashions" and the ancestral trunk. [197]

"Will it be—be modest?" demanded Miss Adair.

"A lot more modest than having that ugly mosquito netting telling everybody that you are not willing to have them see your marvelous neck and arms except through its meshes. Nobody will think you know you've got 'em, if you show them like everybody else; but they'll think you think you are a peep-show if you cover them half up." And as she spoke Miss Lindsey gave another daring rip and snip. Her philosophy struck home.

"That's every word true," agreed Miss Adair, with relief. "I'll just forget about my skin there, as I do about that on my face and hands and nobody will notice me at all."

"That's it. Skin is no treat to New York, and nobody will look at you twice." Miss Lindsey had a struggle to keep her voice and manner unconcerned enough, as she surveyed her finished product and saw that from under her hands would go forth a sensation. In the old ivory satin with its woven rosebuds and cream rose-point, above which rose pearly shoulders and a neck bearing a small, proud head, with close waves of heavy black hair, Miss Adair was like a dainty, luscious, tropical fruit that is more beautiful than its own flower. "How an old maid in a country town made that dress I don't see!" Miss Lindsey added reflectively. [198]

"It was you, who unmade it," answered Miss Adair with gratitude. "I wish you were going, too," she added as she nestled to the taller girl for a perfumed second.

"I'm going to luncheon with you and Mr. Farraday to-morrow," answered Miss Lindsey, with a pleased laugh at Miss Adair's sudden clinging that indicated her sincerity in not wishing to leave her alone.

"Oh, lovely! And Mr. Height will be with us too, for I promised to have luncheon with him again," she exclaimed, as Miss Lindsey began to insert her into an evening wrap made of a priceless old Paisley shawl which "Fashions" had also tempted Miss Elvira to desecrate with her scissors. [199]

"Gerald Height?" asked Miss Lindsey, and her eyes first snapped and then smouldered. "Where did he get in on—where did you meet him? Does Mr. Vandeford know about it and—"

"I met him in Mr. Vandeford's office. He's in 'The Purple Slipper,' and I went to luncheon with him to-day. I meant to tell you about it, and meeting Mr. David, but Mr. Vandeford told me to get a nap and I thought I—"

Here the speaking-trumpet in the hall informed Miss Lindsey that Mr. Vandeford was waiting for Miss Adair below, and she had to let her treasure depart from her.

"I wonder just how straight Godfrey Vandeford is," she mused, as she picked up the discarded tucker of coarse netting. "The poor kid! I wish she was at home hidden behind Miss Elvira's skirts. Hawtry and a girl like that! Damn men!"

CHAPTER V

It may be that in the long life of Mr. Godfrey Vandeford he had passed a more perturbed evening than that on which he led his protégé, the author of "The Purple Slipper," to her début under the white lights of Broadway, but he could not recall the occasion. His grilling had begun while he waited for his charge to descend in the lobby of the Y. W. C. A. and it ended— [200]

"We are delighted to have Miss Adair stay with us while her play is being rehearsed," a very pleasant young woman, with a trim figure, kind and wise eyes, and gray-sprinkled hair, remarked to him after she had whistled the fact of his arrival above. "When such men as you, Mr. Vandeford, begin to put on clean historical plays, many of our anxieties will be over. I look on each musical show that appears on Broadway as a personal enemy." [201]

"I am glad indeed, Madam, that we are going to claim you as a friend of 'The Purple Slipper,'" Mr. Vandeford answered, with his most pleasant smile. Somehow the sight and sound of that executive young woman in charge of his young author gave him a calmness that he needed, and his confidence shone in his face.

"We are deeply interested in Miss Adair, for we have had influential letters sent us about her, and of course we are looking forward with eagerness to seeing her play. She is such a dear child!"

The influential letters and the increased warmth in the young woman's tone in speaking about his author drew Mr. Vandeford still nearer to her, both in body and in spirit. He leaned slightly against the desk and smiled again.

"May I send you seats for some night the first week of 'The Purple Slipper'?" he asked, with the greatest deference. And it must be recorded that in making the offer Mr. Vandeford was not bidding for the distinction conferred on him in the next few seconds. [202]

"That will be delightful," exclaimed the young woman. "And, Mr. Vandeford, here is a latch-key to the front door, to use to-night if you and Miss Adair are a little later than midnight in coming home. Remember to give it to her after you have put her inside the door and tell her to hang it on the rack opposite the number of her room. There she comes now!"

Mr. Vandeford accepted the latch-key of the Y. W. C. A. with awe and looked at it as he would have looked at a decoration handed him by the Metropolitan governors. Then he glanced up and beheld Miss Adair displaying herself to his new-found friend.

"You are very pretty, my dear," she was saying with an affectionate smile. "Just let me put a pin here in this fold of lace," and expertly she reefed up the last fold of rose-point that Miss Lindsey had snipped down in a hurried finish of her remodeling. Strange to say Mr. Vandeford felt still more further drawn to his young Christian Association friend. [203]

"Now run along, both of you, and have a pleasant evening," she said to them as she turned to

answer the telephone.

"That girl is an extremely delightful person," Mr. Vandeford remarked, while he and Valentine were tucking Miss Adair under the linen robe in the car.

"I'm so glad you are getting used to the Y. W. C. A.," Miss Adair answered, giving him a delighted smile as he seated himself beside her while Valentine started the car up the avenue. "Mr. Height said it was like being forced to go to church in a strange town and getting into somebody's cozy corner by mistake."

"I wish I were married to that girl, to-night," Mr. Vandeford exclaimed out of the sudden rush of anxiety that had overtaken him by this fledgling author's mention of his leading man. [204]

"Then who would be taking me out, out on Broadway?" asked Miss Adair with a little laugh that had a more distinctly friendly note in it than it had before held for him.

"Both of us," replied Mr. Vandeford, with an answering laugh that sounded much too young in his own ears. "You'll need two."

"Am I going to have as many dreadful things happen to me to-night as I was going to have when I met Mr. Corbett and Mr. Benjamin David and Mr. Height and the other theatrical people? Am I being warned again?" Mr. Vandeford accepted the teasing and laughed at himself.

"My wings are up. Go out and scratch for yourself."

"Not very far, though," Miss Adair answered. Mr. Vandeford was not sure that she moved a fraction of an inch nearer to him, but he hoped so. "I feel just the same about you as I do about Roger and I like to be going with you—into—into danger." [205]

"Who's Roger?" questioned Mr. Vandeford.

"He's my brother, who treats me as you do. It's fun for a woman to be frightened dreadfully when she is with a man she likes." Again there was that uncertainty as to whether Miss Adair fluttered a fraction of an inch in his direction, and for the life of him Mr. Vandeford could not say whence had flown all the many ways he would have commanded ordinarily for the finding out if such were the case.

"A frightened woman is often rather—rather deadly to a man," he answered before he could stop himself. The habit of speaking out directly to Miss Adair was growing on him, he perceived, and it alarmed him.

"Into what danger are you taking me now?" asked Miss Adair with a fluty, merry laugh.

"We are going with Mr. Farraday and Miss Hawtry to see the Big Show and to the Grove Garden on the roof afterward for supper. Just a slow, usual sort of an evening, but Denny thought it would be fun for you to see the Big Show and the Big Feed and the Big Dance by way of initiation," Mr. Vandeford answered, with an entire lack of enthusiasm. [206]

"I wanted to see what you wanted me to see this first night," Miss Adair said with the affectionate frankness of six years going on seven. "What would that be?"

"We'll see it to-morrow night," Mr. Vandeford answered her, and this time the tenderness in his voice surprised him and he considered it entirely unjustifiable.

"Mr. Height was going to take me to see Maude Adams, but I know he'll put it off again when I tell him that you want me to—"

"No, don't! Let Height get Maude Adams out of his system, for Heaven's sake," snapped Mr. Vandeford, this time in unjustifiable temper.

"Why, what is—" Miss Adair was asking of Mr. Vandeford in positive alarm when Valentine stopped before the blazing doorway of the Big Show. A functionary seven feet tall opened the door of the car and all but literally extracted them by force, for he was anxious to repeat the operation on the occupants of the car chugging behind them. [207]

Now, there are many, many fair women born within the state lines of Old Kentucky who live calm and peaceful lives and die and are buried with no greater contrast of experience than comes from birth and death, love and hate, riches and poverty, and they never know the difference; but occasionally one bursts out of her bonds and flames her beauty over strange worlds, in foreign embassies, in the courts of St. James or Petrograd, or in an opera or theater box in New York. When this eruption occurs many sparks fly. And many sparks from bright eyes were showered on the author of "The Purple Slipper," who sat calmly unaware in the left stage-box of the Big Show that August night beside the notorious Hawtry, Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, and Mr. Dennis Farraday. And of the sparks no one was more conscious than both Miss Hawtry and Mr. Vandeford, while big Dennis was in a blissfully ignorant state of mind like to that of Miss Patricia Adair of Adairville, Kentucky. Though he had been for about forty-eight hours a producer on the rear side of the footlights, Mr. Farraday still had the attitude of mind possessed by one of an audience, and he watched the stage rather than the "front." He thus failed to get the impression created by his guest from Kentucky, and blissfully left Mr. Vandeford to deal with her sensations derived from the show. Mr. Vandeford had his hands full. [208]

To Miss Adair the Big Show was a series of mental and moral and artistic explosions. She sat with

delight through the Japanese acrobats and Swiss quartette of yodelers, and she welcomed pretty, pert little Mazie Villines with enthusiasm that gradually faded into horror as that artist flaunted more and more lingerie and "dished the dirt" which the inebriate playwright, at that moment engaged in "putting pep" into Miss Adair's own beloved "Purple Slipper," *née* "The Renunciation of Rosalind," had supplied. The "dirt" was received by the audience at large with a hilarious joy that entirely justified the managers of the Big Show for keeping Mazie busy "dishing."

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However, all things come to an end, and with a last provocative, revealing kick Mazie was allowed to depart and give way to a pair of young dancers who promised to display wares more wholesome.

Without knowing why he did it, Mr. Vandeford leaned forward so that his left ear was within reach of the whisper of Miss Adair's lips as she turned her head and tilted it like a droopy flower toward his.

"I've only seen Sarah Bernhardt and John Drew and Maude Adams and Mansfield and Joe Jefferson and Arliss and the Coburns, up in Louisville," she faltered with her eyes questioning his and wide open with horror.

"These next ones aren't so bad, and we'll go before any more come on that—that you won't like," he whispered in return. He had glanced through the program and seen that the climax would be an exhibition of jungle courtship by one of America's most notorious women and her partner, done to extreme negroid melody.

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"Thank you," she murmured as she turned to watch the willowy youth and maid go through some very beautiful movements of the dance that was entirely unobjectionable. In two minutes she had turned her face, beaming with pleasure, so that Mr. Vandeford could see that all was well with her; and ten minutes later she giggled out loud at the repartee of two black-faced artists.

During the respite that his knowledge of the numbers on the program gave him, Mr. Vandeford did more of his peculiar brand of thinking, and reached a diplomatic conclusion. By the intermission, which came just before the jungle "big number" to give late comers time to gather in for their salacious feast, he was ready to act.

"Miss Adair and I are going to get a breath of air," he announced.

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"But the big number is next, and she might miss it," objected Miss Hawtry, with solicitude for Miss Adair's pleasure. Mr. Vandeford had thought past just that objection delivered by Miss Hawtry, and he knew that in no way must he seem to be shielding the author of "The Purple Slipper" from the salaciousness that gave Miss Hawtry great joy. If he went too far in any act of comparative analysis he would bring danger upon "The Purple Slipper," with whose fate Miss Adair's was one.

"We'll be back in plenty of time," he lied.

"Be sure!" Miss Hawtry commanded, and then turned to devote herself to Mr. Farraday, who was laying himself out to salve what he thought must be her pain at the loss of his beloved friend. The Violet had soon caught his attitude toward her, and was encouraging his chivalry in every way possible by the most pensive of poses as the generous deserted. Such a situation is all to a woman's advantage if she knows how to work it, and Miss Hawtry possessed that knowledge.

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"Van ought to have a medical degree for operating young girls' eyes open, and making them see rose-colored for a while," she said with a good-humored smile and a soft little sigh, as she raised her Irish eyes in all their softness to Mr. Farraday's.

To this insinuation, founded on an implied lie as far as the Hawtry was concerned, Mr. Farraday made no reply, but turned to greet with fitting applause the great dancer, on whose account one of the American artistic bright lights had been extinguished forever, and in ten seconds was inwardly thanking Vandeford for extracting Miss Adair before she had felt the blighting smirch of the big number. While Mr. Farraday watched the exhibition before him, Mr. Vandeford was amusing the child of their joint solicitude by letting her look at the white lights. While waiting at the curb before the Big Show for the large dignitary in uniform to summon Valentine, he had directed that worthy to have a message sent in to Miss Hawtry that they would join her at supper. Then upon the arrival of his car, he had carefully inserted Miss Adair before he had said to the puzzled Valentine:

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"Drive slowly down around the circle and down Broadway, so that you can come back just while the theater crowd is on."

Some instinct had led Mr. Vandeford to choose exactly the panacea to soothe Miss Adair's shock—the lights of Broadway.

"It's like fairy-land," she gasped, as they rolled down past Forty-seventh Street. "Oh, look at the kitten chasing the spool, all in electric lights!"

"Wait a minute, and I'll show you an eagle flop his wings," promised Mr. Vandeford, and he was surprised that he seemed for the first time to feel the actual glory of the electric signs on his great Broadway, which is as much of an all-American institution as the shipyards in Brooklyn.

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"All the world is on fire, and everybody is going to it," Miss Adair exclaimed, as Valentine made his return just as the theaters were pouring their crowds out into the seething maelstrom of the

great scintillating cañon. She watched as the big car stood motionless before a stream of humanity that poured across its front wheels and then bounded forward as blue-coated arms stemmed the tide on the edges of both sidewalks for a few brief minutes in which they were allowed to progress to a street beyond, where they were again halted, wedged in with other impatient, purring cars.

In a limousine next her Miss Adair saw a boy in a top hat, with white gloves upon his hands, smother in an eager and unabashed embrace a white-shouldered girl, whose arms went around his neck regardless of "mother" assiduously looking the other way. In a car on the other side a richly garbed gentleman dozed upon his cushions in triumphant inebriety. Also, while she and Vandeford waited, she saw a guardian spinster shoo a bevy of school-girls across in front of the cars, and turn in the middle of the street to reprove a college boy for a laughing word tossed to the combined bevy, while the blue arms on both sidewalks waved her into haste so that they might unleash their restrained monster motors. Everywhere protective men had women's arms fastened within their own and were shoving through the throng, while other men and women jostled along by themselves, or in companies of twos and threes, with laughing good nature. Fakirs were crying many wares, and in and out squirmed newsboys calling war extras in words that seemed to imply that New York was being shelled from the sea, but did not make that exact statement.

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"It's all the world, and I'm a part of it," Miss Adair again said, and Mr. Vandeford was again surprised at himself that he was not surprised to find tears glinting in the sea-gray eyes raised to his.

"*This* is the Big Show," he said with a little answering thrill in his own voice, as the enormity of the scene he had witnessed night after night broke on him for the first time.

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"They all live here and sleep here and eat here and work here and—and—love here," she said softly, and smiled, for again the limousine with the embracing lovers had paused by the side of Valentine's car, and the embrace still held.

"No, the sleepers and eaters and workers of New York were in bed long ago. Everybody you see here in this push has his or her vital wires connected up at Squeedunck, Illinois, or Zanesville, Indiana or—"

"Or in Adairville, Kentucky," Miss Adair added with a laugh.

"No, you belong—anywhere. Creative people ought to have no—no home wires," Mr. Vandeford answered, and there was a queer sadness in his voice that he did not himself understand. "People with messages must have masses to hand them to. That's why you came, and, I suppose, must stay."

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"Yes," answered Miss Adair, "I want to stay—if you'll let me."

"I can't do otherwise," Mr. Vandeford answered her. Then he turned and looked her full in her serious eyes. "But if you stay you will have to accept broad standards, or suffer."

"That Mazie woman?"

"Maybe worse."

She sat silent until, a few moments later, Valentine drew up again at the curb before the Big Show, which had been out long enough to disperse most of its crowd, and was now receiving supper guests for the Garden Grove above.

"I'm going to stay—with you—and 'The Purple Slipper,'" she announced, as he reached into the car for her and swung her to the pavement.

"Goes!" he answered, with mingled emotions, which he could not have analyzed.

Miss Adair was as good as her word. She accepted the reveling crowd of the garden, looked upon the abandon of drinking women and men, with only a slightly hunted expression in her eyes, and with her slim white hands applauded Simone when that artist made most audacious slings of her supple body in its scant clothing. She beamed upon the dancer when, as Mrs. Trevor, she came, at Mr. Farraday's invitation, to have a glass of champagne with them, and she quailed only once, when a band of extremely young girls, clothed in filmy garments, took tiny search-lights and went merrily hunting among the tables of laughing men and women after the lights had been put out for the sport. Her horror at observing Mr. Vandeford, who sat between her and the narrow aisle take various moneys from his pocket to defend himself from successive hunters, made her pale, and the moment the lights were flashed on again she rose to go.

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"Wonder what they'll do next," muttered Mr. Farraday, as he helped her into her wrap. Mr. Vandeford was not looking at his author or speaking. Once when he had put his hand in his pocket to get out a coin for one of the teasing girls with her search-light he had felt the Y. W. C. A. latch-key there, and it had short-circuited him entirely.

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"I know you are tired. It takes some time to get the New York pace, but you'll strike it. I think I'll stay to see the next Folly with Mr. Farraday," he heard the Violet saying to Miss Adair, and still short-circuited, he went with his calm young author down to the car. The hour was one-thirty, and a moon had climbed the heights of the Broadway cañon. Valentine, with some sort of psychic direction, went across Central Park and down wide, clean, silent, and dimly lighted Fifth Avenue.

Both Mr. Vandeford and Miss Adair were silent, and he was not aware that she was crying until just before they turned into her side street.

"They were so young, those girls, and they—they didn't want to—to do that," she said with little catches in her beautiful, slurring, Blue-grass voice. [220]

"Maybe they didn't; but they wouldn't go back now, not one," he answered her.

She was silenced, and stood quiet beside him as he opened the door of the big, gloomy, protective building, with the key the woman of another world than his had intrusted to him.

"I know," she said at last, as she held out her hand to him. And because it trembled ever so slightly and was cold, he put his warm lips to it for a second before he handed her into a great international safety. He remembered the key, but he didn't give it to her. Somehow he wanted it himself. He liked the feel of it in his pocket.

"Wish I had Denny locked up in the Christian association!" he growled to himself as Valentine whirled him home.

Just at that exact moment Mr. Dennis Farraday sat in Miss Violet Hawtry's Louis Quinze parlor at the Claridge, engaged in tenderly and awkwardly patting that star's sobbing white shoulder, as she lay on just such a couch as Manon Lescaut probably had had for just such scenes. [221]

"I don't blame him at all," sobbed Miss Hawtry, provocatively, with the art of long practice both on the stage and off. "My kind always loses to hers when the time comes."

"Don't!" pleaded Mr. Farraday. It was all he could or was willing to plead at that moment.

"But I want to make good in this play for him and her—and you—before I go out of his life forever. I want to repay him with—with both money and happiness. He made me an artist." With these words Miss Hawtry made an acknowledgment of the truth that she herself really believed to be untrue, because she saw that to praise Mr. Vandeford was the best way to blind Mr. Farraday while she approached him in that blindness. She knew that his loyalty to his David would be a barrier unless she used it as a ladder. [222]

"My God! How—how great women are!" was the immediate and hoped-for response she drew from the big Jonathan.

"My art must fill my life now. Only there will be—friendship. You make me see that by the comfort of your kindness." Miss Hawtry laid her flushed cheek in the hollow of good Dennis's big warm hand. The moment was tense, but Hawtry had timed her line a little too far ahead, and it failed to get across. The prey was as embarrassed as a girl and, with another brotherly pat, arose to go.

"You'll always let me do anything I can, won't you?" he asked as he looked down upon her for a second, then took a considerate departure.

"Boob!" muttered Hawtry to herself, as she rose and rang for Susette.

There are in this little old world many men like Dennis Farraday; only none of its inhabitants admit their existence.

After the evening of the introduction of its author to Broadway, things spun fast and furiously in the business of producing "The Purple Slipper," and during the whirlwind of the day Miss Adair sat either in her own private office or in the chair beside Mr. Vandeford, and reveled in the excitement, and in the evenings did other revelings. She had her evening with Mr. Height under the spell of Barrie and Maude Adams, and Mr. Vandeford swore under his breath when she reported to him that they had gone to the concert on the roof of the Waldorf for an hour, and had got back to her abiding-place in time not to need the latch-key, which still reposed in his pocket. He knew Gerald Height, and he was puzzled and alarmed at this wary approach. [223]

Mrs. Farraday came to town, and the dinner-party in her staid, old Washington Square home, with himself and Miss Lindsey and Miss Adair as guests, was like a day's vacation for Mr. Vandeford. Also, he got a complete off-guard picture of Miss Adair as he would see her in Adairville, Kentucky, for she and the beautiful and stately Mrs. Farraday spoke the same language and had the same forms. [224]

"My dear child, you positively must come up to Westchester for this week-end! Matilda Van Tyne is going to come for the first blooming of the rhododendrons in the West Marsh, and I feel sure that she must have known your mother in some of her visits to Lexington. She must see you and hear all about the play. Now, Dennis, make all the arrangements." Mrs. Farraday gave her commands as a queen is accustomed to deliver them.

"May I go?" Miss Adair asked of Mr. Vandeford, her shining gray eyes raised to his with deference and confidence as usual.

"You may," answered Mr. Vandeford, aware that Mrs. Farraday's keen eyes of the world were fixed upon him in a speculative way. "The rehearsals will begin at eleven on Monday, and you can be back in plenty of time."

"And, Miss Lindsey, will you come, too, with Miss Adair?" Mrs. Farraday surprised both her son and Mr. Vandeford by asking the young Westerner with the greatest graciousness. It was evident [225]

that the young leading lady had put herself across with the grand dame, and both Mr. Vandeford and Mr. Farraday rejoiced.

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Farraday, but I have made a professional engagement for Saturday evening. I am going to do a monologue stunt to fill in at the Colonial," Miss Lindsey answered, with pleasure at the invitation shining in her dark eyes.

"Then Dennis can drive down on Sunday and bring you back in time for tea and to see the sunset on the rhododendrons." Mrs. Farraday further surprised her son and Mr. Vandeford by giving this command the imperiousness with which she was accustomed to issue her much-sought-after invitations.

"Great!" exclaimed Mr. Farraday, with the same sort of eager kindness shining in his eyes as Miss Lindsey had met when he had asked her if beefsteak and mushrooms would be the thing for her starvation. The memory of that day made Miss Lindsey's eyes dim as she accepted the invitation, though she had had hope of a last minute chance to do a little Sunday "stunt" for Keith somewhere in subway New York. And Miss Lindsey needed the money, for a hundred dollars doesn't go far in New York even when carried in the pocket of a gown donned in the Y. W. C. A.; but she needed the rhododendrons and the tea more than she needed the material things that the extra fifty picked up at Keith's would have purchased. [226]

"Thank you, Mrs. Farraday, it would be—be 'great' to come that way," Miss Lindsey answered. Both Mr. Vandeford and Mr. Farraday, as well as Miss Adair, were struck with the sudden beauty that illumined Miss Lindsey's dark face as she smiled and quoted Mr. Farraday in her acceptance of his mother's invitation.

"Is or is not little Lindsey a beauty, Denny?" asked Mr. Vandeford, as they drove up-town in the Surreness after depositing the girls at their nunnery. [227]

"I was just wondering," answered Mr. Farraday. "I'm mighty glad she made such a hit with the mater."

"And I'm mighty glad I'm going to lose the author of 'The Purple Slipper' into the wilds of Westchester and the rhododendrons, while I extract her play from Howard and slash it myself and help Rooney to mutilate it further," said Mr. Vandeford.

"Of course you are going to the mater's with Miss Lindsey and me for tea, per usual?" asked Mr. Farraday.

"Can't do it. Got to work on 'The Purple Slipper' while you people frolic. Good-night!" With which refusal and taunt Mr. Vandeford left Mr. Farraday at the door of his apartment-house.

Mr. Farraday looked at his watch as he started away from the curb, found the hour to be eleven o'clock, wobbled the machine first to the right and then to the left, and finally turned down-town, in which direction the Claridge reared its twelve stories of masonry at the corner of Forty-fourth and Sixth. [228]

At about that minute these were the remarks exchanged through the open door that connected two little cell-like rooms at the Y. W. C. A.:

"Aren't you going to bed right away? I'm so sleepy that I'm brushing my face instead of my hair," Miss Adair called to Miss Lindsey. A desperate and continual desire for sleep is the pest that haunts the rural visitor to New York and Miss Adair's young health was easily its prey. She did not readily learn to run on nerves.

"You go to bed; but I've got to let the hem of my tailored linen down two inches, so it will brush against those rhododendrons as a lady's should, and sew up the opening in the neck of my chiffon blouse an inch and a half, so I won't spill any of Mrs. Farraday's tea down it. Good-night!" It goes to say that when Greek meets Vandal or the East meets the West, dents occur. [229]

And, as Mrs. Farraday had commanded, the rhododendron party at West Marsh came to pass, to the vast enjoyment of all present, though Mr. Vandeford's absence was a deprivation to the entire company. And that night their friendly hearts would have ached if they had been able to get a vision of his strenuousness. Godfrey Vandeford, Theatrical Producer, was in full action, and chips from "The Purple Slipper" were flying in all directions.

In his bedroom in the Seventy-third Street apartment, Mr. Vandeford was stripped for the fray—to his silk pajamas—and he lay stretched upon his fumed-oak bed, with both reading-lights turned on full blaze. In his hands was the manuscript of "The Purple Slipper," which Mazie Villines had literally torn from under the hands of Grant Howard to deliver to Mr. Vandeford on Saturday afternoon, just a day later than the time set for its deliverance.

"My check and Grant's down, or no play," she had said upon entering Mr. Vandeford's apartment at about the setting of the Saturday sun. "He's off for a two week's d.t., and I gotter take care of him. Twelve-fifty is the way to write it." [230]

"Six hundred, and not a cent more without Grant's signature," answered Mr. Vandeford. Mr. Adolph Meyers, who was listening to the conversation from the hall from which he had ushered Miss Villines into Mr. Vandeford's library, set a spring-lock on the entrance door of the apartment, and entered the library unobtrusively.

"Twelve-fifty, you old dollar-skinner!" averred the vaudeville star, with a nasty little laugh.

"Don't try to pull off a hold-up, Mazie. It won't work. It's Grant's money," said Mr. Vandeford, with an icy calmness in his voice. And as she spoke he looked at Mr. Adolph Meyers, who answered the look with perfect comprehension.

"Then you'll get the manuscript when hell freezes over or your wad loosens," she again laughed, and this time turned toward the door with the square manila portfolio under her arm. [231]

An interested spectator could not have said afterward just how it did happen that in half a second the manila portfolio was in the hands of Mr. Adolph Meyers, who also bore upon his left cheek a long and profusely bleeding scratch.

"Here's your check, child, and keep a good grip on Grant, so he can't get started toward East River as he did last time," Mr. Vandeford said as he handed an already prepared check to the enraged girl. She was dumb for a second, no longer.

"I was going to leave it for five hundred, you old white-skinned bluffer with your goose-grease, strong arm," she finally blurted out, and in a twinkling of her bright eyes her good-nature had returned. "Say, that is some play now, and I wish you'd let me play a dance girl at that dinner-party. I'd do it refined." There was a queer little appeal in the mobile young face. "I'd like to doll up like a lady." [232]

"I'll think that over, Mazie," answered Mr. Vandeford. "A song and dance from you might go all right."

"Gimme a call, will you? I'll be on the job with my guzzler for a week now. I got to get him past, for he's some meal-ticket when times is dull." As Mazie disposed of the check in her stocking, a degree of affectionate anxiety for the condition of Mr. Grant Howard showed in her face for the fraction of a second, then disappeared as she looked at Mr. Adolph Meyers.

"Come on and get my wad from where I've put it, if you dare, Dolph," she challenged, then laughed, as the imperturbable Mr. Meyers both ignored and showed her to the door with all courtesy.

And as he lay on his bed reading over the Howard manuscript of "The Purple Slipper," which had just returned to him after a twenty-four hour overhauling and annotation for action by Mr. William Rooney, the stage director with the top price, Mr. Vandeford said to Mr. Adolph Meyers, who sat at a table beside the bed, taking down and inserting notes into the manuscript as they sprang from Mr. Vandeford's brain, almost before they got past his lips: [233]

"No wonder Mazie could see herself in this show, Pops! Grant has pepped it up almost to her standard. Whee-ugh!" With this whistle Mr. Vandeford turned page twenty of the first act and handed it over to Mr. Meyers, who began to devour it with eyes that took in almost the whole page at a glance.

"It is a snap-shot of Miss Hawtry he has made, Mr. Vandeford, sir. Mr. Howard has never done better."

"Yes, that's what he intended to do, but I'm going to clean it out a bit. Run an insert of the scene on page five to seven and a half out of Miss Adair's manuscript. It is just as good and a little—little more—say, Pops, cut out seven lines on page fourteen from the second down, and take this from me instead." Mr. Vandeford closed his eyes and dictated a bit of dialogue between two of the minor characters of "The Purple Slipper," which cleared up a point Mr. Howard and Mr. Rooney and the original author had all left at loose ends. As he dictated, Mr. Meyers wrote on the blank page opposite the lines, and made some cabalistic signs for insertion. [234]

Slowly they progressed through the first act, Mr. Vandeford reading from two manuscripts and reconciling Mr. Howard's shaky, pen annotations, Mr. Rooney's blue-pencil, action directions, and Miss Adair's original wanderings from the point with many brilliant returns in quaint dialogue. [235]

"That child has got more brains and uses them less than would seem possible," growled Mr. Vandeford, as he with a few deft lines near the close of the second act got the heroine off the stage and out of an impossible situation in which Miss Adair had involved her.

"It is that her characters talk with interest, but act in awkwardness, Mr. Vandeford, sir. Another good play can be written by Miss Adair," Mr. Meyers said as he put in two lines and a cross star sign. [235]

"God forbid!" ejaculated Mr. Vandeford, in all sincerity. "Here, Pops, get this first act down to those girls waiting in the office. Did you get two for all night, so one could get out the parts? You know Rooney will expect a reading to-morrow before he begins rehearsals."

"It is three girls now waiting at the office for the night, and a messenger in your hall, Mr. Vandeford, sir," answered Mr. Meyers as he gathered up his annotated pages, put them into a new manila portfolio, and rose to take them to the A. D. T. boy asleep on the floor in the hall.

"We haven't rushed in a manuscript like this since 'Dear Geraldine,' have we, Pops?" asked Mr. Vandeford, as he picked up the second act. "It's just nine o'clock, and those girls ought to get through by three A. M. Don't let Steinberg charge up twelve hours on you."

"It will be at eight that they are still working, Mr. Vandeford, sir, and night type-writing means much money," Mr. Meyers answered, as he departed with his package. [236]

"At that we'd better get busy to feed it to 'em," Mr. Vandeford said, as he picked up and began to dig into the pages.

For the three hours ensuing he and his henchman worked with never a hitch in their growls and scratches and muttered exchanges. Then, as they came close to the climax of the last act, Mr. Vandeford sat up from his pillows, which were heated almost beyond endurance with his night lights and his tousled head, and gave forth a roar.

"I'll be hanged if I'll let that scene between Rosalind and her lover go with that filthy twist that Howard has given it! The words are almost the original, but what will Hawtry make of what he's put into it?"

"It will be the worst she makes," answered Mr. Meyers. "But it is for pep very good, Mr. Vandeford, sir, and can be tried out." [237]

"That's right, Pops. I wonder if I am a Broadway producer or—or the czar of a young ladies' seminary," Mr. Vandeford growled as he lay down, and again went to work.

"It is that Miss Adair will not understand it until Miss Hawtry is at work, and before that all may be dead," Mr. Meyers consoled, as he, too, fell upon "The Purple Slipper."

At two-thirty the now soggy A. D. T. received the last manila envelope to deliver to the busy girls down in Mr. Vandeford's office, and that distinguished producer was stretched out on his bed in cool darkness while Mr. Meyers was in a subway nodding his way up to his humble room on One Hundred and Sixteenth Street.

"If I live through seeing her past the reading of the blamed thing to-morrow, I'll be stronger than I think I am," Mr. Vandeford murmured as he felt the calmness of sleep fall upon him.

CHAPTER VI

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Rehearsals for "The Purple Slipper" had been called positively for September first, and the response became unanimous at about fifteen minutes to eleven at the Barrett Theater on West Forty-sixth Street; that is, it was unanimous except for the presence of the author and the angel—Miss Adair and Mr. Farraday—and Miss Violet Hawtry, the star, who never came to first readings until the whole cast was assembled and could be impressed with the fact that she came and went as she listed.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I take it that you all know one another—and Mr. William Rooney," said Mr. Vandeford, as he took a seat at the left of a table placed in the center of the stage just beyond the footlights. Mr. Rooney marched to a place beside him, and rapped with a large black pencil for attention from the groups into which the dozen members of the cast had fallen after mutual introductions and greetings. [239]

"Everybody grab a seat that is good enough to glue to for five hours while Fido here gives out your parts," commanded Mr. Rooney, without in any way acknowledging Mr. Vandeford's introduction to the company. Mr. Rooney's voice was low and rich, and had the precision and decision of a machine-gun in its utterances. With hurried obedience the entire company looked about the stage for seats.

Miss Bébé Herne, though having fifty pounds the advantage of any of the others in avoirdupois, was the first seated. She merely dropped down upon a stout pine bench, the front of which was stuccoed to represent antique marble, and peremptorily motioned Mr. Wallace Kent to that portion of the seat left after she had wedged herself as far to one side as possible. Mr. Kent obeyed immediately, though he had just placed a rickety, stuffed chair beside the gold one occupied by Miss Blanche Grayson, the glowerer. Miss Lindsey sat on the end of an overturned box hedge before a drop curtain of a twilight night, and Mr. Reginald Leigh sat in a wicker chair under a brilliant canvas flowering shrub of no known variety. The rest of the company were soon seated and receiving the small, blue-backed, manuscript books from the pale young man whom Mr. Rooney always addressed as Fido. [240]

"Everybody here but Miss Hawtry," said Mr. Rooney, and he glared at Mr. Vandeford as though that gentleman must be concealing the star in the pocket of his gray, silk-crash coat.

"And Miss Hawtry is here also," came in a very beautifully modulated voice from left stage, as the tardy star came down center, and stood directly in front of the table at which sat the producer and his stage-manager. Mr. Vandeford rose immediately and said good-morning; Mr. Rooney kept his seat and looked Miss Hawtry through and through with a cold reproof. [241]

"Five minutes late," he said with an edge in the words that cut.

"I really beg your pardon, and it shall not happen—" the star was beginning to say in an apologetic tone, which bent under the cold edge of the assault, as Mr. Vandeford had hoped it would, when Mr. Rooney cut it off with a curt command to pale Fido.

"Give out the Hawtry part."

Miss Hawtry accepted the little blue booklet handed her by Fido, and also Mr. Vandeford's chair, placed carefully in the center of the stage for her. The first brush between Mr. Rooney and Miss Hawtry had been pulled off and he had won, much to Mr. Vandeford's delight. For "Miss Cut-up" he had had to hire, pay for, and fire, three successive stage-managers, and she had managed all three. Mr. Rooney's boast was that no star had ever managed him and that he had successfully staged every play he had undertaken; hence a spectacular salary. Also he felt that his reputation was at stake in the Hawtry duel, and he was determined to back his own method. [242]

"Scene first, act first; Betty Carrington is discovered on stage. Go to it, Betty!" he commanded as Fido took a seat at the end of the table, opened a copy of the first act, and sat ready for annotations.

"How beautiful the morning is and—" the glowering Miss Blanche Grayson was beginning to read from her cerulean booklet, when an interruption occurred.

Miss Adair and Mr. Farraday entered from the stage door.

Mr. Vandeford looked at Mr. Rooney, and muttered under his breath: "Angel and author, Bill. Easy!"

"Shoot," answered Mr. Rooney, in a mild undertone, though he glared at the company as though in a cold rage.

"Ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce you to Miss Adair, the author of our play. You have all of you met Mr. Farraday. Mr. Rooney, our stage-director, Miss Adair and Mr. Farraday." Mr. Vandeford made the introductions as rapidly as possible and in a voice of such coolness that Miss Adair looked at him in astonishment and then at the assembled company with great timidity. With special trepidation did she regard Mr. Rooney, who had bobbed his scrubby, black-mopped head at her with no expression at all in his little black eyes, while he refused to see Mr. Farraday's offered hand. [243]

"Have seats in the left stage-box," he directed them in the same tone of voice with which he had quelled Miss Hawtry. "Now, get going there, Betty Carrington, and open again."

Mr. Vandeford led Miss Adair and Mr. Farraday out into the wings in a roundabout path to the left stage-box, and paused with them out of sight of Mr. Rooney. Then the humanity came back into his face and voice as he spoke to his friends in an undertone.

"Rooney is the genius among stage-directors, but he's the original and genuine Tartar. How are you both?" As he asked the question he held out a hand to each of them, and his smile held the cordiality to which they were both accustomed. [244]

"We had a blow-out on Riverside Drive, and that's what makes us late. Now I've got to take the car around to the garage," Mr. Farraday apologized, as he ruffled his leonine mane, fanned himself with his hat, and departed.

Miss Adair fairly clung to the hand of friendship offered her, with relief that it had not been withdrawn forever, as she had feared from the coolness of Mr. Vandeford's greeting before the assembled company of "The Purple Slipper."

"I'm afraid," she murmured with both alarm and amusement sparkling in her gray eyes, in which Mr. Vandeford found himself searching for a certain expression with the eagerness with which he always looked for it after even a brief separation from his author. It was there and undimmed. "Let's go sit down where he told us to," Miss Adair whispered. [245]

"Good girl!" laughed Mr. Vandeford as he led the way to the left stage-box to which Mr. Rooney had summarily banished the author and the angel. He seated Miss Adair at the front edge of the box and took the chair close at her left. She was thus bulwarked and buttressed for any assault that might be hurled her way. It came in a very few minutes.

Miss Bébé Herne and Miss Mildred Lindsey were in the midst of reading an animated dialogue on page five by the time Miss Adair's attention was firmly riveted on the stage and the reading in progress. Fortunately the little scene was of her own writing. Mr. Vandeford had put it back into the play instead of the paraphrase Mr. Howard had made of it, and he was surprised to find how deeply grateful he was to himself for having given her this bit as he watched the home-made color rise under the gray eyes as the author sat and heard her written words come to life in a little bit of really sparkling character comedy, which both Miss Lindsey and experienced Bébé were acting as well as reading in such a way as to bring out all the charm of the lines. The happiness of both author and producer lasted about two minutes, then it was broken into by Mr. William Rooney with a crash. [246]

"Nuff, there, nuff!" he commanded, in the midst of a quaint epigram, which Bébé was delivering with unction. "Audiences don't want to hear smart babble after their seats are all down. They want to see the star and get going. Cut in Miss Hawtry at the second set-to of Harriet and aunt. Take it this way: 'And my dear Rosalind has said, Harriet—' Enter Rosalind with the line you have there."

"Yes, it's time for me to get on and—" Miss Hawtry was agreeing complacently, when she was quickly snapped off in her remark.

"Line, Miss Hawtry, not gab," Mr. Rooney commanded.

Instantly Miss Hawtry was reading from her lines and faithful Fido was making annotations upon his manuscript with strokes that spelled finality to the stricken author, who raised her protesting eyes to the producer of her play. [247]

"Steady now," Mr. Vandeford whispered. "This is the first reading, and he's setting. We can't side-track him now. Later you can—" but the author's attention was caught by the dialogue between Miss Hawtry and Bébé, which was the first full dose of the Howard fifteen-hundred-dollar, inebriate, but very brilliant and Hawtry-like, "pep."

"Oh, I didn't write that at all!" she whispered, as she fairly shrank against Mr. Vandeford's strength of mind, if not against the strength of his arm that he had laid across the back of her chair.

"Just sit still and listen to-day as though it were somebody else's play, and we will talk it over afterward. You know I—I warned you," he whispered with soothing tenderness, his lips almost against her ear in the dusk of the box.

"I promised, and I will," she answered him, and he was at a loss to know if she really did flutter to him a fraction of an inch as he had suspected her of doing in his car on the night of her *début* on Broadway. The charm of Kentucky girls is composed of many illusions and realities, which they themselves hardly understand, and use by hereditary instinct. [248]

And with her proud head poised in all stateliness, Miss Patricia Adair sat for five solid hours and heard "The Purple Slipper," *née* "The Renunciation of Rosalind," read from first to last page by the people who were to present it to the public; and Mr. Vandeford found his heart bleeding for the thrusts into hers. Not a protest did she make, but the roses faded and the gray eyes sank far back behind their black defending lashes, and they were glittering with suppressed tears as the wearied company rose to its feet after the last line.

"Here to-morrow at eleven sharp," were Mr. Rooney's words of dismissal as he and Fido followed the company in their hurried exit toward the stage-door, with not so much as a glance at the box in which sat the stricken author. [249]

And there alone, off the dismal and dismantled stage in the cool dusk of the box, producer and author faced each other and the situation.

"If my grandfather were not—not—dying, I'd take it right home and burn it all up!" were the first words the author of "The Purple Slipper" gave utterance to, after the last echo of the last footstep had died off the stage.

"You couldn't, you've sold it to—to me," Mr. Vandeford answered with a coolness in his voice that restored her mental balance, as he had intended it should. "Now answer me truly; is it or is it not a good play?"

"It's not my play; it's horrid and vulgar!" the author stormed, with lightning burning up the tears in her gray eyes.

"That whole situation is exactly as you wrote it, and about a third of the lines are yours, or will be yours by the time it is at the first night, if you play the game. I have not decided whether I think it is a good play or not. If I think it isn't, you may have it and burn it up. I don't know what Rooney thinks yet. If he doesn't want to go on, I won't." Mr. Vandeford had known the women of many climes, and he found himself using that experience on Miss Adair with great skill, though it hurt him to do so. [250]

"Part of it I don't even understand," Miss Adair continued to storm, and Mr. Vandeford was about to discover that either a Blue-grass woman or horse, with the bit in their respective mouths, is mighty apt to go a pace before curbed. "What was that scene in the last act just before the dinner-party? She read so fast and he had his back to me, so I suppose that is the reason I didn't get it." Miss Adair was alluding to the scene whose vulgarity Mr. Vandeford had wished to sacrifice, but which Mr. Meyers had pleaded for on account of its extra dash of "pep" exactly suited to the Hawtry style. [251]

"You won't be able to judge the Hawtry scenes at all until the opening night," Mr. Vandeford answered, positively quaking in his boots for fear that Miss Adair would force him to an elucidation of the scene, which was mostly of the cleverest innuendo. "She is a miserable study, and she and Height rehearse the big scenes alone. She just walks through with the company. Truly, you can hardly judge anything of what a play will be from just a reading or from any rehearsal. Please trust me and help me as you promised you would."

"But the play isn't mine, at all! My play is—is killed—and dead, and murdered." Miss Adair persisted, still writhing from the butchery.

"It is your play; but granting that it isn't, at all, think what it will mean to all of us if this—this nobody's play succeeds. Think what it will mean to the actors in the company. Miss Lindsey was hungry when she got her first advance on your play, and Bébé Herne hasn't had a part that suited her so well in years. If it goes she ought to have enough to make her easy; and she is getting old now—" [252]

"If you'll say and tell everybody that the play isn't mine, of course I'll help you, and—" Miss Adair

agreed, with the tears dried by the anger and a degree of sanity returning at Mr. Vandeford's skilful appeal to her generosity, which he made when he saw that his attempt to bluff her about calling off the play had failed. Mr. William Rooney came into the box. His hat was tilted on the back of his head and in the corner of his mouth was a large cigar, which he was chewing and not smoking. He seated himself without invitation and spoke with his usual abruptness:

"That play is a hummer, Vandeford, if I can just make the dolts put it across. It is a genuine Hawtry vehicle, but in a new vein. It's a corking situation and yet rings true. Did any old dame really have the spunk to put that dinner-party across on both lover and husband that you've got in your play, miss?" As Mr. Rooney asked the question of Miss Adair, it was the first time that he had seemed aware of the existence of the author of "The Purple Slipper." [253]

"It's not my play, Mr. Rooney," Miss Adair said haughtily to the thick-skinned genius. "That—that situation is—was—is true, however."

"Then it's your play all right!" declared Mr. Rooney. "The situation is all there is to any play. The staging is the rest. Anybody can put in good lines. Any simp can doll up the actors in costumes, and one actor can put the ideas across pretty near as good as any other, if he's directed all right; but when it's done, the play is the man's or woman's who made the first layout of the idea—and what the stage-manager does to it. Author and stage manager, I say. The rest is easy."

"That's what I've been telling Miss Adair," Mr. Vandeford eagerly assented.

"And authors ought to go off and die until the first night, too," Mr. Rooney continued to say. "When I staged 'Only Annie' for E. and K., I told that author if he came on my stage any more at rehearsals I would biff him one in the nutt, and I meant it, too. His thinks and mine ran into each other so bad that I was near crazed." [254]

"But an author writes a play and he or she knows—" Miss Adair was beginning to say to Mr. Rooney with kind patience, when he interrupted her as he rose to take his departure.

"The author oughter write all he knows and let it go at that," he said as he spat on the carpet of the box with no sign of compunction. "The stage-manager can do the rest." And with no form of leave-taking he departed.

"And the American drama has to be filtered through that sort of—of illiteracy?" Miss Adair turned and demanded of Mr. Vandeford.

"The American drama is often written by people who have been too closely associated with books on a library shelf, so that it needs to be filtered through a little gross humanity to get across to—humanity in the gross, which pays to see it. If a scholar writes and produces a play scholars go to see it all right, but all the scholars in America only fill one theater twice, and then what is to become of scholar and wife and children, as well as producer, manager, and theater-owner?" Mr. Vandeford spoke slowly, choosing his words. [255]

"Aren't any of the stage-managers educated gentlemen?" demanded Miss Adair, with an interest that was fast becoming impersonal, for she had the wit to see that in some ways Mr. Vandeford's summary of the situation between author and stage-manager was sound.

"Yes, a few, but not the most successful ones," answered Mr. Vandeford. "I tell you truly that a stage-manager has to be a genius to succeed. He must be a man with a vision and sheer brutality enough to put the vision that he gets from his conception of the play he is producing into twenty other mentalities and make them present the play as a harmonious whole to an audience. He cannot be a respecter of persons while he is pounding, and he must not be interfered with or his vision is obscured and the play loses. Do you see what I mean?" [256]

"Then an author ought to produce his own plays," Miss Adair decided very promptly.

"Yes," answered Mr. Vandeford, with a whimsical smile down into the eager, pale, intensely creative face raised to his. "When an author is born who will study years until he is an expert electrician, other years in great studios until he can paint scenery that is a work of art, delve into old books until he knows costuming of thousands of periods in hundreds of lands and how to sketch it, then gives himself to the studying of stagecraft and the writing of half a hundred plays until he writes one that is really great; after which, if he has the strength and the nerves to produce that play, we will all go to see the great human drama. That is, if he has had time to live with and in the hearts of people so as to supply that gross sympathy with the masses who buy tickets which Rooney got while climbing out of the gutter. God grant he comes some day to America—but you are not he!" [257]

"No, I'm not," admitted Miss Adair, with her eyes smiling back into his whimsically, "but what you say makes me see that the—the producer—you are the whole thing. You get it all—me and Mr. Rooney and Miss Hawtry together and pound us into—into a play. I make that acknowledgment."

"If you ask the stage-manager he will say that the success of a play is his; the costumer will claim that success; the star knows it is his or hers, and the lead is sure that it is due to the support; the author surely has some claim to draw the huge royalties, and the location of his theater makes the theater-owner know that any play in that theater will go. Yes, the producer will always claim the whole show if it all goes well. If it fails the show then belongs entirely to the producer, who picked it in its manuscript stage, and he is no good as a producer. If he fails a few times hand-running, to the scrap heap with him!" [258]

"But you've never failed," Miss Adair exclaimed, with a dart of fear in her eyes.

"My last show, 'Miss Cut-up,' was a flivver all right, though we just saved our faces. But I've got a show now that will put me in electric light for two years hand-running and—" Mr. Vandeford was in a panic as he realized that he was going so far in that curious thinking out loud to Miss Adair that he had been about to launch forth on "The Rosie Posie Girl" to her. It would have been like telling a friend the plans of his own funeral with enthusiasm, as it would be obvious to her that Hawtry would have to fail in and drop "The Purple Slipper" before becoming the triumphant "Rosie Posie Girl."

"I'm willing to—to let them cut my play all up if—if it will really run two years and make your reputation more brilliant than it is," Miss Adair said, interrupting his pause of consternation at his near betrayal of his plans. She spoke with the worshipful uplift of her gray eyes to his that had betrayed him in the first place to such a confusion of schemes. "If it added anything to it, I would even be willing to let you put the Adair name to the vulgar thing they read here to-day, but it wouldn't help it anywhere except in Louisville and Cincinnati and Nashville and Atlanta and New Orleans and Richmond. People don't know us in New York, and any name will do here; so mine won't—won't have to be disgraced." [259]

"Please don't say that!" pleaded Mr. Vandeford with consternation in his soul as he thought of the development of the Howard "pep" Hawtry would make as the rehearsals of "The Purple Slipper" progressed. "It is the same thing with Miss Hawtry as it is with Mr. Rooney; she has a—a kind of gutter drag that gets across to the multitude, and of course your play had to be—be fitted to her. Hawtry, to be Hawtry, has to do and say things that you couldn't write at all, that you couldn't very well understand; but they'll get the crowd going and coming. Please give me your promise again to sit tight and see it through—or go home and leave it all to me." Mr. Vandeford was surprised to feel how hard his heart beat, and he was afraid that it sounded like the echo of an anvil chorus in the big empty theater. [260]

"I never have to give promises a second time, and this is the last time I am ever going to cry out," Miss Adair answered him, with a lift to her proud little head. "I am going to stay right here and help if I can, and learn. But I won't in any way distress or—or trouble you. Please don't get me on your mind!"

"I won't get you on my mind," Mr. Vandeford answered out loud—"because I've got you in my heart, poor kiddie," he continued to himself, in a kind of desperation.

Mr. Dennis Farraday burst in upon the dusk of the theater and the tragedy of the situation. He was vastly excited and he waved a letter in his hand. [261]

"Oh, you Patricia Adair, why didn't you tell me that you are old Roger Adair's sister?" he demanded.

"Why, what do you mean about Roger? Do you know—"

"Do I know him? Just listen to this, will you, and here I've *not* been handing you around on a silver salver for two weeks!" He then read the following letter aloud to Miss Adair and Mr. Vandeford:

Adairville, Kentucky.

DEAR DENNY:

Well, here I am! I'm the Captain of my county in the Army of the Furrows, and hope to turn in many thousand pounds of food stuffs for you people in New York to live on. In the meantime Miss Patricia Adair, my sister, is going to New York to see to the putting on of a play she has written for one Mr. Godfrey Vandeford. She is the greatest girl ever, and you stay right on the job seeing that things go right for her while I plant these potatoes to keep you from starving. She will be at the Y. W. C. A. and will sleep and eat safe enough, but you look out for her and don't let her get homesick. If she needs me, of course I will come, but she's a plucky child and you are the best ever, so I'll go on ploughing with a free mind. Let me know how it all goes. What sort of a chap is that Vandeford? [262]

Yours as always and forever,
ROGER.

"Can you beat it?" demanded good Dennis, with a blaze of friendship in his eyes as he regarded Miss Patricia Adair. "It was forwarded from my old office number to my new, to Westchester to Nantucket, back to my office, and finally arrived this morning. I've just sent Roger a thousand-word telegram, and I hope he never knows that I was off the job ten days. Give that child here to me, Van, and go get a report on your character for me before you look at her again. Roger Adair is the best friend I've got on earth, next to you, and you'd better watch your step." [263]

"I like his steps," Miss Adair said, and again Mr. Vandeford felt uncertain as to that curious little flutter that was like a nestling of which he felt he was never to be certain and which Mr. Farraday did not seem to observe at all.

"Didn't you know that Roger was turning you over to me, young lady? Why have you side-stepped me?" Mr. Farraday demanded of the young author, in a voice of great severity.

"I thought that Roger was going to write to a Mr. Denny about me; and I didn't write to him that Mr. Denny hadn't come to take care of me because—because I was afraid he'd leave his work and come up to look after me himself. I didn't remember the Farraday part of your name at all. Roger always said 'Denny.'"

"Well, I suppose I'll have to accept that excuse, as it sounds fairly reasonable; but I'd like to know, Van, why you have been keeping my child here in this musty old theater until past luncheon time when she must be both tired and hungry. Come out to Claremont to luncheon, both of you, this minute," Mr. Farraday both questioned and commanded, with pure delight in his voice and manner. "I'll go run the car around to the door, so you won't have to walk in the sun." And he departed as quickly as he had come. [264]

That night Mr. Vandeford lay stretched on his bed in a dark coolness, with his hands clasped over his eyes, when Mr. Farraday came in with his latch-key at twelve-thirty.

"Denny?" he asked from the darkness as Mr. Farraday was tiptoeing past his open door, through which the southern sea-breeze was pouring, "What sort of chap *is* that Vandeford?"

"The telegram I sent read, 'the best ever.'"

"Are you competent to judge me?"

"I am."

"Good-night!"

For an hour before this masculine version of a scene a feminine real thing was being conducted in the two little dotted-muslin-curtained cells at the Y. W. C. A. Miss Adair was telling Miss Lindsey "all about it," and sparks and tears both were in the atmosphere. The explosion was brought on by Miss Lindsey remarking to Miss Adair: [265]

"You know, honey lady, that play of yours is simply ripping, but it is not at all like—like what I thought it would be from hearing you and Mr. Farraday tell it."

"It's not my play at all; it's Mr. Vandeford's. He got somebody to fit it to Miss Hawtry," replied Miss Adair, calmly, as she began to brush her dark, sleek mane.

"What do you mean?" demanded Miss Lindsey, in astonishment.

"He just took the dinner situation in my play and got a man to make a new one out of it that is—*is* vulgar enough to appeal to the New York theater-goers. He let everybody put in anything they wanted to, instead of what I wrote. He left in a little of mine to compliment me. It's all right, because nobody would have gone to see my play if anybody goes to see—see his." Miss Adair went on calmly with the fifty-third stroke on her raven tresses, but her eyes were beginning to blaze. [266]

"Mr. Vandeford's a complete fool," was on the tip of Miss Lindsey's tongue, but she remembered her main chance, which was the favor of Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, and said instead: "I wish you would let me see a copy of the play as you wrote it. Have you one?"

"I have, in my trunk, and I'll read it to you," answered Miss Adair, and in defensive pride she produced a copy of "The Purple Slipper," which bore the unexpurgated title of "The Renunciation of Rosalind," and proceeded to read it to Miss Lindsey, with both fire and tragedy in her voice.

The operation occupied the two hours before midnight, and Miss Lindsey lay prostrate when it was finished.

"Now, what do you think?" demanded Miss Adair. [267]

"I wish I could have had the making of it over, and for myself instead of Hawtry. That's no play as it stands, but there is a dandy one to be worked up from it that you—you—that would be like you," was the reply that Miss Lindsey gave as she looked out into distance, with glowing eyes.

"Do you think that—that horrid play will be a success?" asked Miss Adair, with her voice sparkling.

"I do," answered Miss Lindsey. "And it is curious that with all its changes it is still—still yours. There is a lot more of your stuff left than you realize, and the turns that—that Mr. Vandeford's playwright has given it are very clever. Lots of times he's just paraphrased your lines into Hawtryites. It will be interesting to see how much of you is left when we all come out of the wash for the first night."

"I wish I were dead and buried!" she was surprised to hear Miss Adair confess, and there then ensued a downpour, which the hardier Western girl weathered for very love of the young Southern tempest in her arms. [268]

"I suppose I ought to go home, out of the way, but I'm going to stay and—and learn—and write another one all by myself," she finally sobbed, with returning courage, thus comforting herself with the resolve which every playwright who ever built a play has used to keep from going entirely mad during the rehearsals of his first play.

"Just try to live until the New York opening, and then see how you feel. That is the way actors do to keep going during the awful grilling of the rehearsals and the road try-out," advised Miss

Lindsey, with great soothing.

"I will," promised Miss Adair, and turned her face on her pillow, to sleep, while Miss Lindsey took herself and her jar of cold-cream into her own cell.

"I wish I had a chance at that play! What'll she do when she sees Hawtry and Height really in action in some of those scenes?" she murmured into her own pillow. [269]

The next morning Miss Adair rose, donned a most lovely home-spun linen gown, which was of an old ivory hue and which had been spun upon the looms of her great-great-great grandmother by that lady's slaves, crowned this toilet with the floppy hat covered with crushed roses she and Miss Lindsey and Mr. Farraday had purchased, and reported herself about an hour late at the rehearsals of "The Purple Slipper," whose authorship she had repudiated. She seated herself in the dusk of the left stage-box and bared her breast for blows. They came fast and furious, but other breasts and heads beside her own suffered. Mr. William Rooney was in full action. The entire company was on the stage in the midst of the last ensemble bit in the first act, all talking and acting with blue booklets of lines in their hands.

"Here you, Mr. Kent," roared Mr. Rooney as he rose from behind his table, at one side of which sat faithful Fido annotating his copy of the manuscript, "make up to that old lady like she was the last ham sandwich extinct and you knew you were going to be fed on alfalfa the rest of your life. Get her going, man, get her going! She's an old fool, and you know it, but you've got to have her plantation and slaves. You can keep a chorus-girl car in the garage if you just get her well fooled. Fool along, fool along!" [270]

"I will write the message to your son, Madam Carrington, and dispatch it forthwith by one of my own black boys. Is my hand not ever ready for your service and my wit—and also my heart?" declaimed Mr. Kent with satisfactory fervor, as he kissed Miss Herne's fat white hand.

"Now blob, Miss Herne, blob!" directed Mr. Rooney, coming entirely from behind the table. "You are the fool of this show and don't let anybody get that away from you."

"I pray a blessing on your excellent friendship, Judge Cheneworth, and I will rest me content in —" Miss Herne answered in a most excellent imitation of the helplessness of an old grand dame. [271]

"Break in there, Miss Lindsey, break in!" raved Mr. Rooney. "'Content in' is your cue. Grab it. Remember you are just the sister and only in the play to swell the list of actors on the program, so grab and keep a-grabbing if you want a place on the salary list. Now, everybody on at Miss Lindsey's lines and break up this drivel between the old birds."

"Mother, Rosalind bids me say to you that—"

"Crowd on everybody, crowd on, and keep things going! It will be nine o'clock by now, and we'll have to begin to feed the audience the hugging by a quarter to ten or they will go out and look elsewhere.—Say, Mr. Leigh, are your feet mates? You don't handle 'em even."

Miss Adair rose and stole from the box to the stage-door, and looked up and down the street to see if Mr. Vandeford was approaching. She felt that she could not stand more alone. He was nowhere in sight, and she decided to walk around the block and see if the sun at ninety degrees would warm her chill. After this journey she returned to her post and found the box still empty. Mr. Vandeford had not arrived nor had Mr. Farraday, but she seated herself resolutely. She was just in time to witness a pitched battle between Miss Hawtry and Mr. Rooney. [272]

"If you are determined to walk through the scenes, Miss Hawtry, do it awake and not asleep!" stormed Mr. Rooney.

"Very well," answered Miss Hawtry, but Miss Adair's heart warmed to her as she noted the contemptuousness in her manner directed toward her stage-manager.

"Now see here, Height, you know that you want to get away with this woman before her husband gets back. You can't do it with kid gloves on. Spit on your hands, man, and grab her by the hair. You say: 'Rosalind, a strong man's love is a weapon which a woman can easily turn against herself with deadly outcome,' like you were begging her to go with you over to Ligget's for an ice-cream soda with crushed strawberries. Say it this way." And as she sat astounded Miss Adair heard a line that she had written in a sympathetic fervor of imagination and which was perhaps her favorite in the whole play, uttered by Mr. William Rooney with the most exquisite and manly feeling, while his homely, vulgar face and body were transformed into the same exquisiteness. A breathless happiness descended upon her, and she waited in it to hear the beautiful Mr. Gerald Height give utterance to it with the same art. Miss Hawtry brought her to earth. [273]

"Mr. Rooney," she said with an utter lack of appreciation or comprehension of the bit of high art that had flashed upon her, "it is in my contract with Mr. Vandeford that I rehearse my scenes alone with my support until the dress rehearsal."

"Yes, I might have judged that from 'Miss Cut-up,'" Mr. Rooney answered her with a blow straight from his shoulder. "Give little sister her cue, Height, and let her run on to rescue you. God knows you need it!" [274]

"Mr. Rooney, I'll have you understand—" Miss Hawtry came to the center to continue her tirade, when Mr. Rooney struck the decisive blow.

"Everybody on and begin the scene over!" he commanded right past the enraged star. "Take it up, Kent, with Miss Herne at 'I will write the message to your son,' and get her going, get her going!"

At this forceful command the machinery of "The Purple Slipper" was set in motion, and swept Miss Hawtry off center and into her place for the time being.

And despite herself Miss Adair was fascinated in watching the machine grind away, with now and then a spark from Mr. Rooney that took fire in the very core of her heart or brain or solar plexus—wherever "The Renunciation of Rosalind" had been conceived. Miss Adair did not know what it was that thus affected her, but she had got hold of her end of the psychic cord along which the author feeds the hostile stage-manager in such a manner that on the first night of a successful play they can say to each other with clasped hands and wet eyes, "Well done!"

[275]

And while Miss Adair sat under the spell of Mr. Rooney, Mr. Vandeford sat in his big chair in his office and fought a battle for "The Purple Slipper" that resulted in a draw that filled him with anxiety.

"I can find only one open booking in New York for October first, Mr. Vandeford, sir," Mr. Meyers was saying, with trouble settled in a cloud upon his broad brow. "I have it fairly good for the road for 'The Purple Slipper' until October first, and then it is a jump to Toronto or Minneapolis, which is into the grave."

"I suppose that one opening on Broadway is Weiner's New Carnival Theater," Mr. Vandeford asked as though the question were useless.

[276]

"You have it right," answered Mr. Meyers. "Still, Mr. Vandeford, sir, it is always failures that leave Broadway openings into which road shows can jump."

"Until last year, yes, Pops, but now New York is so full of people with munition and war-contract money in their pockets that any show, no matter how rotten, that gets in a Broadway theater plays to capacity and stays. They'd go to 'The Old District Skule' because the doors were open and there is no other place to go. What are we going to do?"

"I advise that you see Mr. Breit and trust to some very big failure to give you a place. It is that he will always give you a preference," answered Mr. Meyers with little hope, but determination.

"Yes, Breit will let me in if there is a squeezing chance, but Breit doesn't own a theater, nor do I, or you, Pops; and I don't blame the fellows who do own them for filling them with their own cheap companies and plays so as to get their buckets under the whole golden stream. Why give money away to any independent producer?"

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"Mr. Breit said that he had news that Mr. Weiner would open that New Carnival with a Hilliard show, name not given," Mr. Meyers added to the information already prepared for Mr. Vandeford.

"I'll see goose-grease frying out of him in Inferno before he gets it," said Mr. Vandeford, coolly. "I know that is his game, but I'll put across this 'Purple Slipper' with Hawtry and keep my 'Rosie Posie Girl' until I get good and ready to let her play it. Then I'll produce it to the tune of a half-million dollars and not Mr. Weiner. I've never been squeezed, and I'm not going to have this rotten game beat me. I'll go over and see Breit and he'll jockey me a corner on Broadway, somehow. Back at three." And Mr. Vandeford walked out of his office as coolly as though not sizzling inwardly with anxiety.

"I've got you next on the booking of about four-fifths of the theaters on Broadway, Van," said Mr. Breit, the booking king, as he and Mr. Vandeford smoked leisurely cigars in his big, cool office. "You should worry! E. and K. and S. and Z. are bound to pick some flivvers and in you go. Loaf on the road and lose money like a little man."

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"My contract expires with Hawtry if I don't present her on Broadway by September fifteenth."

"That *is* a bit of a pickle! But she won't have any show to jump into, and she'll compromise with you; won't she?"

"She'll have to," Mr. Vandeford declared. "Coming down to Atlantic City to see 'The Purple Slipper' open two weeks from Monday, September twenty-third?"

"I'll be there. Rooney says it is a go; says little genius amateur wrote it and Grant Howard 'pepped' it. That right?"

"Yes. By!"

An hour later, in the coolness and seclusion of the grill room of The Monks, Mr. Vandeford was imparting his predicament to his partner in the venture and adventures of "The Purple Slipper."

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"And you are worrying about whether Miss Hawtry will stay by us for the few weeks we'll have to loaf on the road or even close while waiting for the New York opening?" questioned Mr. Farraday. "Say, aren't you a bit unjust in your judgment of her, Van?"

"I know the whole tribe of actors, and you don't, Denny," answered Mr. Vandeford, over a tall glass of iced tea he was drinking; he didn't know exactly why, but the habit had grown on him lately.

"Then why not try to put her under contract for those few indefinite weeks?" suggested Mr. Farraday, over his cup of hot coffee.

"You talk as though we were dealing with sane people," answered Mr. Vandeford. "She's got us and she'll keep us guessing up to the last minute, and then put some kind of screws on. I have got to figure out the likely ones, to see what I can do to jam them."

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"Well, anyway, ask her. I think she'll stand by us. I know she will," said Mr. Farraday, with both faith and conviction in his voice. "You do her an injustice, I say!"

"I'm not going to make her any request or offer, Denny. I can't," said Mr. Vandeford, as he looked at the ice floating in his glass of tea.

"Of course," assented Mr. Farraday, with pained sympathy in his big voice. "Would you like me to sound her out?"

"It's half your show; go ahead. She probably knows the situation and has made her plans for the squeeze or double-cross, but you might try her out," consented Mr. Vandeford, with a shrewd glance at Mr. Farraday. "But I wish you wouldn't, Denny," he added, with a sudden glow of affection in his eyes. Then he was restrained from further remonstrance with Mr. Farraday by the thought of the author of "The Purple Slipper" and her plucky sticking by the play through the thick and thin of her disapproval of it. Again he offered up his big Jonathan as a sacrifice in hopes of improving the prospects of "The Purple Slipper."

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Mr. Farraday took Miss Hawtry into his confidence about the predicament of finding a New York theater for his play, "The Purple Slipper," that very evening, out on the veranda of the Beach Inn, where he had motored her by request for dinner after her fatiguing rehearsals, which she had made still more fatiguing for Mr. William Rooney.

"And Van sent you to ask me if I was going to stick by?" she asked, with an effective quaver in her voice.

"He felt that we had no right to—to tie you up for indefinite weeks," said Mr. Farraday, constructing and temporizing at the same time.

"Did you think as little of me as he did?"

"No, by George, I knew you'd stick by us, and I said so!" Mr. Farraday exploded with genuine emotion.

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"Thank you. You know me after these few weeks better than he does after all these years of—" And the Violet bent her head on Mr. Farraday's nearest arm and began to weep softly. They were in a secluded corner of the veranda of the Inn, and the Violet raged at herself for having closed the complete seclusion of Highcliff for herself and her purposes by renting it to the Trevors when she had gone to town to the rehearsals of "The Purple Slipper."

And as good Dennis Farraday had no valid reason, either within or without the law for not doing so, he put consoling and comforting arms about her, and exposed his wide, silk-garbed shoulder to the rain of her tears, which were not really raining. In his big heart there was the same comforting for this conspirator as there would have been for Mr. Vandeford's lawful widow, and he administered it with the same affectionate respect that he would have used to the relict.

"You're a dear, wonderful little woman!" he was saying, when the voice of the Clyde Trevors was heard calling to them from around the veranda, and an oath rose in the Violet with such force that she almost allowed it to explode. Still she felt sure of her ultimate results.

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"You can count on me to stand by you and the play forever," she promised, and the hurried pressure of their lips in the soft, dark, sea-perfumed air was biologically inevitable.

Mr. Godfrey Vandeford had woven a tangled web when he had let fall the purple letter on the purple manuscript and gone out recklessly to follow the hunch their juxtaposition implied.

CHAPTER VII

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The first two weeks of September spent in torrid New York were a strange period of time to have projected itself into the calm life of Miss Patricia Adair of Adairville, Kentucky. Suddenly she found herself a cog screwed tight into a rapid-fire piece of machinery that was running at top speed night and day, by name, "The Purple Slipper."

For long hours she sat in the coolness of that stage-box and held her breath while she threw her whole self into the building of the play, which so fascinatingly was and was not hers. And through all those hours, close at her side, between her and the big dim theater, sat Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, with his arm across the back of her chair and his eager face close to hers and tilted at the same angle. Her slightest murmur or his lowest whisper caught and was answered, and they almost seemed to be breathing one breath, so absorbed were they in the destiny of their mutual adventure. Like all women of her kind, Patricia Adair had known men only through a cloud, which sex traditions had firmly held between her and them, and Godfrey Vandeford was the first man

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she had encountered since she had slipped outside of its deadening density into a world where men and women endeavored together first, and left their sentinel undertakings to a fitting secondary time and place. In all sincerity she accepted him as a co-worker and was as happy working with him as it was possible for a woman to be. She specially liked being beside him in the office, and watched him settle the details of the running the big machine smoothly, from the hiring of the property-man to the firing of three successive stage-carpenters.

"Real eats, Mr. Vandeford?" the former had inquired one morning.

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"Brown-bread turkey, nice and tasty, good crackers, but soda-pop and so forth for booze. Remember, they've got to face it, we hope, many weeks; don't turn their stomachs so they'll all gag."

"I see, sir, I see. I fed 'Maple Leaves' for two years, and they all et every night and gimme a purse when it closed to go to London."

"Goes!"

"Brown-bread turkey sounds nice. I'm hungry," said Miss Adair, as the good-providing property-man departed.

"Pop is going to bring us a piece of pie and a bottle of milk from the automat," answered Mr. Vandeford, as he began putting busy stabs with the press pencil on a pile of papers. "I ought to send him to get Denny to motor you for a real feed in the cool somewhere, but I want you here." With perfect unconcern, he went on checking the list the property-man had left him. He had ceased trying to decide the meaning of the flutter which he was not sure Miss Adair really gave when she was pleased. He was too busy to think about anything but the rush and roar of the machinery of "The Purple Slipper," so he just kept Miss Adair so near him for all the waking hours of the day that he could have no occasion to have his thoughts distracted by worrying over just what might be befalling her. Day after day he extracted her from the Y. W. C. A. at ten o'clock A. M., fed her and Miss Lindsey coffee and rolls and berries just any place that they happened to see (often he even ate with the two girls in the big empty cafeteria at the institution), lunched with her in the same haphazard fashion, sought a cool and quiet spot to give her dinner, and a ride on a country road, turned her into the big safety at about eleven o'clock, and went to bed to sleep the sleep of the interestedly absorbed.

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The few evenings that Miss Adair spent with Mr. Gerald Height Mr. Vandeford did not find repose so early or with such ease. Also, his awakening on those mornings after was not so joyous, and he arrived at the Y. W. C. A. fifteen and twenty minutes too early upon each occasion.

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However, his time was well spent in chatting with the brisk young secretary, and his anxiety was entirely relieved each time by finding the look intact in the gray eyes raised to his in eager greeting after the prolonged absence of fourteen hours, when the usual separation was about ten.

"We went out to a place called the Beach Inn last night, and whom do you suppose we saw there?" she demanded on one of the mornings after, over her bowl of halved peaches.

"Mr. and Mrs. Devil?" he asked, with a sparkle breaking through the frown with which he had instantly greeted her mention of that gay beach resort.

"No; Miss Hawtry and Mr. Farraday. She wasn't nice to us at all, but Mr. Height says she always treats him badly when they are rehearsing together. I think Mr. Height is perfectly wonderful to her on the stage. He's so gentle and kind; but then he's that in real life, isn't he?"

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"Is he?" growled Mr. Vandeford over his corn-flakes.

"Yes, and he's so just and fine in the way he speaks about everybody. He told me how poor Miss Hawtry used to be and how you pushed her along until she could buy that lovely house we passed, in which the Trevors are staying while she is in town. It is hard on you, too, not to be out there boarding with them and her instead of in this heat."

"Did Height say that I—I boarded—out there?" demanded Mr. Vandeford, pushing his coffee-cup away from him with a sudden snap.

"Yes, he said you stayed out there in the summer always, and—"

"We're late," interrupted Mr. Vandeford, snapping his watch with the same temper he had used on his coffee-cup. "Bring that saucer of peaches along and eat it in the car."

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"I'll take an orange instead," assented Miss Adair, as with all good-nature and in all naturalness she deserted the last half of the rosy peach, took an orange from the bowl before her and stood up to go out to the car, which Valentine had parked in the shadow of the building opposite.

"You kid, you!" scoffed Mr. Vandeford, with an ache in his heart, but thanksgiving for that same youthful unsophistication. "Height or somebody will get it all across to her, and then what'll I do?" he growled to himself as he followed her into the car.

"And I saw that Mazie—Mazie woman there, too, with a terrible-looking man that has written ever so many plays that are successful." Mr. Vandeford was devoutly thankful that Mr. Grant Howard's name had not stuck in the consciousness of the author of "The Purple Slipper." "I—I was introduced to them too—because you know you said that I must—must accept broad

standards, and I did—last night." Miss Adair looked away, but Mr. Vandeford could see that her little ears, set close against her small head, with their tips covered by a smooth band of hair, grew rosy. [291]

"What?" he gasped, uncertain as to what she meant.

"Talked to that—that playwright and—and drank some champagne. I like cider better, but Mr. Height ordered it, and I thought—"

Here the car stopped, and Valentine was at the door. Valentine never failed to be at the door instantly when Miss Adair was in Mr. Vandeford's car, because his French soul rejoiced within him for thus serving a grand dame.

"Rooney is on the last lap of the last act, and then he'll begin to polish the whole for dress rehearsals," Mr. Vandeford said as he held the curtains of their box aside for her to enter.

"And Mr. Height told me, too, that the Trevors had—"

"Hush!" commanded Mr. Vandeford, becoming the stern producer, because he felt that he could stand no more of Mr. Height at the Beach Inn, though he began to listen intently to that same gentleman and Bébé Herne in the beginning of the great scene of the now authorless play. The anxieties passed from him, and in a moment he was in harness again with his author and running in perfect unison. [292]

"Cut it off, Height, cut it off!" commanded Mr. Rooney, and he ran his hands into his shock of black hair, which stood up all over his head like a black, sooty mop. "That scene needs something. It isn't big and simple enough. What did she say to him in your first layout, miss?" he demanded of Miss Adair, for the first time acknowledging to the company the presence of the author of their play at the rehearsals. "Can you remember?"

"Yes," answered Miss Adair, with the home-made color blazing in her cheeks and fires in her gray eyes as she rose in the box, and gave the six lines as she had written them. Her lovely, slurring, Blue-grass voice made the whole company smile with pleasure. [293]

"That's it! That's it! That's real people jawing and not a lot of smarty guff. Put that in, Fido, and write it in, Miss Herne," commanded Mr. Rooney, without any form of thanks to the accommodating and forgiving author.

And truth to say the author of "The Purple Slipper" did not notice his omission. She was in such joy at having something of the "big scene" express what she had intended that she was clasping one of Mr. Vandeford's hands in both hers and holding on tight to keep from shedding tears of joy.

"What did I tell you?" he asked, taking the two nervously clutched little hands into his warm, strong ones, unseen in the shadow of the box. "You keep getting things across to Bill by letting him ask you for what he wants. See?"

"Yes, and I'm always glad when I do as you tell me," she whispered, with her lips almost against his ear as they both turned back to the stage and watched their machine begin to run on greased wheels. Mr. Vandeford thought of the Beach Inn, Mazie, the bottle of champagne, and Mr. Gerald Height, and groaned inwardly. [294]

The last week of the rehearsals of "The Purple Slipper" was a hectic rush, the like of which Miss Adair had never imagined. She had gone out again for the week-end to Mrs. Farraday's, up in Westchester, and this time Mr. Vandeford drove out on Sunday for tea and crape myrtle with Mr. Dennis Farraday, and, he was surprised to note again, Miss Mildred Lindsey. The day passed like an oasis in the midst of a desert storm, and Mr. Vandeford had the pleasure of making all arrangements for Mrs. Farraday, Mr. and Mrs. Van Tyne, and several other old Manhattaners, who had fallen under the spell of the young Kentuckian who had in an off moment perpetrated "The Purple Slipper," to go to Atlantic City the following week to be upon the spot for the opening of the play. Suites in the great new hotel were engaged by long-distance telephone, time-tables discussed, and trains settled upon by the time tea was over and the golden sun had let the twilight purple the rosy plumes of the huge myrtle hedges. In the dusk Valentine brought Mr. Vandeford's car from the garage and Mrs. Farraday's chauffeur drove out Mr. Dennis Farraday's beloved Surreness. Miss Lindsey said her farewell, and it again surprised Mr. Vandeford to see the gracious kiss Mrs. Farraday put upon the dusky red of the beautiful Western girl's cheek, while good Dennis stood smilingly by in the friendliest delight. Then a wistful sigh from the talented young author by his side claimed his instant attention. [295]

"What is it?" he asked, with no attempt to control the tenderness in his voice, though the dusk hid that in his eyes.

"I want to go back to town with you," she answered him, with a little catch in her voice. "I feel so far away from you and—and IT, up here." [296]

"You shall," he answered, and turned toward Mrs. Farraday, who was coming across the grass towards them with a huge sheaf of myrtles for his car flower-baskets in her arms. "I wonder if you'll let me take my author back to town in a hurry to-night, Mater Farraday," he pleaded, with the affectionate smile in both his voice and eyes that he had learned to use in coaxing her since the days ten years ago when she had begun to mother him along with big Dennis. "I—I sorter—"

sorter need her."

Mrs. Farraday looked at them both with a keenness under the affection in her glance, and then laughed merrily.

"Yes, go with him, Patricia," she commanded. "I have lived through the week before the presentation of five plays for Van, and I think that it is only just that you should share that ordeal with me. He's impossible, and demands—everything. I gave him a perfectly new and wonderful hat that cost a hundred and ten dollars for the second scene of 'Dear Geraldine' right off my head at the dress rehearsal, and 'Miss Cut-up' did her dances on one of my most choice Chinese rugs. Now he's taking you from me. But go!" [297]

"Here's your wrap, still in the car, so hop in," commanded Mr. Vandeford hurriedly, as though he feared that Mrs. Farraday would withdraw her sympathetic permission. "Good-night, and thank you!"

"Good-night, you two—two dear children," returned Mrs. Farraday, as she saw them off, after tenderly embracing Miss Adair and making plans for their future meeting. "How *lovely* it would be!" she murmured to herself, with a lack of definition, as she went back to the stately house behind the tree, where windows were beginning to glow.

For a long time the producer and his author were silent.

"I hate it—and I love it," Miss Adair finally said, with her soft, slurring voice lowered almost to a whisper as Valentine sped them along the country road perfumed and dusky with the early night, though a silvery radiance proclaimed a chaperoning moon as imminent. [298]

"That is the proper way for an author to feel about a play one week before the opening," Mr. Vandeford assured her, with a laugh keyed to match her declaration. "It shows an entire sympathy with the poor producer."

"Suppose, just suppose, that the producer had been anybody but you and I had had to stand all—" Words failed Miss Adair in imaging her plight as author to another producer than Mr. Vandeford.

"Any other producer might have done better than I have done for you," Mr. Vandeford answered her, with a sadness in his voice that he himself had never heard before. And as he spoke he resolved to tell her the whole Hawtry situation, which was haunting him day and night; to begin with the purple, letter-manuscript hunch, which he had lightly taken up to spank Miss Hawtry for trying to double-cross him with Weiner about "The Rosie Posie Girl," and end up with the hopeless state of his feelings about herself. Miss Adair herself stemmed the confession which might have altered the fate of that good machine "The Purple Slipper." [299]

"You've made the whole horrible experience worth while to me, and I'm going to be a great playwright yet, just to make you—you proud of me," she assured his sadness in the purple dusk, and this time Mr. Vandeford was so sure of the flutter that he reached out his hand and captured a part of it, a white, slim little hand that nestled into his as though it were not in any way aware of doing so. "I'm going to dinner with Miss Herne to-morrow night, so Mr. Kent can show me what is the matter with part of his costume for the third act, and then I'm going to coax Mr. Corbett to fix it over for him," she continued, speaking of the business of learning to be the great playwright she had promised him to become.

"Er—er, did you say dinner with Bébé and—and Kent?" Mr. Vandeford stammered as a desperate opening for letting his author know just what she was doing in visiting that establishment without-the-law. [300]

"Yes, I know about them; Mildred told me, but I told her that I was going to accept the 'broad standard' that prevailed in my profession. I like both of those people a lot. What business is it of mine if they don't want to get married?" Miss Adair's voice was coolly unconcerned and professional.

"Help!" ejaculated Mr. Vandeford, holding the slim little hand as if drowning. And indeed he did have a sinking sensation, which, strange to say, was relieved by a quick mental vision of the capable young woman at the desk of the great international safety.

"And I know about Mr. Height's three divorces, and I think he is to be pitied instead of criticized for being so unfortunate and lonely. Mildred says she doesn't believe he is as lonely as he tells me he is, but I know he is. I asked Miss Herne to ask him to dinner, too, and she did," Miss Adair continued, thus making little stabs into Mr. Vandeford's vitals. [301]

And right there Mr. Vandeford paid the entire penalty for all his tilts against organized morality by feeling unworthy to take a beautiful, fragrant, adoring, confiding girl in his arms and telling her all he had learned of the tragic results of such tilts. His predicament was tragic, though unique. If he summed up these others, he sized up himself to her, and by what judgment he taught her to judge them she would judge him when the time came. If he taught her to turn from Kent or Height she would turn from him, when she knew him entirely, as she surely would soon. And, forsooth, how would he prove to her that he was a better man than the copper-headed tango lizard, Height, though he knew himself to be? And who was this girl, anyway, to come out of a little back-woods town where the standards of life were so narrow that all who could lived out of them in degrading secrecy, and make him feel himself unworthy when he had lived openly in a way about which his own conscience had not troubled him? Why did he hesitate to tell her about [302]

his affair with the Violet and his anxiety about her contract, and why should his face burn at the thought of telling her how he had coolly let his best friend in for the prospect of an affair with the star for the purpose of protecting her and her play? And why should the sex and business standards of his world be entirely different from those of hers or any other world! On the other hand why shouldn't they all double-cross and prey on and defame and applaud each other to their heart's content? Why should they care if they were judged by—? At this part Mr. Vandeford's bitter reflections were suddenly invaded by a perceptible collapse of Miss Adair's soft and proud young body against his, and a round, warm cheek fell against his silk-clad sleeve, as he perceived that his eminent author had plunged suddenly into the depths of healthy and innocent slumber, while he had been moralizing about her and the rest of the universe. He slipped his arm about her with cautious tenderness and made her comfortable, while he muttered to himself:

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"She's a white flame and, God willing, I'm going to keep her that!"

During the next week the "white flame" burned high and bright while the author of "The Purple Slipper" threw herself into her place in the grinding of the machine that was to turn out a perfected play on the following Tuesday night at Atlantic City. Everywhere Mr. Rooney was tightening bolts and polishing surfaces until they glistened while he snapped and tried out all bands.

Miss Lindsey was pale and quiet, but she acted her part to Mr. Rooney's entire satisfaction, though he never said so. Mr. Leigh's feet were still a target, and the glowering girl, Miss Grayson, was always tearful, but constantly improving. When the company was not being ground and polished, Mr. Corbett's tailors and dressmakers were fitting costumes, and the property man was checking over and over each demand of each and every person, from the fresh rose Mr. Kent was to give to Dame Carrington to the mud that was to be splashed every day upon Mr. Gerald Height's riding-boots for his last and triumphant entry. Miss Adair had lost all sense of the play as a whole and only thought of it as distracting and distracted bits. She had, of course, never witnessed the scenes between Miss Hawtry and Mr. Height, as they were still rehearsed in private and would be until the night of the dress rehearsal on Monday at Atlantic City. This was well.

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But one thing she kept with her through the whole strain; the sense of being one with Mr. Godfrey Vandeford and that one working for pure joy.

As for Mr. Vandeford, his eyes sank back under his brows, and Mr. Adolph Meyers was with him far into every night.

"How does the booking stand now, Pops?" Mr. Vandeford demanded on the Thursday night before the opening Tuesday.

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"Atlantic City next week, Wilmington and New Haven the next if need be, and—it is to Syracuse or Toronto we must jump, Mr. Vandeford, sir," answered Mr. Meyers, with beads of perspiration on his high brow.

"Violet will never make that jump, Pops. Her contract closes the day we open in Atlantic City, and there we'll close, too, if we haven't New York right in sight. What'll we do?"

"It is many a show closed before it opened," Mr. Meyers said, with a wary look at Mr. Vandeford.

"This show is going to open and never close—until it's had a thorough Broadway try-out, Pops," said Mr. Vandeford, quietly. "Anything from Mr. Breit?"

"Nothing to hope for a Broadway opening before November first."

"I'll pass the question up Friday, and then see what I'll do," Mr. Vandeford said slowly as if turning his back for the moment to something that stared him in the face.

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All Friday morning he worked with "The Purple Slipper" machine with a bitter defiance in his eyes that made Miss Adair keep close to his side, though she didn't understand her reason for doing so.

"Is anything the matter?" she questioned, with her gray eyes stricken with alarm. The fear for her play in those gray eyes sent Mr. Vandeford into desperate measures. He asked Miss Hawtry to go to luncheon with him, and she graciously accepted.

"Where do we get in on Broadway after Atlantic City, Van?" she asked as soon as she was served with her iced melon.

"We get in all right," he parried, putting his spoon into his cantaloupe.

"That's fine. I don't mind that Atlantic City week, but I'm glad I'm past ever doing the road again except to the Coast. They'll eat up 'The Rosie Posie Girl' in Chicago and San Francisco." Miss Hawtry was deliberately declaring her intentions to Mr. Vandeford without saying a word about them.

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"I'm going to take 'The Purple Slipper' over to London before I take it West." Mr. Vandeford answered her declaration with another not put in words, but so well did he know the workings of her shrewd, small mind that he saw that the game was up unless he did what he must do. During the rest of their luncheon they talked about the Trevors.

Straight from the Astor Mr. Vandeford walked into the office of Mr. Weiner.

"Weiner," he asked, without any sort of preamble, "will you give a month's try-out of my play, 'The Purple Slipper,' in your New Carnival Theater from October first to November first, with a proper guarantee, and then an option on an unlimited run there if it makes good, for a half-interest in 'The Rosie Posie Girl' *without* Hawtry?" Mr. Vandeford knew that he was offering Mr. Weiner a good thing, for the rights of "The Rosie Posie Girl" had been hotly contested by all the big theatrical managers on Broadway the winter before, and Mr. Vandeford had got them from Hilliard because of his success with "Dear Geraldine" by the same author. They had all coveted it because it was one of those combinations about the success of which there could be no doubt. In offering Weiner a half-interest Mr. Vandeford was aware that he was offering him at least a hundred thousand dollars, but Mr. Vandeford's hunch about the purple on purple was beginning to cost him dear, though at least a hundred thousand dollars did not seem too much to pay to keep the agony of failure out of a pair of sea-gray eyes that had trusted him the first time they had looked into his. [308]

"With Hawtry it goes; without Hawtry, no, Mr. Vandeford," was the prompt answer.

"With Hawtry six months from now?" questioned Mr. Vandeford.

"It is that I have a weak heart, Mr. Vandeford, and I do not trade in futures," answered Mr. Weiner, with a spark in his black eyes. [309]

"You know my fix, Weiner; now what will you take for the New Carnival October first for my Hawtry show?"

"I will trade that entire 'Rosie Posie Girl' manuscript, with all rights for that New Carnival Theater on October first, with option for the entire season, Mr. Vandeford," said Mr. Weiner, rolling his big cigar from one side of his mouth to the other.

"Without Hawtry?"

"I have a new Hawtry right now—in pickle," Mr. Weiner answered.

"Will the New Carnival certainly be finished October first?"

"Yes, to a certainty of a large guarantee."

"How long will you give me to answer?" asked Mr. Vandeford.

"I have made an appointment with S. & K. to talk that New Carnival Theater for a show at five o'clock to-day, Mr. Vandeford. I will call it six o'clock for you," answered Weiner, as he turned the screw with all show of consideration for his fellow producer. [310]

"I'll be back at four-forty-five," Mr. Vandeford answered him, and with no further good-by took his departure.

Arriving at his office, Mr. Vandeford directed Mr. Meyers that he was to have half an hour entirely undisturbed, entered his own office, and after a second's pause went into the little office that had been assigned to Miss Adair, the author, and sat down in the chair she very seldom occupied, but which was hers by tenancy. On the desk were a pair of silk gloves she had left there the day before, and in a blue vase were several roses in a good state of preservation, which he recognized as having come from a bunch Miss Adair had been wearing after having had luncheon with Mr. Gerald Height on Monday. These objects disturbed Mr. Vandeford vaguely. He put them out of his mind roughly and went into conference with himself sternly. Literally he was weighing the question. [311]

On one side of the balance he laid "The Rosie Posie Girl," which, with Hawtry, was sure to run on Broadway for at least two seasons and make for him a fortune that was indefinitely large and sure. Beside this, its production would insure him a position among the country's really great producers. The show was big enough in conception to admit of a spectacularly artistic treatment, which he had intended to give it so that it would place musical comedy on a plane upon which it had never stood before. He knew himself well enough to know that a real triumph of that kind once accomplished, he would want to turn to other fields of endeavor, and he could see his greater self standing patiently waiting for his lesser to be liberated by the process of climbing out of the very top of the theatrical profession.

Sternly he turned from himself to the filling of the other pan of the scales in which he was weighing the question. He looked for something to put in to over-balance the certainty of "The Rosie Posie Girl," and found nothing but a vast uncertainty with many potentialities. "The Purple Slipper" was a play of no known classification, and with Hawtry in it was still less fish, flesh, fowl, or good red herring. And there was added the uncertainty of that week from the twenty-third to the first during which he had no legal hold on the fair Violet. He felt reasonably sure that the announcement that "The Purple Slipper" would open the big new Weiner theater, with all the clash of publicity which he could give to it, would hold her steady on her job, but as he laid it down on the scales, it had to be classed as an uncertainty. The fifteen per cent. seat sales based on Mr. Gerald Height's appearance in silk tights, velvet, and lace was about the only positive he had to lay in the scales, and that, of course, failed to tip them to any degree. For about fifteen minutes he sat perfectly rigid. Then he gently laid on the uncertain side of the scales the positive and concrete faith in a pair of sea-gray eyes, jeweled with tears, and watched "The Rosie Posie Girl" rise high as "The Purple Slipper" sank down heavily. [312] [313]

After this he took a rose from the green vase, stuck it in his buttonhole, and went forth—into his own office. He there rang his buzzer for Mr. Meyers, and seated himself with the air of a man who has had a burden lifted off his shoulders rather than with the air of one about to give away half a million dollars.

"Pops, 'The Rosie Posie Girl' is sold, lock, stock, and barrel, to Weiner for a month's try-out of 'The Purple Slipper' at the New Carnival Theater, good guarantee for that month, and an option on a run to the limit for eight-thousand-a-week houses. Get Lusky over the 'phone, and you and he have the contracts drawn as tight as wax by four-thirty."

"But, Mr. Vandeford, sir, I must have a say that—"

"No, Pops, don't say anything."

"With a pardon it is that I think that Miss Adair is a very fine lady, and so also 'The Purple Slipper.'" With this incoherent pronouncement of sympathy and encouragement, though devastated at the loss of "The Rosie Posie Girl," upon which he had already spent many creative days, Mr. Meyers departed into the outer office. [314]

For a long minute Mr. Vandeford glared at the unoffending rose in his buttonhole, then smiled, ran his hands through his hair, turned to the telephone, and plunged into the last lap of the race of "The Purple Slipper." Until four o'clock he was closeted with the most brilliant theatrical publicity man in New York City; then he took his contracts and went over to Weiner's office and sacrificed "The Rosie Posie Girl" to—

An hour later he had told his partner, Mr. Dennis Farraday, all about it, and showed him the deeds of execution.

"You ought not to have done it, Van. It was too big a price to pay," Mr. Farraday declared, with his mane ruffled on high.

"No," answered Mr. Vandeford, in happy calmness. "'The Purple Slipper' will pay it all out—one way or another." [315]

"It must," declared Mr. Farraday, with helpless energy. "What can I do?"

"Oh, be the usual ray of sunshine around the place and—and keep the Violet happy and busy until we land on Broadway." Mr. Vandeford said this with a coldness in tone and voice that he had to force hard. His attitude was that he had had to sacrifice himself so why not sacrifice Mr. Farraday also? And he hated himself for that attitude.

"I understand, and you can count on me," answered Mr. Farraday, with such an innocently happy face that Mr. Vandeford groaned inwardly at the fact that he did not understand, and would surely be made to soon if his calculations on the intentions of Miss Hawtry were correct.

"I've arranged for a chair-car to take the whole company down to Atlantic City Sunday morning, so the whole bunch can have a plunge and a good rest-up before the Monday dress rehearsal." Mr. Farraday produced that piece of business with great pride. [316]

"Good!" was all the commendation that he got, and he betook himself off for other good-natured efforts on the affairs of "The Purple Slipper."

Though at times Mr. Godfrey Vandeford approached the heroic in action, he was very human in reflexes and, having paid a price for the happiness of Miss Patricia Adair, he proceeded to partake of as much of that happiness as he could get hold of. He captured the author of "The Purple Slipper" after the rehearsals on Friday, which were the last before the dress rehearsal in Atlantic City on Monday night, because the cast of a play are, after all, so many human beings, who have to be given at least a day for such animal functions as packing trunks, closing apartments, dodging creditors, and severing home ties, and he carried her off to the country with the intention of having her all to himself for dinner at a little inn up Westchester way. After they had started in that direction and were flying behind Valentine along sun-gilded country lanes, he changed his mind, changed the road slightly, and had them landed under the wing of Mrs. Farraday for dinner. He did this with direct intention. He judged himself, and decided that it would be safest to announce to Miss Adair that her play was to have the honor of opening the great New Carnival Theatre on Broadway somewhere within two hundred yards of Mrs. Farraday. This program he carried out with efficient directness and then found a strange lacking in himself. [317]

"Oh, how wonderful you are!" was Miss Adair's exclamation when he had imparted his news just as a young moon was silvering the poplar under which they sat on an old stone bench at the bottom of the sunken garden. "Everybody has said that you couldn't do it, but I didn't worry at all like the rest of them. I knew that you could."

"How did you know that I could do it?" he asked, and he rejoiced with pride that his author did not yet know of either the existence or his sacrifice of "The Rosie Posie Girl." [318]

"Why, I don't know—I knew just because I—I—" For the first time Mr. Vandeford was absolutely certain of the flutter towards him, and at the same time felt certain that he was the first man who ever had been certain of it; and just as his breast and arms were hollowing themselves to nest it he—denied it and himself. He didn't want it at a purchase price, and he took Miss Adair home and locked her in the Y. W. C. A. before midnight.

The journey down to Atlantic City on Sunday morning was accomplished with much joy and hilarity. The entire cast of "The Purple Slipper" acted like boys and girls let out of school, and mischievous children at that. Miss Adair enjoyed it all immensely, and at times she very timidly joined in the fun, which was centering itself upon putting Mr. Leigh of the uncertain feet, and Miss Grayson, the glowerer, into white ribbon bonds, which bonds were supplied from a large box of bonbons, the identity of the donor of which she refused to reveal, though Mr. Kent declared he had brought her to the station in a gold limousine with diamond wheels, and bore the name of Billy Astorbilt. [319]

Only Miss Hawtry held aloof, as she and her maid and various pieces of ultra luggage occupied the four seats at the end of the car. The seat next her was kept vacant, and at various times during the several hours' run Mr. Vandeford, Mr. Height, and Miss Adair occupied it with respectful tribute, but most of the time Mr. Farraday sat considerably beside her, and smiled upon the fun. Mr. William Rooney and Fido rode in the day-coach and worked the entire way on duplicate prompt copies.

Also Mr. Rooney and Fido were absent that evening from the dinner-party given by Mr. Farraday in the great new hotel to the entire cast of "The Purple Slipper"—in honor of Miss Hawtry. They were working with the stage-carpenter, the property-man, and the electrician until a late hour, when they met the members of the dinner-party in pairs in wheel-chairs being trundled along the board-walk for sea air before retiring. [320]

"Hope the angel gave the bunch enough drink to keep 'em asleep until two-thirty to-morrow," Mr. Rooney remarked to Fido as he spat out into the Atlantic Ocean. "I'm going to put the gaff to 'em to-morrow night, and I want to start with 'em unstrung and string 'em to suit myself. That little author is some girl, but I wonder why Vandeford wanted to shunt that white devil onto a nice boob like Farraday, and him his friend, too," he further remarked as he watched the star and the angel being trundled by in one of the big wicker perambulators that infest the board walk.

In the other direction were being trundled the author and the producer of "The Purple Slipper," and at that moment they were in the mood of fellow-workmen at the machine of "The Purple Slipper." [321]

"Rooney sent me word that the lighting is doubtful. This rotten little theater is hard to count on for any kind of unusual lighting, and we must have that diffusion for the dinner scene so as to make the candle effect seem real," Mr. Vandeford was saying with great animation to Miss Adair and with a total lack of sentiment under the same young moon that had baffled him Friday night out in Westchester.

"The whole thing seems a confused jumble to me," admitted Miss Adair. "I feel as if I couldn't wait until to-morrow night to really see the play with the costumes and scenery and love scenes and all in the right place. And yet I'm so tired I feel as if I could sleep a week."

"I'll shake you if you go dead on me here as you did the other night in the car," threatened Mr. Vandeford, with a laugh, but he adjusted his shoulder back of hers as if he considered the danger entirely real. [322]

"I'll certainly do it if you don't take me back where I belong, wherever it is," threatened Miss Adair. "I hope Mildred isn't as—as tired as I am and—and can help me. I'll go to bed with my clothes on if she doesn't," Miss Adair gasped between yawns, and fluttered to Mr. Vandeford with a frank intention of gaining support.

"Back to the hotel, boy, and go a good pace. Double tip," commanded Mr. Vandeford to their propelling Italian youth, with an alarm which puzzled him as much as it would have puzzled many of his friends, while he accorded his exhausted author the amount of support needed for the occasion—and no more.

And as Mr. Rooney had hoped, the entire cast of "The Purple Slipper" slept into the afternoon of the dress-rehearsal day in the complete collapse which the sea air induced, and they were in a good condition for restringing. In fact, some of them began that process for themselves by an afternoon plunge in the ocean. [323]

One of those plunges had an after-effect on the fate of "The Purple Slipper" further than keying up Mr. Gerald Height for his dress rehearsals. When he discovered, while detaining Miss Adair for a chat after his late luncheon, that the author had never beheld the sea before in all her inland existence, and had never been in it, he insisted on procuring a bathing-suit and initiating her into that sport. She assented to the proposition with the greatest eagerness, and in less than half an hour she had trusted herself to the arms of Mr. Gerald Height and the Atlantic Ocean. They were both rough in their handling, and finally she came to resent the boldness of the former as much as she enjoyed that of the latter. With crimson in her cheeks and lightning in her eyes, she first attempted to drown them both, then waded to shore, sat down on the sand, and said things to Mr. Gerald Height, which had the magic effect of making him unburden himself and his lizard-like career to her in its entirety. [324]

"You see, I didn't know what a girl who—who wrote your play was like exactly, and because I couldn't find out I have kept on trying. Now—now, by George, I know," he said, with a boyishness coming into his murky eyes. "Say, you know my mother was a Kentucky girl, and I guess that is one reason I have stuck by this fool—this 'Purple Slipper.' That and wanting to chase you down."

"Well, now that you've 'chased me down' and found that I'm not—not there, you'll stay by me and 'The Purple Slipper,' won't you?" Miss Adair asked, and then like two merry children they both laughed at her jumble.

"I will," answered Mr. Height, with the queer attachment in his heart that a man feels for a perfectly good woman who is jolly and friendly with him after she has allowed him to tell her just how wicked he is or thinks he is. "I thought the whole thing was a flivver, but when Vandeford got the opening of the New Carnival for it, I sat up and took notice. Just you watch the stuff between Hawtry and me put a line a mile long from the box office." [325]

"I'm wild to see you and Miss Hawtry in your scenes, and we must go to dress for early dinner. The rehearsals are called for six-thirty. Thank you for—for being my friend." As she rose from the sand Miss Adair held out her hand to Mr. Height, with the friendliness and confidence in her eyes that had smoothed over other rough, though not so rough, places of the same character in her young life.

"That's some kid and there are lots like her. I've got to halt sooner or later," Mr. Height muttered to himself as he dressed for his early dinner. "I'm going to put this fool play across for her, too." There are a few women who distill loyalty out of declined passion; but not many. They make their mark on their generation.

The dress rehearsals of a play are varied in finish and intensity, but the variety which Mr. William Rooney conducted was of the most brilliant, and he expected them to go as well as the opening night. He made small allowance for the strangeness of lights, scenery, and costuming, and that allowance was only for time, not in smoothness. As he willed, his cast generally performed. The cast of "The Purple Slipper" was of experienced actors, and he felt certain that they would meet his expectations. At six-thirty o'clock he seated himself in the middle seat of the sixth row center, looked around to see that the electrician and the costumer were at hand to catch any criticism he wished to make, and in a crisp hard voice that exploded like a cannon he called up the curtain. [326]

The author was at her post in the left stage box, and bulwarked and buttressed by the producer as usual, while Mr. Dennis Farraday, the angel, sat alone in the box opposite, with a delighted smile on his broad face.

The curtain went up, and "The Purple Slipper" glided on the stage with never a creak or a careen. The lights scintillated and glared on the wonderful costumes and scenery, and the sparkling dialogue began to unwind itself into the startling plot. For the first ten minutes the author glowed with such joyous excitement that the producer felt the actual radiations; then little by little he felt her begin to cool, and a chill ran up and down his own spine as Hawtry and Height held the stage alone in the first dash of Howard-"pepped" dalliance near the last of the first act. He held his breath, frozen within him, until the curtain went down, and then he refused to turn to the author at his side. He was in a panic and undecided what to do until Mr. Rooney relieved him of the need of action. [327]

"Mr. Vandeford," he commanded from the middle of the theater, "get New York on the wire and have Lindenbergl start a good scenery man out on the early morning train. That back-drop must have a toning wash: it jumps out at the costumes. Lindenbergl is in his office until seven to get a message from you. It's ten to now. You gotter jump." [328]

Without a look at Miss Adair, Mr. Vandeford "jumped," and thus she was left alone to watch the second act grind along to its climax, with Hawtry acting the high-bred virago with an extremity of brilliant sensuality, with Mr. Height supporting her in broad lines that could be well-read between. Once the author looked at Mr. Dennis Farraday in the box opposite, and then looked away from his blazing enjoyment of the startling climax, which the lovers acted in such beauty of body, and such beauty of execution that, without knowing why, she was thrilled from her head to her feet.

"Broad standards," she whispered to encourage herself, as her eyes shone and her cheeks glowed as she lowered her head and re-read the proof of the program to be used on Tuesday night, which Mr. Vandeford had given her and upon which she observed the name Patricia Adair in type only slightly smaller than that of Violet Hawtry. In a few minutes the curtain was again called up; Mr. Vandeford was still absent, and again her attention was riveted to the stage. [329]

Almost the entire first half of the last act was hers, and the tension in her glowing young body had relaxed and she gave Mr. Vandeford a semblance of a smile as he seated himself beside her just before Hawtry came on the scene to lay with Height the foundation of the great dinner scene. This hurdle was held firmly in front of the young author.

Miss Hawtry entered in a blaze of eighteenth century glory, only with her authentic costume cunningly contrived to reveal more of her wonderful white body than any woman of that period would have done, and beautiful in his velvet and ruffles, Gerald Height followed her to thereupon enact a scene which was a slow and marvellous distilling of the very wine of emotion intended to go through human blood like a stinging poison. It had reached its climax, and even the emptiness of the theater was breathless when, like a whip, Mr. Rooney's cold voice brought Miss Hawtry out of Mr. Height's arms. [330]

"Cut it, cut it!" he commanded. "You couldn't get that across even on Broadway. The censor will close the show. Play it fifty per cent. and then all the subway will quit you."

"I'll play it as I choose, you black monkey, you, with your Irish name." Maggie Murphy sprang out from the body of the beautiful Hawtry to answer back gutter with gutter.

"Wait a minute, Miss Hawtry." Mr. Vandeford rose in his box from beside the author of the violent scene that was becoming a basis of a scene of violence. "Rooney, it can be played with—"

"You sit down and help your bread-and-butter baby hide her face for writing such rot instead of trying to tell me how to act." Maggie was now commanding the Violet, and she was wild with nervous rage. "She's welcome to you; five years of your living off me and my work is enough, and I don't intend to—" [331]

"Back to your lines on which Miss Hawtry enters, Miss Lindsey," commanded Mr. Rooney, in his machine-gun manner. "Get ready for your cue, Height."

Completely ignoring Miss Hawtry, who was standing down center, Mildred Lindsey calmly entered and began the beautiful little bit of persiflage with Miss Herne, who had gone on before her with an agility unlike her usual slow gait. There was nothing for Miss Hawtry to do but retire to the wings, which she did, and with the nervous bomb exploded, she continued the rehearsals to a finish with the greatest brilliancy, playing the interrupted scene at fifty per cent. of its fire, as directed by Mr. Rooney.

But the author of "The Purple Slipper" was not there to see the ending in calm after the storm, for she had fled at the Violet's attack upon Mr. Vandeford, and while he stood his ground to see the matter settled in the face of the insult, she had vanished.

CHAPTER VIII

At twelve-thirty Mr. Rooney was still in the theater with his property-man and his electrician, but just before one he left through the stage-door.

"All over, old man, you can put out your lights, lock up, and beat it," he said to the old gentleman who had sat year after year and kept the gates of his Inferno.

"Star still in her dressing-room, gent with her," the old keeper answered, as he leered at Mr. Rooney, and accepted the big black cigar offered him.

"Big, red-headed chap with the show?" Mr. Rooney questioned carelessly.

"Same," admitted the old keeper.

"Cuss her," Mr. Rooney remarked, without either special interest or malice, and took his leisurely way to his hotel.

The star dressing-room at the little Atlantic City theater, in which half the plays produced on Broadway first try out their charm, is larger than the dressing-rooms in most of the modern theaters, and dainty Susette always made any dressing-room which happened to serve Miss Hawtry look more like a boudoir than seemed possible, by taking thought to have silky rose curtains to adjust over costume-racks and windows, with covers to match to be slipped over the couple of rough chairs usually supplied dressing-rooms. A fillet covering large enough for any dressing-table, the silver and ivory of the make-up outfit, and lights shaded with the fillet over rose were about all the equipment that the French girl carried in the top of one of Miss Hawtry's costume trunks, but she managed an effect with them that many a Fifth Avenue decorator might envy. Following instructions, she had put all in exquisite order and left the theater before Miss Hawtry was off the stage. The Violet had been obliged to send her summons to Mr. Dennis Farraday by the old door-keeper; hence his knowledge of her manœuvres. [333]

Miss Hawtry was still encased in the magnificence of the costume for the final scene of "The Purple Slipper," and in the rose light of the little dressing-room she glowed like a fire-hearted opal as Mr. Dennis Farraday entered with the great hesitation of a first appearance in a stage dressing-room. His face was pale and serious. Miss Hawtry had seen that her Maggie Murphy insult to Mr. Vandeford had apparently cut more deeply into the big Jonathan than into Mr. Vandeford himself, and she had realized that she must set her scene well and act quickly and with daring if she accomplished her purposes.

"Forgive me—and comfort me. I have hurt myself more than I have hurt him," she cried out as she turned to him and expelled two sparkling tears from her great blue eyes, and held out bare, white, glorious arms to him, with the sob of a repentant child caught in her throat. [335]

Now, Mr. Dennis Farraday, great gentleman and the son of a line of gentlemen, was in the same state that many another good man and true would be in after witnessing "The Purple Slipper" as played by Miss Hawtry in her compelling animality, and his angry eyes suddenly blazed with another light than anger, as with a hard breath he admitted the big, beautiful, treacherous cat into his arms and allowed her bare arms to coil around his neck and her body to cling to his.

"How could you—how can you?" he asked, and the question on his lips made them cold, and kept them from hers—long enough.

Mr. Vandeford stood in the dressing-room door without so much as rapping for permission to enter, and his face was dead white while his eyes blazed in a great terror. He seemed not to notice the purport of the scene he had interrupted, but his voice cut into the situation like cold steel.

"Denny, we can't find Miss Adair anywhere, and here's a note she left Miss Lindsey. What do you make of it?" He handed Mr. Farraday a sheet of hotel note-paper, which he took with a trembling hand while Miss Hawtry shrank back against her lace-covered dressing-table and gathered her forces to annihilate Mr. Vandeford. This was the note, which Mr. Farraday read with one glance, but failed to read to Miss Hawtry, because its few lines struck all consciousness of her existence entirely from his mind. [336]

Dear Mildred:

Dishonor has never smirched the name of Adair until I put it on that theater program. I have branded the annals of my family, and I never want to look into a human face again. Good-by. You've been good to me.

PATRICIA.

"My God! What do you suppose she means?" Mr. Farraday gasped, as he looked in abject terror at Mr. Vandeford, who returned his glance in kind.

"And I promised Roger to take care of her," Mr. Farraday gasped, and without so much as a glance at Miss Hawtry, both men departed with all the rapidity possible. There must be some reason that all bonds without-the-law are so brittle, and those of friendship and honor and love so strong within the code. [337]

Miss Hawtry did some rapid thinking, as unaided, she slipped from the costume of the star of "The Purple Slipper" into her normal raiment and character. Then she called a wheel-chair and had herself trundled to the hotel. While she was propelled, many other wheels were turning and turning fast.

"What does Miss Lindsey think is the matter, and where she is?" Mr. Farraday questioned Mr. Vandeford as they strode along together down the board-walk towards the hotel.

"She says it's that rotten scene between Hawtry and Height that's killed her, and she is right. I felt her die right there by my side," Mr. Vandeford answered. [338]

"You two don't think she would really put an end to—to herself about a play, do you?" demanded Mr. Farraday, and he fairly staggered as he asked the question. Then not waiting for an answer, he began to run toward the entrance of the hotel half a block ahead. Just as he was turning into the doors with Mr. Vandeford closely following, an Italian wheel-chair boy darted out of the dusk of his stand, and plucked the latter by the sleeve; then together they went racing back the way Mr. Vandeford had come.

Half way down the long arbor, dusky under its vines, Mr. Farraday met Miss Lindsey, and in the subdued light they paused and looked into each other's faces; then entirely to the surprise of them both, they went into each other's arms and clung together like two frightened children. Miss Lindsey was smothering sobs which made her tender breast storm against Mr. Farraday's, in whose own a heart was racing with terror.

"I don't blame her; it was loathsome, and it was about her own grandmother," Miss Lindsey managed to say in a fierce, beautiful voice. [339]

"You don't think, do you, that—" Mr. Farraday was gasping as he held Miss Lindsey still tighter against the racing heart, which was beginning to slow down and pound against hers with a slightly different speed. However, the terror in his voice made Miss Lindsey press him to her with sustaining closeness.

"She's Southern and different, and I don't know what to think," she was saying, and in the absorption of their terror they failed to notice that Miss Hawtry passed them not six feet away in her wicker chair.

And while they clung to each other and enjoyed their fright and anxiety together, Miss Hawtry went into the telephone-booth and got a long-distance connection with Mr. Weiner in New York in an incredibly short time. Their conversation was almost as incredibly short in view of its portentousness, but while it lasted, Mr. Gerald Height and Mr. William Rooney had been added to the group of anxiety under the arbor, and they were all in close conclave, though not in embrace, when Miss Hawtry returned to them, walking with cool determination in every step. [340]

"Mr. Farraday," Miss Hawtry said, with a serenity in her rich voice and manner, "I will have to tell you as Mr. Vandeford's partner in 'The Purple Slipper' that I am entirely dissatisfied with the way the play proves up at dress rehearsal and refuse to open in it. As I am under no contract to him since Saturday night, I am motoring back to New York to-night to begin rehearsals tomorrow in 'The Rosie Posie Girl' for Mr. Weiner. Good-night!" With a stately curtsy to the assembled principals of "The Purple Slipper," very dramatic in execution, the Violet bowed herself away from them forever. Ten minutes after she was on her way back to Manhattan in a big touring-car provided by the hotel management per a telephone order from Mr. Weiner of New York. [341]

"And Van sold 'The Rosie Posie Girl,' for her opening on Broadway in the New Carnival Theater with 'The Purple Slipper,'" Mr. Farraday gasped as he sat down suddenly on one of the benches in the dim little arbor.

"Lord, what a lose, both shows and maybe—maybe Miss Adair, too," Mr. Gerald Height exclaimed, and there were both sympathy and anxiety in his voice.

"Oh, I don't know," said Mr. Rooney, as he rolled his fat cigar from the left of his mouth to the right and spat into the vines. "I've made a pretty good play out of 'The Purple Slipper.' It will go all right without her. Actors aren't so much. It's the situation and the stage-managing."

"That's what you think," jeered Mr. Gerald Height, gloomily. "I always had a hunch that I would never play wig and ruffles." [342]

"Can that hunch," commanded Mr. Rooney. "I'm going to put Miss Lindsey in the part and play it refined for a winner. Been understudying Miss Hawtry, haven't you, Miss Lindsey?"

"Yes," answered Miss Lindsey, and a sudden radiance shone from her dark, intellectual face that lit up the whole arbor and lighted a flame in the creative hearts of both Mr. Gerald Height and Mr. William Rooney. And what it lighted in the hearts of both of those gentlemen was nothing to the blaze it fanned in the heart of Mr. Dennis Farraday, where it had been smouldering along from a spark touched off the day of the beefsteak and mushrooms. "If you'll help me play it as I have seen it all along, Mr. Rooney, I can go on to-morrow night."

"Good," agreed Mr. Rooney. "I'll shove Miss Grayson up into your part, and cut out hers until we get a girl. We'll get the little author busy right now, blotting out the Hawtry smell and putting you in, as I say, refined and—" [343]

"Oh, but where *is* she?" moaned Mr. Farraday, coming back to his agony of uneasiness, which had been drugged by hearing and seeing "The Purple Slipper" and Mr. Vandeford's fortunes rescued and reconstructed right before his ears and eyes.

"There ain't but two places for a refined lady to run in Atlantic City,—the railroad station and the ocean,—and I bet Mr. Vandeford is lugging her from the railroad station right now," Mr. Rooney said with easy conviction. "Course she'd dodge back to the Christian ladies home the first mud-puddle she stepped into, but we'll set her on her feet and rub the splashes off her white stockings and—"

Mr. Rooney was interrupted in his kindly flow of reassurance by the appearance of a wheel-chair propelled by the shrewd Italian youth, who had that evening made his individual fortune, in which sat Mr. Vandeford and the author of "The Purple Slipper." Without command, he stopped beside the group of friends, and Mr. Vandeford alighted, but Miss Adair shrank back into the shadow of the perambulator. [344]

"Oh, darling, listen," cried Miss Lindsey, as she reached into that retreat and drew Miss Adair into her arms. "Miss Hawtry has thrown up the part and gone back to New York, and I am going to act it for you just as you and I have talked about it all this time. Mr. Rooney is going to help us, and we—we are going to make good for you—and Mr. Vandeford—to-morrow night. We are!"

"Just watch us, Miss Adair. I'll do my best, and I'll—I'll be like we talked the other day," Mr. Height said as he came to the other side of the wicker retreat of the hunted author. Something in his voice made Mr. Dennis Farraday put his arm around the lizard's shoulders, a thing he would not have thought of doing a week ago.

"We are all going to stand by, little girl, and it'll be some play that we produce at the New Carnival October first," Mr. Farraday put in by way of his contribution to the wounded young author. [345]

However, it was the crack of Mr. Rooney's whip that brought her to her feet again.

"Miss Adair, you and Lindsey come back with me to the theater now," he commanded the shrinking and tragic author. "Somebody get Fido and tell him to wake up everybody and have 'em all at the theater to rehearse in a hour; that'll be three o'clock. Mr. Vandeford, you'd better get in a press story over long distance before Hawtry beats you to it. You may catch a morning paper or two. Now, everybody get out and work like fun and we'll show Broadway a sure-fire hit October first."

"Can you do it, Bill?" Mr. Vandeford asked in a quiet voice. It was the first time he had spoken since he had coolly and silently picked Miss Adair up off a bench in the little railroad station and put her into the sympathetic young Dago's one-man-power conveyance. [346]

"I can take ten yards of calico, a pot of red wagon paint, and a pretty gal and make a show to fill any theater on Broadway for six months—if I'm let alone," answered Mr. Rooney, with the assurance that moves mountains. "That Lindsey is one good actor with common horse-sense, and the little author filly has Blue-grass speed. Watch us!"

"Goes!" answered Mr. Vandeford, and steel sparks struck out in his keen eyes as he turned and went rapidly to one of the long-distance telephone booths with which all Atlantic City keeps up its intimate relations with New York. It was also astonishing how quickly he got his connection with a great New York morning paper and was put on the desk wire of one of the junior editors, who was a good friend in need.

.....
"Hello, Curt. Godfrey Vandeford speaking."

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.....
"With my show in Atlantic City. Can you get a note across in the morning issue?"

.....
"Good! Spread it that Hawtry is put out of 'The Purple Slipper' cast to give place to a new Pacific Coast star, Mildred Lindsey. Hawtry handed it to Denny and me rotten, but put that under pretty deep, with Lindsey blazed in top lines. I'll have my publicity man send you a special Lindsey Sunday story. Hot stuff."

.....
"Thanks, old man! By!"

Another fifteen minutes was spent in long distance communication with Mr. Meyers, and it was ten minutes after three o'clock in the morning when Mr. Vandeford slipped into his chair beside his author in the little Atlantic City Theater, which Mr. Rooney had induced the old night watchman door-keeper to open up at the hour when all teeming Atlantic City is in the depths of repose. Mr. Rooney had with him the entire cast of "The Purple Slipper," to whom he had just finished explaining the cause of their extraction from their well-earned repose.

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"Most of the Sister Harriet scenes are with me," Miss Bébé Herne was saying, with efficient energy fairly radiating from her big body, clothed in a decorous tailor skirt, but with a boudoir jacket serving for blouse. Also two kid curlers showed at the nape of her neck. "I can feed Miss Grayson into Miss Lindsey's part enough to get by to-morrow—to-night I mean. And Wallace can do the same when he's on with her. That ugly white cat Hawtry to double on Godfrey Vandeford after he pulled her out of Weehawken!"

"Get on, get on, everybody, and use your brains until they lather," commanded Mr. Rooney as he took his stand beside the left stage box. "Now, Miss, you gimme lines out of your head or your first draft when I call for 'em, and I'll take 'em or leave 'em as suits me. Then you smooth the ones I hand you into good talk, and we'll have a show here by sun-up that you'll be proud to invite your Christian lady friends to attend. And we'll keep all the 'pep' too, Vandeford, that you paid Howard to write into it, only we'll take the Hawtry dirt out of it. On, Betty Carrington, and the curtain's up."

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Then from three o'clock in the morning until almost noon the machinery of "The Purple Slipper" was overhauled and adjusted to the new cog. Mr. Rooney lashed and rubbed and polished and oiled with never a let-up on anybody, and beside him sat the author, with her head up and the bit in her mouth. For every line that rang untrue in the reconstruction she had a true one or she took a crude bit from Mr. Rooney and polished it into place. Fido sat crouched in a front seat and transcribed every word into his prompt copy so as to be a veritable first aid.

And Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, experienced show man that he was, felt as if he was witnessing a miracle as he beheld Miss Adair's original "Purple Slipper," with its haphazard amateur charm, again put forth bud and bloom on the branches of Grant Howard's tight-knit, well-constructed, and well-rounded drama. The highly-colored flowers of Hawtry personality Mr. Rooney pruned away and constructed others for Lindsey, and Miss Adair lent them color and perfume in passing them to the new star, who was working steadily, slowly, surely, and with great power.

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"Don't tell him that his eyes 'burn into yours until your soul is seared.' That's old. We got to get a kind of smile here where Hawtry looked like she was going to do the ham sandwich act to Height and his silk tights." Mr. Rooney stopped the abhorred scene, being acted along about six o'clock in the morning, to demand that it be played in the proper key, up to which he had succeeded in wringing lines from Miss Adair for the first act and most of the second. "What do hearts do to each other that's hot and decent and funny all at once?" Mr. Rooney fired this biological question to the author of "The Purple Slipper," and looked at her with a demand for an immediate answer in his little, black, driving eyes.

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"She can say 'There's chaff in my heart; guard the fire in yours,'" Miss Adair supplied offhand.

"That hands it to him, and a good double meaning, too," Mr. Rooney approved. "Go ahead, Height, but don't get this lady mixed with the other kind. Remember, she lives at the ladies Christian home." The laugh that greeted this sally was an uproar that added to the dash and quick fire of the big scene, which Miss Adair and Mr. Rooney had so quickly expurgated and reconstructed between them.

At seven o'clock the play had been entirely run through, and Fido had the result in his prompt copy and was beginning to rapidly write it into their lines for each of the cast.

"One half hour to get breakfast and Miss Herne's back hair down," Mr. Rooney said, with the callousness of a slave-driver. "Then if you run through again fairly well we'll be done by noon, and everybody can hit the hay for six hours."

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Mr. Vandeford watched his author's proud little head droop on the box rail in front of her, and with his face very white he motioned Mr. Farraday to come to her. After his degrading the night before at the hands of Miss Hawtry, he felt that he would be unable to endure the pain of the repulsion he felt sure he would find in her eyes if she ever looked at him again.

But his summons of Mr. Farraday failed in peremptoriness, for that big, bonny gentleman nodded to him, then stood in the wing to catch Miss Lindsey in his arms and bear her away to immediate nourishment. In the excitement of the last few hours a domesticity had grown up between Mr. Farraday and Miss Lindsey that it would have taken months to build in a world less hectic than that in which they were then living.

Their courtship had been brief, and consisted in one question, asked by Mr. Farraday while Miss Lindsey stood in the wings waiting for a moderated, impassioned cue from Mr. Height, and answered by her as she responded to him and the call of her stage lover at the same moment. [353]

"When will you marry me?"

"When 'The Purple Slipper' goes on Broadway."

In the circumstances it was natural that Mr. Dennis Farraday should take Miss Lindsey for a reminiscent beefsteak and mushrooms during the only free half hour she would have for either him or food in the ensuing day, and to fail to heed Mr. Vandeford's summon.

Thus deserted, Mr. Vandeford was about to steal forth and appeal to some member of the cast of "The Purple Slipper" to come to his rescue in providing refreshment to restore the author during the precious half hour respite when "the chaff in his heart" caught fire and began to burn away forever. Miss Adair raised her eyes to his, with the faith still in their wounded depths, and smiled a wan little smile. [354]

"Please get me a glass of milk with an egg in it, and some of that brown-bread turkey," she demanded. "I'm dead, but I'll come alive again if I go to sleep a minute. Shake me when you get back with it, but get something for yourself while you are gone."

"The kiddie, the precious, spunky kiddie," Mr. Vandeford said in his heart over and over as he and the young Italian rushed to the hotel and back with a waiter and a tray of the desired refreshment, to which had been added an iced melon and a couple of bedewed roses.

The shaking had to be literally administered while young Dago Italiana held the tray, and then had to be repeated several times by Mr. Vandeford, as he almost as literally fed his exhausted author, up until the very minute in which Mr. Rooney rang up the curtain and again called her into action. [355]

Five hours was more than enough for the smooth running of the three-hour "Purple Slipper" show, and at eleven o'clock Mr. Rooney dismissed his jaded cast with this strict command delivered in his rich, deep voice, which held a note of genuine solemnity.

"All of you go to sleep every minute between now and night, and then come back here and make good—for all of us."

With the assistance of young Dago Italiana, Mr. Vandeford delivered Miss Adair to a hotel maid, who accepted five dollars from him as a fee for putting her to bed, and then he plunged into still greater strenuositities.

He sat for three hours with his skilled young publicity man and advance-agent, and laid out a discreet, dignified, but very interesting, publicity campaign for the new star of "The Purple Slipper." Due importance was to be given in all the notices that "The Purple Slipper" was to open the New Carnival Theater and in his heart the young advertiser put away the intention of making the fact that Mr. Vandeford had sold Hawtry and "The Rosie Posie Girl" for "The Purple Slipper," his most brilliant reserve story to set all of Broadway, at least, agog for the opening of the expensive new play. [356]

"It puts 'The Purple Slipper' at the big end of the horn, and it's not your fault that there is only the little end of the horn left for 'The Rosie Posie Girl' for the time being," he explained to Mr. Vandeford. "You see, it is a kind of double-cross that acts both ways. If it goes, people will think it was worth your paying a big price for, and if it fails, they'll think the 'Rosie Posie Girl' couldn't have been much if you traded a chance on such a poor show for it."

"Goes!" said Mr. Vandeford, but he was aware that the smart manoeuver, which would once have delighted his soul, made him intensely weary.

In fact, so fatigued did he feel when he left this young press schemer, that he dropped into his bed for an hour, and had a masseur come and pound him into condition to go to the train with good Dennis Farraday to meet Mrs. Farraday, Mrs. and Mr. and Miss Van Tyne, who arrived at five o'clock from big Manhattan. Mr. Farraday had had a like operation performed upon himself, and was in such a radiant condition that Mr. Vandeford felt badly eclipsed beside him. [357]

"What does it all mean about Miss Hawtry and Miss Lindsey and the show, Van?" Mrs. Farraday questioned, with greater anxiety in her face than she had had at any other opening night of her favorite's successful shows. "Are we going to have a terrible time?"

"I'm going to put you in a wheel-chair and let Denny take you up to the north end of the board-

walk and tell you all about it while I locate and make comfortable the rest of the folks," Mr. Vandeford answered with a deep relief at her presence in his eyes.

"Where are my girls?" she questioned.

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"Both dead—asleep," he answered, as if deeply happy to be able to say it of his star and his author.

His statement was only partly true, for while Miss Adair slept the sleep of the emotionally unanxious, Mildred Lindsey sat crouched by her window, with her eyes looking far out over the Atlantic Ocean, waiting for the result of Mr. Dennis Farraday's talk with his mother at the north end of the board-walk.

There are occasionally mothers who bear sons who can tell them all about things, and Mrs. Farraday really enjoyed the whole story that big, bonnie Dennis poured out to her at the sunset hour by the brink of old ocean, Dago Italiana squatting on his heels out of hearing and basking in inactivity, from the moment of the beefsteak episode in his and Miss Lindsey's acquaintance up to the moment in which Miss Hawtry had established herself in his arms on the occasion of his début in a stage dressing-room. And even at that stage of the narration she rather astonished Mr. Farraday, who was shamefaced enough at the telling, by saying with soft pity in her motherly voice:

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"The poor woman. Of course she couldn't help loving you, and now she's lost both Van and you. Now go on and tell me about Mildred."

"She—she's the best ever," was Mr. Farraday's explicit and enlightening answer.

"Of course she is. I saw that the time you brought her to dinner with me, and also that you were in love with her. She's really a rather wonderful girl, and—and—Dennis, I'll tell you something that I never expected to tell you—I've always wanted to be an actress. I simply adore that Lindsey girl, and I know she'll make a great actress. Why on earth should she want to marry you?" Which goes to show that aristocratic Mrs. Farraday was not the ordinary mother.

"Let's go ask her," roared big Dennis, as he embraced her in a way that made the sympathetic and now wealthy young Dago Italiana flash his white teeth in joy.

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And nobody can say how much the fate of "The Purple Slipper" was affected by the fact that Rosalind went upon the stage for her first appearance as a star, straight from the tender arms of stately, white-haired Mrs. Farraday.

The opening night of "The Purple Slipper," by Patricia Adair, produced by Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, and staged by Mr. William Rooney, was a triumph undisputed and acknowledged by a brilliant cosmopolitan audience such as Atlantic City furnishes any play presented to it before September the twenty-fifth, for up until that week on the board-walk of that resort East meets West and the South joins them. The eminent author sat in the left stage box with Mrs. Justus Farraday of New York and Mr. and Mrs. Derick Van Tyne, and at her side was a chair into which at times dropped Mr. Dennis Farraday, but which had been reserved for the producer. Things had gone brilliantly from the start, from the moment the curtain went up with polished, interesting Miss Herne manœuvring the frightened and substituted Betty Carrington through the opening dialogue. A veritable gasp of joy had greeted the beautiful Mr. Gerald Height as he entered in his colonial wig, ruffles, and velvet, and his big eyes under their bowed brows sought out the author and smiled at her with a genuine pledge of loyalty which no lizard could ever have given forth as he glided richly into his archaic banter with Miss Herne.

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"He'll get 'em going, get 'em going the whole dame bunch from Harlem to the Battery," muttered Mr. Rooney to Fido, who stood in the wings, with his eyes glued to the much annotated prompt copy. "Now watch out for Lindsey; she's doing forty sides of new stuff in twenty hours. Me for the stock company to train 'em young. Let her rip, Rosalind!" And with a nod Mr. Rooney sent his "bet" out upon the stage to make the audience forget that they had paid their money to see Violet Hawtry and make them glad to have paid it to see her.

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As Mildred Lindsey stepped out on the stage in all the glory of an almost unbelievable beauty, Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, who sat with his shoulder back of that of the author of his play, seemed to behold a vision with his trained theatrical foresight. This slender, powerful young woman, with the rose dusk of the prairie sun on her cheeks, the depths of the great cañons in her dark eyes, and the breadth of the far horizons across her broad brow seemed to him to typify the rise of order in her profession, over which so long had ruled chaos. And as her rich voice led the intrigued audience from one brilliant scene to another, in which she reincarnated before their eyes a very flower of the old Southern chivalry with dash, finish, and lucidity, he felt as if he had done his best and now had a right to be allowed to depart in peace from the world of tinsel and illusion. As Lindsey and Height held the audience spell-bound while the tempted wife dueled with her might against the tender and desperate lover, placing, with a combined art that was as great as any he had ever witnessed, the "big scene" of "The Purple Slipper" among the "big scenes" of the modern stage instead of in the class of lascivious masterpieces where the night before Hawtry had laid it, Mr. Vandeford looked down into the gray eyes of the girl who had had it all in her blood for generations, and who had so brilliantly given it birth, and felt a prophecy rise within him that soon the American drama would begin to draw on the wealth of tradition which had been piling up in a vast storage for it, and that when it did, dramatists and actors, men and women, would rise to interpret it to a wondering world.

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"Is it really mine?" she asked him, in proud surprise and wonder.

"Yes, it's yours—filtered through Howard and Rooney and all the rest, but—it—is—you," he answered. "You lost it a dozen times, but—his own comes back to a man or a woman." [364]

His eyes blazed so that the long lashes lowered over the stars in hers, and she saw the curtain fall on the last scene in a mist of tears. The onrush of applause that raised the curtain half a dozen times was confused in her by the pounding of Mr. Vandeford's heart back of her shoulder and the echo in her own.

"Fifty weeks and then some, Van," she heard the young press-agent declare, in business-like congratulation.

"Sure-fire hit," Mr. Rooney pronounced, as he spat on the stage floor behind the curtain. "Rehearsals at ten to-morrow to tighten up, Fido. Me for the hay." Miss Adair had gone back of the footlights to cast her gratitude into his arms, and he had failed to notice her appearance in any way at all, but had spat and gone on his autocratic way. Perhaps in the New World of the Theater, stage-managers may be able to afford to be human, perhaps not. [365]

Mr. Vandeford's supper-party to the cast of "The Purple Slipper" and the friends from New York who had come down to see its try-out, lasted until two o'clock in the morning, but when it was over neither the moon, which was as full that night as Mr. Kent had become by coffee and cigars, nor Dago Italiana had retired, and both stayed on their jobs out at the south end of the board walk, where boards melt off into sand and ocean and sky.

Mr. Godfrey Vandeford had got about two thirds of the way along the painful stretch of autobiography, with which he was inflicting agony on himself by recounting to Miss Adair, when she raised her gray eyes to his with the faith and reverence still at their average level, even slightly higher, and stopped his punishment.

"I understand exactly why people like you and Miss Hawtry don't marry each other," she astonished him by saying in all calmness. "Mr. Height explained it all to me the other day. Actors and actresses have peculiar temperaments that fly together when they ought not to, and fly apart when they ought to stay together. I know just how that is because I feel—" [366]

"Hush!" commanded Mr. Vandeford, as he laid his hands on the shoulders of his author, who was standing close to him, with the moonlight full on her clear-cut, high-bred face, and he gave her a savage shake. "The whole crazy bunch will have to have law and order shot into 'em or the theatrical profession will follow horse-racing to the devil. If they don't give up unfaith and the double-cross Broadway will open some night and swallow them all. And here you come out of a real world and say to me—"

"What did you think I was going to say?" demanded Miss Adair, pressing so close to him that it was impossible for him to administer another shake.

"I don't know and I don't want to hear it. I'm afraid to have you say anything to me."

"It was this: I was going to ask you what I would have done if you had been married to Miss Hawtry when I got to you and we had begun to produce our play together. It's different when men and women work together! Standards have to be broader. How do I know that I would have run away to—" [367]

"Don't, don't!" pleaded Mr. Vandeford as she crept still nearer to him and forcibly tried to open his arms for herself. "I'm punished. I've taught you myself! When I leave you how'll I ever know if I'm going to find you there when I come back?"

"Well, how'd you expect to find me—me—there if you don't take me there?" Miss Adair pleaded as she tugged at his folded arms, with such energy that her polished thumb-nail slightly marked his iron wrists.

"I'm not worthy, child, I'm not worthy," Mr. Vandeford answered with grim words, and his arms still taut against his breast.

"You have to judge yourself with the same—same 'broad standards' I judge you by, like you told me to use. Please open your arms!" [368]

"I take those broad standards away from you."

"Jesus Christ gave them to me, only I didn't understand in Adairville."

"God, I wish you had never left Adairville."

"I know what there is for us to do."

"What?"

"I'll go back and marry you by Adairville narrow standards for better and for worse, and then we'll have to keep 'em for ourselves when we come back, because we did it knowing what we know, but let other people be broad wherever they are without judging them. I'm going to drop asleep right here on the sand if you don't open your arms."

"Oh, good Lord, what did You make women out of?" Mr. Vandeford said in all reverence and bewilderment, as he took the "white flame" to his breast and drew it past her lips until it burned [369]

away all the chaff in his soul and established itself upon its altar.

After Mr. Vandeford had again delivered his author to the hopeful maid, waiting up for another greenback, he met Mr. Rooney at the desk of the hotel still on his way to "the hay."

"Closed up with Weiner to begin rehearsing 'The Rosie Posie Girl' on Tuesday, after we open 'The Purple Slipper' in the New Carnival. Said Hawtry wouldn't sign up until I had signed too. She's got a hunch for me. If you fail, their show goes in in your place; if you win, Weiner shunts John Drew or Arliss out to one of his other theaters on the road, and puts in 'The Rosie Posie Girl.' Good business, eh?" And Mr. Rooney rolled his cigar from east to west and questioned Mr. Vandeford, with a new fire for a new undertaking beginning to burn in his little black eyes.

"Fine," answered Mr. Vandeford, with all cordiality, and not even thinking of his lost thousands. [370]
"It will go big, Rooney, and I'll be glad—none gladder."

"Sure," answered Mr. Rooney. "It's all in the business. Everybody on Broadway is out to stab everybody else—but mostly it's paper daggers if you take it right."

"A tissue-paper world sewed together with tinsel thread," Mr. Vandeford murmured, as he fell asleep with his cheek pillowed on the wrist that Miss Adair had marked in the struggle for her own.

A week from that night "The Purple Slipper" had its first night on Broadway, and opened the New Carnival Theater in a blaze of glory, publicity, and electric lights. The talented young press-agent had done his work well, and the audience assembled was the most brilliant possible, made up of the usual blasé critics, eager theatrical people who were not on the boards themselves, and interested and distinguished men and women from many outer worlds. In the box facing the one occupied by Mrs. Justus Farraday, in a blaze of both the Farraday and Justus jewels and prestige, [371] and the beautiful young author of the play, with her son Mr. Dennis Farraday, and the producer, Mr. Godfrey Vandeford, sat Miss Violet Hawtry with Mr. Weiner, the owner of the beautiful new theater which was opening its doors for the first time on Broadway. When the curtain fell upon the new Lindsey star after its eighth elevation, the Violet rushed behind the scenes and took that astonished young woman in her arms, with the real tears of emotion, with which one genuine artist greets another, in her great blue eyes.

"You were wonderful, my dear, perfectly wonderful," she exclaimed. "You see, Van, I never could have done it like that. Good luck to both of you, and the little author—oh, there you are, my dear! All of you shake hands with Mr. Weiner. He's so pleased that he is speechless, but he's going to give you a big banquet on your fiftieth performance. He's promised me."

Which demonstration was perfectly in keeping with Miss Hawtry and Maggie Murphy's [372] character, and emanated from that quality within her that a month later put "The Rosie Posie Girl" up as high and as brilliant in electric lights as "The Purple Slipper," and kept it there an entire year. Which goes to prove that the "tissue paper world" is yet of heroic fibre.

When Mr. Vandeford went to insert his author into the international safety that evening at about the hour of midnight, he saw that his friend the secretary was shooing a chattering party of Christian ladies, who, as his guests, had sat in a group, fifth row center, in the New Carnival Theater that evening, off up-stairs. With his talisman key, which had never left his pocket since it had been presented to him, in his hand, he paused to speak in a friendly shadow to his successful and now truly eminent playwright.

"You'll have to go South Thursday, and I'll follow Sunday to get that little marriage business over in Adairville before we leave for the Klondike. My commission has arrived from Washington, and the Secretary of the Navy wants quick reports of the copper before the big freeze. Do you suppose I can keep you warm in Eskimo furs and—and my heart?" [373]

"Yes," answered Miss Adair, with the flutter which Mr. Vandeford now answered, without any conscious volition. "There ought to be a great play out of the Klondike. Jack London could have done it, but—but—" the faithful gray eyes were raised to his with the flame in their depths.

With a groan, but an answering flame, Mr. Vandeford replied:

"It's a fatal drag—. Yes. Some day we'll come back and try to put across another one!"

THE END

Transcriber's note

The following changes have been made to the text:

Page 12: "marischino" changed to "[maraschino](#)".

Page 14: "plenty ruffles" changed to "plenty [of ruffles](#)".

Page 14: "nee" changed to "[née](#)".

Page 29: "heatrical" changed to "[theatrical](#)".

Page 37: "mocking bird" changed to "[mockingbird](#)".
Page 40: "Highcliffe" changed to "[Highcliff](#)".
Page 42: "Vanderford" changed to "[Vandeford](#)".
Page 57: "Mademoiselle" changed to "[Mademoiselle](#)".
Page 58: "Mademoiselle" changed to "[Mademoiselle](#)".
Page 61: "atinkle" changed to "[atwinkle](#)".
Page 67: "Highcliffe" changed to "[Highcliff](#)".
Page 90: "coemployer's" changed to "[co-employer's](#)".
Page 114: "Fou get Gerald" changed to "[You get Gerald](#)".
Pages 118-119: "ear of his coproducer" changed to "ear of his [co-producer](#)".
Page 125: "Lindenberger" changed to "[Lindenberg](#)".
Page 145: "I'd going to" changed to "[I'm](#) going to".
Page 193: "She's geting along" changed to "She's [getting](#) along".
Page 220: "the he Christian" changed to "[the Christian](#)".
Page 236: "touseled" changed to "[tousled](#)".
Page 237: "manila envelop" changed to "manila [envelope](#)".
Page 245: "Vanderford" changed to "[Vandeford](#)".
Page 307: "tryout" changed to "[try-out](#)".
Page 373: "Esquimo" changed to "[Eskimo](#)".

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