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FAIRFAX AND HIS PRIDE

A NOVEL

BY

MARIE VAN VORST

Author of "Big Tremaine," etc.

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(INCORPORATED)

TO

B. VAN VORST

IN MEMORY OF A LONG FRIENDSHIP

Transcriber's Note: Typographical errors have been corrected, and inconsistent spellings regularized. For details, please see the [End Notes](#). The original versions of any corrections may be viewed as mouseover text.

FAIRFAX AND HIS PRIDE

BOOK I

THE KINSMEN

CHAPTER I

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One bitter day in January in the year 1880, when New York was a tranquil city, a young man stood at the South Ferry waiting for the up-town horse car. With a few other passengers he had just left the packet which had arrived in New York harbour that afternoon from New Orleans.

Antony Fairfax was an utter stranger to the North.

In his hand he carried a small hand-bag, and by his side on the snow rested his single valise. Before him waited a red and yellow tram-car drawn by lean horses, from whose backs the vapour rose on the frosty air. Muffled to his ears, the driver beat together his hands in their leather gloves; the conductor stamped his feet. The traveller climbed into the car, lifting his big bag after him.

The cold was even more terrible to him than to the conductor and driver. He had come from the South, where he had left the roses and magnolias in bloom, and the warmth of the country was in his blood. He dug his feet into the straw covering the floor of the car, buttoned his coat tight about his neck, pushed his hands deep in his pockets and sat wondering at the numbing cold.

This, then, was the North!

He watched with interest the few other passengers board the little car: two fruit vendors and after them were amiably lifted in great bunches of bananas. Antony asked himself the question whether this new country would be friendly to him, what would its spirit be toward him, he asked this question of the cold winter air the city suddenly took reality and formed for him out of his dreams. Would it be kind or cruel? The coming days would answer: meanwhile he could wait. Some places, like some people whom we meet, at once extend to us a hand; there are some that even seem to offer an embrace. Through the car blew a sudden icy blast and New York's welcome to Fairfax was keen as a blow. There was an actual physical affront in this wind that struck him in the face.

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Suppose the elements were an indication of what the rest would be? But no—that was ridiculous! There would be certainly warm interiors behind the snow-fretted panes of the windows in the houses that lined the streets on either side. There would be warm and cordial hearts to welcome him somewhere. There would be understanding of heart, indulgence for youth. He would find open doors for all his ambitions, spurs to his integrity and effort. He would know how to make use of these ways and means of progress. For years he had dreamed of the galleries of pictures and of the museum. It was from this wonderful city whose wideness had the intense outreach of the unknown that Fairfax had elected to step into the world.

New York was to be his threshold. There was no limit to what he intended to do in his special field of work. From his boyhood he had told himself that he would become great. He was too young to have discovered the traitors that hide in the brain and the emptiness of the deepest tears. He was a pioneer and had the faith of the pioneer. According to him everything was real, the beauty of form was enchanting, all hearts were true, and all roads led to fame. His short life focused now at this hour.

Life is a series of successive stages to which point of culmination a man brings all he has of the past and all his hopes. All along the road these blessed visions crowd, fulminate and form as it were torches, and these lights mark the road for the traveller. Now all Antony's life came to a point in this hour. He had longed to go to New York from the day when in New Orleans he had completed his first bust. He had moulded from the soft clay on the banks of the levees the head of a famous general, who had later become president. He was only twelve years old then, but his little work bore all the indications of genius.

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He was an artist from the ends of the slender hands to the centre of the sensitive heart. The childlikeness, the beauty of his nature revealed it in everything he did; and he was only twenty-two years old.

As he sat in the horse car, his heart full of hope, his brain teeming with the ideal, he was an interesting figure to watch, and a fine old gentleman on his way up town was struck by the brilliancy, the aspect of the fellow passenger. He studied the young fellow from behind his evening paper, but the old gentleman could not make up his mind what the young man was. Aside from the valise at his feet Antony had no other worldly goods, and aside from the twenty-five dollars in his pocket, he had no other money. There was nothing about him to suggest the artistic type: broad-shouldered, muscular, he seemed built for battles and feats of physical strength, but his face was thoughtful for one so young. His eyes were clear. "He looks," mused the gentleman, "like a man who has come home after a very successful journey. I suspect the young fellow is returning with something resembling the story books' bag of gold." He humorously fancied even that the treasure might be in the valise on the straw of the car at the traveller's feet.

The car tinkled slowly through the cold. After a long while, well above a street marked Fiftieth, its road appeared to lie in the country. There were vacant lots on either side; there were low-roofed, ramshackle shanties; there were stray goats here and there among the rocks. Antony said to the conductor in a pleasant, Southern voice: "You won't forget to let me off at 70th Street." He rose at the conductor's signal and the ringing of the bell. The old gentleman, who was a canon of the Church, saw as the young man rose that he was lame, that he limped, that he wore a high, double-soled boot. As Fairfax went out he lifted his hat with a courteous "Good evening" to his only fellow passenger, for the others had one by one left the car to go to their different destinations. "Too bad," thought the canon to himself, "Lame, by Jove! With a smile like that a man can win the world."

CHAPTER II

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The little figure in the corner of the pink sofa had read away the hours of the short winter afternoon curled up in a ball, her soft red dress, her soft red cheeks, her soft red lips vivid bits of colour in the lamplight. She had read through the twilight, until the lamps came to help her pretty eyes, and like a scholar of old over some problem she bent above her fairy tale. The volume was unwieldy, and she supported it on her knees. Close to her side a little boy of six watched the absorbed face, watched the lamp and the shadows of the lamp on the pink walls of the room; watched his mother as she sat sewing, but most devotedly of all he watched through his half-dreaming lids his sister as she read her story. His sister charmed him very much and terrified him not a little; she was so quick, so strong, so alive—she rushed him so. He loved his sister, she was his illustrated library of fairy tales and wonderful plays, she was his companion, his ruler, his dominator, and his best friend.

"Bella," he whispered at the second when she turned the page and he thought he might venture to interrupt, "Bella, *wouldn't* you read it to me?"

The absorbed child made an impatient gesture, bent her head lower and snuggled down into her feast. She shook her mane of hair.

"Gardiner," his mother noticed the appeal, "when will you learn to read for yourself? You are a big boy."

"Oh, I'm not so vewy big," his tone was indolent, "I'm not so big as Bella. You said yesterday that you bought me five-year-old clothes."

In the distance, above the noise of the wind, came the tinkle of the car-bell. Gardiner silently wished, as he heard the not unmusical sound, that the eternal, ugly little cars, with the overworked horses, could be turned into fairy chariots and this one, as it came ringing and tinkling along, would stop at the front door and fetch.... A loud ring at the front door made the little boy spring up.

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His sister frowned and glanced up from her book. "It isn't father!" she flashed out at him. "He's got his key. You needn't look scared yet, Gardiner. It is a bundle or a beggar or something or other stupid. Don't disturb."

However, the three of them listened, and in another second the door of the sitting-room was opened by a servant and, behind the maid, on the bare wood floor of the stairs, there fell a heavy step and a light step, a light step and a heavy step. Bella never forgot the first time she heard those footfalls.

The lady at the table put her sewing down, and at that moment, behind the servant, a young man came in, a tall young man, holding out his hand and smiling a wonderful and beautiful smile.

"Aunt Caroline. I'm Antony Fairfax from New Orleans. I've just reached New York, and I came, of course, at once to you."

Not very much later, as they all stood about the table talking, Bella uncurled and once upon her feet, astonishingly tall for twelve years old, stood by Fairfax's side, while Gardiner, an old-fashioned little figure in queer home-made clothes, flushed, delicate and timid, leaned on his mother. The older woman had stopped sewing. With her work in her lap she was looking at the seventh son of her beautiful sister of whom she had been gently, mildly envious all her life.

Bella said brusquely: "You've got an awfully light smile, Cousin Antony."

He laughed. "I suppose that comes from an awfully light heart, little cousin!"

"Bella," her mother frowned, "don't be personal. You will learn not to mind her, Antony; she is frightfully spoiled."

The little girl threw back her hair. "And you've got one light step, Cousin Antony, and one heavy step. No one ever came up our stairs like that before. How do you do it?"

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The stranger's face clouded. He had been looking at her with keen delight, and he was caught up short at her words. He put out his deformed shoe.

"This is the heavy step."

Bella's cheeks had been flushed with excitement, but the dark red that rose at Fairfax's words made her look like a little Indian.

"Oh, I didn't know!" she stammered. "I didn't know."

Her cousin comforted her cheerfully. "That's all right. I don't mind. I fell from a cherry tree when I was a little chap and I've stumped about ever since."

His aunt's gentle voice, indifferent and soft, like Gardiner's murmured—

"Oh, don't listen to her, Antony, she's a spoiled, inconsiderate little girl."

But Bella had drawn nearer the stranger. She leaned on the table close to him and lifted her face in which her eyes shone like stars. She had wounded him, and it didn't seem to her generous little heart that she could quite let it go. And under her breath she whispered—

"But there's the *light* step, isn't there, Cousin Antony? And the smile—the awfully light smile?"

Fairfax laughed and leaned forward as though he would catch her, but she had escaped from under his hand like an elusive fairy, and when he next saw her she was back in her corner with her book on her knees and her dark hair covering her face.

CHAPTER III

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He talked with his aunt for a long while. Her grace and dignity suggested his mother, but she was not so lovely as the other woman, whose memory was always thrilling to him. Fairfax ran eagerly on, on fire with his subject, finally stopping himself with a laugh.

"I reckon I'm boring you to death, Aunt Caroline."

"Oh, no," she breathed, "how can you say so? How proud she must be of you!"

Downstairs in the hall he had left his valise and his little hand satchel, with the snow melting on them. He came from a household whose hospitality was as large, as warm, as bright as the sun. He had made a stormy passage by the packet *Nore*. His head was beginning to whirl. From the sofa there was not a sign. Bella read ardently, her hand pressing a lock of her dark hair across her burning cheek. Gardiner, his eyes on his cousin, drank in, fascinated, the figure of the big, handsome young man.

"He's my relation," he said to himself. "He's one of our family. I know he can tell stories, and he's a traveller. He came in the fairy cars."

Mrs. Carew tapped her lip with her thimble. "So you will learn to model here," she murmured. "Now I wonder who would be the best man?"

And Fairfax responded quickly, "Cedersholm, auntie, he's the only man."

"My husband," his aunt began to blush, "your uncle knows Mr. Cedersholm in the Century Club, but I hardly think...."

Antony threw up his bright head. "I have brought a letter from the President to Cedersholm and several of the little figures I have modelled."

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"Ah, that will be better," and his aunt breathed with relief. Mrs. Carew's mention of her husband came to Antony like a sharp chill. Nothing that had been told him of the New York banker who had married his gentle aunt was calculated to inspire him with a sense of kinship. It was as though a window had been opened into the bright room. A slight noise at the door downstairs acted like a current of alarm upon the family. The colour left his aunt's cheeks, and little Gardiner exclaimed, "I hear father's key." The child came over to his mother's side. It seemed discourteous

to Antony to suggest going just as his uncle arrived, so he waited a moment in the strange silence that fell over the group. In a few seconds Mr. Carew came in and his wife presented. "My dear, this is Antony Fairfax, my sister Bella's only child, you know. You remember Bella, Henry."

A wave of red, which must have been vigorous in order to sweep in and under the ruddy colour already in Carew's cheeks, testified that he did remember the beautiful Mrs. Fairfax.

"I remember her very well," he returned; "is she as handsome as ever? You have chosen a cold day to land in the North. I presume you came by boat? We have been two hours coming up town. The cars are blocked by snow. It's ten degrees below zero to-night. I wish you would see that ashes are poured on the front steps, Caroline, at once."

The guest put out his hand. "I must be going. Good night, Aunt Caroline—good night, Gardiner. Good night, sir."

Fairfax marked the ineffectuality in his aunt's face. It was neither embarrassment nor shame, it was impotence. Her expression was not appealing, but inadequate, and the slender hand that she gave him melted in his like the snow. There was no grasp there, no stimulus to go on. He turned to the red figure of the huddled child in the sofa corner.

"Good night, little cousin."

Bella dropped her book and sprang up. "Good night," she cried; "why, you're not going, Cousin Antony?"

And as the older woman had done she extended her hand. It was only a small child's hand, but the essential was there. The same sex but with a different hand. It did not melt in Antony's; it lay, it clasped, lost in his big palm. He felt, nevertheless, the vital little grasp, its warmth and sweetness against his hand.

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"Where are you going?"

Mr. Carew had passed out now that he had successfully eliminated from the mind of the guest any idea that hospitality was to be extended. Once more the little group were by themselves.

"There is the Buckingham Hotel," Mrs. Carew ventured. "It's an excellent hotel; we get croquettes from there when Gardiner's appetite flags. The children have their hair cut there as well."

Tired as Fairfax was, rebuffed as he was, he could not but be cheered by the bright look of the little girl who stood between him and her mother. She nodded at her cousin.

"Why, the Buckingham is six dollars a day," she said. "I asked the barber when he cut Gardiner's hair."

Fairfax smiled. "I reckon that is a little steep, Bella."

"It's too far away, anyhow, Cousin Antony, it's a mile; twenty blocks is a New York mile. There are the Whitcombs." And the child turned to the less capable woman.

Her mother exclaimed: "Why, of course, of course, there are the Whitcombs! My dear Antony," said his aunt, "if you could only stay with them you would be doing a real charity. They are dear little old maids and self-supporting women. They sell their work in my women's exchange. They have a nice little house."

Bella interrupted. "A dear little red-brick house, Cousin Antony, two stories, on the next block."

She tucked her book under her arm as though it were a little trunk she was tucking away to get ready to journey with him.

"The Whitcombs would be perfectly enchanted, Antony," urged his aunt, "they want a lodger badly. It's Number 700, Madison Avenue."

"It looks like the house that Jack built," murmured Gardiner, dreamily; "they have just repainted it bright red with yellow doors...."

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Fairfax thanked them and went, his heavy and his light step echoing on the hard stairway of his kinsmen's inhospitable house. Bella watched him from the head of the stairs, her book under her arm, and below, at the door, he shouldered his bag and went out into the whirling, whirling snow. It met him softly, like a caress, but it was very cold. Bella had said two blocks away to the left, and he started blindly.

This was his welcome from his own people.

His Southern home seemed a million miles away; but come what would, he would never return to it empty-handed as he had left it. He had been thrust from the door where he felt he had a right to enter. That threshold he would never darken again—never. A pile of unshovelled snow blocked his path. As he crossed the street to avoid it, he looked up at the big, fine house. From an upper window the shade was lifted, and in the square of yellow light stood the two children, the little boy's head just visible, and Bella, her dark hair blotting against the light, waved to him her friendly, cousinly little hand. He forged on through the snow to "The House that Jack built."

He was the seventh son, and his mother was tired of child-bearing when Antony was born. The others, mediocre, fine fellows, left to their father's control, had turned out as well as children are likely to turn out when brought up by a man. One by one, during the interval of years before Antony came, one by one they had died, and when Mr. Fairfax himself passed away, he left his wife alone with Antony a baby in her arms. She then gave herself up to her grief and the contemplation of her beauty. Adored, spoiled, an indifferent house-keeper, Mrs. Fairfax was, nevertheless, what is known as a charming creature, and a sincere artist. She had her studio, her canvases, she wrote plays and songs, and nothing, with the exception perhaps of realities, for she knew nothing of them, nothing made less impression on her than did her only child, until one day she suddenly remembered Antony when it was too late.

He was like his mother, but she was unconscious of the fact. She only knew him as a rowdy boy, fond of sports, an alarmingly rough fighter, the chief in the neighbourhood scuffles, a vigorous, out-of-door boy, at the head of a yelling, wild little band that made her nerves quiver. Coloured servants and his Mammy soothed Antony's ills and washed his bruises. With a feeling of shame he thrust aside his artistic inclinations, lest his comrades should call him a milksop, but he drew copiously in secret, when he was kept in at school or housed with a cold. And from the distance at which she kept him, Antony worshipped his mother. He admired her hauteur, the proud cold loveliness. His sunny nature, incapable of morose or morbid brooding, felt no neglect. Late in spring they too had gone north to a water cure popular with Louisiana people, where a more vigorous growth of trees magnetized Antony, who climbed like a squirrel and tore his clothes to his heart's content. He had come in from a tramp and, scandalized by his rough and tumbled appearance as she caught a glimpse of him swinging along, Mrs. Fairfax summoned her little son. Rocking idly on the verandah she watched him obey her call, and there was so much buoyant life in his running step, such a boy's grace and brightness about him that he charmed her beauty-loving eyes.

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"Go, wash your face and hands and bring your school books here. I do hope you have brought your books with you."

When he reappeared with the volumes of dog-eared school books, she fingered them gingerly, fell on his drawing portfolio and opened it.

"Who drew these for you, Tony?"

"Mother, no one. I did them. They are rotten."

Mrs. Fairfax exclaimed with excitement: "Why, they are quite extraordinary! You must study with some one."

Blushing, enraptured, Antony was tongue-tied, although a host of things rushed to his lips that now he might be permitted to speak to her he longed to tell everything that was on his heart.

Neither of them forgot that day. The wistaria was purple in the vines, and his mother, a shawl with trailing fringe over her shoulders, rocked indolent and charming in her chair. She had made her husband and her other sons her slaves, and she remembered now, with a sense of comfort, that she had another servitor.

"My shoe is unbuttoned"—she raised her small foot—"button it, Tony."

The boy fell on his knees, eager to offer his first service to the lovely woman, but his hands were awkward. He bungled and pinched the delicate skin. The mother cried out, leaned over and smartly boxed his ears.

"Stupid boy, go; send me Emmeline."

Poor Antony retired, and as Emmeline took his place he heard his mother murmur—

"Aren't the cherries ripe yet, Emmy? I'm dying to taste some cherries, they're so delicious in the North."

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Emmeline had fastened the shoe and lagged away with southern negligence, leaving Antony's books as he had flung them on the porch, and though it was an effort to lean over, Mrs. Fairfax did so, picked up the drawing-book and studied it again.

"Talented little monkey," she mused, "he has my gift, my looks too, I think. How straight he walks! He has *'l'élégance d'un homme du monde.'*"

She called herself Creole and prided herself on her French and her languor.

She sat musing thus, the book on her knees, when half an hour later they carried him in to her. He had fallen from a rotten branch on the highest cherry tree in the grounds.

He struck on his hip.

All night she sat by his side. The surgeons had told her that he would be a cripple for life if he ever walked again. Toward morning he regained his senses and saw her sitting there. Mrs. Fairfax remembered Antony that day. She remembered him that day and that night, and his cry of "Oh, mother, I was getting the cherries for you!"

Before they built him his big, awkward boot, when he walked again at all, Antony went about on crutches, debarred from boyish games. In order to forget his fellows and the school-yard and "the street" he modelled in the soft delicious clay, making hosts of creatures, figures, heads and arms and hands, and brought them in damp from the clay of the levee. His own small room was a studio, peopled by his young art. No sooner, however, was he strong again and his big shoe built up, than his boy-self was built up as well, and Antony, lame, limping Antony, was out again with his mates. He never again could run as they did, but he contrived to fence and spar and box, and strangely enough, he grew tall and strong. One day he came into his little room from a ball game, for he was the pitcher of the nine, and found his mother handling his clayey creatures.

"Tony, when did you do these?"

"Oh, they are nothing. Leave them alone, mother. I meant to fire them all out."

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"But this is an excellent likeness of the General, Tony."

He threw down his baseball mask and gloves and began to gather up unceremoniously the little objects which had dried crisp and hard.

"Don't destroy them," his mother said; "I want every one of them. And you must stop being a rowdy and a ruffian, Antony—you are an artist."

He was smoothing between his palms one of the small figures.

"Professor Dufaucon could teach you something—not much, poor old gentleman, but something elementary. To-morrow, after school, you must go to take your first lesson."

Mrs. Fairfax took the boy herself, with the bust of the famous General in her hands, and afterwards sent the bust to Washington, to its subject himself, who was pleased to commend the portrait made of him by the little Southern boy from the clay of the New Orleans levee.

Professor Dufaucon taught him all he knew of art and something of what he knew of other things. In the small hall-room of the poor French drawing-master, Antony talked French, learned the elements of the study of beauty and listened to the sweet strains of the Professor's flute when he played, "J'ai perdu ma tourterelle...."

In everything that he modelled Antony tried to portray his mother's face. As she had been indifferent to him before, so ardently Mrs. Fairfax adored him now. She poured out her tenderness on this crippled boy. He had been known to say to his Mammy that he was glad that he had fallen from the cherry tree because his mother had never kissed him before, and her tears and her love, he thought, were worth the price. She was as selfish with him in her affection as she had been in her indifference. She would not hear of college, and he learned what he could in New Orleans. But the day came when his mistress, art, put in a claim so seductive and so strong that it clouded everything else. Professor Dufaucon died, and in the same year Antony sent a statuette to the New York Academy of Design. It was accepted, and the wine of that praise went to his head.

Mrs. Fairfax, broken as no event in her life had been able to break her, saw Antony leave for the North to seek his fortune and his fame.

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She owned her house in Charles Street, and lived on in it, and the little income that she had barely sufficed for her needs. She showed what race and what pride she had when she bade Antony good-bye, standing under the jasmine vine. She never wore any other dress than a loose morning robe of a white or a soft mauve material. Standing there, with a smile of serene beauty, she waved her handkerchief to him as she saw him go limping down the walk from the garden to the street and put of sight. True to her type then, she fainted dead away, and Emmeline and Mammy brought her to.

He thought of things in Miss Whitcomb's front room. There was nothing fairylike about the red-brick dwelling, although at the corner of the New York Avenue these two stories seemed diminutive and out of place. He made with the timid maiden ladies his own timid arrangement. He was so poor and they were so poor that the transaction was timorous—Antony on his part was afraid that they might not take him in, they, on theirs, were terrified lest the lodger would not come in. When at length they left him alone, his first feeling was gratitude for a room of any kind that represented shelter from the Northern cold, but when he had divested himself of his coat, he realized that the little unheated room was as cold as the outside. A meagre bed, a meagre bureau and washstand, two unwelcoming chairs, these few inanimate objects were shut in with Antony, and unattractive as they were, they were appealing in their scant ugliness. Before the window slight white curtains hung, the same colour as the snow without. They hung like little shrouds. Around the windows of his Southern home the vine had laid its beauty, and the furnishings had been comfortable and tasteful. The homelessness of this interior, to the young man who had never passed a night from under his own roof, struck with a chill, and he thought of the sitting-room in the vast house of his kinsmen not a block away. His kinspeople had not even asked him to break bread. Dressed as he was, he lay down exhausted on his bed, and when a knock came and Miss Whitcomb's voice invited him to supper, Fairfax sprang up and answered as out of a

CHAPTER V

His fortune of twenty-five dollars he divided into five equal packets. His weekly bill with the old ladies, to whom his aunt had begged Antony to go *in charity*, was to be six dollars. There would of course be extras, car-fare and so forth. With economy—it would last. Antony saw everything on the bright side; youth and talent can only imagine that the best will last for ever. Decidedly, before his money gave out he would have found some suitable employment.

With the summons for supper he flung on his coat, plunged downstairs and into the dining-room, and shone upon his hostesses over their tea and preserves. The new boarder chatted and planned and listened, jovial and kindly, his soul's good-fellowship and sweet temper shedding a radiance in the chill little room. Miss Eulalie Whitcomb was in the sixties, and she fell in love with Antony in a motherly way. Miss Mitty was fifteen years her junior, and she fell in love with Antony as a woman might. Fairfax never knew the poignant ache he caused in that heart, virginal only, cold only because of the prolonged winter of her maidenhood.

That night he heard his aunt's praises sung, and listened, going back with a pang to the picture the family group had made before his home-loving eyes.

Such a marvellous woman, Mr. Fairfax (she must call him Antony if he was to live with them. Miss Mitty couldn't. She must. Well, Mr. Antony then), such a brilliant and executive woman. Mrs. Carew had founded the Women's Exchange for the work of indigent ladies, such a dignified, needed charity.

Miss Mitty knew a little old lady who made fifteen hundred dollars in rag dolls alone.

"Dear me," said Fairfax, "couldn't you pass me off for a niece, Miss Whitcomb? I can make clay figures that will beat rag dolls to bits."

Fifteen hundred dollars! He mused on his aunt's charity.

"And another," murmured Miss Eulalie, "another friend of ours made altogether ten thousand dollars in chicken pies."

"Ah," exclaimed the lodger, "that's even easier to believe. And does my uncle Carew make pies or dolls?"

"He is a pillar of the Church," said his hostess gravely, "a very distinguished gentleman, Mr. Antony. He bowed once to one of us in the street. Which of us was it, sister?"

Not Miss Mitty, at any rate, and she was inclined to think that Mr. Carew had made a mistake, whichever way it had been!

Their lodger listened with more interest when they spoke of the children. The little creatures went to school near the Whitcomb house. Gardiner was always ailing. Miss Mitty used to watch them from her window.

"Bella runs like a deer down the block, you never saw such nimble legs, and her skirts are *so* short! They *should* come down, Mr. Antony, and her hair is quite like a wild savage's."

Miss Eulalie had called Bella in once to mend a hole in her stocking "really too bad for school."

"She should have gone into the Women's Exchange," suggested her cousin, "and employed some one who was out of orders for chicken pies or dolls!"

That night, under the gas jet and its blue and ghastly light, Fairfax tried to write to his mother, began his letter and left it as he began. "My dearest Mother...." She had told him little of his kinspeople, the sisters had never been friends. Nevertheless, he quite understood that, whatever she might have thought of the eccentricities of his uncle, this welcome to her boy would cut her cruelly. She had fully expected him to be a guest at the Carews.

"My dearest Mother...." He began to draw idly on the page. A spray of jasmine uncurled its leaves beneath his hand. Across his shoulders he felt the coldness of the room where he sat. A few more hurried strokes and Fairfax had indicated on the page before him a child's head—an upturned face. As he rounded the chin, Antony saw that the sketch would be likely to charm him, and he was tired out and cold. He threw down his pen, dragged out his valise, opened it, took out his things and prepared for his first night's rest in the city of his unfriendly kinsmen.

CHAPTER VI

If it had been only spring, or any season less brutal than this winter, whose severity met him at times with a fresh rebuff and a fresh surprise—if it had been spring, Antony would have procrastinated, hung back, unaccustomed as he was to taking quick, decisive action, but the ugliness of the surroundings at Miss Whitcomb's and the bitter winter weather forced him to a decision. In the three following days he visited every one of the few studios that existed at that period in New York. What were his plans? What were his ideas? But, when he came face to face with the reality of the matter-of-fact question, he had no plans. Idealistic, impractical, untried and unschooled, he faced the fact that he had no plan or idea whatsoever of how to forge his life: he never had had any and his mother had given him no advice. He wanted to work at art, but how and where he did not know. Some of the studios could use models—Fairfax burned at the thought. He could not study as a pupil and live on air. No one wanted practical workmen.

The man he most wanted to see was Gunner Cedersholm. He had fallen in love with the works of the Swedish master as he had seen them in photograph and plaster cast at the exposition in New Orleans. He had read all the accounts in the papers he could find of the great Swede. When he learned that Gunner Cedersholm was in Europe and that he should not be able to see him until spring, poor Antony longed to stow himself on a ship and follow the artist.

Meanwhile, the insignificant fact that an insignificant piece of modelling had been accepted by an inadvertent jury and placed in the New York Academy, began to appear to him ridiculous. He had not ventured to mention this to any one, and the fact that at his fingers' ends lay undoubted talent began to seem to him a useless thing as well. The only moment of balm he knew came to him one afternoon in the Metropolitan Museum. This museum was at that period sparsely dowered. Fairfax stood before a plaster figure of Rameses, and for the first time the young artist saw around him the effigies of an art long perfect, long retained and long dead.

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Turning down through the Egyptian room, his overcoat on his arm, for, thank Heaven, the place was warmed, his beauty-loving eyes fell on the silent objects whose presence was meed and balm. He took in the nourishment of the food to his senses and the colour in his cheeks brightened, the blue deepened in his eyes. He was repeating the line: "Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time ..." when two living objects caught his attention, in a room beyond devoted to a collection of shells. Before a low case stood the figure of a very little boy in a long awkward ulster and jockey cap, and by his side, in a conspicuously short crimson skirt and a rough coat, was a little girl. Her slender legs and her abundant hair that showered from beneath a crimson tam-o'-shanter recalled Miss Mitty's description of Bella; but Antony knew her for herself when she turned.

"Cousin Antony!" She rushed at him. Childlike, the two made no reference to the lapse of time between his first visit and this second meeting. Gardiner took his hand and Antony thought the little boy clung to it, seized it with singular appealing force, as though he made a refuge of the strong clasp. Bella greeted him with her eager, brilliant look, then she rapidly glanced round the room, deserted save for themselves.

"Something perfectly fearful happened last week, Cousin Antony. Yes, Gardiner, I will tell. Anyhow, it's all over now, thank the stars." (He learned to hear her thank these silent heavenly guardians often.) "What do you think? Last week we came here, Gardiner and me, we come often. We play with the ancient Egyptians. I'm Cleopatra and Gardiner's' different things, and there's a guardian here that we specially like because he taught us things useful for school if you have a weak memory. This is how you remember the poets—

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Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Pope,
Go upstairs and get some soap.

So you see we can't forget them like that. And Shakespeare's birth and death I never could remember till he taught me—

Fifteen hundred and sixty-four
Shakespeare first was heard to roar.
Sixteen hundred and sixteen
Billy Shakespeare last was seen.

When your memory's weak it's a great help, Cousin Antony. Then what do you think Gardiner did?"

Here Fairfax was more than ever sensible of the little boy's clinging hand. He looked down at the sensitive, flushed face, and the fascinated eyes of Gardiner were fixed on the vigorous, ardent little sister.

"Well," said Antony, cordially, "I reckon it's not anything very bad, little cousin."

He led them to a bench under the calm serene chaperonage of Rameses who kept sentinel over them.

"Bad," whispered Bella, "why it was the worst thing you can possibly imagine, Cousin Antony. He stole."

The child's voice dropped solemnly and the silence that fell in the museum was impressive, even though the situation was humorous. Gardiner, whom Antony had lifted on his knee, raised his head and looked his cousin mildly in the eyes.

"It was a shell," he said slowly, "a blue and brown shell. Nobody was looking and I took it home."

He confessed calmly and without shame, and his sister said—

"The guardian was cleaning the cases. I think they trusted us, Cousin Antony, we were alone here, and it makes it much worse. When we got home Gardiner showed it to me, and we have had to wait a week to come back and restore it."

"I restored it," repeated the boy, "Bella made me."

With his diminutive hand he made a shell and discoursed regretfully—

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"It was a perfectly lovely shell. It's over there in its place. Bella made me put it back again."

"The worst of it is," said the sister, "that he doesn't seem to care. He doesn't mind being a thief."

"Well," laughed Antony, "don't you trouble about it, Bella honey, you have been a policeman and a judge and a benefactor all in one, and you have brought the booty back. Come," said Fairfax, "there's the man that shuts us out and the shells in, and we must go." And they were all three at the park gate in the early twilight before the children asked him—

"Cousin Antony, where have you been all these days?"

He saw the children to their own door, and on the way little Gardiner complained that his shoes were tight, so his cousin carried him, and nearly carried Bella, who, linking her arm firmly in his, walked close to him, and, unobserved by Antony, with sympathetic gallantry, copied his limp all the way home.

Their companionship had been of the most perfect. He learned where they roller skated, and which were the cracks to avoid in the pavement, and which were the treasure lots. He saw where, in dreary excavations, where plantain and goatweed grew, Bella found stores of quartz and flints, and where she herded the mangy goat when the Irish ragpickers were out ragpicking.

Under his burden of Gardiner Antony's heart had, nevertheless, grown light, and before they had reached the house he had murmured to them, in his rich singing voice, Spartacus' address to the gladiators, and where it says: "Oh, Rome, Rome, thou hast been a tender nurse to me; thou hast given to the humble shepherd boy muscles of iron and a heart of steel,"—where these eloquent words occurred he was obliged to stand still on Madison Avenue, with the little boy in his arms, to give the lines their full impressiveness.

Once deposited on the steps, where Fairfax looked to see rise the effigies of the ashes his uncle had ordered scattered, Gardiner seemed hardly able to crawl.

Trevelyan encouraged him: "Brace up, Gardiner, be a man."

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And the child had mildly responded that "his bones were tired." His sister supported him maternally and helped him up, nodding to Antony that she would look after her little brother, and Antony heard the boy say—

"Six and six are twelve, Bella, and you're both, and I'm only one of them. How can you expect...?"

Antony expected by this time nothing.

And when that night the eager Miss Whitcomb handed him a letter from his aunt, with the heading 780, Madison Avenue, in gold, he eagerly tore it open.

"My dear Antony," the letter ran, "the children should have drawing lessons, Gardiner especially draws constantly; I think he has talent. Will you come and teach them three times a week? I don't know about remuneration for such things, except as the school bills indicate. Shall we say twenty dollars a term—and I am not clear as to what a 'term' is! In music lessons, for instance—" (She had evidently made some calculations and scratched it out, and here the price was dropped for ever and ever.)

To an unpractical woman such a drop is always soothing, and to a sensitive pauper probably no less so. The letter ended with the suggestion to Antony that he meet them in their own pew on Sunday morning at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, and that he return with them for dinner.

CHAPTER VII

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He succeeded in keeping from the kind and curious interest of the little ladies the state of his mind and his pocket, and his intentions. It had not been easy, for when their courteous hints brought no satisfaction, Miss Eulalie and Miss Mitty asked Fairfax out boldly what he "was going to do"? Miss Mitty, on whom the task of doing up the hall room had fallen, dreamed over the sketches she found (in his valise). Spellbound, she held in her hand a small head of a dryad, and modestly covered up with her handkerchief a tiny figure whose sweet nudity had startled her.

Antony parried questions. He had come to seek Fortune. So far it rolled before him with the very devil in its tantalizing wheel, but he did not say this to Miss Whitcomb. Miss Eulalie suggested to him that his uncle "could make a place for him in the bank," but Fairfax's short reply cooled her enthusiasm, and both ladies took their cue. In the first week he had exhausted his own projects and faced the horrible thought of disaster.

His nature was not one to harbour anything but sweetness, and the next day, Sunday, when the sunlight poured upon New York, he thought of the little cousins and decided to accept his aunt's invitation. The sky was cloudless and under its hard blue the city looked colder and whiter than ever. It was a sky which in New Orleans would have made the birds sing. The steeples sang, one slender tower rocking as its early ringing bells sang out its Sunday music on the next corner of the street, and Antony listened as he dressed, and recognized the melody. He found it beautiful and sang in his young voice as he shaved and tied his cravat, and made himself impeccable for the Presbyterian Church. His own people were High Church Episcopalians, and from the tone and music of these bells he believed that they rang in an Episcopal building. There was no melancholy in the honied tone of the chime, and it gave him a glow that went with him happily throughout the dreary day.

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He found himself between the children in the deep dark pew, where the back of the seat was especially contrived to seize the sinner in a sensitive point, and it clutched Antony and made him think of all the crimes that he had ever committed. Fortunately it met Bella and Gardiner at their heads. Antony's position between the children was not without danger. He was to serve as a quieter for Bella's nerves, spirits and perpetual motion, and to guard against Gardiner's somnolence. He remained deaf to Bella's clear whispers, and settled Gardiner comfortably and propped him up. Finally the little boy fell securely against the cousinly arm. At the end of the pew, Mr. and Mrs. Carew were absorbed, she in her emotional interest in the pastor, a brilliant Irishman who thundered for an hour, and Mr. Carew in his own importance and his position. Antony remembered Miss Mitty and that his uncle was a pillar of the Church, and he watched the pillar support in grave pomposity his part of the edifice.

But neither time nor place nor things eternal nor things present affected the little girl at Antony's side. Sunk in the deep pew, unobserved and sheltered by Antony's figure, she lived what she called her "Sunday pew life," lived it as ardently as she did everything. After a short interval in which she pored over the open hymnbook, she whispered to him — — —

"Cousin Antony, I have learned the whole hymn, ten verses in five minutes. Hear me."

He tried to ignore her, but he was obliged to hear her as with great feeling and in a soft droning undertone she murmured the hymn through.

"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.' Isn't it perfectly beautiful, Cousin Antony?"

This done, she took off her yellow kid gloves carefully, finger by finger, and blew them out into a shapely little hand like Zephyr's, to the dangerous amusement of a child in the next pew. Antony confiscated the gloves. By squeezing up her eyes and making a lorgnon of her pretty bare hand, Bella scrutinized the solemn preacher. Antony severely refused her pencils and paper and remained deaf to her soft questions, and, thrown on her own resources, Bella extracted her father's huge Bible from the rack and, to Fairfax's relief, with much turning of the leaves she finally found a favourite chapter in Revelation and settled down and immersed herself in the Apocalypse. She read with fervour, her bonnet back on her rebellious hair, her legs crossed in defiance of every rule of polite demeanour. Something of the sermon's eloquent, passionate savagery was heard by Fairfax, and at the close, as the preacher rose to his climax, Bella heard too. At the text, "There shall be no more night there, neither candle nor light of the sun," she shut her book.

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"He is preaching from my chapter, Cousin Antony," she whispered; "isn't it perfectly beautiful?"

Fairfax learned to wait for this phrase of hers, a ready approval of sensuous and lovely and poetic things. He learned to wait for it as one does for a word of praise from a sympathetic companion. Gardiner woke up and yawned, and Fairfax got him on his feet; his tumbled blonde head reached just to the hymnbook rail. He was a pretty picture with his flushed soft cheeks, red as roses, and his sleepy eyes wide. So they stood for the solemn benediction, "The love of God ... go with you ... always."

CHAPTER VIII

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He decided not to be the one to shut doors against himself. If life as it went on chose with backward fling to close portals behind him of its own accord, he at least would not assist fate, and with both hands, generously, as his heart was generous, Fairfax threw all gates wide. Therefore with no *arrière pensée* or any rankling thought, he went on the appointed afternoon to teach his little cousins the rudiments of drawing.

The weather continued brutal, grew more severe rather, and smartly whipped him up the avenue and hurled him into the house. He arrived covered with snow, white as Santa Claus, and he heard by the voices at the stair head that he was welcome. The three were alone, the upper floor had

been assigned to the drawing party. It was a big room full of forgotten things, tons of books that people had ceased to want to read, the linen chest, a capital hiding-place where a soft hand beneath the lid might prevent a second Mistletoe Bough tragedy. There were old trunks stored there, boxes which could not travel any more, one of which had been on a wedding journey and still contained, amongst less poetic objects, mother's wedding slippers. There was a dear disorder in the big room whose windows overlooked Madison and Fifth Avenues, and the distant, black wintry trees of Central Park. A child on either side of him, Fairfax surveyed his workshop, and he thought to himself, "I could model here, if I only had some clay."

Bella had already installed herself. Their tables and their boards and a prodigal outlay of pencils and paper were in themselves inspiring.

"There is no chair high enough for Gardiner," Bella said, "but we can build him one up out of books."

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"I'd wather sit on Cousin Antony's lap," said the little boy; "built-up books shake me off so, Bella."

Both children wore blue gingham play aprons. Fairfax told them they looked like real workmen in a real studio, with which idea they were much delighted.

"Gardiner looks like a charity child," said his sister, "in that apron, and his hair's too long. It ought to be cut, but I gave my solemn word of honour that I wouldn't cut it again."

"Why don't you go to your famous Buckingham barber?" asked the cousin.

"It's too far for Gardiner to walk," she returned, "and we have lost our last ten cents. Besides, it's thirty-five cents to get a hair-cut."

Fairfax had placed the boy before his drawing board, and confiscated a long piece of kitchen bread, telling Bella that less than a whole loaf was enough for an eraser, extracted the rubber from Gardiner's mouth, and sat down by the little boy's side.

"There's not much money in this house, Cousin Antony," Bella informed him when the séance opened. "Please let me use the soft pencils, will you? They slide like delicious velvet."

Fairfax made an equal division of the implements, avoiding a scene, and made Bella a straight line across the page.

"Draw a line under it."

"But any one can draw a straight line," said Bella, scornfully, "and I don't think they are very pretty."

"Don't you?" he answered; "the horizon is pretty, don't you think? And the horizon is a straight line."

"Yes, it is," said Gardiner, "the howizon is where the street cars fall over into the sunset."

"Gardiner's only six," said Bella, apologetically, "you mustn't expect much of him, Cousin Antony."

She curled over the table and bent her head and broke her pencils one by one, and Fairfax guided Gardiner's hand and watched the little girl. She was lightly and finely made. From under her short red skirt the pretty leg in its woollen stocking swung to and fro. There was a hole in the stocking heel, visible above the tiny, tiny slipper. Through the crude dark collar of the gingham apron came her dark head and its wild torrent of curling hair, wonderful hair, tangled and unkempt, curling roundly at the ends, and beneath the locks the curve of her cheek was like ivory. She was a Southern beauty—her little red mouth twisted awry over her drawing.

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"I thought dwaving was making pictures, Cousin Antony; if I'd have known it was *lines*, I wouldn't have taken," said his youngest cousin.

"You have to begin with those things, old man. I'll wipe your hands off on my handkerchief."

"Please do," said the little boy; "my hands leak awful easy."

His sister laughed softly, and said to herself in an undertone—

"I've drawn my lines long—long—ago, and now I'm making...."

"Don't make anything, Bella, until I tell you to," commanded her teacher, and glanced over her page where she had covered the paper with her big formless handwriting, "Dramatiss personi, first act."

"Why, I had a lovely idea for a play, Cousin Antony, and I thought I'd just jot it down. We're the company, Gardiner and I, and we give plays here every now and then. You can play too, if you like, and say 'Spartacus.' Ah, say it now."

Trevelyan felt the appealing little hand of the boy stealing into his.

"Do, please," he urged; "I don't want ever to draw again, never, never."

"Hush," said his sister severely, "you mustn't say that, Gardiner; Cousin Antony is our drawing master."

Gardiner's sensitive face flushed. "I thought he was only my cousin," said the child, and

continued timidly, "I'll draw a howison now and then if you want me to, but I'd wather not."

They left their tables. Fairfax said, "I'm no good at teaching, Bella." He stretched his arms. "I reckon you're not much good at learning either. Gardiner's too young and you're not an artist."

"Say about the 'timid shepherd boy,' Cousin Antony."

He had taken his coat off in the furnace-heated room and stood in his snowy shirt sleeves, glad to be released from the unwelcome task of teaching restless children. He loved the ring and the thrill of the words and declaimed the lines enthusiastically.

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"You look like a gladiator, Cousin Antony," Bella cried; "you must have a perfectly splendid muscle."

He bared his right arm, carried away by his recitation and the picture evoked. The children admired the sinews and the swelling biceps. Gardiner touched it with his little fingers; the muscular firm arm, ending in the vigorous wrist, held their fascinated gaze. The sculptor himself looked up it with pardonable approval.

"Feel mine," said Gardiner, crimson with the exertion of lifting his tiny arm to the position of his cousin's.

"Immense, Gardiner!" Fairfax complimented, "immense."

"Feel mine," cried Bella, and the sculptor touched between his fingers the fine little member.

"Great, little cousin!"

"I'll be the gladiator's wife and applaud him from the Coliseum and throw flowers on him."

Fairfax lingered with them another hour, laughing at his simplicity in finding them such companions. With compunction, he endeavoured to take up his lesson again with Bella, unwilling and recalcitrant. She drew a few half-hearted circles, a page of wobbly lines, and at the suspicion of tears Fairfax desisted, surprised to find how the idea of tears from her touched him. Then in the window between them, he watched as the children told him they always did, for "mother's car to come home."

"She is sharpening," exclaimed Gardiner, slowly; "she has to sharp very hard, my mother does. She comes back in the cars, only she never comes," he finished with patient fatality.

"Silly," exclaimed his sister, "she always comes at dinner-time. And we bet on the cars, Cousin Antony. Now let's say it will be the seventy-first. We have to put it far away off," she explained, "'cause we're beginning early."

Fairfax left them, touched by their patience in watching for the mother bird. He promised to return soon, soon, to go on with his wonderful tales. As he went downstairs Bella called after him.

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"But you didn't say *which* car you bet on, Cousin Antony."

And Fairfax called back in his Southern drawl: "I reckon she'll come in a pumpkin chariot." And he heard their delighted giggles as he limped downstairs.

CHAPTER IX

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He avoided his uncle, Mr. Carew, and made up his mind that if the master of the house were brusque to him, he would not return, were the threshold worn never so dear by little feet. Bella had the loveliest little feet a fellow connoisseur of plastic beauty could wish to see, could wish to watch twinkle in run-down slippers, in scuffed boots—in boots where a button or two was always lacking—and once when she kicked off her strap slipper at a lesson Fairfax saw, through a hole in the stocking, one small perfect toe—a toe of Greek marble perfection, a most charming, snowy, rosy bit of flesh, and he imagined how adorable the little foot must be.

To an audience, composed of a dreamy boy and an ardent, enthusiastic little girl, Fairfax confessed his talent, spoke of his hopes, of his art, even hinted at genius, and one day fetched his treasures, his bits of moistened clay, to show the children.

"Oh, they are perfectly *beautiful*, Cousin Antony. Wouldn't you do Gardiner's head for mother?"

On this day, with his overcoat and hat, Fairfax had laid by a paper parcel. It was stormy, and around the upper windows the snow blew and the winds cried. Propped up by pillows, Gardiner, in his red flannel dressing-gown, nestled in the corner of the sofa. Antony regarded Bella, red as a cardinal bird in her homely dress; he had seen her wear no other dress and would have regretted the change.

"Oh, I'll do Gardiner one of these days, but I reckon I'll make another study to-day."

"Me?" Bella shook back her mane.

Her cousin considered her with an impersonal eye, whose expression she did not understand to be the artist's gauge and measure.

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"Bella," he said shortly, "I'm going to make a cast of your foot."

She was sitting on the sofa and drew her feet under her.

"Only just my foot, Cousin Antony, not all of me?"

"Come now," said the sculptor, "it won't take long. It's heaps of sport."

He unrolled the paper parcel he had brought, unfolding a mass of snowy, delectable looking powder.

"Ask old Ann to fetch us a couple of basins, deep ones, some water and a little oil and salt."

When after toilsome journeys up and down the stairs of the four-storied house, the things had been fetched, Fairfax mixed his plaster, eagerly watched by the children. Perched on the edge of the divan, Bella brooded over the foaming, marvellous concoction, into whose milky bubbles she saw art fall like a star—a genius blossom like a flower. She gazed at Antony's hands as they plunged in and came out dripping; gazed as though she expected him to bring forth some peerless image his touch had called to life. His shirt sleeves rolled up over his fine arms, his close high-cropped and sunny hair warm upon his brow, his eyes sparkling, he bent an impassioned face over the milky plaster.

"Now," Fairfax said, "hurry along, Bella, I'm ready!"

She responded quietly. "I'm here. It's like a snow pie, Cousin Antony."

"Take off your shoe and stocking."

"Cousin Antony!"

A painful flush of red, the drawing under her more closely of the little legs, showed how far she had been from comprehending.

"Casts are taken from life, Bella," informed her cousin practically, "you'll see. I'm going to make a model from life, then watch what happens. I reckon you're not afraid, honey?"

Gardiner kicked his foot out from under the rugs. "Do mine."

With the first timidity Antony had seen her display, Bella divested herself of her shoe and drew off her dark stocking, and held him out the little naked foot, a charming, graceful concession to art.

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"It's clean," she said simply.

He took it in his big hand and it lay like a pearl and coral thing in his palm. Bella did not hear his murmured artistic ecstasies. Fairfax deftly oiled the foot, kneeling before it as at a shrine of beauty. He placed it in one of the basins and poured the plaster slowly over it, sternly bidding her to control her giggles and her "ouches" as it could not harm.

"Keep perfectly still. Do not budge till the plaster sets."

"Oh, it's setting already," she told him, "*hard!* You won't break off my foot, Cousin Antony?"

"Nonsense."

Whilst the cast set he recited for them "St. Agnes's Eve," a great favourite with the children, beyond their comprehension, but their hearts nevertheless stirred to the melody. As Fairfax leant down to break the model Bella helped him bravely.

"*Now*, might I put on my stocking, Cousin Antony?"

He had been pouring the warm plaster into the mould and had forgotten her, and was reproached.

The twilight gathered and made friends with the storm as they waited for the cast to harden. Old Ann came in and lighted the gas above the group on the old divan.

"Be the hivenly powers! Mr. Fairfax, ye've here a power of a dirt."

Fairfax, who had taken a fancy to the patient old creature, who had' known his mother and was really more a slave to the children than his own black Mammy, bore the scolding peacefully.

"Ye're the childest of the three, sor."

Antony caught her arm. "Wait and see, old Ann," and he kneeled before the cooled plaster and broke his model, released his work and held up the cast.

"For the love of hiven, Mr. Antony, it's Miss Bella's foot ye've got, sor."

She stared as at a miracle, then at her little lady as though she expected to see a missing member. Bella danced around it, pleaded for it, claimed it. Gardiner was allowed to feel how cold

it was, and Fairfax took it home in his overcoat pocket, anxious to get safely away with it before his uncle came and smashed it, as he had the feeling that Mr. Carew would some day smash everything for him. That night when she undressed Bella regarded with favour the foot that had been considered worthy of a cast and extracted sacredly a bit of plaster which she found between the toes, and Antony Fairfax limped home to the House that Jack Built, his heavy step lighter for the fairy foot, the snow-white, perfect little foot he carried triumphantly in his pocket.

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CHAPTER X

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He was too sincerely an artist not to make pictures of all he saw, and, being sincere, he made his lines true, and then outlined the sketch, softening, moulding, moulding.... His aunt's gentle inefficiency (she was kind to him, affectionate, and called him "her dear boy") was to Fairfax only charming, feminine softness, and he grew fond of Mrs. Carew, indulgent to her faults, listened half convinced to her arguments, admired her in her multitudinous toilettes, in all of which she was original, found her lovely and graceful. Her eyes were deer-like—not those of a startled fawn, but like a doe's who stands gazing at a perfect park, whose bosks she takes to be real forests. Mrs. Carew knew absolutely nothing of life. Fairfax at twenty-three, knew less of it, and he could not criticize her vision. He saw his uncle through Bella's eyes, but he never passed the master of the house in the halls, taking good care to escape him. It was not easy to associate fear with Bella; her father had not impressed her free mind with this sentiment.

"Father," she told Antony, "is the most important man in New York City, the cook said so. He might be President, but he doesn't want to; he likes his own work best. Father's work is making money, and he quite understands how hard such a thing is. That is why there is so little in the house, Cousin Antony. Even the cook hadn't a cent when I asked her to lend me a penny. We used to have five cents a week, but now mother has to be so careful that we're hard up. It's awful when there are treats on, Cousin Antony, because you see, you ought to do your share. That is why Gardiner and I always stick around together and say we don't like children.... No," she said firmly, "I really *couldn't* take five cents, Cousin Antony; thank you ever so much. We're bound in honour not to; we promised never to take from a stranger; yes, I know you're not a stranger, and I forget to whom we promised, but I really couldn't, Cousin Antony."

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Mrs. Carew could, however. One day, on her way to the magic car, as it waited with its lean horses and jingle-jangle to take the lady "sharping," that day she borrowed two dollars from Fairfax, who, being a pauper, had always money in his pocket; having in reality nowhere else to keep it—and having none to keep elsewhere. The two dollar bill went to join ghostly company with the drawing lessons money, and fluttered away to the country of unpaid bills, of forgotten obligations, of benefits forgot, and it is to be wondered if souls are ever at peace there.

"Father," said Bella, "is the 'soul of honour.' When Ann comes to rub Gardiner's feet at night (they are so often tired, Cousin Antony), she told me about father's character. She's awfully Irish, you wouldn't understand her. Father goes to 'board meetings' (I don't know what they are, but they're very important) and they call him 'your honour,' and Ann says it's all because of his soul. *He never breaks his word*, and when the bills come in...."

The drawing lessons went bravely and wearily on day after day. Because his aunt wished it, Fairfax guided Gardiner's inert fingers across the page and almost tied Bella to her chair. On drawing days he lunched with the household, and honestly earned his food. Half fed, keen with a healthy appetite, he ate gratefully. They had been pausing at the end of a half-hour's torture when Bella took up her monologue on her father's character.

"When the bills come in he shuts himself in the library. I hear him walk up and down; then he comes out with his face white, and once, long past dinner-time, when mother didn't come in, he said to me, 'Where in heaven's name is your mother? What can she find left in the shops to buy?' just that, he asked me that, Cousin Antony. I felt awfully sorry. I was just going to ask him for five cents, but I hadn't the heart."

That she had heart for her father, this child of twelve, and at so tender an age could see and comprehend, could pity, struck Fairfax, and on his part he began to see many things, but being a man and chivalrous, he pitied the woman as well.

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"My aunt is out of her element," he decided; "she cannot be in love with her husband; no woman who loved anything on earth could gad about as she does," and he wondered, and the deer in the park gazing at an artificial wilderness became more and more of a symbol of her.

Regarding the man they called "his honour" Fairfax had not made up his mind.

Gardiner developed scarlet fever and lay, so Mrs. Carew assured Antony, "at the door of death," and Bella had been sent away to the country. Mr. Carew lived at the Club, and Antony made daily visits and did countless errands for his aunt. One day, toward the end of the little boy's convalescence, Fairfax came in late and heard the sound of a sweet voice singing. He entered the drawing-room quietly and the song went on. Mrs. Carew had a lovely voice, one of those natural

born voices, heart-touching, appealing; one of those voices that cause an ache and go to the very marrow, that make the eyes fill. As though she knew Antony was there, and liked the entertainment, she sang him song after song, closing with "Oh, wert thou in the cold blast," then let her hands rest on the keys. Fairfax went over to the piano.

"Why didn't you tell me you sang like this, Aunt Caroline?" The emotion her songs had kindled remained in his voice.

"Oh, I never sing, my dear boy, your uncle doesn't like music."

"Damn," said the young man sharply; "I beg your pardon. You've got the family talent; your voice is divine."

She was touched but shook her head. "I might have sung possibly, if your uncle had ever cared for it. He'll be back to-morrow and I thought I'd just run these things over."

As she rose and left the piano he observed how young she was, how graceful in her trailing dress. The forced housing of these weeks of Gardiner's illness had quieted the restless spirit. Mrs. Carew was womanly to him, feminine for the first time since his arrival. It was at the end of his tongue to say, "Why did you ever marry that man?" He thought with keen dislike of the husband whose appearance would close the piano, silence the charming voice, and drive his aunt to find occupation in the shops and in charities. He became too chivalrous.

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"Flow gently, sweet Afton," as sung by her, echoed thence afterwards in his mind all his life. The melody was stored in the chambers of his memory, and whenever, in later years, he tried not to recall 700 Madison Avenue, and the inhospitable home, maddeningly and plaintively these tunes would come: "Roll on, silver moon," that too. How that moon rolled and hung in the pale sky of remembrance, whose colour and hue is more enchanting than ever were Italian skies!

Mrs. Carew had an audience composed of two people. Little Gardiner, up and dressed in his flannel gown, and the big cousin fathering him with a protecting arm, both in the sofa corner. Mrs. Carew's mellow voice on those winter afternoons before Bella returned, before Mr. Carew came back from the Club, flowed and quavered and echoed sweetly through the room. In the twilight, before the gas came, with old-fashioned stars set in the candelabra, the touching pathos of the ballads spoke to the romantic Fairfax ... spoke to his twenty-three years and spoke dangerously. He became more and more chivalrous and considered his aunt a misunderstood and unloved woman. Long, long afterwards, a chord, a note, was sufficient to bring before him the square drawing-room with its columns, furnish with an agglomeration of gaudy, rich, fantastic things expressive of her uncertain taste. He saw again the long dark piano and the silhouette of the woman behind it, graceful, shadowy, and felt the pressure against his arm of little Gardiner, as they two sat sympathetically lifted to an emotional pitch, stirred as only the music of a woman's voice in love-songs can stir a man's heart.

Bella came back and there was an end of the concerts. A charm to keep Bella silent had not yet been found, unless that charm were a book. "She could not read when mother sang," she said, "and more than that, it made her cry." And when Mr. Carew's latchkey scratched in the door, Bella flew upstairs to the top story, Antony and Gardiner followed more slowly; Mrs. Carew shut her piano, and took the cars again to forget her restlessness in the purchase of silks and dry goods and house decorations, and was far from guessing the emotion she had aroused in the breast of her nephew—"Flow gently, sweet Afton." Nothing flowed gently in Fairfax's impetuous breast. Nothing flowed gently on the tide of events that drifted past slowly, leaving him unsuccessful, without any opening into fame.

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CHAPTER XI

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Cedersholm returned to New York and Fairfax presented himself again at the studio, getting as far as the workroom of the great Swede who had started in life the son of a tinsmith in Copenhagen. The smell of the clay, the sight of the figures swathed in damp cloths, the shaded light, struck Fairfax deliciously as he waited for an audience with Cedersholm. Fairfax drew his breath deep as though he were once again in his element. Cedersholm was out, and with no other encouragement than the sight of the interior of the four walls, Antony was turned away. His mother had added to his fast melting funds by a birthday gift, and Fairfax was nearly at the end of this.

Walking up from Cedersholm's to his uncle's house, a tramp of three miles, he limped into the children's room, on his usually bright face the first shadow they had seen. Bella was already seated at her table. Her six weeks in the country had sent her back, longer, slimmer, her skirt let down at the hem an inch, and some pretence to order in her hair. The dark mass of her hair was lifted back, held by a round comb; Bella was much transformed.

"Hello, honey," cried her cousin, "what have you been changing into?"

"What do you think of my back comb, Cousin Antony? It's the fourth. I've broken three. All cheap, luckily, not the best quality."

Bella took the comb from her hair and handed it to Antony, and, unprisoned, her locks fell

triumphantly around her face.

"I like you better that way, little cousin," said Fairfax, "and," continued the drawing master, "you've a wonderful new pair of shoes, Bella!"

The little leg was encased in a light blue silk stocking, and the perfect little foot, whose rosy curves and lines Fairfax knew, was housed in a new blue kid shoe with shining white buttons, entirely out of keeping with the dear old red dress which, to Fairfax, seemed part of Bella Carew. [Pg 42]

"Dancing school," she said briefly; "mother promised us we might go ages ago, long before you came, Cousin Antony."

"About ten years ago, I fink," said Gardiner helpfully.

"Nonsense," corrected his sister sharply, "but long enough ago for *these* to grow too small." She held up her pretty foot. "We got as far as the shoes and stockings (real silk, Cousin Antony, feel). Aren't they perfectly *beautiful*? We didn't *dare*, because of the bills, get the dress, you know, so I guess mother's been waiting for better times. But just as soon as I came back from the country and they let out the hem and bought the comb, I said to Gardiner, 'There, my dancing shoes will be too small.'" She leant down and pinched the toes. "They *do* squeeze." She crinkled up her eyes and pursed up the little red mouth. "They pinch awfully, but I'm going to wear them to drawing lessons, if I can't to dancing lessons. See," she smoothed out her drawing board and pointed to her queer lines, "I have drawn some old things for you, a couple of squares and a triangle."

Fairfax listened, amused; the problems of his life were vital, she could not distract him. He took the rubber, erasing her careless work, sat down by her and began to give her real instruction. Little Gardiner, excused from all study, amused himself after his own fashion in a corner of the sofa, and after a few moments of silence, Fairfax's pupil whispered to him in a low tone—

"I can't draw anything, Cousin Antony, when you've got that look on."

Fairfax continued his work.

"It's no use, you've got the heavy look like the heavy step. Are you angry with me?"

Not her words, but her voice made her cousin stop his drawing. In it was a hint of the tears she hated to shed. Bella leant her elbow on the table, rested her head in her hand and searched Fairfax's face with her eloquent eyes. They were not like her mother's, doe-like and patient; Bella's were dark eyes, superb and shadowy. They held something of the Spanish mystery, caught from the strain that ran through the Carew family from the Middle Ages, when the Carew were nobles in Andalusia. [Pg 43]

"I am angry with myself, Bella; I am a fool."

"Oh no, you're *not*," she breathed devotedly, "you're a genius."

The tension of Fairfax's heart relaxed. The highest praise that any woman could have found, this child, in her naïveté, gave him.

"Why don't you make some figures and sell them, Cousin Antony? Are you worried about money troubles?" She had heard these terms often.

"Yes," he said shortly, "just that."

He had gone on to sketch a head on the drawing-board, touching it absently, and over his shoulder Bella murmured—

"Cousin Antony, it's just like me. You just draw wonderfully."

He deepened the shadows in the hair and rounded the ear, held it some way off and looked at it.

"I wish I had some clay," he murmured.

He had brought the cast of the foot back to show it to his aunt when an occasion should offer. It stood now in the little cabinet where Bella and Gardiner kept their treasures.

"I went to see Mr. Cedersholm to-day," Fairfax continued, for lack of other confidant taking the dark-eyed child; "now, if Cedersholm would only take me up, and give me the chance to work under him, I'd soon show him."

Bella agreed warmly. "Yes, indeed, you soon would."

CHAPTER XII

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The odours of strange meats and sauces were wafted throughout the house. Little troublesome feet pattered up and down the dingy back stairs, and whenever Bella and Gardiner were laid hold upon they were banished. They were inoculated with excitement and their nostrils pricked with the delicious smells of flowers and smilax and feast meats.

Mr. Carew annually gave a banquet to some twenty New Yorkers, who he was so generous as to

think were nearly as great as himself. The household was not constructed or run on a hospitable basis and nothing was in tune for entertaining. Sympathetic Bella, thrilling with liveliest interest, assisted at the preparations, and to her bright cheeks and eyes her mother bewailed—

"Only *twenty* glasses, Bella, of the fine engraved deer and pheasant pattern, and we shall be twenty-four."

"Mother, give me one in a paper and I'll take it down town and match it."

Her mother laughed. "Match it, why they were made by hand years ago, and are worth ten dollars apiece."

"Oh, dear," breathed the little girl, and multiplied: "Two hundred dollars for twenty. *Mother!*"

The child stole silently out from the glistening array. Ten dollars apiece. And she and Gardiner at their last nursery tea-party.... Through the door, as she slipped away, she looked back at her mother, standing thoughtful over the rows of crystal. In the great mahogany cage which, like a small dark *château*, surmounted the pedestal of carved wood, the blackbird Jetty huddled on his perch. He was a superb specimen, black as jet, whence his name, a free woodland spirit, with a yellow bill like a crocus flower, and piercing eyes. Bella passed under the cage and called up to him, "Sing, Jetty, sing."

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Piped a blackbird from a beechwood spray,
"Little maid, slow wandering this way,
What's your name?" said he.

Little Bell had wandered through the glade,
She looked up between the beechwood's shade,
"Little Bell," said she....

The child crooned to the bird her schoolroom poem. In return, Jetty sang a short, brilliant little roulade, his one trained tune, which Bella had vainly tried to pick out on the piano. She never heard half so sweet a song from any bird.

"Jetty is my *favourite* singer," she had said to Antony. But as she lingered now under his cage in order to lengthen out the time, which, because of her aching conscience, was hanging heavy, Jetty blinked down at her as she stood with her hands behind her back, her face uplifted; he peered at her like a weird familiar spirit. "Listen, Jetty. Gardiner and I took those perfectly beautiful, expensive glasses for our tea party. He smashed all three of them. There was a glass for Gardiner, a glass for me and one for the uninvited guest—no, I mean the unexpected guest. Gardiner sat down on the glasses where I had put them out to wash them. He would have been awfully cut only he had father's overcoat on (one of father's old coats, we got it out of the camphor chest)." She ceased, for Jetty, in the midst of the confession, hopped down to take a valetudinarian peck at his yellow seeds.

"Now," murmured Bella, "the question is, *shall* I tell mother on an exciting day like this when she is worried and nervous, and, if I do tell her, wouldn't it be carrying tales on poor little Gardiner?"

Jetty, by his food cup, disheartened and discouraged and apparently in a profound melancholy, depressed Bella; she left him, turned and fled.

Bella picked a forbidden way up the freshly oiled stairs and joined her little brother. There she listened to tales, danced on tiptoe to peer through the stair rails, and hung with Gardiner over the balustrade and watched and listened. The children flew to the window to see the cabs and carriages drive up, fascinated by the clicking of the doors, finding magic in the awning and the carpeting that stretched down the stoop to the curb; found music in the voices below in the hallway as the guests arrived. Bella could hardly eat the flat and unpalatable supper prepared for her on the tray, and, finally, she seized her little brother.

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"Come, let's go down and see the party, Gardiner."

She dragged him after her, half-reluctant and wholly timid. On the middle of the stairway she paused. The house below was transformed, hot and perfumed with flowers, the very atmosphere was strange. Along the balustrade, their hands touched smilax garlands. The blaze of light dazzled them, the sweet odours, the gaiety and the spirit of cheer and life and good-fellowship came up on fragrant wings. The little brother and sister stood entranced. The sound of laughter and men's agreeable voices came soaring in, the gaiety of guests at a feast, and, over all rose a sound most heavenly, a low, thrilling, thrilling sound.

Jetty was singing.

The children knew the blackbird's idyl well, but it was different this night. They heard the first notes rise softly, half stifled in his throat, where Jetty caressed his tune, soothed it, crooned with it, and then, preluded by a burst all his own of a few adorable silver notes, the trained melody came forth.

"Oh, *Gardiner*," breathed the little girl, "hear Jetty. Isn't it perfectly beautiful?"

They stepped softly on downstairs, hand in hand, into the lower rooms, over to the dining-room where the thick red curtains hung before the doorway. Gardiner wore his play apron and his worsted bed slippers. Bella—neither the little brother nor the old nurse had observed that Bella

had made herself a toilette. The dark hair carefully brushed and combed, was tied back with a crimson ribbon, and below her short dress shone out her dancing school blue stockings and her tight blue shoes. Peering through the curtains, the children could see the dinner company to their hearts' content. Bella viewed the great New Yorkers, murmuring under her breath the names and wondering to whom they belonged. Judge Noah Davis, famous for the breaking of the Tweed ring—him, Bella knew, he was a frequent caller. There was a prelate of the Church and there was some one whom Bella wanted especially to see—Cedersholm, Mr. Cedersholm—which could he be? Which might he be? Little Gardiner's hand was hot in hers. He whispered beseechingly—

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"Come, Bella, come, I'm afraid."

"Hear Jetty, Gardiner, be quiet."

And the bird's voice nearly drowned the murmur and the clamour of the dining-room. Mr. Carew, resplendent in evening clothes, displayed upon his shirt front the badge of the Spanish Society (a golden medal hung by a silken band). It was formed and founded by the banker and he was proud of his creation.

"Who would ever suppose that father didn't like company? Whoever would think that you could be afraid of father!"

Suave, eloquent, Carew beamed upon his guests, and his little daughter admired him extravagantly. His hair and beard were beautiful. Touching the medal on his breast, Carew said—

"Carez is the old name, Cedersholm."

Cedersholm! Bella stared and listened.

"Yes, Carez, Andalusian, I believe, to be turned later in England into Carew; and the bas-relief is an excellent bit of sculpturing."

Mr. Carew undid the medal and handed it to the guest on his right.

"Here, Cedersholm, what do you think of the bas-relief?"

Cedersholm, already famous in New York, faced Bella Carew and she saw him plainly. This was the sculptor who could give Cousin Antony his start, "his fair chance." He did not look a great man, as Bella thought geniuses should look; not one of the guests looked as great and beautiful as Cousin Antony. Why didn't they have him to the dinner, she wondered loyally. Hasn't he got money enough? Perhaps because he was lame.

Jetty was lame. He had broken his leg in the bars once upon a time. How he sang! From his throat poured one ecstatic roulade after another, one cascade after another of liquid delicious sweetness. Fields, woods, copses, and dells; sunlight, moonlight, seas and streams, all, all were in Jetty's passion of song.

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Gardiner had left his sister's side and stood under the bird-cage gazing up with an enraptured face. He made a pretty, quaint figure in the deserted room, in his gingham apron and his untidy blonde hair.

Bella heard some one say, "What wonderful singing, Mrs. Carew." And she looked at her mother for the first time. The lady was all in white with a bit of old black point crossed at her breast and a red camellia fastened there. Her soft fine hair was unpretentiously drawn away neatly, and her doe-like eyes rested amiably on her guests. She seemed to enjoy her unwonted entertainment.

Still Bella clung to her hiding-place, fascinated by the subdued noise of the service, the clinking of the glasses, listening intelligently to a clever raconteur when he told his anecdote, and clapping her hand on her mouth to keep from joining aloud in the praise that followed, and the bead of excitement mounted to her head like the wine that filled the glasses, the engraved deer and pheasant glasses, three of which had been massacred upstairs. The dinner had nearly reached its end when the children slipped down, and the scraping of chairs and a lull made Bella realize where she was, and when she escaped she found that Gardiner had made his little journey upstairs without her guardianship. Bella's mind was working rapidly, for her heart was on fire with a scheme. In her bright dress she leaned close to the dark wainscoting of the stairway and heard Jetty sing. How he sang! *That* was music!

"Why do people sing when there are birds!" Bella thought. Low and sweet, high and fine, the running of little country brooks, unattainable as a weather vane in the sun.

Bella was at a pitch of sensitive emotion and she felt her heart swell and her eyes fill. She would have wept ignominiously, but instead shot upstairs, a red bird herself, and rushed to the cabinet where her childish treasures were stored away.

CHAPTER XIII

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The sculptor Cedersholm had come from Sweden himself a poor boy. He had worked his way into recognition and fame, but his experience in life had embittered rather than softened him. He

early discovered that there is nothing but example that we can learn from the poor or take from the poor, and he avoided everything that did not add to his fame and everything that did not bring in immediate aids. It was only during the late years that he had made his name known in New York. He had been working in Rome, and during the past three years his expositions had made him enormously talked of. He would not have dined at the Carews' without a reason. Henry Carew was something of a figure in the Century Club. His pretence to dilettantism was not small. But Cedersholm had not foreseen what a wretched dinner he would be called on to eat. Cooked by a woman hired in for the day, half cold and wholly poor, Mr. Carew's banquet was far from being the magnificent feast it seemed in Bella's eyes. Somewhat cheered by his cigar and liqueur, Cedersholm found a seat in a small reception room out of earshot of his host and hostess, and, in company with Canon Prynne of Albany, managed to pass an agreeable half hour.

The Canon agreed with the Swede—he had never heard a bird sing so divinely.

"I told Mrs. Carew she should throw a scarf over the cage. The blackbird will sing his heart out."

The sculptor took up his conversation with his friend where he had left it in the dining-room. He had been speaking of a recent commission given him by the city for an important piece of work to be done for Central Park.

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"You know, Canon, we have succeeded in bringing to the port of New York the Abydos Sphinx—a marvellous, gigantic creature. It is to be placed in Central Park, in the Mall."

This, Canon Prynne had heard. "The base pedestal and fixtures are to be yours, Cedersholm?"

The sculptor nodded. "Yes, and manual labour such as this is tremendous. If I were in France, now, or in Italy, I could find chaps to help me. As it is, I work alone." After a pause, he said, "However, I like the sole responsibility."

"Now, I am not sure," returned his companion, "whether it is well to like too sole a responsibility. As far as *I* am concerned, no sooner do I think myself important than I discover half a dozen persons in my environment to whom I am doing a wrong, if I do not invite them to share my glory."

There was no one in the small room to which the gentlemen had withdrawn, and their chat was suddenly interrupted by a small, clear voice asking, "Is this Mr. Cedersholm?" Neither guest had seen steal into the room and slip from the shadow to where they sat, a little girl, slender, overgrown, in a ridiculously short dress, ridiculous shoes and stockings, her arms full of treasures, her dark hair falling around her glowing cheeks, in terror of being caught and banished and punished; but ardent and determined, she had nevertheless braved her father's displeasure. Bella fixed her eyes on the sculptor and said rapidly—

"Excuse me for coming to father's party, but I am in a great hurry. I want to speak to you about my Cousin Antony. He is a great genius," she informed earnestly, "a sculptor, just like you, only he can't get any work. If he had a chance he'd make *perfectly beautiful* things."

The other gentleman put out his hand and drew the child to him. Unused to fatherly caress, Bella held back, but was soon drawn within the Canon's arm. She held out her treasures: "He did these," and she presented to Cedersholm the white cast of her own foot.

"Cousin Antony explained that it is only a cast, and that anybody could do it, but it *is* awfully natural, isn't it? only so deadly white."

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She held out a sheet of paper Fairfax had left at the last lesson. It bore a sketch of Bella's head and several decorative studies. Cedersholm regarded the cast and the paper.

"Who is Cousin Antony, my child?" asked the Canon.

"Mother's sister's son, from New Orleans—Antony Fairfax."

Cedersholm exclaimed, "Fairfax; but yes, I have a letter from a Mr. Fairfax. It came while I was in France."

The drawing and the cast in Cedersholm's possession seemed to have found their home. Bella felt all was well for Cousin Antony.

"Oh, listen!" she exclaimed, eagerly, "listen to our blackbird. Isn't it perfectly beautiful?"

"Divine indeed," replied the clergyman. "Are you Carew's little daughter?"

"Bella Carew. And I must go now, sir. Arabella is my real name."

She slipped from under the detaining arm. "Nobody knows I'm up. I'll lend you those," she offered her treasures to Cedersholm, "but I am very fond of the foot."

It lay in Cedersholm's hand without filling it. He said kindly—

"I quite understand that. Will you tell your Cousin Antony that I shall be glad to see him?"

"Oh, thank you," she nodded. "And he'll be *very* glad to see you."

Cedersholm, smiling, put the cast and the bit of paper back in her hands.

"I won't rob you of these, Miss Bella. Your cousin shall make me others."

As the little girl ran quickly out it seemed to the guests as if the blackbird's song went with her, for in a little while Jetty stopped singing.

"What a quaint, old-fashioned little creature," Cedersholm mused.

"Charming," murmured Canon Prynne, "perfectly charming. Now, my dear Cedersholm, there's your fellow for the Central Park pedestal."

CHAPTER XIV

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The month was nearly at its end, and his money with it. Some time since, he had given up riding in the cars, and walked everywhere. This exercise was the one thing that tired him, because of his unequal stride. Nevertheless, he strode, and though it seemed impossible that a chap like himself could come to want, he finally reached his last "picayune," and at the same time owed the week's board and washing. The excitement of his new life thus far had stimulated him, but the time came when this stimulus was dead, and as he went up the steps of his uncle's house to be greeted on the stoop by a beggar woman, huddling by her basket under her old shawl, the sculptor looked sadly down at her greasy palm which she hopefully extended. Then, with a brilliant smile, he exclaimed—

"I wonder, old lady, *just* how poor you are?"

"Wurra," replied the woman, "if the wurrl'd was for sale for a cint, I couldn't buy it."

Beneath his breath he murmured, "Nor could I," and thought of his watch. Curiously enough, it had not occurred to him that he might pawn his father's watch.

He now looked forward with pleasure to the tri-weekly drawing lessons, for the friendly fires of his little cousins' hearts warmed his own. But on this afternoon they failed to meet him in the hall or to cry to him over the stairs or rush upon him like catapults from unexpected corners. As he went through the silent house its unusual quiet struck him forcibly, and he thought: "*What* a tomb it would be without the children!"

No one responded to his "Hello you," and at the entrance of the common play and study room Fairfax paused, to see Bella and Gardiner in their play aprons, their backs to the door, motionless before the table, one dark head and one light one bent over an object apparently demanding tender, reverent care.

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At Fairfax's "Hello *you* all!" they turned, and the big cousin never forgot it as long as he lived—never forgot the Bella that turned, that called out in what the French call "a torn voice"—*une voix déchirée*. Afterwards it struck him that she called him "Antony" *tout court*, like a grown person as she rushed to him. He never forgot how the little thing flung herself at him, threw herself against his breast. For an answer to her appeal with a quick comprehension of grief, Antony bent and took her hand.

"Cousin Antony, Cousin Antony——"

"Why, Bella, Bella, little cousin, what's the matter?"

And above the sobs that he felt tremble through him, he asked of Gardiner—who, young as he was, stifled his tears back and gulped his own grief like a man—

"What's the row, old chap?"

But Bella told him passionately. "Jetty, *Jetty's dead!*"

Soothed by her cousin's hand on her head, she calmed, buried her face in the cool handkerchief with which he wiped her tears. In the circle of his arms Bella stood, tearful, sobbing, nothing but a child, and yet she appealed to Fairfax in her tears as she had not done before, and her abandon went to the core of his being and smote a bell which from thenceforth rang like her name—"Bella"—and he used to think that it was from that moment.... Well, her tears at any rate stirred him as never did any tears in the world.

She wiped her eyes. "Jetty died last night; he sang himself to death. You should have heard him sing! This morning when they came to give him water and feed him, Jetty was dead."

Gardiner pointed to the table. "See, we've made him a coffin. We're going to his funewal now."

A discarded cigar box lined with cotton was the only coffin the children had found for the wild wood creature whose life had gone out in song.

"We don't know where to buwy him, Cousin Antony."

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"I tried," Bella murmured, touching the blackbird's breast with gentle fingers, "I tried to write him a poem, an epitaph; but I cried so I couldn't."

She held Antony's handkerchief to her tear-stained cheek.

"May I keep your handkerchief for just this afternoon? It smells so delicious. You could make a

cast of him, couldn't you?—like the death-mask of great men in father's books?"

Fairfax dissuaded them from the funeral, at which Gardiner was to say, "Now I lay me," and Fairfax had been elected to read the Lord's Prayer. He rolled the bird up in another handkerchief (he appeared to be rich in them) and put it reverently in his overcoat pocket, promising faithfully to see that Jetty should be buried in Miss Whitcomb's back yard, under the snow, and, moreover, to mark the place with a stick, so that the children could find it when spring came.

Then Bella, tear-stained but resigned, suggested that they should play "going to Siberia."

"I *can't* work to-day, Cousin Antony! Don't make me. It would seem like sewing on Sunday."

Without comment, Fairfax accepted the feminine inconsistency, and himself entered, with what spirit he might, into the children's game. "Going to Siberia" laid siege to all the rooms in the upper story. It was a mad rush on Fairfax's part, little Gardiner held in his arms, pursued by Bella as a wolf. It was a tear over beds and chairs, around tables,—a wild, screaming, excited journey, ending at last in the farthest room in the middle of the children's bed, where, one after another, they were thrown by the big cousin. The game was enriched by Fairfax's description of Russia and the steppes and the plains. But on this day Bella insisted that Gardiner, draped in a hearthrug, be the wolf, and that Fairfax carry her "because her heart ached." And if Gardiner's growls and baying failed to give the usual zest to the sport, the carrying by Fairfax of Bella was a new emotion! The twining round his neck of soft arms, the confusion of dark hair against his face, the flower-like breath on his cheeks, Bella's excitement of sighs and cries and giggles gave the game, for one player at least, fresh charm. Chased by Ann back into the studio, the play-mates fell on the sofa, worn out and happy; but, in the momentary calm, a little cousin on either side of him, the poor young man felt the cruel return of his own miseries and his own crisis.

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"Misther Fairfax," said the Irish woman, "did the childhren give ye the letter what come to-day? I thawt Miss Bella'd not mind it, what wid funnerals and tearin' like a mad thing over the house!" (Ann's reproof was for Fairfax.) "Yez'll be the using up of little Gardiner, sir, the both of ye. The letther's forbye the clock. I putt it there m'self."

Fairfax, to whom no news could be but welcome, limped over to the mantel, where, by the clock, he perceived a letter addressed to him on big paper in a small, distinguished hand. He tore it open, Ann lit the gas, and he read—

Dear Mr. Fairfax,

"I have not answered your letter because I was so unfortunate as to have lost your address. Learning last night that you are a nephew of Mr. Carew, and sure of a response if I send this to his care, I write to ask that you will come in to see me to-day at three o'clock.

"Yours sincerely,
"Gunner Cedersholm."

Fairfax gave an exclamation that was almost a cry, and looked at the clock. It was past four!

"When did this letter come?" His nerves were on end, his cheeks pale.

Bella sat forward on the sofa. "Why, Mother gave it me to give to you when you should come to-day, Cousin Antony."

In the strain to his patience, Fairfax was sharp. He bit his lip, snatched up his coat and hat.

"You should have given it me at once." His blue eyes flashed. "You don't know what you may have done. This may ruin my career! I've missed my appointment with Cedersholm. It's too late now."

He couldn't trust himself further, and, before Bella could regain countenance, he was gone.

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Cut to the heart with remorse, crimson with astonishment, but more deeply wounded in her pride, the child sat immovable on the sofa.

"Bella," whispered her little brother, "I don't like Cousin Antony, do you?"

She looked at her brother, touched by Gardiner's chivalry.

"I fink he's a mean man, Bella."

"He's dreadful," she cried, incensed; "he's just too horrid for anything. Anyhow, it was me made Cedersholm write that letter for him, and he didn't *even* say he was obliged."

She ran to the window to watch Antony go, as he always did, on the other side of the road, in order that the children might see him. She hoped for a reconciliation, or a soothing wave of his hand; but Antony did not pass, the window was icy cold, and she turned, discomfited. At her foot—for as Antony had snatched up his coat he had wantonly desecrated a last resting-place—at her foot lay the blackbird. With a murmured word Bella lifted Jetty in both hands to her cheek, and on the cold breast and toneless throat the tears fell—Bella's first real tears.

Fairfax went into the studio of the first sculptor in the United States with set determination to find work. Cedersholm was cool and absorbed, occupied and preoccupied, overburdened with orders, all of which meant money and fame, but required time. Fairfax was an hour and a half late, and, in spite of the refusal of the manservant, came limping in, and found the master taking a glass of hot milk and a biscuit. Cedersholm reposed on a divan in the corner of a vast studio giving on a less magnificent workroom. The studio was in semi-darkness, and a table near the sofa bore a lamp whose light lit the sculptor's face. To Fairfax, Cedersholm was a lion and wore a mane. In reality, he was a small, insignificant man who might have been a banker. The Southerner introduced himself, and when he was seated by the sculptor's side, began to expose his projects, to dream aloud. He could have talked for ever, but the sum of what he said was that he wanted to enter Cedersholm's studio.

"The old Italians took subordinates, sir," he pleaded.

"There are classes at Cooper Union," Cedersholm began.

But Fairfax, his clear eyes on the artist, said, "But I want to work under a genius."

The other, complimented, pushed his milk aside and wiped his lips.

"Well, of course, there *is* plenty of hard work to be done right here in this studio." He spoke cautiously and in a measured tone. "I have workmen with me, but no artists."

Fairfax patiently waited. He was as verdant as the young jasmine leaves, as inexperienced and guileless as a child.

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"I had not thought of taking such an assistant as you represent, Mr. Fairfax." The older man fixed him with clever eyes. "A man must have no end of courage in him, no end of patience, no end of humility, to do what you *say* you want to do."

The young man bowed his head. "Courage, patience, and humility are the attributes of genius, sir."

"Yes," admitted Cedersholm, "they are, but ordinary talent will do very well in my workshop, and it is all that I need in a subordinate."

Fairfax smiled lightly. "I think I may say I am a good worker, Mr. Cedersholm. Any hod-carrier may say that without vanity, and if you turn me out, I'll take a mason's place at two dollars a day."

Cedersholm smiled. "You don't look like a mason," he said hesitatingly, "though you do appear muscular. What would be your suggestion with regard to our relations?"

(Fairfax's eager heart was saying, "Oh, teach me, Master, all you know; let me come and play with the clay, finger it, handle it; set me loose in that big, cool, silent room beyond there; let me wander where I can see the shadow of that cast and the white draped figure from where I sit.")

"You are a fairly good draftsman?" Cedersholm asked. "Have you any taste for decoration and applied design?"

"I think I have."

The Master rose. "Come to-morrow morning at ten and I'll give you something to do. I have just accepted a contract for interior decoration, a new house on Fifth Avenue. I might possibly make you useful there."

Fairfax walked home on air. He walked from Ninth Street, where the studio was, to his boarding-house, in the cold, still winter night—a long tramp. In spite of his limp he swung along, his coat open, his hat on the back of his head, his cheeks bright, his lips smiling. As he passed under the gas lamps they shone like Oriental stars. He no longer shivered at the cold and, warm with faith and confidence, his heart could have melted a storm. He fairly floated up Madison Avenue, and by his side the spirits of his ideals kept him company. Oh, he would do beautiful things for New York city. He would become great here. He would garland the metropolis with laurel, leave statues on its places, that should bear his name. At ten o'clock on the following day, he was to begin his apprenticeship, and he would soon show his power to Cedersholm. He felt that power now in him like wine, like nectar, and in his veins the spirit of creation, the impulse to art, rose like a draught. His aunt should be proud of him, his uncle should cease to despise him, and the children—they would not understand—but they would be glad.

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When he reached his boarding-house, Miss Eulalie opened the door and cried out at the sight of his face—

"Oh, Mr. Antony; you've had good news, sir."

He put both hands on the thin shoulders, he kissed her roundly on both cheeks. The cold fresh air was on his cool fresh lips, and the kiss was as chaste as an Alpine breeze.

He cried: "*Good* news; well, I reckon I have! The great Mr. Cedersholm has given me a place in his studio."

He laughed aloud as she hung up his coat. Miss Eulalie's glasses were pushed up on her forehead—she might have been his grandmother.

"The Lord be praised!" she breathed. "I have been praying for you night and day."

"I shall go to Cedersholm to-morrow. I have not spoken about terms, but that will be all right, and if you ladies will be so good as to wait until Saturday——"

Of course they would wait. If it had not been that their means were so cruelly limited, they would never have spoken. Didn't he think?... He knew! he thought they were the best, dearest friends a young fortune hunter could have. Wait, wait till they could see his name in the papers—Antony Fairfax, the rising sculptor! Wait until they could go with him to the unveiling of his work in Central Park!

Supper was already on the table, and Antony talked to them both until they *could* hardly wait for the wonders!

"When you're great you'll not forget us, Mr. Antony?"

"Forget them——!"

Over the cold mutton and the potato salad, Fairfax held out a hand to each, and the little old ladies each laid a fluttering hand in his. But it was at Miss Eulalie he looked, and the remembrance of his happy kiss on this first day of his good fortune, made her more maternal than she had ever hoped to be in her life.

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There was a note for him on the table upstairs, a note in a big envelope with the business stamp of Mr. Carew's bank in the corner. It was addressed to him in red ink. He didn't know the handwriting, but guessed, and laughed, and drew the letter out.

"Dear Cousin Antony,

"I feel perfectly dreadful. How *could* I do such a selfish thing? I hope you will forgive me and come again. I drew two whole pages of parrel lines after you went away, some are nearly strait. I did it for punishment. You forgot the blackbird.

"Your little Bella."

What a cad he had been! He had forgotten the dead bird and been a brute to the little living cousin. As the remembrance of how she had flown to him in her tears came to him, a softer look crossed his face, fell like a veil over his eyes that had been dazzled by the visions of his art. He smiled at the childish signature, "*Your little Bella.*" "Honey child!" he murmured, and as he fell asleep that night the figure of the little cousin mourning for her blackbird moved before him down the halls of fame.

CHAPTER XVI

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Before Fairfax became dead to the world he wrote his mother a letter that made her cry, reading it on her veranda in the gentle sunlight. Her son wrote her only good news, and when the truth was too black he disguised it. But after his interview with Cedersholm, with these first good tidings he had to send, he broke forth into ecstasy, and his mother, as she read, saw her boy successful by one turn of the wheel. Mrs. Fairfax laughed and cried over the letter.

"Emmy, Master Tony's doing wonders, wonders! He is working under a great genius in the North, but it is easy to see that Tony is the spirit of the studio. He is at work from nine in the morning till dark, poor honey boy! and he is making all the drawings and designs and sketches for a millionaire's palace on Fifth Avenue."

"Fo' de Lawd, Mis' Bella."

"Think of it, we shall soon see his name in the papers—heaven knows where he'll stop. How proud I am of my darling, darling boy."

And she dreamed over the pages of Antony's closely-written letter, seeing his youth and his talent burn there like flame. She sent him—selling her watch and her drop earrings to do so—a hundred dollars, all she could get for her jewels. And the sum of money came like manna into his famished state. His mother's gift gave him courage to rise early and to work late, and the silver sang in his waistcoat pockets again, and he paid his little ladies, thanking them graciously for their patience; he sent his aunt a bunch of flowers, bought an image of the Virgin for old Ann, a box of colours for Gardiner, and a book for Bella.

Then Antony, passing over the threshold of the workshop, was swallowed up by art.

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And he paid for his salt!

How valuable he was to Cedersholm those days he discovered some ten years later. Perched on his high stool at the drawing-table, his materials before him, he drew in freehand what his ideas suggested. The third day he went with Cedersholm to the palace of Rudolph Field on Fifth Avenue to inspect the rooms to be decorated. Fairfax went into the "Castle of the Chinking Guineas" (as he called it in writing to his mother), as buoyantly as though he had not a leaking boot on one foot and a bill for a cheap suit of clothes in his pocket. He mentally ranged his visions on the frieze he was to consider, and as he thought, his own stature seemed to rise gigantic in the vast salon. He was alone with Cedersholm. The Fields were in Europe, not to return until the palace had been made beautiful.

Cedersholm planned out his scheme rather vaguely, discoursing on a commonplace theme, indicating ceilings and walls, and Fairfax heard him through his own meditations. He impulsively caught the Master's arm, and himself pointing, "Just there," he said, "why not...." And when he had finished, Cedersholm accepted, but without warmth.

"Perfectly. You have caught my suggestions, Mr. Fairfax," and poor Antony shut his lips over his next flight.

In the same week Cedersholm left for Florida, and Fairfax, in the deserted studio, sketched and modelled *à sa faim*, as the French say, as old Professor Dufaucon used to say, and as the English say, less materially, "to his soul's content." February went by in this fashion, and Fairfax was only conscious of it when the day came round that he must pay his board and had nothing to do it with. Cedersholm was to return in a few days, and he would surely be reimbursed—to what extent he had no notion. His excitement rose high as he took an inventory of his work, of his essays and drawings and bas-reliefs, his projects for the ceiling of the music room. At one time his labour seemed of the best quality, and then again so poor, so abortive, that the young fellow had more than half a mind to destroy the lot before the return of the Master. During the last week he had a comrade, a great, soft-eyed, curly-locked Italian, who didn't speak a word of English, who arrived gentle as an ox to put himself under the yoke of labour. Antony, thanks to his keenness and his gift for languages, and his knowledge of French, made out something of what he was and from where. He had been born in Carrara and was a worker in marble in his own land, and had come to work on the fountain for the music room in the Field palace.

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"The fountain!" Fairfax tumbled over his sketches and showed one to his brown-eyed friend, who told him rapidly that it was "divinely beautiful," and asked to see the clay model.

None had been made.

The same night, Fairfax wrote to Cedersholm that he had begun a model of the fountain, and in the following days was up to his ears and eyes in clay.

The block of marble arrived from Italy, and Fairfax superintended its difficult entry by derrick through the studio window. He restrained "Benvenuto Cellini," as he called his comrade, from cutting into the marble, and the Italian used to come and sit idle, for he had no work to do, and waited Cedersholm's orders. He used to come and sit and stare at his block of marble and sing pleasantly—

"Aria pura
Cielo azzuro
Mia Maddelena,"

and jealously watch Fairfax who *could* work. Fairfax could and did, in a long blouse made for him by Miss Mitty, after his directions. With a twenty-five cent book of phrases, Fairfax in no time mastered enough Italian to talk with his companion, and his own baritone was sweet enough to blend with Benvenuto Cellini's "Mia Maddelena," and other songs of the same character, and he exulted in the companionship of the young man, and talked at him and over him, and dreamed aloud to him, and Benvenuto, who had only the dimmest idea of what the frenzy meant—not so dim, possibly, for he knew it was the ravings of art—supplied the "bellisimos" and "grandiosos," and felt the spirit of the moment, and was young with Fairfax, if not as much of a soul or a talent.

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The model for the fountain was completed before Cedersholm's return. After a month's rest under the palms of Florida, the sculptor lounged into the studio, much as he might have strolled up a Paris boulevard and ordered a liqueur at a round table before some favourite *café*. Cedersholm had hot milk and biscuits in a corner instead, and Fairfax drew off the wet covering from his clay. Cedersholm enjoyed his light repast, considering the model which nearly filled the corner of the room. He fitted in an eyeglass, and in a distinguished manner regarded the modelling. Fairfax, who had been cold with excitement, felt his blood run tepid in his veins.

"And your sketches, Fairfax?" asked the Master, and held out his hand.

Fairfax carried him over a goodly pile from the table. Cedersholm turned them over for a long time, and finally held one out, and said—

"This seems to be in the scale of the measurements of the library ceiling?"

Fairfax's voice sounded childish to himself as he responded—

"I think it's correct, sir, to working scale."

"It might do with a few alterations," said Cedersholm. "If you care to try it, Fairfax, it might do. I will order the scaffolding placed to-morrow, and you can sketch it in, in charcoal. It can always come out, you know. You might begin the day after to-morrow."

The Master rose leisurely and looked about him. "Jove," he murmured, "it's good to be back again to the lares and penates."

Fairfax left the Master among the lares and penates, left him amongst the treasures of his own first youth, the first-fruits of his ardent young labour, and he went out, not conscious of how he quivered until he was on his way up-town. What an ass he was! No doubt the stuff was rubbish! What could he hope to attain without study and long apprenticeship? Why, he was nothing more than a boy. Cedersholm had been decent not to laugh in his face—Cedersholm's had been at once the kindest and the cruelest criticism. He called himself a thousand times a fool. He had no talent, he was marked for failure. He would sweep the streets, however, and lay bricks, before he went back to his mother in New Orleans unsuccessful. His letters home, his excitement and enthusiasm, how ridiculous they seemed, how fatuous his boastings before the old ladies and little Bella!

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Fairfax passed his boarding-house and walked on, and as he walked he recalled what Cedersholm had said the day he engaged him: "Courage, patience, humility." These words had cooled his anger as nothing else could have done, and laid their salutary touch on his flushed face.

"These qualities are the attributes of genius. Mediocrity is incapable of possessing them." He would have them *all*, every one, every one! Courage, he was full of it. Patience he didn't know by sight. Humility he had despised—the poor fellow did not know that its hand touched him as he strode.

"I ought to be thankful that he didn't kick me out," he thought. "I daresay he was laughing in his sleeve at my abortions!"

Then he remembered his design for the ceiling, and at the Carews' doorstep he paused. Cedersholm had told him to draw it on the Field ceiling. This meant that he had another chance.

"It's perfectly ripping of the old boy," he thought, enthusiastically, as he rang the door-bell. "I'll begin to-morrow."

Bella opened the door to him.

CHAPTER XVII

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The following year—in January—lying on his back on the scaffolding, Fairfax drew in his designs for the millionaire's ceiling, freely, boldly, convincingly, and it is doubtful if the eye of the proprietor—he was a fat, practical, easy-going millionaire, who had made money out of hog's lard—it is doubtful that Mr. Field's eyes, when gazing upward, saw the things that Fairfax thought he drew.

Fairfax whistled softly and drew and drew, and his cramped position was painful to his left leg and thigh. Benvenuto Cellini came below and sang up at him—

"Cielo azuro,
Giornata splendida
Ah, Maddelena,"

and told him in Italian about his own affairs, and Fairfax half heard and less than half understood. Cedersholm came once, bade him draw on, always comforting one of them at least, with the assurance that the work could be taken out.

During the following weeks, Fairfax never went back to the studio, and one day he swung himself down when Cedersholm came in, and said—

"I'm a little short of money, sir."

Cedersholm put his hand in his pocket and gave Antony a bill with the air of a man to whom money is as disagreeable and dangerous as a contagious disease. The bill was for fifty dollars, and seemed a great deal to Antony; then a great deal too little, and, in comparison with his debts, it seemed nothing at all. Cedersholm had followed up his payment with an invitation to Antony to come to Ninth Street the following day.

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"I am sketching out my idea for the pedestal in Central Park. Would you care to see it? It might interest you as a student."

The ceiling in Rudolph Field's house is not all the work of Antony Fairfax. Half-way across the ceiling he stopped. It is easy enough to see where the painting is carried on by another hand. He finished the bas-reliefs at the end of March, and the fine frieze running round the little music-room. Mr. Field liked music little and had his room in proportion.

Antony stood with Cedersholm in the studio where he had made his scheme for the fountain and his first sketches. Cedersholm's design for the base of the pedestal, designed to support the winged victory, was placed against the wall. It was admirable, harmonious, noble.

Fairfax had seen Cedersholm work. The sculptor wore no apron, no blouse. He dressed with his usual fastidiousness; his eyeglass adjusted, he worked as neatly as a little old lady at her knitting, but his work had not the quality of wool.

"What do you think of it, Fairfax?"

Fairfax started from his meditation. "It's immense," he murmured.

"You think it does not express what is intended?" Cedersholm's clever eyes were directed at Fairfax. "What's the matter with it?"

Without reply, the young man took up a sheet of paper and a piece of charcoal and drew steadily for a few seconds and held out the sheet.

"Something like this ... under the four corners ... wouldn't it give an idea ... of life? The Sphinx is winged. Doesn't it seem as if its body should rest on life?"

If Cedersholm had in mind to say, "You have quite caught my suggestion," he controlled this remark, covered his mouth with his hand, and considered—he considered for a day or two. He then went to Washington to talk with the architects of the new State Museum. And Fairfax once more found the four walls of the quiet studio shutting him in ... found himself inhabiting with the friendly silence and with the long days as spring began to come.

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He finished the modelling of his four curious, original creatures, beasts intended to be the supports of the Sphinx. He finished his work in Easter week, and wrote to Cedersholm begging for his directions and authority to have them cast in bronze.

CHAPTER XVIII

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The four beasts were of heroic size. They came out of the moulds like creatures of a prehistoric age. Benvenuto Cellini, who was to have met his friend Antony at the foundry on the day Fairfax's first plaster cast was carried down, failed to put in an appearance, and Fairfax had the lonely joy, the melancholy, lonely joy, of assisting at the birth of one of his big creatures. All four of them were ultimately cast, but they were to remain in the foundry until Cedersholm's return.

His plans for the future took dignity, and importance, from the fact of his success, and he reviewed with joy the hard labour of the winter, for which in all he had been paid one hundred dollars. He was in need of everything new, from shoes up. He was a great dandy, or would have liked to have afforded to be. As for a spring overcoat—well, he couldn't bear to read the tempting advertisements, and even Gardiner's microscopic coat, chosen by Bella, caused his big cousin a twinge of envy. Bella's new outfit was complete, a deeper colour glowed on the robin-red dress she wore, and Fairfax felt shabby between them as he limped along into the Park under the budding trees, a child's hand on either arm.

"Cousin Antony, why are there such *délicious* smells to-day?"

Bella sniffed them. The spring was at work under the turf, the grass was as fragrant as a bouquet.

"Breathe it in, Cousin Antony! It makes you wish to do *heaps* of things you oughtn't to!"

On the pond the little craft of the school children flew about like butterflies, the sun on the miniature sails.

"What kind of things does the grass cutter, shearing off a few miserable dandelions, make you want to do, Bella? You should smell the jasmine and the oleanders of New Orleans. These are nothing but weeds."

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"How can you say so?" she exclaimed; "besides, most of the things I want to do are wicked, anyhow."

"Jove!" exclaimed Fairfax. "That *is* a confession."

She corrected. "You ought not to say 'Jove' like that, Cousin Antony. You can cut it and make it sound like 'Jovah,' it sounds just like it."

"What wicked things do you want to do, Bella?"

She pointed to the merry-go-rounds, where the giraffes, elephants, and horses raced madly round to the plaintive tune of "Annie Laurie," ground out by a hurdy-gurdy.

"I'd *love* to go on."

Fairfax put his hand in his pocket, but she pulled it back.

"No, Cousin Antony, please. It's not the money that keeps me back, though I haven't any. It's Sunday, you know."

"Oh," her cousin accepted dismally.

And Bella indicated a small boy carrying a tray of sweets who had advanced towards the three with a hopeful grin.

"I'd perfectly *love* to have some of those *lossingers*, but mother says 'street candy isn't pure.' Besides, it's Sunday."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Fairfax. "Do you mean to say that out here in God's free air you are going to preach me a sermon?"

He beckoned the boy.

"Oh," cried Gardiner, "can't we *choose*, Cousin Antony?"

The little cousins bent above the tray and slowly and passionately selected, and their absorption in the essence of wintergreen, sassafras, and peppermint showed him how much this pleasure meant to these rich children. Their pockets full, they linked their arms in his again.

"I have never had such fun in all my life as I do with you, Cousin Antony," Bella told him.

"Then come along," he suggested, recklessly. "You must ride once on the merry-go-round." And before the little Puritans realized the extent of their impiety, Fairfax had lifted Bella on a horse and Gardiner on an elephant, paid their fare and started them away. He watched Bella, her hat caught by its elastic, fallen off her head on the first round, her cheeks flushed and her eyes like stars, and bravely her straight little arm stretched out to catch the ring. There was triumph in her cry, "Oh, Cousin *Antony*, Cousin Antony, I've won the ring!"

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Such flash and sparkle as there was about her, with her teeth like grains of corn and her eyes dancing as she nodded and smiled at him! Poor little Gardiner! Antony paid for him again and patted him on the back. There was a pathos about the mild, sweet little face and in the timid, ineffectual arm, too short and too weak to snap the iron ring on to his sword. Bella rode till "Annie Laurie" changed to "Way down upon de Swanee river," and Fairfax's heart beat for Louisiana, and he had come to the end of his nickels. He lifted the children down.

Bella now wound both arms firmly in her cousin's, and clung to him.

"Think of it, I never rode before, never! All the children on the block have, though. Isn't it perfectly delightful, Cousin Antony? I *wish* your legs weren't so long."

"Cousin Antony," asked little Gardiner, "couldn't we go over to the animals and see the seals fall off and ddown themselves?"

They saw the lion in his lair and the "tiger, tiger burning bright," and the shining, slippery seals, and they made an absorbed group at the nettings where Antony discoursed about the animals as he discoursed about art, and Spartacus talked to them about the wild beast show in Cæsar's arena. His audience shivered at his side.

They walked up the big driveway, and Fairfax saw for the first time the Mall, and observed that the earth was turned up round a square some twelve feet by twelve. He half heard the children at his side; his eyes were fastened on the excavation for the pedestal of the Sphinx; the stone base would soon be raised there, and then his beasts would be poised.

"Let's walk over to the Mall, children."

Along the walk the small goat carriages were drawn up with their teams; little landaus, fairy-like for small folk to drive in. Fairfax stood before the cavity in the earth and the scaffolding left by the workmen. He was conscious of his little friends at length by the dragging on his arms of their too affectionate weight. "Cousin Antony."

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Fairfax waved to the vacant spot. "Oh, Egypt, Egypt," he began, in his "recitation voice," a voice that promised treats at home, but that palled in the sunny open, with goat rides in the foreground.

"Out of the soft, smooth coral of thy sands,
Out of thy Nilus tide, out of thy heart,
Such dreams have come, such mighty splendours——"

"Bella, do you see that harmonious square?"

"Yes," she answered casually, with a lack lustre. "And do you see the *goats*?"

"Goats, Bella! I see a pedestal some ten feet high, and on it at its four corners, before they poise the Sphinx—what do you think I see, Bella?"

"... Cousin Antony, that boy there has the *sweetest goats*. They're *almost* clean! Too dear for anything! With such cunning noses!"

He dropped his arm and put his hand on the little girl's shoulder and turned her round.

"I'm disappointed in you for the first time, honey," he said.

"Oh, Cousin *Antony*."

"Little cousin, this is where my creatures, my beautiful bronze creatures, are to be eternally set—there, there before your eyes." He pointed to the blue May air.

"Cousin *Antony*," said Gardiner's slow voice, "the only thing I'm not too tired to do is to wide in a goat carwage."

Fairfax lifted the little boy in his arms. "If I lift you, Gardiner, like this, high in my arms, you could just about see the top of the pedestal. Wait till it's unveiled, my hearties! Wait—wait!"

He put Gardiner down with a laugh and a happy sigh, and then he saw the goats.

"Do you want a ride, children?"

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"*Did* they!"

He ran his hands through the pockets that had been wantonly emptied.

"Not a picayune, honey. Your poor old cousin is dead broke."

"Then," said Bella, practically, "let's go right away from here, Cousin *Antony*. I can't bear to look at those goats another minute. It hurts."

Fairfax regarded her thoughtfully. "*Bella the Desirous*," he murmured. "What are you going to be when you grow up, little cousin?"

They started slowly away from temptation, away from the vision of the pedestal and the shadowy creatures, and the apparition of the Sphinx seemed to brood over them as they went, and nothing but a Sphinx's wisdom could have answered the question Fairfax put: "What are you going to be when you grow up, little *Bella*?"

Fairfax soon carried the little boy, and *Bella* in a whisper said—

"He is almost too small for our parties, Cousin *Antony*."

"Not a bit," said the limping cousin, stoically. "We couldn't get on without him, could we, old chap?"

But the old chap didn't answer, for he had fallen asleep as soon as his head touched his cousin's shoulder.

When Fairfax left them at their door, he was surprised at *Bella's* melancholy. She held out to him the sticky remnant of the roll of lozenges.

"Please take it. I shouldn't be allowed to eat it."

"But what on earth's the matter?" he asked.

"Never mind," she said heroically, "you don't have to bear it. You're *Episcopalian*; but *I've got to tell!*" She sighed heavily. "I don't care; it was worth it!"

As the door clicked behind the children, Fairfax laughed.

"What a little trump she is! She thinks the game is worth the candle!"

CHAPTER XIX

[Pg 74]

That miserable foot of his gave him pain. The unusual strain of standing long at his work, the tramps he took to save car-fare, wearied him, and he was finally laid up for ten days. No one missed him, apparently, and the long, painful hours dragged, and he saw no one but his little landladies. His mother, as if she knew, sent him extra money and wonderful letters breathing pride in him and confidence in his success. When he was finally up and setting forth again to the studio, a visitor was announced. Fairfax thought of *Benvenuto*—(he would have been welcome)—he thought of *Bella*, and not of his Aunt *Caroline*.

"My dear boy, why didn't you let us know you had been ill?"

There is something exquisite to a man in the presence of a woman in his sick-room, be she lovely or homely, old or young.

"This is awfully, awfully good of you, Auntie. I've had a mighty bad time with this foot of mine."

Mrs. *Carew* in her street dress, ready for an all-day's shopping, came airily in and laid her hand on her nephew's shoulder. Fairfax thought he saw a look of *Bella*, a look of his mother. He eagerly leaned forward and kissed his visitor.

"It's mighty good of you, Auntie."

"No, my dear boy, it isn't! I really didn't know you were ill. We would have sent you things from

the Buckingham. Our own cook is so poor."

She couldn't sit down, she had just run in on her way to shop. She had something to say to him....

"What's wrong, Aunt Caroline?"

His aunt took a seat beside him on the bed. Her dove-like eyes wandered about his room, bare save for the drawings on the walls and on a chair in the corner, a cast covered by a wet cloth. Mrs. Carew's hands clasped over her silk bead purse hanging empty between the rings.

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"I have come to ask a great favour of you, Antony."

He repeated, in astonishment, "Of *me*—why, Auntie, anything that I can do...."

Mrs. Carew's slender figure undulated, the sculptor thought. She made him think of a swan—of a lily. Her pale, ineffectual features had an old-fashioned loveliness. He put his hand over his aunt's. He murmured devotedly—

"You must let me do anything there is to do."

"I am in debt, Tony," she murmured, tremulously. "Your uncle gives me *so* little money—it's impossible to run the establishment."

He exclaimed hotly, "It's a *shame*, Aunt Caroline."

"Henry thinks we spend a great deal of money, but I like to dress the children well."

Her nephew recalled Bella's wardrobe. Mrs. Carew, as though she confessed a readily-forgiven fault, whispered—

"I am so fond of bric-à-brac, Antony."

He could not help smiling.

"Down in Maiden Lane last week I bought a beautiful lamp for the front hall. I intended paying for it by instalments; but I've not been able to save enough—the men are waiting at the house. I *can't* tell your uncle, I really *can't*. He would turn me out of doors."

Over Fairfax's mind flashed the picture of the "Soul of honour" confronted by a debt to a Jew ironmonger. His aunt's daily pilgrimage began to assume a picturesqueness and complexity that were puzzling.

"Carew's a brute," he said, shortly. "I can't see why you married him."

Mrs. Carew, absorbed in the picture of the men waiting in the front hall and the iron lamp waiting as well, did not reply.

"How much do you need, Auntie?"

"Only fifty dollars, my dear boy. I can give it back next week when Henry pays me my allowance."

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He exclaimed: "I am lucky to have it to help you out, Auntie. I've got it right here."

The sense of security transformed Mrs. Carew. She laughed gently, put her hand on her nephew's shoulder again, exclaiming—

"How *fortunate!* Tony, how *glad* I am I thought of you!"

He gave her all of his mother's gift but ten dollars, and as she bestowed it carefully away she murmured—

"It *is* a superb lamp, and a *great* bargain. You shall see it lit to-night."

"I'm afraid not to-night, Aunt Caroline. I'm off to see Cedersholm now, and I shan't be up to much, I reckon, when I get back."

His visitor rose, and Fairfax discovered that he did not wish to detain her as he had thought to do before she had mentioned her errand. She seemed to have entirely escaped him. She was as intangible as air, as unreal.

As he opened the door for her, considering her, he said—

"Bella looks very much like my mother, doesn't she, Aunt Caroline?"

Mrs. Carew thought that Bella resembled her father.

As Fairfax took his car to go down to Ninth Street, he said to himself—

"If *this* is the first sentimental history on which I am to embark, it lacks romance from the start."

CHAPTER XX

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At the studio he was informed by Cedersholm's man, Charley, that his master was absent on a

long voyage.

"He has left me a letter, Charley, a note?"

"Posted it, no doubt, sir."

Charley asked Mr. Fairfax if he had been ill. Charley was thoroughly sympathetic with the Southerner, but he was as well an excellent servant, notwithstanding that he served a master whom he did not understand.

"I should like to get my traps in the studio, Charley."

"Yes, Mr. Fairfax." But Charley did not ask him in.

"I'll come back again to-morrow.... I'll find a note at home."

"Sure to, Mr. Fairfax."

"Benvenuto been around?"

The Italian had sailed home to Italy on the last week's steamer. Fairfax, too troubled and dazed to pursue the matter further, did not comprehend how strange it all was. The doors of the studio were henceforth shut against him, and Charley obeyed the mysterious orders given him. There reigned profound mystery at the foundry. The young man was sensible of a reticence among the men, who lacked Charley's kindness. Every one waited for Cedersholm's orders.

The *Beasts* were cast.

"Look out how you treat those moulds," he fiercely ordered the men. "Those colossi belong to me. What's the damage for casting them?"

At the man's response, Fairfax winced and thrust his hands into his empty pockets.

Under his breath he said: "Damn Cedersholm for a cold-blooded brute! My youth and my courage have gone into these weeks here."

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As he left the foundry he repeated his injunction about the care of the moulds, and his personal tenderness for the bronze creatures was so keen that he did not appreciate the significant fact that he was treated with scant respect. He stepped in at the Field palace on the way up-town, and a man in an official cap at the door asked him for his card of admission.

"Card of admission? Why, I'm one of the decorators here.... I reckon you're new, my boy. I only quit working a fortnight ago."

He was nervous and pale; his clothes were shabby.

"Sorry," returned the man, "my orders are strict from Mr. Cedersholm himself. *Nobody* comes in without his card."

The sculptor ground his heel on the cruel stones.

He had been shut away by his concentrated work in Cedersholm's studio from outside interests. He had no friends in New York but the children. No friend but his aunt, who had borrowed of him nearly all he possessed, no sympathizers but the little old ladies, no consolations but his visions. In the May evenings, now warm, he sat on a bench in Central Park, listlessly watching the wind in the young trees and the voices of happy children on their way to the lake with their boats. He began to have a proper conception of his own single-handed struggle. He began to know what it is, without protection or home or any capital, to grapple with life first-hand.

"Why, *art is the longest way in the world*," he thought. "It's the rudest and steepest, and to climb it successfully needs colossal *genius*, as well as the other things, and it needs money."

He went slowly back to his lodging and his hall room. Along the wall his array of boots, all in bad condition—his unequal boots and his deformity struck him and his failure. A mist rose before his eyes. Over by the mirror he had pinned the sketch he liked the best.

On Sunday afternoon, in his desire to see the children, he forgot his distaste of meeting the master of the house, and rang the bell at an hour when Carew was likely to be at home. He had, too, for the first time, a wish to see the man who had made a success of his own life. Whatever his home and family were—*Carew* was a success. Fairfax often noted his uncle's name mentioned at directors' meetings and functions where his presence indicated that the banker was an authority on finance. Ever since Mrs. Carew had borrowed money of him, Fairfax had been inclined to think better of his uncle. As the door opened before him now he heard singing, and though the music was a hymn, it rolled out so roundly, so fully, so whole-heartedly, that he knew his uncle must be out.

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The three were alone at the piano, and the young man's face brightened at the sight of the children. On either side of their mother Bella and Gardiner were singing with delight the little boy's favorite hymn.

"No parting yonder,

All light and song,
The while I ponder
And say 'how long
Shall time me sunder
From that glad throng?"

Curious how syllables and tones and inflections can contain and hold our feelings, and how their memory makes a winding-sheet.

Fairfax came in quietly, and the singers finished their hymn. Then the children fell upon him and, as Gardiner said, "Cousin Antony *always did*," he "gobbled them up."

"You might have *told* us you were ill," Bella reproved him. "When I heard I made some wine jelly for you, but it wobbled away, and Gardiner drank it."

"It wasn't *weal* wine," said the little boy, "or *weal* jelly...."

Fairfax glanced toward his aunt, unconsciously looking to her for comfort on this trying day.

Mrs. Carew was truly embarrassed at the sight of her creditor, but she continued to play lightly among the hymns, and gave him up to the children. But Fairfax was too desperate to be set aside. If there was any comfort anywhere he was going to have it. He said to his aunt in a voice deepened by feeling—

"Aunt Caroline, I'm a little down on my luck."

The lady turned her doe-like eyes on her nephew. "My dear Tony...."

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He clenched his vigorous hands to keep down his emotion.

"Yes. Cedersholm has turned his back on me, as far as I can see."

With a short laugh he threw off his intense mood, thoroughly ashamed of his weakness.

"*Our* branch of the family, Aunt Caroline, are unlucky all round, I reckon."

There was one thought uppermost in his aunt's mind. *She had no money with which to pay her debt to him.* When there weren't lamps to buy there were rugs and figures of *biscuit* Venuses bending over *biscuit* streams. She had confessed her vice; she "adored bric-à-brac." The jumble in her mind made her eyes more vague than ever.

"Will you go back South?" she wondered.

He started, spread out his empty hands. "Go back to mother like this? Auntie!"

As ineffectual as she had been on the night of his arrival, so now Mrs. Carew sat ineffectual before his crisis. She breathed, "My poor boy!" and her fingers strayed amongst the keys and found the melody of the song he loved so much.

The young traveller at her side was too much of a man, even in his state of despair, to have expected a woman to lift his burden. If she did, he did not think of the money she owed him. What he wanted was a soothing touch to be laid on his heart, and the song in which, not six weeks before, he had nearly loved his aunt, did what she did not.

The children had gone upstairs. Mrs. Carew sang through the first verse of the song. As far as she was concerned nothing could have been a greater relief. The sympathy she did not know how to give, the debt she had never discharged, the affection she had for Antony, and her own self-pity, Mrs. Carew threw into her voice, and it shook its tremulo through him.

He breathed devotedly: "Thank you, *dear*," and raised one of his aunt's hands to his lips.

Mr. Carew had let himself in with his latchkey, and was within a few feet of them as his wife finished her song.

CHAPTER XXI

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Neither Antony nor Mrs. Carew had the presence of mind to stir. Mrs. Fairfax said of her brother-in-law that he was a "vain creature whose pomposity stood in place of dignity." Carew, at all events, came upon a scene which he had never supposed would confront his eyes. Before him in his own drawing-room, a whipper-snapper from the South was kissing his wife's hands. To Carew the South was the heart of sedition, bad morals, lackadaisical indolence. What the South could not do for him in arousing his distaste, the word "artist" completed. He said to his wife—

"Is *this* the way you pass your Sabbath afternoons, Mrs. Carew?"

And before she could murmur, "My *dear* Henry—" he turned on Fairfax.

"Can't *you* find anything better to do in New York, sir?" He could not finish.

Fairfax rose. "Don't say anything you will regret, sir. I kissed my aunt's hand as I would have

kissed my mother's. Not that I need to make excuse."

Mr. Carew's idea of his own importance, of the importance of everything that belonged to him, was colossal, and it would have taken more than this spectacle, unpleasant as it was, to make him fancy his wife harboured a sentiment for her jackanapes of a nephew. If the tableau he had had time to observe on his way across the dining-room floor had aroused his jealousy, that sentiment was less strong than was his anger and his dislike. Young Fairfax had been a thorn in his side for several weeks.

"You are wise to make no excuses," he said coldly. "I could not understand your sentiments. I have my own ideas of how a young man should employ his time and carve out his existence. Your romantic ideas are as unsympathetic to me as was this exhibition." [Pg 82]

Mrs. Carew, who had never been so terrified in her life, thought she should faint, but had presence of mind sufficient to realize that unconsciousness would be prejudicial to her, and by bending over the keys she kept her balance.

She murmured, "My dear, you are very hard on Antony."

Carew paid no attention to her. "Your career, sir, your manner of life, are no affair of mine. I am concerned in you as you fetch your point of view" (Carew was celebrated for his extempore speaking), "your customs and your morals into my house."

"Believe me," said Mrs. Fairfax's son, in a choked voice, "I shall take them out of it for ever."

Carew bowed. "You are at liberty to do so, Fairfax. You have not asked my advice nor my opinions. You have ingratiated yourself with my friends, to my regret and theirs."

Antony exclaimed violently, "Now, what do you mean by *that*, sir?"

"I am in no way obliged to explain myself to you, Fairfax."

"But you are!" fairly shouted the young man. "With whom have I ingratiated myself to your regret?"

"I speak of Cedersholm, the sculptor."

"Well, what does *he* say of me?" pursued the poor young man.

"It seems you have had the liberty of his workshop for months—"

"Yes,"—Antony calmed his voice by great effort,—"I have, and I have slaved in it like a nigger—like a slave in the sugar-cane. What of that?"

The fact of the matter was that Cedersholm in the Century Club had spoken to Carew lightly of Fairfax, and slightly. He had given the young sculptor scant praise, and had wounded and cut Carew's pride in a possession even so remote as an undesirable nephew by marriage. He could not remember what Cedersholm had really said, but it had been unfortunate.

"I don't know what Cedersholm has said to you," cried Antony Fairfax, "nor do I care. He has sapped my life's blood. He has taken the talent of me for three long months. He is keeping my drawings and my designs, and, by God—" [Pg 83]

"Stop!" said Mr. Carew, sharply. "How *dare* you use such language in my house, before my wife?"

Antony laughed shortly. He fixed his ardent blue eyes on the older man, and as he did so the sense of his own youth came to him. He was twenty years this man's junior. Youth was his, if he was poor and unlucky. The desire to say to the banker, "If I should tell you what I thought of *you* as a husband and a father," he checked, and instead cried hotly—

"God's here, at all events, sir, and perhaps my way of calling on Him is as good as another."

He extended his hand. It did not tremble. "Good-bye, Aunt Caroline."

Hers, cold as ice, just touched his. "*Henry*," she gasped, "he's Arabella's son."

Again the scarlet Antony had seen, touched the banker's face. Fairfax limped out of the room. His clothes were so shabby (as he had said a few moments before, he had worked in them like a nigger), that, warm as it was, he wore his overcoat to cover his suit. The coat lay in the hall. Bella and Gardiner had been busy during his visit on their own affairs. They had broken open their bank. Bella's keen ears had heard Antony's remark to her mother about being down on his luck, and her tender heart had recognized the heavy note in his voice. The children's bank had been their greatest treasure for a year or two. It represented all the "serious" money, as Bella called it, that had ever been given them. The children had been so long breaking it open that they had not heard the scene below in the drawing-room.

As Fairfax lifted his coat quickly it jingled. He got into it, thrust his hands in the pockets. They were full of coin. His sorrow, anger and horror were so keen that he was guilty of the unkindest act of his life.

"What's this!" he cried, and emptied out his pockets on the floor. The precious coins fell and rolled on every side. Bella and her little brother, who had hid on the stairs in order to watch the effect of their surprise, saw the disaster, and heard the beloved cousin's voice in anger. The little [Pg 84]

girl flew down.

"Cousin *Antony*, how *could* you? It was for *you*! Gardiner and I broke our bank for you. There were ten dollars there and fifty-nine cents."

There was nothing gracious in Fairfax's face as it bent on the excited child.

"Pick up your money," he said harshly, his hand on the door. "Good-bye."

"Oh," cried the child, "I didn't know you were proud like *that*. I didn't know."

"Proud," he breathed deeply. "I'd rather starve in the gutter than touch a penny in this house."

He saw the flaming cheeks and averted eyes, and was conscious of Gardiner's little steps running down the stairs, and he heard Bella call "*Cousin Antony*," in a heart-rent voice, as he opened the door, banged it furiously, and strode out into the street.

BOOK II

THE OPEN DOOR

CHAPTER I

[Pg 85]

He had slept all night in a strained position between a barrel of tallow candles and a bag of potatoes. In spite of the hardness of the potatoes on which he lay and the odour of the candles, he lost consciousness for a part of the night, and when he awoke, bruised and weary, he found the car stationary. As he listened he could not hear a sound, and crawling out from between the sacks in the car, he saw the dim light of early dawn through a crack in the door. Pushing open the sliding door he discovered that the car had stopped on a siding in an immense railroad-yard and that he was the only soul in sight. He climbed out stiffly. On all sides of him ran innumerable lines of gleaming rails. The signal house up high was alight and the green and yellow and white signal lamps at the switches shone bright as stars. Further on he could see the engine-house, where in lines, their cow-catchers at the threshold, a row of engines waited, sombre, inert horses of iron and steel, superb in their repose. Fairfax reckoned that it must be nearly four-thirty, and as he stood, heard a switch click, saw a light change from green to red, and with a rattle and commotion a train rolled in—along and away. On the other side of the tracks in front of him were barrack-like workshops, and over the closed station ran a name in black letters, but it did not inform Fairfax as to his whereabouts except that he was at "West Junction." He made his way across the tracks towards the workshops, every inch of him sore from his cramped ride.

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He always thought that on that day he was as mentally unhinged as a healthy young man can be. Unbalanced by hunger, despair and rage, his kindly face was drawn and bore the pallor of death. He was dirty and unshaven, his heavy boot weighed on his foot like lead. Without any special direction he limped across the tracks and once, as he stopped to look up and down the rails on which the daylight was beginning to glimmer, in his eyes was the morbidness of despair. A signalman from his box could see him over the yards, and Fairfax reflected that if he lingered he might be arrested, and he limped away.

"Rome, Rome," he muttered under his breath, "thou hast been a tender nurse to me! Thou hast given to the timid shepherd-boy muscles of iron and a heart of steel."

The night before he had rushed headlong from his uncle's house, smarting under injustice, and had walked blindly until he came to the Forty-second Street station. His faint and wretched spirit longed for nothing but escape from the brutal city where he had squandered his talent, crushed his spirit and made a poor apprenticeship to ingratitude. A baggage car on the main line, with an open door, was the only means of transportation of which Fairfax could avail himself, and he had crept into it undiscovered, stowed himself away, hoping that the train's direction was westward and expecting to be thrown out at any moment. Thus far his journey had been made undiscovered. He didn't wonder where he was—he didn't care. Any place was good enough to be penniless in and to jump off from! His one idea at the moment was food.

"God!" he thought to himself, "to be hungry like this and not be a beggar or a criminal, just a duffer of a gentleman of no account!"

He reached the engine-house and passed before the line of iron locomotives, silent and vigorous in their quiescent might, and full of inert power. He set his teeth, for the locomotives made him think of his beloved beasts. A choking sensation came in his throat and tears to his blue eyes. He thrust his hands in the pockets of his overcoat and went on. In front of him a city street came down to the tracks, and sharp across it cut the swinging gates which fell as Fairfax approached. Behind him the switches snapped; another train, this time a fast express, rushed past him. He watched it mutely; the flinging up of the dust around the wheels, the hiss and roar and wind of its passing smote through him. It was gone.

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He limped on. The street leading down to the tracks was filthy with mud and with the effects of the late rain. It was to Fairfax an avenue into an empty and unknown town. Small, vile, cobbled with great stones, the alley ran between lines of two-storied frame buildings, tenement houses which were the home of the railroad employes. The shutters were all closed, there was not a sign of life. Fairfax came up with the signal-box by the swinging gate, and a man with a rolled red flag stood in the doorway. He looked at Fairfax with little curiosity and the young man decided not to ask him any questions for fear that his stolen ride should be discovered. As he passed on and went into the empty street, he mused—

"It is curious how we are all taking pains to escape consequences to which we say we are indifferent. What matter is it if he *does* arrest me? I should at least have a cup of coffee at the station house."

On either side of the alley through which Fairfax now walked there was not a friendly door open, or a shutter flung back from a window. At the head of the street Fairfax stopped and looked back upon the yards and the tracks of the workshops. The ugly scene lay in the mist of very early morning and the increasing daylight made its crudeness each moment more apparent. As he stood alone in Nut Street, on either side of him hundreds of sleeping workmen, the sun rose over the yards, filling the dreary, unlovely outlook with a pure glory. To Fairfax's senses it brought no consolation but the sharp suffering that any beauty brings to the poet and the seer. It was a new day—he was too young to be crushed out of life because he had an empty pocket, and faint as he was, hungry as he was, the visions began to rise again in his brain. The crimson glory, as it swam over the railroad yards, over the bridge, over the unsightly buildings, was peopled by his ideals—his breath came fast and his heart beat. The clouds from which the sun emerged took winged shapes and soared; the power of the iron creatures in the shed seemed to invigorate him. Fairfax drew a deep breath and murmured: "Art has made many victims. I won't sacrifice my life to it." And he seemed a coward to himself to be beaten so early in the race.

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"Muscles of iron and a heart of steel," he murmured again, "*a heart of steel.*"

He turned on his feet and limped on, and as he walked he saw a light in an opposite window with the early opening of a cheap restaurant. The shutters on either side of Nut Street were flung back. He heard the clattering of feet, doors were pushed open and the workers began to drift out into the day. Antony made for the light in the coffee house; it was extinguished before he arrived and the growing daylight took its place. A man from a lodging-house passed in at the restaurant door.

Fairfax's hands were deep in the pockets of his overcoat, his fingers touched a loose button. He turned it, but it did not feel like a button. He drew it out; it was twenty-five cents. He had not shaken out quite all the children's coins on the hall floor. This bit of silver had caught between the lining and the cloth and resisted his angry fling. As the young man looked at it, his face softened. He went into the eating-house with the other man and said to himself as he crossed the door-sill—

"Little cousin! you don't know what 'serious' money this is!"

CHAPTER II

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A girl who he judged by her frowzled hair and her heavy eyes had just been aroused from sleep, stood behind the counter pouring hot and steaming coffee into thick china cups. The smell to the hungry man was divine. Fairfax's mouth watered. From the one pot the coffee came out with milk added, and from another the liquid poured clear. Fairfax asked for coffee with milk and a sandwich, and as the girl pushed the plate with hunks of bread and ham towards him, he asked, "How much, please?" The girl raised her heavy lids. Her gray eyes could have sparkled if she had been less sleepy. She glanced at him and responded in a soft brogue—

"Two cints a cup. Sandwiches two cints apiece."

He took his breakfast over to the table where a customer was already seated before a huge breakfast. After watching Fairfax for a few moments, this man said to him—

"Got a rattling good appetite, Mister."

"I have, indeed," Fairfax returned, "and I'm going to begin over again."

The man wore a red shirt under his coat, his battered bowler was a-cock on his head. Antony often recalled Sanders as he looked that morning. His face from his neck up was clean. He exuded water and brown soap; he had a bright healthy colour; he was a good-looking workman, but his hands! Fairfax thought them appalling—grimed with coal. They could never be washed clean, Fairfax reflected, and one finger on the left hand was missing.

"Stranger?" the man asked him. "Just going through?"

And as Fairfax replied, he thought to himself, "He doesn't dream *how* strange I am and that I don't even know the name of the town."

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He asked the man, "Much going on here?"

"Yards. Up here in West Albany it's nothing but yards and railroading."

"Ah," nodded Fairfax, and to himself: "This is the capital of New York State—*Albany*—that's where I am."

And it was not far enough away to please him.

The man's breakfast, which had been fed into him by his knife, was disposed of, and he went on—

"Good steady employment; they're decent to you. Have to be, good men are scarce."

A tall, well-set-up engineer came to the coffee counter, and Fairfax's companion called out to him

"Got your new fireman yet, Joe?"

And the other, with a cheerful string of oaths, responded that he had not got him, and that he didn't want anybody, either, who wasn't going to stay more than five minutes in his cab.

"They've got a sign out at the yards," he finished, "advertising for hands, and when I run in at noon I'll call up and see what's doing."

Fairfax digested his meal and watched the entrance and exit of the railroad hands. Nearly all took their breakfast standing at the counter jollyng the girl; only a few brakemen and conductors gave themselves the luxury of sitting down at the table. Antony went and paid what he owed at the counter, and found that the waitress had waked up, and, in spite of the fact that she had doled out coffee and food to some fifty customers, she had found time to glance at "the new one."

"Was it all right?" she asked.

She handed him the change out of his quarter. He had had a dime's worth of food.

"Excellent," Fairfax assured her; "first-rate."

Her sleeves came only to the elbow, her fore-arm was firm and white as milk. Her hands were coarse and red; she was pretty and her cheerfulness touched him.

He wanted to ask for a wash-up, but he was timid.

"I'll be back at lunchtime," he said to her, nodding, and the girl, charmed by his smile, asked hesitatingly—

"Workin' here?"

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And as Fairfax said "No" rather quickly, she flashed scarlet.

"Excuse me," she murmured.

He was as keen to get out of the restaurant now as he had been to cross its threshold. The room grew small around him, and he felt himself too closely confined with these common workmen, with whom for some reason or other he began to feel a curious fraternity. Once outside the house, instead of taking his way into the more important part of West Albany, he retraced his steps down Nut Street, now filled with men and women. Opposite the gateman's house at the foot of the hill, he saw a sign hanging in a window, "New York Central Railroad," and under this was a poster which read, "Men wanted. Apply here between nine and twelve."

Fairfax read the sign over once or twice, and found that it fascinated him. This brief notice was the only call he had heard for labour, it was the only invitation given him to make his livelihood since he had come North. "Men wanted."

He touched the muscles of his right arm, and repeated "Muscles of iron and a heart of steel." There was nothing said on the sign about sculptors and artists and men of talent, and poets who saw visions, and young ardent fellows of good family, who thought the world was at their feet; but it did say, "Men wanted." Well, he was a man, at any rate. He accosted a fellow who passed him whistling.

"Can you tell me where a chap can get a shave in this neighbourhood? Any barbers hereabouts?"

The other grinned. "Every feller is his own razor in Nut Street, partner! You can find barber shops uptown."

"I want to get a wash-up," Fairfax said, smiling on him his light smile. "I want to get hold of a towel and some soap."

The workman pointed across the street. "There's a hotel. They'll fix you up."

Fairfax followed the man's indication, and he saw the second sign that hung in Nut Street. It gave the modest information, "Rooms and board three dollars a week. Room one dollar a week. All at Kenny's first-class hotel. Gents only." Of the proprietor who stood in the doorway, and whose morning toilet had gone as far as shirt and trousers, Antony asked—

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"How much will it cost me to wash-up? I'd like soap and a towel and to lie down on a bed for a couple of hours."

The Irish hotel-keeper looked at him. Fairfax took off his hat, and he didn't explain himself

further.

"Well," said Patrick Kenny, "yez don't look very dirty. Charge fifteen cents. Pay in advance."

"Show me up," accepted Fairfax, and put the last of Bella's charity into the man's hand.

CHAPTER III

[Pg 93]

That was May. Five months later, when the Hudson flowed between flaming October shores, and the mists of autumn hung like a golden grail on the air, Fairfax leaned out of the window of the engine-cab and cried to another man, in another cab on the opposite track—

"Hello, Sanders; how's your health?"

It was the slang greeting of the time. The engineer responded that he was fine as silk, and rang his bell and passed on his rolling way.

Fairfax wore a red shirt, his trousers were thick with oil and grease. His collar, open at the neck, showed how finely his head was set upon his shoulders, and left free the magnificent column of his throat. Down to his neck came his crisp fair hair, just curling at the ends; his sleeves were up to his elbows and his bare arms were dirty, vigorous and powerful, with the muscles standing out like cords. He never looked at his hands any more, his clever sensitive hands. He had been Joe Mead's fireman for five months, a record ticket for Joe Mead's cab. Fairfax had borne cursing and raging from his chief, borne them with equanimity, feeding into the belly of his engine whatever disgust he felt. Thrown together with these strange men of a different class, he learned new things of life, and at first he was as amused as a child at play. He made two dollars a day. This amply fed him and kept him, and he put by, with a miserliness that was out of all keeping with his temperament, every cent he could spare from the necessities of life.

Not that Fairfax had any plans.

From the first opening of his eyes on West Albany, when he had crawled out of the baggage car in the dawn, he shut out his past from himself. He crushed back even his own identity. He earned his bread by the sweat of his brow in the real sense of the word, and for what reason he saved his money he could not have told. He had become a day labourer, a fireman on the New York Central road, and he was a first-rate hand. His figure in the rude, dirty clothes, his bowler always worn on the back of his blonde head, his limp (that big boot had gone hard with him on the day that he applied for a job at the boss's office), all were familiar in Nut Street by this. His voice, his smile, his rare good heart, made him a popular companion, and he was, too, popular with the women.

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His miserable reception in New York, the bruises inflicted upon him by Cedersholm and his uncle, had embittered Tony Fairfax to an extent of which his humble Nut Street friends were ignorant. He didn't do them any harm, however. If any harm were done at all—and there is a question even regarding that—it was done to himself, for he crushed down his ambitions, he thrust them out of his heart, and he bit the dust with a feeling of vengeance. He had been a gentleman with talent, and his own world had not wanted him; so he went down to the people. All that his mother knew was that he had gone on to the north of the State, to perfect certain branches of his art, and that it was better for him to be in Albany. Reclining under the vines, she read his letters, smiling, fanning herself with a languid hand.

"Emmy, Master Tony's getting on, getting on."

"Yas'm, Mis' Bella, I do speck he is."

"Listen, Emmy." And Mrs. Fairfax would read aloud to the devoted negro the letters planned, concocted, by her son in his miserable lodgings, letters which cost him the keenest pangs of his life, kind and tender lines; things he would have done if he could; things he had hoped for and knew would never come true; joys he meant to bring her and that he knew she would grow old and never see; success and fame, whose very sound to him now was like the knell of fate. At the end of the letter he said—

"I am studying mechanics. I reckon you'll laugh at me, mother, but they are useful to a sculptor."

And she had not laughed in the way he meant as she kissed his letter and wet it with her tears.

CHAPTER IV

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No Sunday duties took him to the yards, and washed and dressed, shaved and brushed, he became a beautiful man of the world, in a new overcoat and a new sleek hat, and over his hands thick doeskin gloves. He could afford to pay for his clothes, and like this he left Nut Street every Sunday at nine o'clock, not to see West Albany again till midnight. On the seventh day of the week he was a mystery to his chums and his landlady, and if any one in Nut Street had had time to be suspicious and curious they might have given themselves the trouble of following Fairfax.

There were not many idlers, however, and no saloons. Drunkards were unwelcome, and Sunday was a day of rest for decent hard workers. When Antony, in his elegance, came out he used to pass between fathers of families in their shirt sleeves, if it were warm weather, and between complacent couples, and many of the hands slept all day. The most curious eyes were those of Molly Shannon, the girl at the restaurant, and her eyes were more than curious.

Fairfax had been courteous to her, bidding her good-morning in a way that made her feel as though she were a lady. He had been there for his breakfast and lunch several months until finally Molly Shannon drove him away. This she did not do by her boldness, for she was not bold, but by her comeliness and her sex and her smile. Fairfax fed his Pride in his savage immolation before the monster of iron and steel; by his slavery to work he revenged himself upon his class. His Pride grew; he stood up against Fate, and he thought he was doing a very fine thing, when his Pride also stood up in the restaurant when he took his cup of coffee from the red-handed girl of the people, pretty Molly Shannon from Killarney. Fairfax went farther up the street. He found another eating house, and later ate his sandwich on his knees at noon in the cab of his engine.

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When Molly Shannon found that he was not coming there for his coffee any more, she grew listless, and doled out food to the other men with a lack of science and interest that won her sharp reproofs and coarse jokes. From her window over the restaurant she watched Mister Fairfax as every Sunday he went limping up the street. Molly watched him, her breast palpitating under the common shirtwaist, and the freckles on the milky white skin died out under the red that rose.

"He's got a girl," she reflected; "sure, he's got a girl."

One Sunday in October, a day of yellow sunlight and autumn air, when Nut Street and the yards and West Albany fringed the country like the hem of an ugly garment, Molly came down and out into the street, and at a distance she followed Fairfax. Fairfax cut down a couple of blocks further on to the main station. He went in and bought a ticket for Albany. He boarded the cars, and Molly followed.

She tracked him at a safe distance up Market Street to Eagle, and the young man walked so slowly that it was easy to keep him in sight. The man pursued by the Irish girl suggested nothing less than a New York Central fireman. He looked like any other well-set-up, well-made young gentleman out on a Sunday morning. In his fashionable coat, his fashionable hat, Molly saw him go through the doors of a stone church whose bells rang solemnly on the October air.

The girl was very much surprised.

She felt him safe even within the walls of the heathen church, and she went directly back to Nut Street, her holiday hanging heavy on her hands, and she went in and helped her patron wash the dishes, and upstairs that night she stopped in her simple preparations for bed and reddened.

"Sure, ain't I a silly! He's went to church to *meet* his girl!"

Her morning's outing, the tramp and the excitement, were an unusual strain to Molly, not to speak of her emotions, and she cried herself to sleep.

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Fairfax sat every Sunday in the same pew. The seat was to the left of the altar, and he sang with an ardour and a mellowness that was lost neither on the people near him nor on the choir-master. All arts were sympathetic to him: his ear was good and his voice agreeable. His youth, his sacrifice, his dying art he put into his church singing, and once the choir-master, who had taken pains to mark him, stopped him in the vestibule and spoke to him.

"No," Fairfax said, "I am not a musician. Don't know one note from another, and can't learn. Only sing by ear, and not very sure at that!"

He listened indifferently. As the gentleman spoke of art and success, over Antony's handsome mouth there flitted a smile that had something of iron in it.

"I don't care for any of those things, sir," he replied. "I reckon I'm a barbarian, a rudimentary sort of man."

He took a certain pride and glory in his station as he talked. There was a fascination in puzzling this mild, charming man, one of his own class, whose very voice and accent were a relief after the conversations he heard daily.

"You see," he said, "I happen to be a fireman in the New York Central yards down at West Albany."

The quiet choir-master stared at him. "Oh, come, come!" he smiled.

Fairfax thrust his cane under his arm, drew off his glove, and held out his hand, looking into the other man's eyes. The musician's hand closed over Fairfax's.

"My dear young fellow," he said gravely, "you are a terrible loss to art. You would make your way in the musical world."

Fairfax laughed outright, and the choir-master watched him as others did as he limped away, his broad, fine back, his straight figure, and Fairfax's voice swelling out in the processional came to the musician's mind.

"There is a mystery about that chap," he thought. "He is a gentleman. The Bishop would be interested."

By contrast Sundays were delightful to Antony. Amusements possible to a workingman with the tastes of a gentleman were difficult to obtain. Church in the morning, a lazy stroll through the town, an excellent dinner at the Delavan House, set Fairfax up for the week. The coloured waiter thought his new patron was a Southerner, and suspected him of being a millionaire.

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"Yass, sar, Mr. Kunnell Fairfax, sar."

Antony, in a moment of heart hunger for the South, had told George Washington his name. George Washington kept the same place for him every Sunday, and polished the stone china plates till they glistened, displayed for Antony all his dazzling teeth, bowed himself double, his napkin under his arm, and addressed Antony as "Kunnell"; and Antony over his dessert laughed in his sleeve (he took great pains to keep his hands out of sight). After luncheon he smoked and read the papers in the lobby, lounged about, wrote a Sunday letter to his mother, and then loitered about through old Albany. On Sunday afternoons when it was fine, he would choose School Street and the Cathedral close, and now, under the falling of the yellow leaves there was a beauty in the day's end that thrilled him hour by hour. He made these pilgrimages to keep himself from thinking, from dreaming, from suffering; to keep his hands from pencil and design; to keep his artist soul from crying out aloud; to keep his talent from demanding, like a starving thing, bread that he had no means to give. Sometimes, however,—sometimes, when the stimulus of an excellent dinner, and a restful morning, when the cheer of George Washington's droll devotion had died, then the young man's step would lag in the streets of Albany, and with his hands behind his back and his bright head bowed, he would creep musing, half-seeing where he went.

Taking advantage of his lassitude, like peris whose wings had been folded against Paradise, and whose forms had been leaning hard against the gate, his ideals, his visions, would rush in upon him, and he would nearly sink under the beating of their wings—under their voluptuous appeal, under their imperious demand.

On these occasions Fairfax would go home oppressed, and content himself with a glass of milk and light food at the restaurant, and dressed as he was even to the hat on his head, he would sink by the table in his little room and bury his face in his hands. Then he would count up his money. Working from May until October, he had saved only fifty dollars. After his calculations there was no magnitude in the sum to inspire him to new plans or to tempt him to make a fresh venture for art. He often thought, in looking back on those days, that it was nothing but his pride and his obstinacy that kept him there. The memory of his winter's creations, of his work in the studio, and his beasts with their powerful bodies and their bronze beauty, came upon him always with such cruel resentment and made him feel so impotent against the injustice of the great, that if drink had tempted Fairfax he would have gone to the nearest saloon and made a beast of himself.

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The working hours were long and his employment physically exhausting, but he embraced his duties and fell in love with the great steel and iron creature which it was his work to feed and clean and oil. And when he left his engine silent in the shed, the roar and the motion absent, tranquil, breathless, and yet superb, Antony left his machine with regret, the regret of a lover for his mistress. He was fireman to a wild-cat engineer.

CHAPTER V

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Fairfax, used to the Southern climate, found no fault with the heat of summer, bone-racking and blood-boiling though it was; but, remembering his past experience of winds and snow in January, he wondered how winter would seem in the yards, endured in the cab of the engine, but his toil had now toughened him, roughened him, and strengthened his heart of steel. November, with its Indian summer smoothness, with its fine, glorious light that glowed over West Albany, passed, and the year went out in beauty and December followed, still windless and mild. But that was the last touch of mercy. January rushed down upon them, fierce, tempestuous, and up and down the yards, from his window, Fairfax watched the whirling shrouds of snow sweep over the ground, cover the tracks, and through the veil the lights flickered like candles that the snuffers of the storm were vainly trying to extinguish. He put on an extra flannel shirt under his red shirt; he buttoned his vest high, got into his coat, jammed his hat on fiercely and shook himself like a reluctant dog before going to his work. Under his window he could hear the souging of the wind and it sucked under the door; he was sure that he would never be warm here again.

"Jove!" he thought, "there will be two inches of snow inside my window when I get back at midnight." He drove his razor into the crack to stiffen the casement, and took an old flannel shirt and laid it along the ledge. As he did so the storm blew a whirl of snow across the pane.

"Siberia," he muttered to himself; "don't talk to me about Russia. This is far enough North for me!"

He could not have said why the thought of the children came, but its spirit came back to him. For months he had fiercely thrust out every memory of the children, but to-night, as the wind struck him, he thought of their games and the last time they had played that romping sport together.

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Like a warm garment to shield him against the cold he was just going to fight, he seemed to feel Bella's arms around his neck as they had clung whilst he rushed with her through the hall. It was just a year ago that he had arrived in the unfriendly city of his kinsmen, and as he thought of them, going down the narrow dark stairs of the shanty hotel, strangely enough it was not the icy welcome that he remembered, but Bella—Bella in her corner with her book, Bella with her bright red dress, Bella with her dancing eyes and her eager face.

"You've got an awfully light smile, Cousin Antony."

The door of the hotel eating-room was open and dimly lighted. Kenny and his wife were talking before the stove. They heard their lodger's step—a unique step in the house—and the woman, who would have gone down on her knees and blacked his big boot and the smaller boot, called out to him—

"Ah, don't yez go out unless ye have a cup of hot coffee, Misther Fairfax. It's biting cold. Come on in now."

Kenny's was a temperance hotel, obliged to be by the railroad. There were two others in the room besides the landlady and Kenny: Sanders and Molly Shannon. They sat together by the stove. As Fairfax came in Molly drew her chair away from the engineer. Fairfax accepted gratefully Mrs. Kenny's suggestion of hot coffee, and while she busied herself in getting it for him, he sat down.

"Running out at eight, Sanders?"

"You bet," said the other shortly. "New York Central don't change its schedule for the weather."

Sanders was suspicious regarding Fairfax and the girl, not that the fireman paid the least attention to Molly Shannon, but she had changed in her attitude to all her old friends since the new-comer first drank a cup of coffee in Sheedy's. Sanders had asked Molly to marry him every Sunday since spring, and he firmly believed that if he had begun his demands the Sunday before Fairfax appeared, the girl would be Mrs. Sanders now. [Pg 102]

Molly wore a red merino dress. According to the fashion of the time it fitted her closely like a glove. Its lines revealed every curve of her young, shapely figure, and the red dress stopped short at the dazzling whiteness of her neck. Her skin and colouring were Irish, coral-like and pure. Her hair was auburn and the vivid tint of her costume was an unfortunate contrast; but her grey eyes with black flecks in them and long black lashes, her piquant nose and dimples, brought back the artistic mistake, as the French say. She was too girlish, too young, too pretty not to score high above her dreadful dress.

Fairfax, who knew why he did not eat at the coffee-house any more, looked at the reason, and the artist in him and the man simultaneously regarded the Irish girl.

"Somebody's got on a new frock," he said. "Did you make it, Miss Molly?"

"Sure," she answered, without lifting her eyes, and went all red from her dress to her hair.

Fairfax drank the hot coffee and felt the warmth at his heart. He heard Sanders say under his breath—

"Why, I bet you could make anything, Molly, you're so smart. Now I have a rip in my coat here; if Mrs. Kenny has a needle will you be a good girl and mend it?"

And Fairfax heard her say, "Sanders, leave me be."

Since Sanders had cooled to him, Fairfax took special pains to be friendly, for his pride shrank against having any jars here in these quarters. He could not bear the idea of a disagreement with these people with whom he was playing a false part. He took out a couple of excellent cigars from his waistcoat and gave one to Kenny, who stood picking his teeth in the doorway.

"Thank you, Mister Fairfax. For a felly who don't smoke, ye smoke the best cigars."

Sanders refused shortly, and as the whistle of an engine was heard above the fierce cry of the storm, he rose. He took the eight o'clock express from Albany to New York. He left all his work to his fireman, jumping on his locomotive at the last moment, always hanging round Molly Shannon till she shook him off like a burr. Fairfax put the discarded cigar back in his pocket. He was not due for some twenty minutes at the engine-house, and Sanders, gloomily considering his rival, was certain that Fairfax intended remaining behind with the girl. Indeed, Antony's impulse to do just this thing was strong. He was tempted to take Sanders' chair and sit down by Molly. She remained quietly, her eyes downcast, twisting her handkerchief, which she rolled and unrolled. Mrs. Kenny cleared away the dishes, her husband lit his cigar and beamed. Sanders got his hat off the hook, put on his coat slowly, the cloud black on his face. Fairfax wanted to make the girl lift her eyes to him, he wanted to look into those grey eyes with the little black flecks along the iris. As the language of the street went, Molly was crazy about him. He wanted to feel the sensation that her lifted lashes and her Irish eyes would bring. Temptations are all of one kind; there are no different kinds. What they are and where they lead depends upon the person to whom they come. [Pg 103]

"Good-night," said Sanders, shortly. "Give up the door, Kenny, will you? You're not a ghost."

"I'm going with you, Sanders," Fairfax said; "hold on a bit."

Sanders' heart bounded and his whole expression changed. He growled—

"What are you going for? You're not due. It's cold as hell down in the yards."

Fairfax was looking at Molly and instinctively she raised her head and her eyes.

"Better give this cigar to your fireman, Sandy," Fairfax said to him as the two men buttoned up their coats and bent against the January wind.

"All right," muttered the other graciously, "give it over here. Ain't this the deuce of a night?"

The wind went down Sandy's throat and neither man spoke again. They parted at the yards, and Sanders went across the track where his fireman waited for him on his engine, and Fairfax went to the engine-house and found his legitimate mistress, his steel and iron friend, with whom he was not forbidden by common-sense to play.

CHAPTER VI

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By the time he reached the engine-house he was white with snow, and wet and warm. There was no heating in the sheds where the locomotives waited for their firemen, and the snow and wind beat in, and on the cow-catchers of the two in line was a fringe of white like the embroidery on a woman's dress. The gas lamps lit the big place insufficiently, and the storm whistled through the thin wooden shed.

Number Ten at the side of Antony's engine was the midnight express locomotive, to be hitched at West Albany to the Far West Limited. His own, Number Forty-one, was smaller, less powerful, more slender, graceful, more feminine, and Antony kept it shining and gleaming and lustreful. It was his pride to regard it as a living thing. Love was essential to any work he did; he did not understand toil without it, and he cared for his locomotive with enthusiasm.

He did not draw out for half an hour. His machine was in perfect order; the fire had already been started by one of the shed firemen, and Fairfax shook down the coals and prepared to get up steam. They were scheduled to leave West Albany at nine and carry a freight train into the State as far as Utica. He would be in the train till dawn. It was his first night's work in several weeks, and the first ever in a temperature like this. Since morning the thermometer had fallen twenty points.

His thoughts kindled as his fire kindled—a red dress flashed before his eyes. Sometimes it was vivid scarlet, too vivid and too violent, then it changed to a warm crimson, and Bella's head was dark above it. But the vision of the child was too young to hold Antony, now desirous and gloomy. His point of view had changed and his face set as he worked about in the cab and his adjustable lamp cast its light upon a face that was grave and stern.

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He hummed under his breath the different things as they came to him.

"J'ai perdu ma tourterelle."

Dear old Professor Dufaucon, with his yellow goatee and his broken English. And the magnolias were blooming in the yard, for the professor lived on the veranda and liked the open air, and in the spring there were the nightingales.

"J'ai perdu ma tourterelle."

"First catch your hare," Antony said. "I have never had a turtle-dove, never had a sweetheart since I fell from the cherry-tree."

Sounds that were now familiar to him came from outside, the ringing of the bells as the locomotives drew through the storm, the high scream of the whistles, the roll and rumble of the wheels and the calling of the employer to the railroad hands as they passed to their duties outside the shed. Fairfax left Louisiana and stopped singing. He threw open the door of his furnace, and the water hissed and bubbled in the boiler. He opened the cock and the escaping steam filled the engine-house and mixed with the damp air.

Looking through the window of the cab, Fairfax saw a figure pass in under the shed. It was a woman with a shawl over her head. He climbed down out of the cab; the woman threw the shawl back, he saw the head and dress.

"Why, Miss Molly!" he exclaimed. He thought she had come for Sanders.

She held out a yellow envelope, but even though she knew she brought him news and that he would not think of her, her big eyes fastened on him were eloquent. Fairfax did not answer their appeal. He tore open the telegram.

"I brought it myself," she murmured. "I hope it ain't bad news."

He tore it open with hands stained with grease and oil. He read it in the light of his cab lamp, read it twice, and a man who was hanging around for a job felt the fireman of Number Forty-one grasp his arm.

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"Tell Joe Mead to take you to-night to fire for him—tell him I've got bad news. I'm going to New York."

"It's too bad," said the other cheerfully. "I'll tell him."

Fairfax had gone flying on his well foot and his lame foot like a jackdaw. He was out of the shed without a word to Molly Shannon.

"Your felly's got bad news," said the man, and, keenly delighted with his sudden luck, climbed agilely into the cab of Number Forty-one, and, leaning out of the window, looked down on Molly.

"He ain't my felly," she responded heavily, "he boards to Kenny's. I just brought him the despatch, but I think it's bad news, sure enough."

And wrapping the shawl closer over her head, she passed out into the storm whose fringe was deepening on the cow-catchers of Number Ten and Number Forty-one.

Sanders' big locomotive ran in from the side to the main track as smoothly as oil, and backed up the line to the cars of the night mail. Sanders was to start at eight o'clock, and it was a minute before the hour. The ringing of his bell and the hiss of the steam were in his ears. He was just about to open the throttle when a voice on the other side called to him, and Fairfax climbed up into the cab.

"Take me in, Sanders, old man; let me hang on here, will you? I've got to get to New York as fast as you can take me."

Sanders nodded, the station signal had been given. He started out, and Antony made himself as small as possible in the only available place between the fireman, who was one of his special pals, and the engineer. Sanders' face was towards his valves and brakes. He pulled out into the driving sleet, scanning the tracks under the searchlight.

"What's up, Tony?" the fireman at his side asked him as they rolled out into the night to the ringing of the bell. Fairfax handed him his despatch and the fireman read it, and Fairfax answered him—

"A little cousin. One of my little cousins. What time are we due in New York?"

CHAPTER VII

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It was past midnight when Antony rushed out of the Forty-second Street station into a blizzard of sleet and snow. He stood a second looking up and down Madison Avenue, searching vainly for a car. There were no cabs at the station, there was nothing in sight but the blinding storm, and he began on foot to battle his way with the elements. It had been snowing in New York for twelve hours. The same fierce challenge met him that he had received the year before, and he pushed his way through the dim streets where the storm veils wrapped the gas lamps like shrouds. He had been on duty since six that morning, except for a few hours in the afternoon. Every now and then he had to stop for breath and to shake the weight of snow off his collar. He was white as wool. The houses on either side were dark with a stray light here and there, but he knew that farther on he should find one house lit with the light that burns for watchers. He glowed like a gladiator, panted like a runner, and he reached the door and leaned for breath and waited for an answer to his ring. Like a gladiator! How he had mouthed Spartacus for them! He could see the dancing eyes, and little Gardiner touched the muscles of his arm.

"Feel mine, Cousin Antony."

Heart of steel! Well, he would need it now.

The door was opened, he never knew by whom, and a silence met him that was profound after the voices of the storm. He stamped his feet and shook off the drift from without, threw off his coat, caked thick and fairly rattling with its burden, threw off his hat, heavy and dripping, and as he was, his heart of steel beating in him like a tender human heart, he limped up the quiet stairs. Even then he noticed that there were signs of a feast in the house. It should have been the annual dinner of Mr. Carew. The odours of flowers that had died were sickening in the heat. Smilax twisted around the balustrade of the stairs met his work-stained hand that trembled in the leaves. On the second floor, some one, he was not clear, but afterwards he thought it must have been Miss Eulalie, met him and took him in.

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In the feeble sick-room light, grouped a few people whose forms and faces go to make part of the sombre pictures of watchers; that group in which at some time or other each inhabitant of the world takes his place. There was one kneeling figure; the others stood round the bed. The little bark, quite big enough to carry such a small freight thus far on the voyage, was nearly into port.

Bella lay close to her little brother, her dark hair and dress the only shadow on the white bed covers. Gardiner's hair was brushed back from his brow, he looked older, but still very small to

go so far alone. Gardiner was travelling, travelling—climbing steep mountains, white with snow, and his breath came in short laboured sighs, fast, fast—it was the only sound in the room. Bella had not left his side for hours, her cheek pressed the pillow by his restless head. Her tears had fallen and dried, fallen and dried. Bella alone knew what Gardiner tried to say. His faltering words, his halting English, were familiar to the sister and she interpreted to the others, to whom Gardiner, too small to reach them, had never been very near. Twenty times the kneeling figure had asked—

"What does he say, Bella? What does he want?"

"He thinks it is a game," the little sister said; "he says it's cold, he says he wants Cousin Antony."

Since his summons, when Gardiner found that he must gird his little loins for the journey, his mind had gone to the big cousin who had so triumphantly carried him over the imaginary steeps.

From the door, where he had been standing on the edge of the group, a tall figure in a red flannel shirt came forward, bent down, and before any one knew that he had come, or who he was, he was speaking to the sick child.

"Gardiner, little cousin, here's your old cousin Antony come back."

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Gardiner was travelling hard, but his head stopped its restless turning. He looked up into the beloved face, whose smile shone on him and lit his dark journey. Gardiner tried to answer the brightness of that smile, he tried to hold out his little arms. In a sob Bella whispered—

"He wants Cousin Antony to carry him."

Without removing his look of tender brightness from the traveller's face, Fairfax murmured—

"I reckon I'll take him in my arms, Aunt Caroline."

And as the steepest, coldest place came in sight to little Gardiner, he was lifted in a warm embrace. He opened his eyes upon Antony's and with a radiant look gave up the painful climbing to the rescuer.

CHAPTER VIII

[Pg 110]

Fairfax himself made many cruel Siberian journeys and voyages through hellish tropics, on his own narrow bed in the hall room overlooking the New York Central yards. He had something close to pneumonia and turned and cried out on his bed, too small for his big form, and in his delirium he kicked away the footboard. His uncle's house, which he had left as brusquely this time as before, haunted him in his mind troubled by sickness. He cried out that it was a cursed place and that Gardiner had been killed by neglect, and that he shook the dust of New York from his feet. From wild blue eyes that flamed under his hair grown long, he stared into the space peopled by delirium and called his solitary attendant "Bella," and begged her to come away with him before it was too late, for, as many sick people seem to be, he was travelling. In his case he journeyed back to his boarding-house and laid his visions down and waked up in the same old world that had treated him badly, but which he was not ready to leave.

It was a sunny, brilliant January day. The snow had frozen on his window and the light played upon gleaming bands, and through the dingy yellow shade the sunlight came determinedly. On the table by his bedside were his medicines and milk, and he was covered by counterpanes lent by the other lodgers.

He felt the perspiration pour off him as his mind found its balance, and he saw how weak he was; but though it hurt him to breathe, he could do so, and the crisis was past. He had fallen on his bed when he came from New York and here he had remained. He wet his cracked lips, said "Water," and from behind him, where she had been sitting, a girl came and held a glass to his lips. Fairfax drank, closed his eyes, made no sign of recognition, for he knew Molly Shannon. She wiped the sweat from his brow and face tenderly, and though her hand had not trembled before in her ministrations, it trembled now. Her heart was beating with gratitude for she knew he was saved. She gave him milk and brandy, after a few moments, then sat down to her work. Fairfax, speaking each word distinctly, said—

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"I reckon I've been pretty sick, haven't I?"

"You're all right now, Misther Fairfax."

He smiled faintly. He was indifferent, very weak, but he felt a kind of mild happiness steal over him as he lay there, a sense of being looked after, cared for, and of having beaten the enemy which had clutched his throat and chest. He heard the voices of Molly and the doctor, heard her pretty Irish accent, half-opened his eyes and saw her hat and plaid red-and-black shawl hanging by the window. The plaid danced before his eyes, became a signal flag, and, watching it, he drowsed and then fell into the profound sleep which means recovery.

Fairfax took Molly Shannon's presence for granted, accepted her services, obeyed her docilely and thanked her with his smile which regained its old radiance as he grew stronger. Lying shaven, with his hair cut at last—for she had listened to his pleading and sent for a barber—in clean sheets and jacket, he looked boyish and thin, and to the Irish girl he was beautiful. She kept her eyes from him for fear that he should see her passion and her adoration, and she effaced herself in the nurse, the mother, the sister, in the angel.

Sure, she hadn't sent word to any one. How should she? Sorry an idea she had where he came from or who were his folks.

"I am glad. I wouldn't have worried my mother."

And answering the question that was bounding in Molly's heart, he said—

"There's no one else to frighten or to reassure. I must write to my mother to-day."

As he said this he remembered that he would be obliged to tell her of little Gardiner, and the blood rose to his cheek, a spasm seized his heart, and his past rushed over him and smote him like a great wave.

Molly sat sewing in the window, mending his shirts, the light outlining her form and her head like a red flower. He covered his face with his hand and a smothered groan escaped him, and he fell back on the pillow. Molly ran to him, terrified: "a relapse," that's what it was. The doctor had warned her.

"God in heaven!" she cried, and knowing nothing better to do, she put her arms round him as if he had been a boy. She saw the tears trickle through his thin hands that in his idleness had grown white, though the dark ridges around the broken nails were blackened still.

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Fairfax quickly regained his control and made the girl go back to her work. After a little he said—

"Who's been paying for all these medicines, and so forth?"

"Lord love ye, that's nothing to cry about."

"There is money in my vest pocket, Molly; get it, will you?"

She found a roll of bills. There were twenty dollars.

She exclaimed—

"That's riches! I've only spent the inside of a five-dollar bill."

"And the doctor?"

"Oh, he'll wait. He's used to waiting in Nut Street."

Fairfax fingered the money. "And your work at Sheedy's?"

Molly stood by the bed, his shirt in her hand, her brass thimble on one finger, a bib apron over her bosom.

"Don't bother."

"You've lost your place, Molly; given it up to take care of me."

She took a few stitches, the colour high in her face, and with a rare sensitiveness understood that she must not let Antony see her sacrifice, that she must not put her responsibility on Fairfax. She met his eyes candidly.

"If you go on like this, you'll be back again worse nor ye were. Sheedy's afther me ivery day at the dure there, waitin' till I'm free again. He is that. Meanwhile he's payin' me full time. He is that. He'll keep me me place!"

She lied sweetly, serenely, and when the look of relief crept over Fairfax's face, she endured it as humble women in love endure, when their natures are sweet and honey-like and their hearts are pure gold.

She took the five dollars he paid her back. He was too delicate in sentiment to offer her more, and he watched her, his hands idly on the sheets.

"I reckon Joe Mead's got another fireman, Molly?"

"Ah, no," she laughed, "Joe's been here every day to see when you would be working, and when Joe don't come the other felly comes to see when you'll let *him* off!"

Life, then, was going on out there in the yards. He heard the shriek of the engines, the fine voices of the whistles, and the square of his sunny window framed the outer day. People were going on journeys, people were coming home. He had come back, and little Gardiner....

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"Sit down," he said brusquely to the girl who stood at his side; "sit down, for God's sake, and talk to me; tell me something, anything, or I shall go crazy again."

He recovered rapidly; his hard work had strengthened his constitution, and Molly Shannon modestly withdrew, and Mary Kenny, the landlady, who had disputed the place from the first, took it and gave Antony what further care he needed. He missed Molly the first day she left him, missed her shawl and hat and the music of her Irish voice. He had sent for books through Joe Mead, and read furiously, realizing how long he had been without intellectual food.

But the books made him wretched.

Not one of them was written for an artist who had been forced by hard luck to turn into a day labourer. All the beautiful things he read made him suffer and desire and long, and worse still, made him rebel. One phrase out of Werther lingered and fascinated him—

"The miseries of mankind would be lighter if—God knows why this is so—if they would not use all their imagination to remember their miseries and to recall to themselves the souvenirs of their unhappy past."

The unhappy past! Well, was it not sad at his age to have a past so melancholy that one could not recall it without tears?

Every one but Sanders came to see him, and jolly him up. Joe Mead gave him to understand that he only lived for the time when Tony should come back to feed "the Girl," as he called his engine. Tony looked at his chief out of cavernous eyes. Joe Mead had on his Sunday clothes and would not light his cigar out of deference to Tony's sick-room.

"You're forty, Mead, aren't you?"

"About that, I guess."

"And I am only twenty-three," returned Fairfax. "Is that going to be a picture of me at forty?" he thought, and answered himself violently: "My mother's pride and mine forbid." [Pg 116]

"Sanders doesn't come to see me, Joe?"

"Nope," returned the other, "you bet your life. If he ain't waiting for you at the door with a gun when you come down it's only because he is off on his job."

When his chief got up to leave him, Fairfax said, "I want you to get me a book on mechanics, Joe, practical mechanics, and don't pay over a dollar and a half."

He owed Molly Shannon more than he could ever return. The doctor told him, because he imagined that it would give the young fireman satisfaction, that the nursing had saved his life. Sanders was not at the stair-foot when Fairfax finally crept down to take his first outing. It was the middle of February and a mild day. Indeed, he had been at work over a fortnight when he caught sight of Molly and Sanders standing at the head of Nut Street, talking.

As he came up to them, Sanders turned a face clouded with passion on Fairfax.

"You cursed hound!" he growled under his breath, and struck out, but before he could reach Fairfax Molly threw herself on Sanders and caught the blow on her arm and shoulder. In spite of her courage she cried out and would have fallen but for Fairfax. The blow, furiously directed by an able-bodied man, had done worse work than Sanders intended, and the poor girl's arm hung limp and she fainted away.

"Mother of God," muttered Sanders, "I have killed you, Molly darling!"

Her head lay on Fairfax's shoulder. "Let's get her into the coffee house," he said shortly.

Sanders was horrified at the sight of the girl he adored lying like death from his blow, and with a determination which Fairfax could not thwart the engineer took the girl in his own arms.

"Give her to me," he said fiercely, "I'll settle with you later. Can't take her into the coffee house: they've turned her out on account of you. There's not a house that would take her but the hotel. I'm going to carry her to my mother." [Pg 117]

Followed by a little group of people whom Fairfax refused to enlighten, they went down the street, and Sanders disappeared within the door of the shanty where his family lived.

The incident gave Antony food for thought, and he chewed a bitter cud as he shut himself into his room. He couldn't help the girl's coming to him in his illness. He could have sent her about her business the first day that he was conscious. She would not have gone. She had lost her place and her reputation, according to Sanders, because of her love for him. There was not any use in mincing the matter. That's the way it stood. What should he do? What could he do?

He took off his heavy overcoat and muffler, rubbed his hands, which were taking on their accustomed dirt and healthy vigour, poured out a glass of milk from the bottle on his window sill, and drank it, musing. The Company had acted well to him. The paymaster was a mighty fine man, and Antony had won his interest long ago. They had advanced him a month's pay on account of his illness. He brushed his blonde hair meditatively before the glass, settled the cravat under the

low rolling collar of his flannel shirt. He was a New York Central fireman on regular duty, no further up the scale than Molly Shannon—as far as Nut Street and the others knew. Was there any reason why he should not marry her? She had harmed herself to do him good. He was reading his books on mechanics, a little later he was going to night school when his hours changed; he was going to study engineering; he had his yard ambitions, the only ones he permitted himself to have.

It was four o'clock of the winter afternoon, and the sunset left its red over the sky. Through his little window he saw the smoke of a locomotive rise in a milky column, cradle and flow and melt away. The ringing of the bells, the crying note of the whistles, had become musical to Fairfax.

There was no reason why he should not marry the Irish girl who doled out coffee to railroad hands.... Was there none? The figure of his mother rose before him, beautiful, proud, ambitious Mrs. Fairfax. She was waiting for his brilliant success, she was waiting to crown him when he should bring his triumphs home. The ugly yards blurred before his eyes, he almost fancied that a spray of jasmine blew across the pane.

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He would write—

"Mother, I have married an Irish girl, a loving, honest creature who saved my life and lost her own good name doing so. It was my duty, mother, wasn't it? I am not striving for name or fame; I don't know what art means any more. I am a day labourer, a common fireman on an engine in the Albany yards—that's the truth, mother."

"Good heavens!" He turned brusquely from the window, paced his room a few times, limping up and down it, the lame jackdaw, the crippled bird in his cage, and his heart swelled in his breast. No—he could not do it. The Pride that had led him here and forced him to make his way in spite of fate, the Pride that kept him here would not let him. He had ambitions then? He was not then dead to fame? Where were those dreams? Let them come to him and inspire him now. He recalled the choir-master of St. Angel's church. He could get a job to sing in St. Angel's if he pleased. He would run away to Albany. He had run away from New York; now he would run from Nut Street like a cad and save his Pride. He would leave the girl with the broken arm, the coffee-house door shut against her, to shift for herself, because he was a gentleman. Alongside the window he had hung up his coat and hat, and they recalled to him her things as they had hung there. There had been something dove-like and dear in her presence in his room of sickness. His Pride! He could hear his old Mammy say—

"Massa Tony, chile, you' pride's gwine to lead yo thru black waters some day, shore."

He said "Come in" to the short, harsh rap at the door, and Sanders entered, slamming the door behind him. His face was hostile but not murderous; as usual his bowler was a-cock on his head.

"See here, Fairfax, she sent me. She ain't hurt much, just a damned nasty bruise. I gave her my promise not to stick a knife into you."

Fairfax pushed up his sleeves; his arms were white as snow. He had lost flesh.

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"I'll fight you right here, Sanders," he said, "and we'll not make a sound. I'm not as fit as you are, but I'll punish you less for that reason. Come on."

Molly's lover put his hand in his pockets because he was afraid to leave them out. He shook his head.

"I gave the girl my word, and I'd rather please Molly than break every bone in your — body, and that's saying a good deal. And here on my own hook I want to ask you a plain question."

"I shan't answer it, Sandy."

The other with singular patience returned, "All right. I'm going to ask just the same. Are you ... will you ... what the hell...!" he exclaimed.

"Don't go on," said Fairfax; "shut up and go home."

Instead, Sanders took off his hat, a sign of unusual excitement with him. He wiped his face and said huskily—

"Ain't got a chance in the world alongside you, Fairfax, and I'd go down and crawl for her. That's how *I'm* about her, mate." His face broke up.

Fairfax answered quietly, "That's all right, Sanders—that's all right."

The engineer went on: "I want you to clear out and give me my show, Tony. I had one before you turned up in Nut Street."

"Why, I can't do that, Sanders," said Fairfax gently; "you oughtn't to ask a man to do that. Don't you see how it will look to the girl?"

The other man's face whitened; he couldn't believe his ears.

"Why, you don't mean to say...?" he wondered slowly.

The figure under the jasmine vine, the proud form and face of his mother, grew smaller, paler as does the fading landscape when we look back upon it from the hill we have climbed.

"The doctor told me Molly had saved my life," Fairfax said. "They have turned her out of doors in — Street. Now you must let me make good as far as I can."

The young man's blue eyes rested quietly on the blood-shot eyes of his visitor. Sanders made no direct answer; he bit his moustache, considered his companion a second, and clapping his hat on his head, tore the door open. [Pg 120]

"You are doing her a worse wrong than any," he stammered; "she ain't your kind and you don't love her."

His hand whitened in its grip on the door handle, then giving one look at his companion as though he meditated repeating his unfortunate attack upon him, he flung himself out of the door, muttering—

"I've got to get out of here.... I don't dare to stay!"

CHAPTER XI

[Pg 121]

By the time the sublime spring days came, Fairfax discovered that he needed consolation. He must have been a very stubborn, dull animal, he decided, to have so successfully stuffed down and crushed out Antony Fairfax. Antony Fairfax could not have been much of a man at any time to have gone down so uncomplainingly in the fight.

"A chap who is uniquely an artist and poet," he wrote to his mother, "is not a real man, I reckon."

But he had not described to her what kind of a fellow stood in his stead. Instead of going to church on Sundays he exercised in the free gymnasium, joined a base-ball team—the firemen against the engineers—and read and studied more than he should have done whenever he could keep his eyes open. Then spring came, and he could not deny another moment, another day or another night, that he needed consolation.

The wives and daughters of the railroad hands and officials—those he saw in Nut Street—were not likely to charm his eyes. Fairfax waited for Easter—waited with a strange young crying voice in his heart, a threatening softness around his heart of steel.

He went on rapidly with his new studies; his mind grasped readily whatever he attacked, and his teacher, less worldly than the choir-master at St. Angel's, wondered at his quickness, and looked at his disfigured hands. Joe Mead knew Tony's plans and his ambitions; by June they would give Fairfax an engine and Mead would look out for another fireman to feed "the Girl." The bulky, panting, puffing, sliding thing, feminine as the machine seemed, could no longer charm Fairfax nor occupy all his thoughts. [Pg 122]

He had been sincere when he told Sanders that he would look out for Molly Shannon. The pinnacle this decision lifted him to, whether felt to be the truth or purely a sentimental advance, nevertheless gave him a view which seemed to do him good. The night after Sanders' visit, Fairfax slept in peace, and the next day he went over to Sanders' mother and asked to see Molly Shannon. She had left Nut Street, had run away without leaving any address. Fairfax did not push his chivalry to try to find her. He slept better than ever that night, and when during the month Sanders himself went to take a job further up in the State and the entire Sanders family moved to Buffalo, Fairfax's slumbers grew sounder still. At length his own restless spirit broke his repose.

April burst over the country in a mad display of blossoms, which Fairfax, through the cab of his engine, saw lying like snow across the hills. He passed through blossoming orchards, and above the smell of oil and grease came the ineffable sweetness of spring, the perfume of the earth and the trees. Just a year ago he had gone with Bella and Gardiner to Central Park, and he remembered Gardiner's little arm outstretched for the prize ring he could never secure, and Bella's sparkling success. The children had been in spring attire; now Fairfax could buy himself a new overcoat and did so, a grey one, well-made and well-fitting, a straw hat with a crimson band, and a stick to carry on his Sunday jauntings—but he walked alone.

He flung his books in the bottom drawer of his bureau, locked it and pitched the key out of the window. He would not let them tempt him, for he had weakly bought certain volumes that he had always wanted to read, and Nut Street did not understand them.

"It's the books," he decided; "I can't be an engineer if I go on, nor will I be able to bear my lonely state."

Verse and lovely prose did not help him; their rhythm and swell drew away the curtains from the window of his heart, and the golden light of spring dazzled the young man's eyes. He eagerly observed the womenkind he passed, and Easter week, with its solemn festival, ran in hymn and prayer toward Easter Day. New frocks, new jackets, new hats were bright in the street. On Easter Sunday Fairfax sat in his old place by the choir and sang. The passion and tenderness brooding in him made his voice rich and the choir-master heard him above the congregation. From the lighted altar and the lilies, from the sunlight streaming through the stained windows, inspiration came to him, and as Fairfax sat and listened to the service he saw in imagination a [Pg 123]

great fountain to the left of the altar, a fountain of his building that should stand there, a marble fountain held by young angels with folded wings, and he would model, as Della Robbia modelled, angels in their primitive beauty, their bright infancy. The young man's head sank forward, he breathed a deep sigh. He owed every penny that he had laid by to Mrs. Kenny, to the tailor and the doctor, and in another month he would be engineer on probation. His inspiration left him at the church door. He walked restlessly up to the station and with a crowd of excursionists took his train to West Albany. Luncheon baskets, crying babies, oranges, peanuts, and the rest of the excursion paraphernalia filled the car. Fairfax looked over the crowd, and down by the farther door caught sight of a familiar face and figure.

It was Molly Shannon coming back to Nut Street for Easter. For several months the girl had been working in the Troy collar factory, and drawn by the most powerful of magnets was reluctantly returning to Nut Street on her holiday. Molly had no new dress for Easter. She hadn't even a new hat. Her long hours in the factory and her state of unhappy, unrequited love, had worn away the crude brilliance of her form. She was pale, thinner, and in her cheap dress, her old hat with its faded ribbon, with her hands clasped over a little imitation leather handbag, she sat utterly alone, as youth and beauty should never be.

Fairfax limped down the car and took his place by her side.

CHAPTER XII

[Pg 124]

Mrs. Kenny, with prodigal hospitality, took Molly in for over Sunday. Fairfax walked alongside of her to his boarding-house, carrying the imitation leather bag, talking to her, laughing with her, calling the colour back and making her eyes bright. He found himself, with his young lady, before the threshold of Kenny's hotel. "Gents only." Whether this was the rule or an idea only, Fairfax wondered, for Molly was not the first one of the gentler sex who had been cordially entertained in the boarding-house! Mrs. Kenny's sister and her sister's child, her mother and aunts three, had successively come down on the hotel during Fairfax's passing, and been lavishly entertained, anywhere and everywhere, even under Fairfax's feet, for he had come out one morning from his door to find two little girls sleeping on a mattress in the hall.

All his lifelong Fairfax retained an adoration for landladies. They had such tempting opportunities to display qualities that console and ennoble, and the landladies with whom he had come in contact took advantage of their opportunities! It didn't seem enough to wait five weeks for a chap to pay up, when one's own rent was due, but the landlady must buy chicken at ruinous prices when a chap was ill, and make soup and put rice in it, and carry it steaming, flecked with rich golden grease, put pot-pie balls in it and present it to a famishing fireman who could do no more than kiss the hand, the chapped hand, that brought the bowl.

"Now *wud* ye, Misther Fairfax?"

He would, as if it had been his mother's!

Nut Street was moral, domestic and in proportion severe. Mary Kenny had not been born there; she had come with her husband from the happy-go-lucky, pig-harbours shanties of County Cork. She was the most unprejudiced soul in the neighbourhood. Between boarders, a lazy husband, six children and bad debts, she had little time to gossip, but plenty of time in which to be generous.

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"I *wull* that!" she assured Molly. "Ye'll sleep in the kitchen on a shakedown, and the divil knows where it'll shake *from* for I haven't a spare bed in the house!"

Molly would only stay till Monday... Fairfax put her little bag on the kitchen table, where a coarse cloth was spread, and the steam greeted them of a real Irish stew, and the odour of less genuine coffee tickled their appetites.

Molly Shannon considered Fairfax in his new Easter Sunday spring clothes. From his high collar, white as Nut Street could white it, to his polished boots—he was a pleasant thing to look upon. His cravat was as blue as his eyes. His moustache was brushed carefully from his young, well-made mouth, and he beamed with good humour on every one.

"Shure, dinner's dished, and the childer and Kenny are up to the cemetery pickin' vi'lets. Set right down, the rest will be along. Set down, Misther Fairfax and Molly Shannon."

After dinner, up in his room, the walls seemed to have contracted. The kitchen's smoky air rose even here, and he flung his window wide to the April sweetness. The atmosphere was too windless to come in and wrestle with the smell of frying, but he saw the day was golden as a draught waiting to be quaffed. The restricted schedule of Sunday cast a quiet over the yards, and from the distance Fairfax heard sounds that were not distinguishable in the weekday confusion, the striking of the hour from the Catholic Church bell, the voices of the children playing in the streets. There was a letter lying on his bureau from his mother: he had not had the heart to read it to-day. The gymnasium was shut for repairs, there was no ball game on for Easter Day, and,

after a second's hesitation, he caught up his hat from where he had dropped it at his feet and rushed downstairs into the kitchen. [Pg 126]

Molly, her sleeves rolled up, was washing dishes for Mrs. Kenny.

"Don't you want to come out with me for a walk?" Fairfax asked her.

"Go along," said Mrs. Kenny, giving her a shove with her bare elbow. "I'll make out alone fine. The suds is elegant. If you meet Kenny and the children, tell them there's not a bit left but the lashins of the stew, and to hurry up."

CHAPTER XIII

[Pg 127]

There was a divine fragrance in the air. Fairfax stopped to gather a few anemones and handed them to his silent companion.

"Since you have grown so pale in the collar factory, Miss Molly, you look like these flowers."

He stretched out his arms, bared his head, flung it up and looked toward the woodland up the slope and saw the snow-white stones on the hill, above the box borders and the cedar borders of the burial place: above, the sky was blue as a bird's wing.

"Let me help you." He put his hand under her arm and walked with her up the hill. They breathed together; the sweet air with its blossomy scent touched their lips, and the ancient message of spring spoke to them. He was on Molly's left side; beneath his arm he could feel her fluttering heart and his own went fast. At the hill top they paused at the entrance to a pretentious lot, with high white shafts and imposing columns, broken by the crude whiteness of a single marble cross. Brightly it stood out against the air and the dark green of cedar and box.

"This is the most perfect monument," he said aloud, "the most harmonious; indeed, it is the only relief to the eye."

On every grave were Easter garlands, crosses and wreaths; the air was heavy with lilac and with lily.

Except for a few monosyllables Molly said nothing, but now, as they paused side by side, she murmured—

"It's beautiful quiet after the racket of the shops; it's like heaven!"

Fairfax's glance wandered over the acres of monuments, marking the marble city, and came back to the living girl at his side. [Pg 128]

"It's a strange place for two young people to stroll about in, Miss Molly."

Molly Shannon stood meekly, her work-stained hands clasped loosely before her and in her form were the beauties of youth, virginity, chastity, promise of life and fecundity, and, for Fairfax, of passion.

"Ah, I don't know," she answered him slowly, "I think it's lovely and quiet here. Back in Troy next week when we work overtime and the boss gets mad, I'll think of it likely, I guess."

He talked to her as they strolled, realizing his need of companionship, and his pent-up heart poured itself forth as they walked between the graves, and he told the Irish girl of Bella and little Gardiner, and of his grief.

"I don't know what I did that day," he finished. "I was a brute to my aunt and to the little girl. I laid him down on his bed and rushed out like a crazy man; the house seemed to haunt me. I must have been ill then. I recall that my aunt called to me and that Bella hung on my arm and that I shook her off. I recall that my uncle followed me downstairs and stood by me while I got into my overcoat, but I was too savage and too miserably proud to answer him. I left him talking to me and the little girl crying on the stairs."

She asked him timidly, "What had they done to make you hate them so?" She told herself in her humility that he was a gentleman and not for her.

He continued, carried away by the fact of a good listener, and, although she listened, she understood less than Benvenuto Cellini, less, even, than the children. He came up against so many things that were impossible to tell her that he stopped at length, laughing.

"You see how a chap runs on when he has a friend by him, Miss Molly. Why do you go back to the collar factory?"

He stopped short, remembering what Sanders had said, and that Nut Street had shut its doors against her. They had come down through the cemetery to the main avenue that stretched, spacious and broad, between the dwellings of the dead. They sauntered slowly side by side, an incongruous, appealing couple. He saw her worn shoes, the poor skirt, the hands discoloured as were his, through toil, and his glance followed up the line of her form and his artistic sense told him that it was lovely. Under her coarse bodice the breast gently swelled with her breath, her [Pg 129]

eyes were downcast, and there was an appealing charm about her that a young man in need of love could not gainsay. Pity for her had been growing long in Fairfax—since the first day he saw her in the coffee house, since the time when he had decided to go elsewhere for his meals.

She stopped at the foot of the avenue and said something was beautiful, and he looked up. The marble figure of an angel on a grey pedestal rose at the gate, a colossal figure in snowy marble, with folded wings and one uplifted hand. There was a solemn majesty in the creation, a fine, noble, holy majesty, and the sculptor halted before it so long, his face grave and his eyes absorbed, that when Molly sighed, he started. Along the base ran the words—

"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

"Come," he said brusquely to his companion; "come. This is no place for us." And he hurried her out of the grounds.

On the way home his silence was not flattering to his companion, who was too meek to be offended. Already the pleasure of being by his side was well-nigh too much for her swelling heart to bear. The lengthening twilight filled Nut Street as they turned into it, and very nearly every member of the little working colony was out of doors, including the Sheedys and the new tenants of Sanders' old room. Walking alongside of Molly Shannon, Fairfax understood what his promenade would mean. He glanced at his companion and saw her colour, and she raised her head with a dignity that touched him, and as they passed the Sheedys he said "Good-evening" in his pleasant Southern voice, lifting his hat as though they had been of his own kind. He drew the Irish girl's arm within his own.

For Molly, she walked a gamut of misery, and the sudden realization of the solemnity of the thing he was doing made the young man's heart beat heavily.

CHAPTER XIV

[Pg 130]

He had been gone from home more than a year, his mother wrote. "One cannot expect to carve a career in twelve months' time, Tony, and yet I am so impatient for you, my darling, I am certain you have gone far and have splendid things to show me. Are you sure that Albany is the place for you? Would it not have been better to have stayed on with Cedersholm? When will you run down to your old mother, dearest? I long for the sound of your footstep, the dear broken footstep, Tony...." Then she went on to say not to mind her foolishness, not to think of her as mourning, but to continue with his beautiful things. She had not been very well of late—a touch of fever, she reckoned: Emmeline took the best of care of her. She was better.

He let the pages fall, reading them hastily, eagerly, approaching in his thought of her everything he had longed to be, had yearned to be, might have been, and the letter with its elegant fine writing and the fluttering thin sheets rustled ghost-like in his hand. As he turned the pages a leaf of jasmine she had put between the sheets fell unseen to the floor.

He would go to New Orleans at once: he would throw himself at his mother's knees and tell her his failures, his temptations, his griefs: he would get a transfer to some Southern train, he would steal a ride, but he would go. His mother's pride would suffer when she saw what he had become, but he was not bringing her home a shameful story. She would ask to see his beautiful creations—alas! even his ideals were buried under grime and smoke, their voices drowned in whistles and bells! He folded his arms across his breast, the last sheet of the long letter in his hand, and again his room stifled him as it had done before when he had flown out to walk with the Irish girl. The walls closed in upon him. The ceiling seemed to confine him like a coffin lid, and the flickering gas jet over his bureau burned pale like a burial candle....

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He groaned, started forward to the door as though he would begin his journey home immediately, but like many a wanderer who starts on his voyage home and finds the old landmarks displaced, before Fairfax could take the first step forward, his course was for ever changed.... He had not heard Molly's knock at the door. The girl came in timidly, holding out a telegram; she brought it as she had brought the other, without comment, but with the Irish presentiment of ill, she remained waiting silently, knowing in her humble breast that she was all he had.

Fairfax opened the despatch, held it transfixed, gave a cry and said to Molly, staring her wildly in the eyes: "My mother, my mother!" and went and fell on his knees by his bed and flung his arms across it as though across a beloved form. He shook, agonized for a few moments, then sprang up and stared at the desertion before him, the tears salt on his face and his heart of steel broken. And the girl by the door, where she had clung like a leaf blown there by a wind of grief, came up to him. He felt her take his arm between her hands, he felt her close to him.

"It cuts the heart o' me to see ye. It's like death to see ye. Is it your mother gone? The dear mother ye must be like? God knows there's no comfort for that kind, but," she breathed devotedly, "I'd give the life o' me to comfort ye."

He hardly heard her, but her presence was all he had. Her human companionship was all that was left him in the world. He put his hand on her shoulder and said brokenly—

"You don't know what this means. It is the end of me, the end. To think I shall never see her

again! Oh, *Mother!*" he cried, and threw up his arms. The loving woman put hers about him as the gesture left him shorn of his strength, and when his arms fell they were around her. He held her for a moment as a drowning man holds to that which is flung out to him to save his life; then he pushed her from him. "Let me get out of this. I must get out of the room."

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"You'll not do anything to yourself? Ah, tell me that."

He snatched up his hat and fled from her without reply.

He wandered like a madman all night long. Whither he did not know or care. He was walking down his anguish, burying his new grief deep, deep. His nails clenched into his palms, the tears ran over his face. One by one as the pictures of his mother came to him, imperious, graceful, enchanting, one by one he blessed them, worshipped before them until the curtain fell at the end—he could not picture that. Had she called for him in vain? Had she watched the open door to see him enter? In God's name why hadn't they sent for him? "Suddenly of heart disease ..." the morning of this very day—this very day. And on he tramped, unconsciously going in the direction he had taken that morning, and at a late hour found himself without the gates of the cemetery where he and Molly Shannon had spent the late afternoon. The iron gates were closed; within stretched the shining rows of the houses and palaces of the dead, and on their snowy portals and their marble doors fell the first tender glimmer of the day. Holding the gate between his convulsive hands, staring in as though he begged an entrance as a lodger, Fairfax saw rise before him the angel with the benign uplifting hand, and the lettering, large and clear, seemed written that day for him as much as for any man—

"*Why seek ye the living among the dead?*"

He raised his eyes to the angel face on whose brow and lips the light of his visions had gathered for him that morning; and as he looked the angelic figure brightened in the dawn; and after a few moments in which he remained blotted against the rails like an aspirant at Heaven's gate, he turned and more quietly took his way home.

CHAPTER XV

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He did not go South. There was nothing for him to go for. The idea of his home uninhabited by her made him a coward. Emmeline sent him her thimble, her lace collar, her wedding ring and a lock of her hair, shining still and without a touch of grey. The packet, wrapped up in soft paper and folded by jasmine leaves and buds, whose withered petals were like a faded dress, Fairfax put away in his trunk and did not untie; he did not wish to open his wound. And his face, thinner from his illness and his loss, looked ten years older. The early happy ecstasy of youth was gone, and a bitter, mature recklessness took its place, and there was no hand to soothe him but Molly's, and she had gone back to Troy. He tried what ways were open to a man of his age and the class he had adopted, and he turned for distraction and relief and consolation to their doors. But at those portals, at the threshold of the houses where other men went in, he stopped. If his angel had deserted him, at any rate the beast had not taken its place. The vast solitude and the cruel loneliness, the isolation from his kind, made him an outcast too wretched not to cry for help and too clean to wallow in order to forget his state. His work saved his health and his brain. He made a model of an engine in plaster and went mad over it; he set it on a shelf in his room and when in June he drove his own engine and was an engineer on the New York Central, he knew his locomotive, body and soul and parts, as no other mechanic in the Company knew it. His chiefs were conscious of his skill and intelligence. There were jealousies and enmities, and instead of driving the express as he had hoped, he was delegated to a local on a branch line, with an Italian for fireman who could not speak a word of any but his own language.

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"You speak Italian, don't you, Fairfax?" his boss at the office asked him.

("Cielo azuro ... Giornata splendida...!") and he smelt the wet clay.

"I can *point*," laughed the engineer, "in *any* language! and I reckon I'll get on with Falutini."

CHAPTER XVI

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The boss was a Massachusetts man and new to Nut Street, and Fairfax, when he took the paper with his orders from Rainsford's hand, saw for the first time in months a man of his own class, sitting in the revolving chair before the desk where his papers and schedules and ledgers were filed. The man's clothes were too thin for the season, his linen was old and his appearance meagre, and in his face with its sunken cheeks, the drooping of the eyes and the thinness of the brow, were the marks of the sea of life and its waste, and the scars of the storm. A year ago Fairfax would have passed Rainsford by as a rather pitiful-looking man of middle age.

The boss, his thin hand opening and shutting over a small book which looked like a daily ledger, regarded the engineer in his red shirt as Fairfax paused.

"Irish, I expect? Your name, Fairfax, is Irish. I understand you've had a hard blow this year, been sick and lost your mother."

At the quiet statement of this sacred fact Fairfax started painfully, his face flushed.

"He would not have spoken to me like that," he thought, "if he had not imagined me a working man."

"Work is the best friend a young man can have," Rainsford went on; "it is a great safeguard. I take it that you are about thirty?"

"Twenty-three," said Fairfax, shortly.

His report was brief. Just then his fireman came in, a black-haired, tall young fellow with whom Fairfax knew he should never sing "Mia Maddelena."

CHAPTER XVII

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He avoided Rainsford, gave himself up to his engine and his train, and took a dislike to his black-headed fireman, who dared to be Italian and to recall the aurora of days he had buried fathoms deep. The heat pouring on him in summer time made him suffer physically. He rather welcomed the discomfort; his skin grew hardened and tanned and oiled and grimed, and his whole body strong and supple; and his devotion to his work, the air that filled him as he flew, made him the perfect, splendid animal that he was.

At night, when the darkness blotted out the steel rails, and the breeze blowing through the car-window fluttered his sleeve till it bellied, and the cinders, red and biting, whirled by, and on either side the country lay dark and fragrant with its summery wealth—at night his eyes, fixed on the track under the searchlight, showed him more than once a way to end his unhappy life, but his confused reveries and his battle, spiritual and physical, helped him, and he came out of it with a love for life and a stronger hold upon it each time than the last. He gave up wearing his Sunday clothes, he went as the others did; he had not been for months to Albany or to Troy.

One Sunday in midsummer his local did not run on the seventh day. He considered his own image in the glass over his bureau and communed with his reflection. The result of his musings was that he opened his trunk and took out the precious packet; started to unfold it, turned it over in his uncertain hands, thrust it back, set his teeth and went out to the junction and took the train for Troy.

He found her in the boarding-house where she was passing her Sunday, rocking the landlady's teething baby. He bade her to come as she was, not to fix up. The idea of a toilet which would end in a horrible frock rasped his nerves. She detected a great change in him, simple-minded though she was, and she tried to get him to talk and failed. Down at the Erie Canal, by the moored boats and the motionless water, he seized her arm and facing her, said, his lips working—

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"I have come to ask you to marry me, Molly."

She grew as white as the drying linen on the windless air, as the family wash hung on the canal boat lines behind her. Her grey eyes opened wide on Antony.

"I'm making a good living; too much for me alone."

He saw her try to find her voice and her senses, and with something of his old radiance, he said—

"I'm a brute. I reckon I don't know how to make love. I've startled you."

"Ah, shure, ye don't know what ye're saying," she whispered; "the likes o' me ain't good enough."

"Hush, hush," he answered, "don't say foolish things."

She gasped and shook her head. "Ye shouldn't tempt me so. It's crool. Ye shouldn't tempt me so."

With a self-abandonment and a humility which he never afterward forgot, as her life and colour came back Molly said under her breath—

"Take me as I am, shure, if I'm the least bit of good to ye. I love ye enough for both."

He exclaimed and kissed her.

Dreams of women! Visions of the ecstasy of first love, ideals and aspirations, palpitating, holy, the young man's impassioned dream of The Woman, the Only Woman, the notion and conception that the man of nature and of talent and of keen imagination sleeps upon and follows and seeks and seeks and follows all his life, from boyhood to the grave—where were they then?

He had brushed his aunt's cheek, he had touched her hand and trembled; now he kissed fresh young lips that had yearned for his, and he gave his first embrace to woman, put his arms round Molly Shannon and her young body filled them. As she had said, she had love enough for both. He felt a great gratitude to her, a relaxation of his tense senses, a melting of his heart, and his tenderness was deep for her when his next kiss met her tears.

He returned to Nut Street dazed, excited but less sentimentally miserable and more profoundly touched. He had made himself a mechanical career; he had assumed the responsibilities of a man. He might have been a miserable failure as a sculptor, perhaps he would be a good mechanic. Who knows where any flight will carry a man? Making his life, married and founding a home, he would be a factor in the world's progress, and a self-supporting citizen. He tried to fire himself with this sacrifice. At any rate, in order to save his body he had lost his soul—that is, his spiritual soul. "Is not the life more than the meat?" In the recesses of his artist's mind a voice which he had strangled tried to tell him that he had done his soul a great, great wrong. Nevertheless, a solemn feeling of responsibility and of manhood came upon him, a grave quiet strength was his, and as he journeyed back to his lodgings, he did not then regret.

Mrs. Kenny and her husband and the children were in the kitchen as he passed and the landlady called out something, but he did not hear for he was half-way upstairs. As he opened the door and went into his room he saw some one was standing by the window—no, leaning far out of the window, very far; a small figure in a black dress.

"Bella!" he cried.

She flashed about, rushed at him, and for the first time since "Going to Siberia" he felt the entwining arms. He suffered the dashing embrace, then, freeing himself, saw her hair dark under her black hat, and that she had grown in eighteen months, and he heard—

"Oh, Cousin Antony, how long you have been coming home! I have been waiting for your engine to come under the window, but I didn't see you. How did you get here without my seeing you?"

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If the sky had opened and shown him the vision of his own mother he could not have been more overwhelmed with surprise.

"Where did you come from, Bella? Who is with you?"

She took her hat off, dropped it easily on the floor, and he saw that her hair was braided in a great braid. She sat on the ledge of the open window and swung her feet. Her skirts had been lengthened, but she was still a little girl. The charming affectionate eyes beamed on him.

"But you are like anybody else, Cousin Antony, to-day. When I saw you in your flannel shirt I thought you were a fireman."

At the remembrance of when she had seen him, a look of distress crossed her mobile face. She burst out crying, sprang up and ran to him.

"Oh, Cousin Antony, I want him so, my little brother, my little playmate."

He soothed her, made her sit on his bed and dried her tears, as he had dried them when she had cried over the blackbird.

"Who is with you, honey? Who brought you here?"

As though she had stored up all her sorrow, as though she had waited with a child's loyal tenderness for this moment, she wound her arms around Fairfax's neck and brought her face close to his cheek.

"I miss him perfectly dreadfully, Cousin Antony. Nobody took care of him much but me. Now father is broken-hearted. You loved him, didn't you? He perfectly worshipped you."

"There, Bella, you choke me, honey. I can't breathe. Now tell me who let you come. Is Aunt Caroline here?"

She had no intention of answering him, and wiped her eyes briskly on the handkerchief that he gave her.

"Tobacco," she sniffed, "your handkerchief has got little wisps of tobacco on it. I think it is perfectly splendid to be an engineer! I wouldn't have thought so though, if I hadn't seen you in the flannel shirt. Wouldn't you rather be a *genius* as you used to think? Don't you make casts any more? Isn't it *sweet* in your little room, and aren't the tracks mixing? How do you ever know which ones to go on, Cousin Antony? And *which* is your engine? Take me down to see it. How Gardiner would have loved to ride!"

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She was a startling combination of child and woman. Her slenderness, her grace, her tender words, the easy flow of speech, the choice of words caught and remembered from the varied books she devoured, her ardour and her rare brilliant little face, all made her an unusual companion.

"Now answer me," he ordered, "who came with you to Albany?"

"No one, Cousin Antony."

"What do you mean?"

"I came alone."

"From New York? You're crazy, Bella!"

She sat up with spirit, brought her heavy braid around over her shoulder and fastened the black ribbon securely.

"I lose my hair ribbons like anything," she said. "Why, I've done things alone for years, Cousin Antony. I've been all over New York matching things. I used to buy all Gardiner's things alone and have them charged. I know my way. I'm going on fourteen. You dropped your telegram, the one Miss Mitty sent you, when you rushed out that night. I found it on the stairs." She fished it out of her pocket. "Mr. Antony Fairfax, 42, Nut Street, West Albany. I had to watch for a good chance to come, and when I got to Forty-second Street I just took a ticket for West Albany, and no one ever asked me my name or address, and the people in the cars gave me candy and oranges. At the station down here I asked the ticket man where Nut Street was, and he said: 'Right over those tracks, young lady,' and laughed at me. Downstairs the woman gave me a glass of milk—and aren't the children too sweet, Cousin Antony, with so many freckles? And doesn't she speak with a brogue just like old Ann's?"

"This is the wildest thing I ever heard of," said her cousin. "I must telegraph your mother and take you home at once."

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She gasped. "Oh, you wouldn't do that? I'm not going home. I have run away for good."

"Don't be a goose, little cousin."

"I hate home," she said hotly, "it's lonely, and I miss my little brother. They won't let me go to school, and mother takes lessons from an opera singer, and there is no quiet place to read. I never go to the Top Floor where we used to play." She clung to his hand. "Let me stay, Cousin Antony," she pleaded, "I want to live with you."

She coloured furiously and stopped. And Fairfax saw that she was like his mother, and that the promises were fulfilled. Her low collar, edged with fine lace, fell away from the pure young throat. Her mouth, piquant and soft, half-coaxing and half-humorous, and her glorious eyes fast losing the look of childhood, were becoming mysterious.

"You are too big a girl," he said sternly, "to talk such nonsense. You are too old to be so silly, Bella. Why, your people must be insane with anxiety."

But her people, as it turned out, were at Long Branch for the summer, and Bella, presumably to go to the dentist, had come up to stay for a day or two with the little Whitcomb ladies. She had chosen her time well.

"No one knows where I am. The Whitcombs don't know I am coming to New York, and the family think I am with Miss Eulalie and Miss Mitty."

"There is a train to New York," he said, "in half an hour."

"Oh," she cried, "Cousin Antony, how horrid! You've changed perfectly dreadfully. I see it now. You used to be fond of me. I thought you were fond of me. I don't want to force myself on you, Cousin Antony."

Fairfax was amazed, charmed and bewildered by her. What did Mrs. Kenny think? He opened the door and called her, and said over his shoulder to Bella—

"What did you tell the woman downstairs?"

Bella picked her hat up from the floor and wound the elastic around her fingers. Her face clouded.

"Tell me," Antony urged, "what did you say to Mrs. Kenny?" He saw her embarrassment, and repeated seriously: "For heaven's sake, Bella, tell me."

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"No," she whispered, "I can't."

He shrugged in despair. "Come, it can't be anything very dreadful. I've got to know, you see."

The bell of the Catholic Church tolled out eight o'clock.

"Come, little cousin."

Half-defiantly and half-shamefacedly, she raised her eyes.

"It's rather hard to tell you," she stammered, "you seem to be so mad at me." She put a brave face on it. "I just told them that I was engaged to you and that I had come to marry you." And she stood her ground, her little head held up.

Fairfax stifled a shout, but was obliged to laugh gently.

"Why, Bella, you are the most ridiculous little cousin in the world. You have read too much. Now, please don't cry, Bella."

He flung the door open and called: "Mrs. Kenny, Mrs. Kenny! Will you come up-stairs?"

CHAPTER XIX

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Those five hours were short to him travelling back to New York. Bella talked to Fairfax until she was completely talked out. Leaning on him, pouring out her childish confidences, telling him things, asking him things, until his heart yearned over her, and he stored away the tones of her sweet gay voice, exquisite with pathos when she spoke of Gardiner, and naïvely tender when she said—

"Cousin Antony, I love you better than any one else. Why can't I stay with you and be happy? I want to work for my living too. I could be a factory girl."

A factory girl!

Then she fell asleep, her head on his shoulder, and was hardly awake when they reached Miss Mitty's house and the cab stopped.

He said, "Bella, we are home."

She did not answer, and, big girl as she was, he carried her in asleep.

"I wish you could make her believe it's all a dream," he said to the Whitcombs. "I don't want the Carews to know about it. It would be far better if she could be induced to keep the secret."

"I am afraid you can't make Bella believe anything unless she likes, Mr. Antony."

No one had missed her. From the Long Branch boat she had gone directly to the Forty-second Street station, and started bravely away on her sentimental journey.

The little ladies induced him to eat what they could prepare for him, and he hurried away. He was obliged to take his train out at nine Monday morning.

He bade them look after bold Bella and teach her reason, and before he left he went in and looked at the little girl lying with her face on her hand, the stains of tears and travel on her face.

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"I told her that I had come to marry you, Cousin Antony...."

"Little cousin! Honey child!"

His heart was tender to his discarded little love.

CHAPTER XX

[Pg 145]

Bella Carew's visit did disastrous work for Fairfax. The day following he was like a dead man at his engine, mechanically fulfilling his duties, his eyes blood-shot, his face worn and desperate. The fireman Falutini bore Fairfax's rudeness with astonishing patience. Their run was from nine until four, with a couple of hours lying off at Fonda, and back again to Albany along in the night.

The fatality of what he had been doing appeared to Antony Fairfax in its full magnitude. He had cut himself off from his class, from his kind for ever. Bella Carew, baby though she was, exquisite, refined, brilliant, what a woman she would be! At sixteen she would be a woman, at eighteen any chap, who had the luck and the fortune, could marry her. She would be the kind of woman that a man would climb for, achieve for, go mad for. As far as he was concerned, he had made his choice. He was engaged to be married to an Irish factory girl, and her words came back to him—

"If I'm any good, take me as I am. You couldn't marry the likes o' me."

Why had he ever been such a short-sighted Puritan, so little of a worldling as to entangle himself in marriage? More terribly the sense of his lost art had come in with the little figure he had admitted.

When he flung himself into his room Monday morning his brain was beyond his usual control, it worked like magic, and one by one they passed before him, the tauntingly beautiful aerial figures of his visions, the angelic forms of his ideals, and if under his hands there had been any tools he would have fallen upon them and upon the clay like a famished man on bread. He threw himself down on his lonely bed in his room through which magic had passed, and slept heavily until Mrs. Kenny pounded on the door and roused him an hour before his train.

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At Fonda, in the shed, he climbed stiffly from his cab, his head aching, his eyes drunk with sleep. All there was of brute in him was rampant, and anything that came in his way would have to bear the brunt of his unbalanced spleen.

Falutini, a great bunch of rags in his hand, was at the side of the engine, wiping the brass and

softly humming. Fairfax heard it—

"Azuro puro,
Cielo azuro,
Mia Maddalena..."

"Stop that infernal bellow," he said, "will you?"

The Italian lifted himself upright and responded in his own tongue—

"I work, I slave, I endure. Now I may not sing? Macché," he cried defiantly, "I will sing, I will."

He threw his chest out, his black eyes on Tony's cross blue ones. He burst out carolling—

"Ah Mia Maddalena."

Fairfax struck his face; the Italian sprang at him like a cat. Falutini was as tall as Fairfax, more agile and with a hard head. However, with one big blow, Fairfax sent him whirling, and as he struck and felt the flesh and blood he discovered how glorious a thing a fight is, how nerve relaxing, and he received the other's assault with a kind of ecstasy. They were not unequally matched. Falutini's skin and muscles were like toughened velvet; he was the cock of his village, a first-rate boxer; and Tony's muscles were of iron, but Fairfax was mad and gloomy, and the Italian was desperate and disgusted, and he made the better show.

A few men lounged in and one called out: "You darned cusses are due to start in ten minutes."

Fairfax just then had his arm round the Italian's neck, the close cropped head came under his chin, and as Fairfax panted and as he smelt the garlic that at first had nauseated him in his companion, he was about to lay his man when the same voice that called before, yelled in horror

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"Look out, for God's sake, Fairfax, he's got a knife."

At the word, Fairfax gave a wrench, caught his companion's right hand with his left and twisted the wrist, and before he knew how he had accomplished it, he had flung the man and knife from him. The knife hit Number Twenty-four and rattled and the fireman fell in a lump on the ground. Fairfax stood over him.

"What a mean lout you are," he said in the jargon he had learned to speak, "what a mean pup. Now you get up, Tito, and clear out."

The fellow rose with difficulty, white, trembling, punched a little about the face, and breathing like a saw-mill. Some one handed the knife to Fairfax.

"It never was made in America. It's a deadly weapon. Ugh, you onion!"

The Italian wiped the sweat from his forehead with his shirt sleeve and spat out on the floor.

Fairfax felt better than he had felt for years. He went back to his engine.

"Get up, Tito," he commanded his fireman; "you get in quickly or I'll help you up. Give me the oil can, will you?" he said. And Tito, trembling, his teeth dry between his lips, obeyed.

Fairfax extended his hand, meeting his companion's eyes for the first time, and said frankly—

"My fault. No hard feeling, Tito. Bene benissimo."

He smiled and slapped the Italian on the back almost affectionately. Tito saw that radiant light for the first time—the light smile. The old gentleman had said a man could win the world with an expression like that upon his face.

"Keep your knife, Falutini; cut up garlic with it: don't use it on me, amico—partner."

They went to work without a word further on the part of either, and Number Twenty-four slipped out on to the switch and was wedded to the local on the main line.

Fairfax was relieved in mind, and the morbid horror of his crisis had been beaten and shaken out.

"What brutes we are," he thought, "what brutes and animals. It is a wonder that any spirit can grow its wings at any time."

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He drew up into a station and stopped, and, leaning out of his window, watched the passengers board the train. Pluff, pluff, pant, pant. The steal and flow and glide, the run and the motion that his hand on the throttle controlled and regulated, became oftentimes musical to him, and when he was morose he would not let the glide and the roll run to familiar melodies in his head, above all, no Southern melodies. "Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching," that was the favourite with Number Twenty-four. He had used to whistle it as he modelled in his room in New Orleans, where the vines grew around his window and Maris made molasses cake and brought it up hot when the syrup was thick on the side, and downstairs a voice would call, "Emmeline, oh, Emmeline." That sacred voice...! When Number Twenty-four was doing her thirty miles an hour, that was the maximum speed of the local, her wheels were inclined to sing—

"Flow gently, sweet Afton,
Among thy green braes:

Flow gently, I'll sing thee
A song in thy praise.
My Mary's asleep
By thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton,
Disturb not her dream."

And little Gardiner leaned hard against his arm and Bella ran upstairs to escape the music because she did not like to cry, and his aunt's dove-like eyes reproached him for his brutal flight. He would not hear any ballads; but to-night, no sooner had he rolled out again into the open country than he began to hum unconsciously the first tune the wheels suggested. They were between the harvest fields and in the moonlight lay the grain left by the reapers.

"Cielo azuro
Giornata splendida,
Mia Maddalena."

Fairfax laughed when he recognized it. He glanced over at Falutini who was leaning out of his window dejectedly. At the next station, whilst the engine let off steam, Fairfax called to his fireman, and the man, as he turned his face to his chief, looked more miserably homesick than revengeful. [Pg 149]

"I used to know a chap from Italy!" Fairfax said in his halting Italian, "a molto bravo diavolo. Shake her down, Tito, and brace her up a little, will you?"

The fireman bent to the furnace, its blast red on his face; from under the belly of the engine the sparks sang as they fell into the water gutter along the track.

"My chap was a marble cutter from Carrara."

Tito banged the door of the furnace. "I too am from Carrara."

"Good!" cried Fairfax, "good enough." And to himself he said: "I'll be darned if I ever knew Benvenuto Cellini's real name!"

"Carrara," continued his companion, "is small. He may have been a cousin. What was his name?"

"Benvenuto Cellini," replied Tony, easily, and rang his bell.

Once more they rolled out into the night. As they drove through the country Fairfax saw the early moonlight lie along the tracks, sifting from the heavens like a luminous snow. No breeze stirred and over the grain fields the atmosphere hung hot and heavy, and they rushed through a sea of heat and wheat and harvest smells. The wind of their going made a stir, and as Fairfax peered out from his window his head was blown upon by the wind of the speed.

Falutini from his side of the cab said, "Benvenuto Cellini. That is not a Carrara man, no, no."

"I never knew him by any other name," said the engineer. "I like Italians." He threw this cheerfully over his shoulder at his inferior.

There was a childlike and confiding smile on the Italian's face; brutal as all Italian peasants are, brutal but kindly and unsuspecting as a child, ready to love and ready to hate.

"Only you mustn't use your knife; it's not well thought of in America. You'll get sent to gaol."

The Limited whistled from around a curve, came roaring toward them, tore past them, cutting the air, and Fairfax's local plugged along when the mile-a-minute left them. Tony was conscious that as he hummed the sound grew full and louder; he was accompanied by a voice more assured than his own, and in melodious fraternity the two men sang together. So they took their train in. [Pg 150]

CHAPTER XXI

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The Kennys did not know what had happened to Mister Fairfax. He sang on the stairs now and again as he had done when he first came to Nut Street. He bought the children sweet Jackson balls and the baby nearly died from "wan in its throat," and his mother picked him up by his socks and rattled the sticky sweet out of the child's larynx, and the cat finished it.

Tony's foreman was asked in to have supper and a late cup of coffee, and Miss Cora Kenny, whom "Pop" had sent to the Troy convent the first week of Antony's appearance in the Gents' Boarding and Lodging House, came home for a Catholic holiday, and she helped her mother. They made macaroni for Tito Falutini—"high Falutini," as Mrs. Kenny called him. The name stuck, and the macaroni stuck as well, fast to the plate; but the Italian, in bashful gratitude, his eyes suffused with smoke and tears, ate gratefully, gesticulating his satisfaction, and Cora Kenny studied him from the stove where she slaved to tempt the appetites of Fairfax and his friend.

Fairfax was proud of Falutini: he was not an ordinary acquaintance; he sang after supper, standing stiffly in a corner of the kitchen, his red shirt well opened at the throat, and his moustache like black velvet above his red lips.

"He sings better than the theater, Mister Fairfax," Mr. Kenny said; "it makes yer eyes thrick ye," and blew his nose, and Cora asked the singer softly if he could give them "When the band begins to play," or "Gallagher's Daughter Belle." Tito smiled hopefully, and when Fairfax laughingly translated, assured Cora Kenny by means of Fairfax again, that if determination could make a man learn a foreign song, he would sing her "Gallagher's Daughter Belle" next Saturday night.

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"Ah," she breathed, "she'd not be home then!"

"No," said Kenny, who was a lazy husband but a remarkable father, "that she *wud* not!"

The Italian fireman and the Irish lodging-house keeper's daughter gazed in each other's eyes. "Gallagher's Daughter Belle" ... dum ... dum ... Fairfax hummed it, he knew it. Kenny's daughter Cora—*that* would be more to the point: and he thought of Molly. He had not seen her since he had kissed her a fortnight before. Cora said she had never been bold before, had never let herself think how jealous she was, but to-night Mr. Tito High-Falutini's eyes made her a new woman. Cora said to her mother over her shoulder—

"Shure, Molly Shannon's the onlucky gurl."

"How's that, Cora?"

"Lost her job."

"No!" exclaimed Mrs. Kenny, sympathetically, "and with what doin'?"

Shure, the foreman's daughter was a chum with Cora. The boss had made the girl presents of collars, and it seemed, so Bridget said—Cora with exquisite subtlety dropped her voice, and after a second Mrs. Kenny exclaimed—

"Cora, you're a bad gurl to hark to such goings on, much less belave thim," and pushed her daughter back and brought out herself the crowning delicacy of the feast, a dish that needed no foreign help to compose, steaming praties cooked in their shimmies, as she expressed it. Cora sat down by High-Falutini, Mrs. Kenny went into the next room to her littlest children, and Kenny lit a fresh pipe, held the bowl in his hand, and opposite his distractingly pretty little daughter kept a thoughtful eye upon the pair. And Fairfax went upstairs two steps at a time.

It was after eleven, dense and hot, but he had gone up eagerly. Of late, whenever he had a few spare moments he took them, and all Sundays he remained in his room. There was an odour in the apartment, one that persistently rose above the tenement smells, a damp, moist, earthy perfume, to Fairfax delicious beyond words. Mosquitoes were rampant, but he had been brought up in a mosquito-ridden country, and he had rigged a bit of muslin across his window, and burned Mrs. Kenny's gas with heartless inconsideration.

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On a small wooden stool stood something covered with cloths damped night and morning by Fairfax, and during the day by Matty Kenny, a public-school girl of twelve years of age, a pretty, half-witted little creature, whom of all Nut Street Fairfax liked and whom he blindly trusted. Between school hours the little girl ran up and patted with a sponge the mysterious image in Mister Fairfax's hall room. Tell? Ah, shure, Mister Fairfax, cross her heart and hope to die but she'd not. As her duties consisted in tidying Antony's room, her visits were not remarked. Now Antony lifted off the first cloth; he drew out the stool under the light, flung off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, loosened his cravat, got from his drawer a small spatular instrument, and looking at his unveiled work, meditatively wiped the dried clay from his tool. Then he drew off the last bit of cheesecloth, uncovering a statuette modelled in clay with great delicacy and great assurance. The gaslight fell yellow on it and the little statue seemed to swim, to oscillate and illumine. It was the figure of a little girl, her hair loose around her face, holding to her cheek a dead blackbird. The art of the work was its great sincerity, the calm, assured modelling, the tender truthfulness; the form of the child, her dress, even her strapped shoes were only indicated, nevertheless it was a perfect bit of realism, though crude. But the head, the attitude, the cheek and the face, the little caressing enfolding hands, were Greek in their perfect execution.

A flush rose on the young man's face, his eyes brightened, he gave a soft touch here and there with the little instrument, but he had done all he could to this creation. It was only in perishable clay, it must crumble and dry; how could he perpetuate it? He thought of having it cast in terracotta, but how and where? The figure vacillated in the gaslight, and taunted him with its perishability, its evanescence, frail, transient as childhood is transient. "Bella," he mused before it, "little cousin." His right hand had not quite lost its cunning, then? He could construct and direct a locomotive, but he had not lost all his skill. For what the statue proved to him, for its evidence of his living art and his talent, he loved it, he turned it and viewed it on all sides, whistling softly under his breath, not morbid about his tunes now.

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Tito High-Falutini pushed the door open. "Goin' home, Tony, la Signora Kenni has turned me out."

Fairfax pointed to his statue. "Look. If we were in Carrara somebody would lend me a quarry or I would steal one, and turn little Bella into a snow image." He spoke in English, entirely uncomprehended by his companion. He put his hand on Tito's arm.

"Did you do that, Tony? It is valuable. In Italy we make terra-cotta figures like that and sell them."

"Do you think, Tito," his companion replied, "that I would sell little Bella for a few lire, you commercial traveller?"

Tito was acquainted with the Italian quarter, he would find some one who baked in terra-cotta. They had brought their trades with them. Tony could do others: a Savoyard with a hand-organ, those things were very genteel, very brave indeed, and money, said Tito, gloating, money,—why that would cost a dollar at least.

Fairfax covered up the clay and pushed the stool back in its corner.

"You can make a fool of yourself, too," he said good-humouredly, and pushed Falutini out. "Go home and dream of Kenny's daughter Cora, and don't forget to buy a can of crude oil and order a half dozen of those cock-screws. Good-night." He banged the door.

He undressed, still softly whistling, unpinned the curtain from the window, and what there was of heat and freshness came into the room with the mosquitoes that had huddled at the glass and the sill. He had heard Cora Kenny's information: Molly had lost her place because she would not do what the boss wanted. They always wanted one thing in the collar factories. The boss was a beast. He heaved a deep sigh. He had not been lonely the last fortnight, his work had absorbed him. There was no way for him to go on with it, he had no time, nor means. It had brought him near to his people, to his mother, to his kinsmen, to the child who had died, to the one that remained. But he knew his loneliness would return, his need of companionship, of expression and life, and he was too healthy, too strong to be nourished by his sentimental thought of the child-woman or to live on the sale of terra-cotta statues. He cradled his young head with its fair hair on his arm and fell asleep, and over the yards the harvest moon rose yellow and shone through the small window and on Antony. He might have been a boy asleep at school, his face looked so young and so unstained, and the same light shone on the angel of the resurrection at the gate of the rural cemetery, on Gardiner's little grave in Woodlawn, and on his mother's grave in New Orleans, where the brick walls keep the coffins high above the Mississippi's tide and silt.

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The moonlight could not penetrate to the corner where, under the damp cloths, Bella wept over the blackbird pressed against her cheek.

CHAPTER XXII

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Fairfax expected to find a melancholy, wet-eyed little creature with a hard-luck story when he went to Troy, and although he knew that Molly would never reproach him, he knew as well that he had treated her very badly. From the day he had asked her to become Mrs. Antony Fairfax, and heard Cora Kenny's news, he had not been near his sweetheart. His sweetheart! Since he had read "The Idylls of the King" in his boyhood, no woman had seemed too high or too fine for him: he had been Lancelot to Guinevere, the Knight to the Lady: Molly Shannon had not been in any romance he had ever read.

He found her sitting among her lodging-house keeper's children in a room tidied by her own hands. During her leisure, she had made herself a pink gingham dress with small white rosebuds on it, and around her neck a low white collar she had pinned with a tortoise-shell brooch. Her dress was the simplest Fairfax had ever seen her wear. It was cool and plain, and the Irish girl's milk-white skin, her auburn hair, her eyes with the black flecks in them, her young round breast, her bare fore-arm, as she rocked Patsy O'Brien, were charming, and her cry, as Fairfax came in, and the hands she pressed to her heart were no less charming.

She sprang up, her work fell to the floor: she stood deathly white and trembling. Her emotion, her love, affected the young man very deeply. He did not think of the obstacles between them, of her station, or of anything as he came into Mrs. O'Brien's parlour-bedroom amongst her six ubiquitous children and disturbed the cradle to get to Molly Shannon. He thought of one fact only, that he had kissed her: how had he forgotten the honey of it for a fortnight? Without so much as bidding her good-morning, he repeated the ecstasy and kissed her. She had time to grow faint and to regain her life in his arms, and under her happy breath she whispered: "Ah, I must quiet Patsy. Ah, let me go, he'll hurt his throat." And she bent, blooming and heart-breakingly happy, over the cradle.

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Mrs. Kenny called him as he went past the door. "Shure," she said, "I've got bad news for ye, Mither Fairfax, dear."

He stopped on the threshold. "There is only one death on the earth that could give me any pain, Mrs. Kenny. I reckon it's—"

"It's not death then," she hastened, "shure it's a little thing, but poor Matty's that crazy that the child has gone out to her aunty's and wurra a bit will she come home."

"Matty!" Fairfax exclaimed.

"Shure, the moniment in your bedroom, Mither Fairfax."

He flew upstairs. The corner inhabited for him by a fairy companion was empty. The image of his talent, of his little love, of his heart's hope, had disappeared. Mrs. Kenny did not follow him upstairs as one would have supposed that she would do. He locked his door, the cloths lay in a pile, damp and soggy. Why had they not left the fragments—the precious morsels? His eyes filled with impotent, angry grief; he tore his table drawer open and found the designs which he had made for the figure. The sketches seemed crude and poor beside the finished work whose execution had been inspired. This destruction unchained again his melancholy. He was overwhelmed; the accident seemed like a brutal insistence of Destiny, and he seemed bound to the coarse, hard existence to which he had taken in desperation. With this destruction he saw as well the wiping out of his life of Bella.

Ah, at Troy that day he had done more than break a clay image of her. He opened the door as if he would have called to Mrs. Kenny, then slammed it, unable to speak from excitement, and a dogged look crossed his face. The night was muggy, his throat burned with a sudden thirst, and he exulted that it did so. On his empty room, empty to him for ever, for the figure in the corner had disenchanting it of all its horrors for fourteen happy days and nights, he looked once and then he fled. He threw himself down the stairs and out into the late mid-summer night.

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The coloured porter at the Delavan put him to bed at one o'clock in a comfortable room. As the fellow's black face bent above him, Tony, who saw it blur and waver before his intoxicated eyes, murmured—

"Emmy, Emmy, don't tell my mother, and wake me at seven, for I run out at nine sharp."

CHAPTER XXIII

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The paymaster, Peter Rainsford, had found little in West Albany to excite the tepid interest he still retained in life, but Tony Fairfax, the driver of Number Twenty-four, had attracted his attention. Each time that Fairfax came to report Rainsford made a vain effort to engage him in conversation. The agent wondered what the engine-driver's story was, and having one of his own, hoped for Fairfax's sake that there was anything but a class resemblance between them.

Detained late this night at his desk, he pushed back his lamp to contemplate Tito Falutini, who, his hat pressed against his red flannel breast, his teeth sparkling, came in to report. Tito told a tale in a jargon which only an etymologist could have sifted into words.

"Well, what do you think has become of him?" Rainsford asked.

The Italian gesticulated with his hat far and wide.

"*You* took the train to Fonda alone, without an engineer, Falutini? How was it the fellows didn't stop you at Fonda? It doesn't seem possible."

The official opened a ledger and ran his eye over the names.

"I can put Steve Brodie on Number Twenty-four to-morrow morning. You should have reported at once in West Albany, Falutini."

The name of Steve Brodie was intelligible to Tito. "Nota io," he said, "not a fire for any man, only Toni."

Rainsford wrote a few moments in his ledger. "Want me to strike your name right off the books now, Falutini? I've a good mind to do it anyway. You should have reported at nine this morning."

"Want to find Fairfax," said the Italian.

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The disappearance did not speak well for the young man in whom the boss had taken an interest.

"Has he paid up at Kenny's?" Rainsford asked hopelessly.

Falutini did not understand. "Signora Kenni," informed the fireman, "mutche cri, kids mutche cri, altro." Fairfax, the fellow made Rainsford understand, had left his clothes and belongings.

"Ah," Rainsford thought, "it looks worse than at first."

"No," Falutini explained, "no fight." Then he broke forth into an explanation from which Rainsford vainly tried to create some order. Statues and terra-cotta figures mingled with an explanation of theft of some property of Fairfax's and his flight in consequence.

"I'll close up here in a quarter of an hour, and go over and see Mrs. Kenny. Steve Brodie will take your engine, and you look out for yourself, my man, and don't get bounced when you come in to report to-morrow."

Rainsford saw Mrs. Kenny in the kitchen-bedroom-parlour of the first-class hotel (Gents only). When he came in and sat down in the midst of the Irish family Rainsford did not know that he was the second gentleman that had crossed the threshold since the sign had swung in the window. Mary Kenny was intelligible, charmingly so, and her account was full of colour; and the young man's character was drawn by a woman's lips, with a woman's tenderness.

"Ah, wurra sor," she finished, "Oi cud go down on me knees to him if it wasn't for Pathrick Kenny. It was an evil day when that Hitalian came to the dure. Wud ye now?" she offered, as though she suggested that he should view sacred relics, "wud ye feel like goin' up to his room and castin' an eye?"

Peter Rainsford did so, feeling that he was taking a man at a disadvantage, but consoling himself with the thought that Fairfax's disappearance warranted the invasion. Mrs. Kenny, the baby on her arm, stood by his side, and called over the objects as though she were a showman at a museum.

"That's his bury, sor, and the best wan in the hotel, and them's his little ornyments an' foolin's in order on the top. Matty reds his room up, an' never a hand but mine puts his wash to rights." She pulled a drawer open. "His beautiful starched shirts, I doos them with me own hands and charges him as though he was me son; an' there is his crayvats, an' over there," she pointed with her thumb, "stud the image, bad cess to the Hitalian an' his likes, Mr. Rainsford, an' many's the time I've stud beyont the dure an' heard him sing and whustle beautiful, whilst he was a-carvin' of it."

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Rainsford looked at a small design pinned against the wall: he considered it long.

"Do ye think that he's kilt then?" asked the Irish woman.

The paymaster returned briskly. "No, I don't think so. I hope he has not come to any harm."

"His readin' buks, sor," she said, "wud ye cast an eye?"

But here Rainsford refused, and returning to his own lodgings higher up in the town, and on a better scale, went home thoughtful, touched, and with a feeling of kinship with the truant engineer. Before, however, he could take any steps to look for Fairfax, a coloured man from somewhere appeared with the request that Mrs. Kenny send all Fairfax's things. The mysterious lodger enclosed, moreover, a week's board in advance, but no address; nor had the coloured man any information for Nut Street, and a decided antipathy existed between George Washington and Mary Kenny. She was pale when she packed up Fairfax's belongings and cried into his trunk, as she laid the drawing of Bella Carew next to the unopened packet of his mother's treasures. She was unconscious of what sacred thing she touched, but she was cut to the heart, as was poor Falutini. Peter Rainsford, who had not gone far in his friendship with the elusive Fairfax, was only disappointed.

At the close of the following Sunday afternoon, Rainsford was reading in his room when Fairfax himself came in.

"Why, hello, Fairfax," the paymaster's tone was not that of a disaffected patron to a delinquent engineer. "You are just two weeks late in reporting Number Twenty-four. But I'm sincerely glad you came, whatever the reason for the delay."

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Rainsford's greeting was that of a friend to a friend. Fairfax, surprised, lifted his eyebrows and smiled "thanks." He took the chair Rainsford offered. "Why *thank* you, Rainsford." He took a cigar which Rainsford handed him. He was in the dress of a railroad man off duty.

"Now I don't know anybody I've been more curious about," said the paymaster. "Where on earth did you go to, Fairfax? You don't know how you have mystified us all here, and in fact, me from the first."

"There are no end of mysteries in life," said the young man, still smiling; "I should have wondered about you, Mr. Rainsford, if I had had either the time or the courage!"

"Courage, Fairfax?"

"Why yes," returned the engineer, twisting his cigar between his fingers, "courage to break away from the routine I've been obliged to follow."

Fairfax saw before him a spare man of about forty years of age. The thin hair, early grey, came meekly around the temples of a finely made and serious brow, but the features of Rainsford's face were delicate, the skin was drawn tightly over the high cheek-bones. There was an extreme melancholy in his expression; when defeat had begun to write its lines upon his face, over the humiliating stain, Resignation had laid a hand.

"Well, I'll spare you wondering about me, Fairfax," the agent said; "I am just a plain fellow, that's all, and for that reason, when I saw that one of the hands on my pay-roll was clearly a gentleman, and a very young one too, it interested me, and since I have been to Kenny's"—he hesitated a little—"since I have heard something about you from that good soul, why, I am more than interested, I am determined!"

Fairfax, his head thrown back, smoked thoughtfully, and Rainsford noted the youthfulness of the line of his neck and face, the high idealism of the brow, the beautiful mouth, the breeding and the sensitiveness there.

"Why, it's a crime, that's what it is. You are young, you're a boy. Thank God for it, it is not too late. Would you care to tell me what brought you here like this? I won't say what misfortune brought you here, Fairfax,"—he put his nervous hand to his lips—"but what folly on your part." [Pg 163]

Rainsford took for granted the ordinary reasons for hard luck and the harvest of wild oats.

Fairfax said, "I have no people, Rainsford; they are all dead."

"But you have influential friends?"

"No," said Fairfax, "not one."

"You have extraordinary talent, Fairfax."

The young man started. "But what makes you think that?"

"Falutini told me."

Fairfax laughed harshly. "Poor Tito. He's a judge, I daresay." His face clouded, grew quite stern before Rainsford's intent eyes. "Yes," he said slowly, "I think I have talent; I think I must have a lot somewhere, but I have got a mighty dangerous Pride and it has driven me to a sort of revenge on Fate, an arrogant showing of my disdain—God knows of what and of whom!" More quietly he said: "Whilst my mother lived I could not beg, Rainsford, I couldn't starve, I couldn't scratch and crawl and live as a starving artist must when he is making his way. I wanted to make a living first, and I was too proud to take the thorny way an artist must."

Fairfax got up, put his hands in his pockets, and walked across Rainsford's small room. It was in excellent order, plainly furnished but well supplied with the things a man needs to make him comfortable. There were even a few luxuries, like pillows on the hard sofa, bookshelves filled with books and a student's lamp soft under a green shade. As he turned back to the paymaster Fairfax had composed himself and said tranquilly—

"I reckon you've got a pretty bad note against me in the ledger, haven't you, Rainsford?"

"Note?" repeated the other vaguely. "Oh, your bad conduct report. Well, rather."

"Who has got my job on Number Twenty-four?"

"Steve Brodie."

Fairfax nodded. "He surely does know how to drive an engine all right, and so do I, Rainsford."

"You mustn't run any more engines, Fairfax."

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"I don't want to come back to West Albany and to the yards," said the engineer.

"I haven't much influence now," Rainsford said musingly, "but I have some friends still. I want you to let me lend you some money, a very small sum."

The blood rushed to Fairfax's face. He extended his hand impulsively.

"There, Rainsford, you needn't go on. You are the first chap who has put out a rope to me. I did have twenty-five cents given me once, but otherwise——"

"I mean it sincerely, Fairfax."

"Rainsford," said the young man, with emotion in his voice, "you are a fine brand of failure."

"Will you let me stand by you, Fairfax?"

"Yes, indeed," said the other, "I will, but not in the way you mean. I reckon I must have felt what kind of a fellow you were or I wouldn't be here. At any rate you're the only person I wanted to see. I quite understand you can't take me back at the yards, and I don't want to drive in and out from West Albany. Could you do anything for me at the general company, Rainsford? Would they give me a job in Albany? I'd take a local though I'm up to an express."

"No," said Rainsford, "you mustn't think of driving engines; I won't lift my hand to help you."

"It is all I can do," returned the engineer quietly, after a second, "all I want." Then he said, "I've *got* to have it...."

"Why I'll *lend* you enough money, Fairfax, to pay your passage to France!"

"Stop!" cried the young man with emotion, "it's too late."

"Nonsense," said the other warmly, Fairfax's voice and personality charming him as it charmed others. "Why, you are nothing but a big, headlong boy! You have committed a tremendous folly; you've got art at your finger tips. Are you going to sweat and stew all your life in the cab of an engine? Why, you are insane."

"Stop," cried Fairfax again, "for the love of heaven...."

Rainsford regarded him, fascinated. He saw in him his own lost promises, his own lost chance; it seemed to him that through this young man he might in a way buy back the lost years. [Pg 165]

"I'll *not* stop till I have used every means to make you see the hideous mistake you're making."

"Rainsford," said Antony, paling, "if you had made me this offer the day before I left Nut Street, I would have been in France by this. My God!" he murmured beneath his breath. "*How* I would have escaped!"—checked himself with great control for so young a man and so ardent a man. He was a foot taller than his desk-bowed pale companion, and he laid his hand impulsively on his chief's shoulder.

"If you can give me a *job*, Rainsford, do so, will you? I know I have no right to ask you, after the way I have treated the Company, but I am married. I have married Molly Shannon. You know her, the girl at Sheedy's." He waited a second, looking the other man in the eyes, then, with something of his old humour, he said, "There are two of us now, Rainsford, and I have got to make our living."

CHAPTER XXIV

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Death does not always make the deepest graves. His art was buried deepest of all, and there was just one interest in his life, and that was not his wife. He was kind to her, but if he had beaten her she would have kissed his hand; she could not have loved him better. Her life was "just wrapped round him." He treated her as a lady, and he was a gentleman. Her manners were always soft and gentle, coming from a sweet good heart. She grew thinner, and her pride in him and her love for him and her humility made Molly Fairfax beautiful. There was a great deal of cruelty in the marriage and in their mating. It was no one's fault, and the woman suffered the most. Their rooms were in a white frame building with green blinds, one of the old wooden houses that remained long in Albany. It did not overlook the yards, for Fairfax wanted a new horizon. From her window, Molly could see the docks, the river, the night and day boats as they anchored, and she had time to watch and know them all. Nothing in his working life or in his associations coarsened Antony Fairfax; it would have been better for him had it done so. She was not married to an engineer, but to a gentleman, and he was as chivalrous to her as though she had been the woman of his dreams; but she spent much of the time weeping and hiding the traces from him, and in the evenings, when he came home to the meal that she prepared each day with a greater skill and care, sometimes after greeting her he would not break the silence throughout the evening, and he did not dream that he had forgotten her. His new express engine became his life. He drove her, cared for her, oiled and tended her with art and passion. There were no bad notes against him at the office. His records were excellent, and Rainsford had the satisfaction of knowing that the man whom he had recommended was in the right place. The irony of it all was that his marrying Molly Shannon did not bring him peace, although it tranquillized him, and kept part of his nature silent. He had meditated as he drove his engine, facing the miles before him as the machine ate them up, and these miles began to take him into other countries. There was a far-awayness in the heavens to him now, and as he used to glance up at the telegraph wires and poles they became to him masts and riggings of vessels putting out to sea, and from his own window of his little tenement apartment of two bedrooms and a kitchen, he watched the old river boats and the scows and the turtle-like canal boats that hugged the shore, and they became vessels whose bows had kissed ports whose names were thrilling, and in the nest he had made his own, thinking to rest there, his growing wings began to unprison and the nest to be too small. There was no intoxication in the speed of his locomotive to him, and he felt a grave sense of power as he regulated and slowed and accelerated, and the smooth response of his locomotive delighted him. She flew to his hand, and the speed gave him joy. [Pg 167]

At lunch time Falutini had told him of Italy, and the glow and the glamour, the cypress and the pines, the azure skies, olive and grape vines brought their enchantment around Fairfax, until No. 111 stood in an enchanted country, and not under the shed with whirling snows or blinding American glare without. He exchanged ideas with Rainsford. The agent became his friend, and one Sunday Fairfax led him into the Delavan House, and George Washington nearly broke his neck and spilled the soup on the shoulder of the uninteresting patron he was at the moment serving, in his endeavour to get across the floor to Antony.

"Yas, *sah*, Mistah Kunnell Fairfax, sah! Mighty glad to see yo', and the Captin'g?—Hyah in de window?"

"Rainsford," said the young man, "isn't it queer? I feel at home here. This dingy hotel and this smiling old nigger, they are joys to me—joys. To this very table I have brought my own bitter food to eat and bitter water to drink, and half forgotten their tastes as I have eaten the Delavan fare, and been cheered by this faithful old darkey. Perhaps all the chaps round here aren't millionaires or Depuysters, but there are no railroad men such as I am lunching here, and I breathe again." [Pg 168]

The two ate their tomato soup with relish. Poor Molly was an indifferent cook, and the food at Rainsford's hash-house was horrible.

"Don't come here often now, Fairfax, do you?"

"Every Sunday."

"Really? And do you bring Mrs. Fairfax?"

"No," frowned the young man, "and I wonder you ask. Don't you understand that this is my holiday? God knows I earn it."

Rainsford finished his soup. The plate was whisked away, was briskly replaced by a quantity of small dishes containing everything on the bill of fare from chicken to pot-pie, and as Rainsford meditated upon the outlay, he said—

"She's a gentle, lovely creature, Fairfax. I don't wonder you were charmed by her. She has a heart and a soul."

Fairfax stared. "Why when did you see her?"

He had never referred to his wife since the day he had announced his marriage to his chief.

"She came on the day of the blizzard to the office to bring a parcel for you. She wanted me to send it up the line by the Limited to catch you at Utica."

"My knit waistcoat," nodded Fairfax. "I remember. It saved my getting a chill. I had clean forgotten it. She's a good girl."

Rainsford chose amongst the specimens of food.

"She is a sweet woman."

Here George Washington brought Fairfax the Sunday morning *Tribune*, and folded it before his gentleman and presented it almost on his knees.

"Let me git ye a teenty weenty bit mo' salid, Kunnell?"

Fairfax unfolded the *Tribune* leisurely. "Bring some ice-cream, George, and some good cigars, and a little old brandy. Yes, Rainsford, it isn't poison."

Fairfax read attentively, and his companion watched him patiently, his own face lightened by the companionship of the younger man. Fairfax glanced at the headlines of the *Tribune*, said "By George!" under his breath, and bent over the paper. His face underwent a transformation; he grew pale, read fixedly, then laughed, said "By George!" again, folded the paper up and put it in his pocket. [Pg 169]

The ice-cream was brought and described as "*Panillapolitan* cream, sah," and Fairfax lit a cigar and puffed it fast and then said suddenly—

"Do you know what hate is, Rainsford? I reckon you don't. Your face doesn't bear any traces of it."

"Yes, Fairfax," said the other, "I know what it is—it's a disease which means battle, murder, and sudden death."

The young man took the paper out of his pocket and unfolded it, and Rainsford was surprised to see his hands tremble, the beautiful clever hands with the stained finger ends and the clean, beautiful palm. Falutini did more work than Fairfax now. He slaved for his master.

"Read that, Rainsford." He tapped a headline with his forefinger. "It sounds like an event."

The Unveiling of the Abydos Sphinx in Central Park
Cedersholm's Wonderful Pedestal.
The Difficult Transportation of the Egyptian
Monument from the Port to the Park.
Unveiling to take place next Saturday.

The article went on to speak of the dignified marble support, and hinted at four prehistoric creatures in bronze which were supposed to be the masterpieces of modern sculpture.

Rainsford read it through. "Very interesting. An event, as you say, Tony. Cedersholm has made himself a great reputation."

"*Damn him!*" breathed the engineer. His heart was beating wildly, he felt a suffocation in his breast. A torrent of feeling swept up in him. No words could say what a storm and a tempest the notice caused.

"Jealous," Rainsford thought. "Cedersholm has all that poor Fairfax desires."

Overcome by the memories the headlines recalled, overcome by his anger and the injustice, Fairfax's face grew white. [Pg 170]

"Take a little more coffee, Kunnell," said George Washington at his elbow.

"No." Antony repulsed him rudely. "Did you read it all, Rainsford?"

"I think so. I dare say this will bring Cedersholm close on a hundred thousand dollars."

"It will pave his way to hell one day, Rainsford," said the engineer, leaning across the table. "It will indeed! Why, it is a monument of injustice and dishonour. Do you know what that Sphinx rests on, Rainsford, do you know?"

For a moment the railroad agent thought his friend had lost his senses brooding over his discarded art, his spoiled life.

"Four huge prehistoric creatures," Rainsford read mildly.

Fairfax's lips trembled. "It rests on a man's heart and soul, on his flesh and blood, on his bleeding wounds, Rainsford. I worked in Cedersholm's studio, I slaved for him night and day for eighteen months. I spilled my youth and heart's blood there, I did indeed." His face working, he tapped his friend's arm with his hand. "I made the moulds for those beasts. I cast them in bronze, right there in his studio. Every inch of them is mine, Rainsford, mine. By ... you can't take it in, of course, you don't believe me, nobody would believe me, that's why I can do nothing, can't say anything, or I'd be arrested as a lunatic. But Cedersholm's fame in this instance is mine, and he has stolen it from me and shut me out like a whipped dog. He thinks I am poor and unbefriended, and he knows that I have no case. Why, he's a *hound*, Rainsford, the meanest hound on the face of the earth."

Rainsford soothed his friend, but Fairfax's voice was low with passion, no one could overhear its intense tone.

"Don't for a moment think I have lost my senses. If you don't believe me, give me a pencil and paper and I'll sketch you what I mean."

Rainsford was very much impressed and startled. "If what you say is true," he murmured.

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And Fairfax, who had regained some of his control—he knew better than any one the futility of his miserable adventure—exclaimed—

"Oh, it's true enough; but there is nothing to do about it. Cedersholm knows that better than any one else."

He sat back, and his face grew dark and heavy with its brooding. His companion watched him helplessly, only half convinced of the truth of the statement. Fairfax lifted his eyes and naïvely exclaimed—

"Isn't it cruel, Rainsford? You speak of failures; did you ever see such a useless one as this? Cedersholm and his beasts which they say right here are the best things in modern sculpture, and me with my engine and my—" He stopped. "Give me the bill," he called to George Washington.

The old darkey, used as he was to his gentleman's moods, found this one stranger than usual.

"Anythin' wrong with the dinner, Kunnell?" he asked tremulously. "Very sorry, Captin'. Fust time yo'—"

Fairfax put the money in his hand. "All right, George," he assured kindly, "your dinner's all right—don't worry. Good-bye." And he did not say as he usually did, "See you next Sunday." For he had determined to go down to New York for the unveiling of the monument.

CHAPTER XXV

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The May afternoon, all sunshine and sparkle, had a wine to make young hope spring from old graves and age forget its years, and youth mad with its handicaps; a day to inspire passion, talent, desire, and to make even goodness take new wings.

With the crowd of interested and curious, Antony Fairfax entered Central Park through the Seventy-second Street gate. Lines of carriages extended far into Fifth Avenue, and he walked along by the side of a smart victoria where a pretty woman sat under her sunshade and smiled on the world and spring. Fairfax saw that she was young and worldly, and thought for some time of his mother, of women he might have known, and when the victoria passed him, caught the lady's glance as her look wandered over the crowd. A May-day party of school children spread over the lawn at his left, the pole's bright streamers fluttering in the breeze. The children danced gaily, too small to care for the unveiling of statues or for ancient Egypt. The bright scene and the day's gladness struck Antony harsh as a glare in weakened eyes. He was gloomy and sardonic, his heart beating out of tune, his genial nature had been turned to gall.

The Mall was roped off, and at an extempore gate a man in uniform received the cards of admission. Fairfax remembered the day he had endeavoured to enter the Field Palace and his failure.

"I'm a mechanic," he said hastily to the gateman, "one of Mr. Cedersholm's workmen."

The man pushed him through, and he went in with a group of students from Columbia College.

In a corner of the Mall, on the site he had indicated to the little cousins, rose a white object covered by a sheeting, which fell to the ground. Among the two hundred persons gathered were people of distinction. There was to be speech-making. Fairfax did not know this or who the speakers were to be. All that he knew or cared was that at three o'clock of this Saturday his Beasts—his four primitive creatures—were to be unveiled. He wore his workday clothes, his Pride had led him to make the arrogant display of his contempt of the class he had deserted. His hat

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was pushed back on his blond head. His blue eyes sparkled and he thrust his disfigured hands into his pockets to keep them quiet. The lady beside whose carriage he had stood came into the roped-off enclosure, and found a place opposite Fairfax. Once more her eyes fell on the workman's handsome face. He looked out of harmony with the people who had gathered to see the unveiling of Mr. Cedersholm's pedestal.

For the speakers, a desk and platform had been arranged, draped with an American flag. Antony listened coldly to the first address, a *résumé* of the dynasty in whose dim years the Abydos Sphinx was hewn, and the Egyptologist's learning, the dust he stirred of golden tombs, and the perfumes of the times that he evoked, were lost to the up-state engineer who only gazed on the veiled monument.

His look, however, returned to the desk, when Cedersholm took the place, and Fairfax, from the sole of his lame foot to his fair head, grew cold. His bronze beasts were not more hard and cold in their metallic bodies, nor was the Sphinx more petrified. Cedersholm had aged, and seemed to Fairfax to have warped and shrunk and to stand little more than a pitiful suit of clothes with a *boutonnière* in the lapel of the pepper-and-salt coat. There was nothing impressive about the sleek grey head, though his single eye-glass gave him distinction. The Columbia student next to Fairfax, pushed by the crowd, touched Antony Fairfax's great form and felt as though he had touched a colossus.

Cedersholm spoke on art, on the sublimity of plastic expression. He spoke rapidly and cleverly. His audience interrupted him by gratifying whispers of "Bravo, bravo," and the gentle tapping of hands. He was clearly a favourite, a great citizen, a great New Yorker, and a great man. Directly opposite the desk was a delegation from the Century Club, Cedersholm's friends all around him. To Fairfax, they were only brutes, black and white creatures, no more—mummers in a farce. Cedersholm did not speak of his own work. With much delicacy he confined his address to the past. And his adulation of antiquity showed him to be a real artist, and he spoke with love of the relics of the perfect age. In closing he said—

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"Warm as may be our inspirations, great as may be any modern genius, ardent as may be our labour, let each artist look at the Abydos Sphinx and know that the climax has been attained. We can never touch the antique perfection again."

Glancing as he did from face to face, Cedersholm turned toward the Columbia students who adored him and whose professor in art he was. Searching the young faces for sympathy, he caught sight of Fairfax. He remembered who he was, their eyes met. Cedersholm drank a glass of water at his hand, bowed to his audience, and stepped down. He moved briskly, his head a little bent, crossed the enclosure, and joined the lady whom Fairfax had observed.

"That," Fairfax heard one of his neighbours say, "is Mr. Cedersholm's fiancée, Mrs. Faversham."

Fairfax raised his eyes to the statue. There was a slight commotion as the workmen ranged the ropes. Then, very gracefully, evidently proud as a queen, the lady, followed by Mr. Cedersholm, went up to the pedestal, took the ropes in her gloved hands, and there was a flutter and the conventional covering slipped and fell to the earth. There was an exclamation, a murmur, the released voices murmured their praise, Cedersholm was surrounded. Fairfax, immovable, stood and gazed.

The pedestal was of shell-pink marble, carved in delicate bas-relief. Many of the drawings Antony had made. Isis with her cap of Upper and Lower Egypt, Hathor with the eternal oblation—the Sphinx.... God and the Immortals alone knew who had made it.

On its great, impassive face, on its ponderous body, there was no signature, no name. Under the four corners, between Sphinx and pedestal, crouched four bronze creatures, their forms and bodies visible between the stones of the pink pedestal and the soft blue of the Egyptian granite. The bold, severe modelling, their curious primitive conception, the life and realism of the creatures were poignant in their suggestion of power. The colour of the bronze was beautiful, would be more beautiful still as the years went on. The beasts supported the Egyptian monument. They rested between the pedestal and the Sphinx; they were the support and they were his. They seemed, to the man who had made them, beautiful indeed. Forgetting his outrage and his revenge, in the artist, Fairfax listened timidly, eagerly, for some word to be murmured in the crowd, some praise for his Beasts.

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He heard many.

The students at his side were enthusiastic, they had made studies from the moulds; moulds of the Beasts were already in the Metropolitan Museum. The young critics were lavish, profuse. They compared the creatures with the productions of the Ancients.

"Cedersholm is a magician, he is one of the greatest men of his time...."

The man in working clothes smiled, but his expression was gentler than it had been hitherto. He lifted his soft hat and ran his fingers through his blond hair and remained bareheaded in the May air that blew about him; his fascinated eyes were fastened on the Abydos Sphinx, magnetized by the calm, inscrutable melancholy, by the serene indifference. The stony eyes were fixed on the vistas of the new world, the crude Western continent, as they had been fixed for centuries on the sands of the pathless desert, on the shifting sands that relentlessly effaced footsteps of artist and Pharaoh, dynasty and race.

Who knew who had made this wonder?

How small and puny Cedersholm seemed in his pepper-and-salt suit, his *boutonnière* and single eye-glass, his trembling heart. His heart trembled, but only Fairfax knew it; he felt that he held it between his hands. "He must have thought I was dead," he reflected. "What difference did it make," Fairfax thought, "whether or not the Egyptian who had hewn the Sphinx had murdered another man for stealing his renown? After four thousand years, all the footsteps were effaced." His heart grew somewhat lighter, and between himself and the unknown sculptor there seemed a bond of union.

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The students and the master had drifted away. Cedersholm was in the midst of his friends. Fairfax would not have put out his hand to take his laurel. His spirit and soul had gone into communion with a greater sculptor of the Sphinx, the unknown Egyptian. Standing apart from the crowd where Cedersholm was being congratulated, Fairfax remarked the lady again, and that she stood alone as was he. She seemed pensive, turning her lace parasol between her hands, her eyes on the ground. The young man supposed her to be dreaming of her lover's greatness. He recalled the day, two years ago, when with Bella and Gardiner he had come up before the opening in the earth prepared for the pedestal. "Wait, wait, my hearties!" he had said.

Well, one of them had gone on, impatient, to the unveiling of greater wonders, and Antony had come to his unclaimed festival alone....

CHAPTER XXVI

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He said to Rainsford at luncheon, over nuts and raisins, and coffee as black as George Washington's smiling face—

"I reckon you think I've got a heart of cotton, don't you? I reckon you think I don't come up to the scratch, do you, old man? I assure you that I went down to New York seeing scarlet. I had made my plans. Afterward, mind you, Rainsford, not of course before a whole lot of people,—but in his own studio, I intended to tell Cedersholm a few truths. Upon my honour, I believe I *could* have killed him."

Rainsford held a pecan nut between the crackers which he pressed slowly as he listened to his friend. Antony's big hand was spread out on the table; its grip would have been powerful on a man's throat.

"We often get rid of our furies on the way," said Rainsford, slowly. "We keep them housed so long that they fly away unobserved at length. And when at last we open the door, and expect to find them ready with their poisons, they've gone, vanished every one."

"Not in this case," Fairfax shook his head. "I shall call on them all some day and they will all answer me. But yesterday wasn't the time. You'll think me poorer-spirited than ever, I daresay, but the woman he is going to marry was there, a pretty woman, and she seemed to love him."

Fairfax glanced up at the agent and saw only comprehension.

"Quite right, Tony." Rainsford returned Fairfax's look over his glistening eyeglasses, cracked the pecan nut and took out the meat. "I am not surprised."

Antony, who had taken a clipping from his wallet, held it out.

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"Read this. I cut it out a week ago. Yesterday in the Central Park old ambitions struck me hard. Read it."

The notice was from a Western paper, and spoke in detail of a competition offered to American sculptors by the State of California, for the design in plaster of a tomb. The finished work was to be placed in the great new cemetery in Southern California. The prize to be awarded was ten thousand dollars and the time for handing in the design a year.

"Not a very cheerful or inspiring subject, Tony."

On the contrary, Fairfax thought so. He leaned forward eagerly, and Rainsford, watching him, saw a transfigured man.

"Death," said the engineer, "has taken everything from me. Life has given me nothing, old man. I have a feeling that perhaps now, through this, I may regain what I have lost.... I long to take my chance."

The other exclaimed sympathetically, "My dear fellow, you must take it by all means."

Fairfax remained thoughtful a moment, then asked almost appealingly—

"Why, how can I do so? Such an effort would cost my living, *her* living, the renting of a place to work in...." As he watched Rainsford's face his eyes kindled.

"I offered to lend you money once, Tony," recalled his friend, "and I wish to God you'd taken the loan then, because just at present—"

The Utter Failure raised his near-sighted eyes, and the look of disappointment on the bright countenance of the engineer cut him to the heart.

"Never mind." Fairfax's voice was forced in its cheerfulness. "Something or other will turn up, I shall work Sundays and half-days, and I reckon I can put it through. I am bound to," he finished ardently, "just bound to."

Rainsford said musingly, "I made a little investment, but it went to pot. I hoped—I'm always hoping—but the money didn't double itself."

The engineer didn't hear him. He was already thinking how he could transform his kitchen into a studio, although it had an east light. Just here Rainsford leaned over and put his hand on Antony's sleeve. "I want to say a word to you about your wife. I don't think she's very well." [Pg 179]

"Molly?" answered his companion calmly. "She's all right. She has a mighty fine constitution, and I never heard her complain. When did you see her, Rainsford?" He frowned.

"Saturday, when you were in New York. You forgot to send your pass-book, and I went for it myself."

"Well?" queried Antony. "What then?"

"Mrs. Fairfax gave me the book, and I stopped to speak with her for a few moments. I find her very much changed."

The light died from the young man's illumined face where his visions had kindled a sacred fire. The realities of life blotted it out.

"I'm not able to give Molly any distractions, that you know."

"She doesn't want them, Tony." Rainsford looked kindly and affectionately, almost tenderly, at him, and repeated gently: "She doesn't want amusement, Tony."

And Fairfax threw up his head with a sort of despair on his face—

"My God, Rainsford," he murmured, "what can I do?"

"I'm afraid she's breaking her heart," said the older man. "Poor little woman!"

CHAPTER XXVII

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In the little room they used as parlour-kitchen and which to one of the inhabitants at least was lovely, Fairfax found Molly sitting by the window through which the spring light fell. The evening was warm. Molly wore a print dress, and in her bodice he saw that she had thrust a spray of pink geranium from the window-boxes that Antony had made and filled for her. Nothing that had claim to beauty failed to touch his senses, and he saw the charm of the picture in the pale spring light. He had softly turned the door-handle, and as there was a hand-organ playing without and Molly listening to the music, he entered without her hearing him.

"Is it yourself?" she exclaimed, startled. "You're home early, Tony."

He told her that he had come to take her for a little walk, and as she moved out of the light and came toward him, he thought he knew what Rainsford had meant. She was thin and yet not thin. The roundness had gone from her cheeks, and there was a mild sadness in her eyes. Reproached and impatient, suffering as keenly as she, he was nevertheless too kind of heart and nature not to feel the tragedy of her life. He drew her to him and kissed her. She made no response, and feeling her a dead weight he found that as he held her she had fainted away. He laid her on the bed, loosened her dress, and bathed her icy temples. Before she regained consciousness he saw her pallor, and that she had greatly changed. He was very gentle and tender with her when she came to herself; and, holding her, said—

"Molly, why didn't you tell me, dear? Why didn't you tell me?" [Pg 181]

She had thought he would be angry with her.

He exclaimed, hurt: "Am I such a brute to you, Molly?"

Ah, no; not that. But two was all he could look out for.

He kneeled, supporting her. Oh, if he could only be glad of it, then she would be happy. She'd not let it disturb him. It would be sure to be beautiful and have his eyes and hair.

He listened, touched. There was a mystery, a beauty in her voice with its rich cadence, her trembling breath, her fast beating pulse, her excitement. Below in the street the organ played, "Gallagher's Daughter Belle," then changed to—ah, how could he bear it!—"My Old Kentucky Home." Tears sprang to his eyes. Motherhood was sacred to him. Was he to have a son? Was he to be a father? He must make her happy, this modest, undemanding girl whom he had made woman and a wife. He kissed her and she clung to him, daring to whisper something of her adoration and her gratitude.

When after supper he stood with her in the window and looked out over the river where the anchored steamers were in port for over Sunday, and the May sunset covered the crude brick buildings with a garment of glory, he was astonished to find that the stone at his heart which had lain there so long was rolled a little away. He picked up the geranium which Molly had worn at her breast and which had fallen when she fainted, and put it in his button-hole. It was crushed and sweet. Molly whispered that he would kill her with goodness, and that "she was heart happy."

"Are you, really?" he asked her eagerly. "Then we'll have old Rainsford to supper, and you must tell him so!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

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Fairfax, stirred as he had been to the depths by his visit to New York, awake again to the voices of his visions, could give but little of himself to his home life or to his work. The greatest proof of his kindly heart was that he did not let Molly see his irritation or his agony of discontent. If he were only nothing but an engineer with an Irish wife! Why, why, was he otherwise? In his useless rebellion the visions came and told him why—told him that to be born as he was, gifted as he was, was the most glorious thing and the most suffering thing in the world.

To the agent who had accepted the Fairfax hospitality and come to supper, Tony said—

"To ease my soul, Peter, I want to tell you of something I did."

Molly had washed the dishes and put them away, and, with a delicate appreciation of her husband's wish to be alone with his friend, went into the next room.

"After mother died my old nigger mammy in New Orleans sent me a packet of little things. I could never open the parcel until the other day. Amongst the treasures was a diamond ring, Rainsford, one I had seen her wear when I was a little boy. I took it to a jeweller on Market Street, and he told me it was worth a thousand dollars."

Here Tony remained silent so long that his companion said—

"That's a lot of money, Tony."

"Well, it came to me," said the young man simply, "like a gift from her. I asked them to lend me five hundred dollars on it for a year. It seems that it's a peculiarly fine stone, and they didn't hesitate."

Rainsford was smoking a peaceful pipe, and he held the bowl affectionately in his hand, his attention fixed on the blond young man sitting in the full light of the evening. The night was warm, Fairfax was in snowy shirt-sleeves, his bright hair cropped close revealed the beautiful lines of his head; he was a powerful man, clean in habits of body and mind, and his expression as he talked was brilliant and fascinating, his eyes profound and blue. Around his knees he clasped the hands that drove an engine and ached to model in plaster and clay. His big shoe was a deformity, otherwise he was superb.

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"I've taken a studio, Rainsford," he smiled. "Tito Falutini found it for me. It is a shed next to the lime-kiln in Canal Street. I've got my material and I'm going to begin my work for the California competition."

The older, to whom enthusiasm was as past a joy as success was a dim possibility, said thoughtfully—

"When will you work?"

"Sundays, half-holidays and nights. God!" he exclaimed in anticipation, holding out his strong arms, "it seems too good to be true!"

And Rainsford said, "I think I can contrive to get Saturdays off for you. The Commodore is coming up next week. He owes me a favour or two. I think I can make it for *you*, old man."

There was a little stir in the next room. Fairfax called "Molly!" and she came in. She might have been a lady. Long association with Fairfax and her love had taught her wonders. Her hair was carefully arranged and brushed until it shone like glass. Her dress was simple and refined; her face had the beauty on it that a great and unselfish love sheds.

"It means," said Rainsford to himself as he rose and placed a chair for her, "that Molly will be left entirely alone."

CHAPTER XXIX

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What Rainsford procured for him in the Saturday holidays was worth the weight of its hours in

gold. This, with Sundays, gave him two working days, and no lover went more eagerly to his mistress than Antony to the barracks where he toiled and dreamed. He began with too mad enthusiasm, lacking the patience to wait until his conceptions ripened. He roughly made his studies for an Angel of the Resurrection, inspired by the figure in the West Albany Cemetery. As he progressed he was conscious that his hand had been idle, as far as his art was concerned, too long; his fingers were blunted and awkward, and many an hour he paced his shed in agony of soul, conscious of his lack of technique. He was too engrossed to be aware of the passing months, but autumn came again with its wonderful haze, veiling death, decay and destruction, and Fairfax found himself but little more advanced than in May, when he had shut himself in his studio, a happy man.

He grew moody and tried to keep his despair from his wife, for not the least of his unrest was caused by the knowledge that he was selfish with her for the sake of his art. By October he had destroyed a hundred little figures, crushed his abortive efforts to bits, and made a clean sweep of six months' work and stood among the ruins. He never in these moments thought of his wife as a comforter, having never opened his heart to her regarding his art. He shrank from giving her entrance into his sanctuaries. He was alone in his crisis of artistic infecundity.

On this Sunday morning he left his studio early, turned the key and walked up Eagle Street toward the church he had not entered since he was married. Led by discontent and by a hope that beneath the altar in his old place he might find peace and possibly hear a voice which would tell him as every creator must be told—HOW. He listened to the music and to the Litany, the rich, full voices singing their grave, solemn pagan appeal; but the sensuous ecstasy left Fairfax indifferent and cold. To-day there were no visions around the altar through whose high windows came the autumn glory staining the chancel like the Grail. His glance wandered to the opposite side of the church where in the front pew were the young scholars of Canon's School, a bevy of girls; and he thought with a pang of Bella. She wouldn't be little Bella Carew much longer, for she was nearly sixteen, charming little Bella. He thought of the statue he had made and which had been so wantonly destroyed, and with this came the feeling that everything he touched had been warped and distorted. Ashamed of this point of view, he sighed and rose with the others at the Creed. He repeated it with conviction, and at the words, "Resurrection and the Life Everlasting," he dwelt upon "Everlasting Life" as though he would draw from the expression such consolation as should make him belittle the transient show with its mass of failures and unhappy things, and render immortal only that in him which was still aspiring, still his highest. He was glad to see instead of the curate a man with a red hood mount the pulpit steps, and he knew it was the Canon himself. With a new interest in his mind he sat erect.

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For the first time since he had come to the North a man whom he could revere and admire stood before him. The Canon's clear-cut heavenly face, his gracious voice, his outstretched hand as he blessed his people, made an agreeable impression on the young man out of his element, nearly shipwrecked and entirely alone. It occurred to him to speak to the Canon after service; but what should he say? What appeal could he make? He was an engineer married to a Roman Catholic woman of the other class, too poor a specimen of his own class to remain in it. Since his marriage he had felt degraded in society, out of place. If the Canon had advice to give him, it would be to shut up his studio and devote himself to his wife.

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He wandered slowly out of the building amongst the others into the golden autumn day, and the music of the organ rolled after him like a rich blessing. He waited to let the line of schoolgirls pass him, and all of a sudden as he looked at them their ranks broke, he heard a cry, an exclamation, and a call—

"*Cousin Antony!*"

Before she could be prevented she had flown to him. Not throwing herself against him in the old mad sweetness of her impulsive nature,—both pretty gloved hands were held out to him and her upturned face lifted all sparkle and brilliance, her red lips parted. "Oh, Cousin Antony!"

Both Fairfax's hands held hers.

"Quick!" she cried, "before Miss Jackson comes out. Where do you live? When will you come to see me? But you can't come! We're not allowed to have gentlemen callers! When can I come to see you? Dear Cousin Antony, how glad I am!"

"Bella!" he murmured, and gazed at her.

The rank-and-file of schoolgirls, giggling, outraged and diverted, passed them by, and the stiff teachers were the last to appear from the church.

"Tell me," Bella repeated, "where do you live? I'll write you. I've composed tons of letters, but I forgot the number in Nut Street. Here's Miss Jackson, the horrid thing! Hurry, Cousin Antony."

He said, "Forty, Canal Street," and wondered why he had told her.

Miss Jackson and Miss Teeter passed the two, and were so absorbed in discussing the text of the sermon that neither saw Mistress Bella Carew.

"I'm safe," she cried, "the old cats! The girls will never tell—they're all too sweet. But I must go; I'll just say I've dropped my Prayer-book. There, you take it!"

And she was gone.

Antony stood staring at the flitting figure as Bella ran after the others down the steps like an autumn leaf blown by a light wind. She wore a brown dress down to her boot tops (her boots too were brown with bows at the tops); her little brown gloves had held his hand in what had been the warmest, friendliest clasp imaginable. She wore a brown hat with a plume in it that drooped and dangled, and Antony had looked into her brown eyes and seen their bright affection once more.

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Well, he had known that she was going to be like this! Not quite, though; no man ever knows what a woman can be, will be, or ever is. He felt fifty years old as he walked down the steps and turned towards Canal Street to the door he had fastened four hours before on his formless visions.

CHAPTER XXX

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He did not go home that day.

Towards late evening he sat in the twilight, his head in his hands, a pile of smoked cigarettes and Bella's Prayer-book on the table before him.... In the wretched afternoon he had read, one after another, the services: Marriage ... for better or for worse, till death do us part.... The Baptismal service, and the Burial for the Dead.

At six he rose with a sigh, and, though it was growing dark, he began to draw aimlessly, and Rainsford, when he came in, found Tony sketching, and the young man said—

"You don't give a fellow much of your company these days, Peter. Have a cigarette? I've smoked a whole box myself."

"I'm glad to see you working, Fairfax."

"You don't know how glad I am," Fairfax exclaimed; "but the light's bad."

Putting aside his drawing-board, he turned to his friend, and, with an ardour such as he had not displayed since the old days at the Delavan, began to tell of his conception.

"I have given up my idea of a single figure. I shall make a bas-relief, a great circular tablet, if you understand, a wall with curving sides, and emblematic figures in high relief. It will be a mighty fine piece of work, Rainsford, if it's ever done."

"What will your figures be, Tony?"

"Ah, they won't let me see their forms or faces yet." He changed the subject. "What have you done with your Sunday, old man? Slept all day?"

"No, I've been sitting for an hour or two with Mrs. Fairfax."

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Molly's husband murmured, "I'm a brute, and no one knows it better than I do."

Rainsford made no refutation of his friend's accusation of himself, but suggested—

"She might bring her sewing in the afternoons, Tony; it would be less lonely for her?"

Fairfax noticed the flush that rose along the agent's thin cheek.

"By Jove!" Fairfax reflected. "I wonder if old Rainsford is in love with Molly?" The supposition did not make him jealous.

The two men went home together, and Rainsford stayed to supper as he had taken a habit of doing, for Fairfax did not wish to be alone. But when at ten o'clock the guest had gone and the engineer and his wife were alone together in their homely room, Fairfax said—

"Don't judge me too harshly, Molly."

Judge him? Did he think she did?

"You might well, my dear."

He took the hand that did all the work for his life and home and which she tried to keep as "ladylike" as she knew, and said, his eyes full on her—

"I do the best I can. I'm an artist, that's the truth of it! There's something in me that's stronger than anything else in the world. I reckon it's talent. I don't know how good it is or how ignoble; but it's brutal, and I've got to satisfy it, Molly."

Didn't she know it, didn't Mr. Rainsford tell her? Didn't she want to leave him free?

"You're the best girl in the world!" he cried contritely, and checked the words, "You should never have married me."

She couldn't see the struggle in him, but she could observe how pale he was. She never caressed him. She had long since learned that it was not what he wanted; but she laid her hand on his head, for he was sitting on the bed, and it might have been his mother who spoke—

"You're clear tired out," she said gently. "Will I fix up a bed for you in the kitchen to-night? You'll lie better."

He accepted gratefully. To-morrow, being Monday, was the longest day in the week for him.

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He could not permit himself to go to church again, but during the next few days he half expected to hear a knock at the door which should announce Bella. But she did not come, and he was glad that she did not, and more than once, in the evening, he walked around the school building, up — Street, looking at the lighted windows of the house where the doves were safely coted, and thought of the schoolgirl, with her books and her companions.

"... Not any more perfectly straight lines, Cousin Antony ..."

And the leaves fell, piles of them, red and yellow, and were swept and burned in fires whose incense was sweet to him, and the trees in the school garden grew bare.

In the first days of his Albany life, his Visions had used to meet him in those streets; now there seemed to be no inspiration for him anywhere, and he wondered if it were his marriage that had levelled all pinnacles for him or his daily mechanical work? His associations with Tito Falutini? Or if it were only that he was no sculptor at all, not equal to his dreams!

In the leaf-strewn street, near the Canon's School, he called on the Images to return, and, half halting in his walk, he looked up at one lighted window as if he expected to see a girlish figure there and catch sight of a friendly little hand that waved to him; but there was no such greeting.

That afternoon, as he went into his studio, some one rose from the sofa, and his wife's voice called to him—

"Don't be startled, Tony. I just came for awhile to sit with you."

He was amazed. Molly had never crossed the threshold of the workroom before, not having been invited. She had brought her sewing. It was so lonely in the little rooms, she wondered if it wasn't lonesome in the studio as well?

Smoking and walking to and fro, his hands in his pockets, Fairfax glanced at his wife as she took up the little garments on which she was at work. Her skin was stainless as a lily save here and there where the golden fleck of a freckle marred its whiteness. Her reddish hair, braided in strands, was wound flatly around her head. There was a purity in her face, a Mystery that was holy to him. He crossed over to her side and lit the lamp for her.

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"Who suggested your coming? Rainsford?"

"Nobody. I wanted to come, just."

He threw himself down on the sofa near her. "I can't work!" he exclaimed. "I've not been able to do anything for weeks. I reckon I'm no good. I'm going to let the whole thing go."

Molly folded her sewing and laid it on the table. "Would you show me what you've been workin' at, Tony?"

The softness of her brogue had not gone, but she had been a rapid pupil unconsciously taught, and her speech had improved.

"I've destroyed most of my work," he said, hopelessly; "but this is something of the new scheme I've planned."

He went over to the other part of the studio and uncovered the clay in which he had begun to work, and mused before it. He took some clay from the barrel, mixed it and began to model. Molly watched him.

"I get an idea," he murmured; "but when I go to fix it it escapes and eludes me. It has no form. I want a group of figures in the foreground and the idea of distance and far-away on the other side."

"It will be lovely, Tony," she encouraged him. "I mind the day we walked in the cemetery for the first time and you looked at the angel so long."

"Yes." He was kneeling, bending forward, putting the clay on with his thumb.

"Ever since then"—Molly's tone was meditative—"that angel seems like a friend to me. Many's the time when there's a hard thing to do he seems to open the door and I go through, and it's not so hard."

She was imaginative, Fairfax knew it. She was superstitious, like the people of her country. The things she said were often full of fancy, like the legends and stories of the Celts; but now he hardly heard her, for he was working, and she went back to her task by the lamp, and, under the quiet of her presence and its companionship, his modelling grew. He heard her finally stir, and the clock struck seven, and they had had no supper. Until she crossed the floor, he did not speak. Then he turned—

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"I'll work on a little longer. I want to finish this hand."

"Take your time, Tony. I'll be going home slowly, anyway."

She was at the door, stood in it, held it half-open, her arm out along the panel looking back at him. Her figure was in the shadow, but the light fell on her face, on her hair and on her hand. The unconscious charm of her pose, her slow pause, her attitude of farewell and waiting, the solemnity of it, the effect of light and shadow, struck Fairfax.

"Molly," he cried, "wait!"

But she had dropped her arm. "You'll be coming along," she said, smiling, "and it's getting late."

He found that the spell for work was broken after she left, though a fleeting idea, a picture, an image he could not fix, tantalized him. He followed his wife. He had passed the most peaceful hour in his Canal Street studio since he had signed the lease with the money of his mother's ring. He would have told Molly this, but Rainsford was there for supper.

CHAPTER XXXI

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Molly came and sat with him Saturday afternoons and Sundays. Fairfax made studies of his wife as she sewed, a modern conception of a woman sitting under a lamp, her face lifted, dreaming. He told Rainsford that when the lease was up he should vacate the studio, for he could not go on with his scheme for the monument. He had the memories of Molly's coming to him during the late autumn and winter afternoons. The remembrance of these holidays soothed and pardoned many faults and delinquencies. She seemed another Molly to the Sheedy counter girl, the Troy collar factory girl, and an indefinable Presence came with her, lingered as she sewed or read some book she had picked up, and if Fairfax the artist watched the change and transformation of her face as it refined and thinned, grew more delicate and meditative, it was Fairfax the man who recalled the picture afterward.

She was exceedingly gentle, very silent, ready with a word of encouragement and admiration if he spoke to her. She knew nothing of the art he adored, but seemed to know his temperament and to understand. She posed tranquilly while the short days met the early nights; she disguised her fatigue and her ennui, so that he never knew she grew tired, and the Presence surrounded her like an envelope, until Antony, drawing and modelling, wondered if it were not the soul of the child about to be born to him, and if from the new emotion his inspiration would not stir and bless him at the last?

What there was of humour and fantasy in her Irish heart, how imaginative and tender she was, he might have gathered in those hours, if he had chosen to talk with her and make her his companion. But he was reserved, mentally and spiritually, and he kept the depths of himself down, nor could he reveal his soul which from boyhood he had dreamed to give to One Woman with his whole being. He felt himself condemned to silence and only partially to develop, and no one but Molly Fairfax, with her humility and her admiration, could have kept him from unholy dreams and unfaithfulness.

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His life on the engine was hard in the winter. He felt the cold intensely, and as his art steadily advanced, his daily labour in the yards grew hateful, and he pushed the days of the week through till Sunday should come and he be free. His face was set and white when Rainsford informed him that it would be impossible to give him "Saturdays off" any longer. Antony turned on his heel and left the office without response to his chief, and thought as he strode back to his tenement: "It's Peter's personal feeling. He's in love with Molly, and those days in the studio gall him."

Molly, who was lying down when he came in, brushed her hand across her eyes as if to brush away whatever was there before he came. She took his hat and coat; his slippers and warm jacket were before the stove.

"Rainsford has knocked me off my Saturdays," he said bitterly.

She stopped at the hook, the things in her hand. "That's hard on you, Tony, and you getting on so well with your work."

She didn't say that she could not have gone on any more ... that the walk she took the week before to Canal Street had been her last; but Fairfax, observing her, rendered keen by his own disappointment, understood. He called her to him, made her sit down on the sofa beside him.

"Peter has been better to you than I have," he said sadly. "I've tired you out, my dear, and I've been a selfish brute to you."

He saw that his words gave her pain, and desisted. He was going to be nothing more from henceforth but an engineer. He would shut the studio and take her out on Sundays. She received his decision meekly, without rebuffing it, and he said—

"Molly, if I had not come along, I reckon you would have married Peter Rainsford. There! Don't look like that!"

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"Tony," she replied, "I'd rather be wretched with you—if I were, and I'm not, dear. I'd rather be unhappy along of you than the happiest queen."

He kissed her hand with a gallantry new to her and which made her crimson, and half laugh and half cry.

She went early to bed, and Antony, alone in the kitchen, raked down the coals, covered the fire in the stove, heard the clock tick and the whistles of the boat on the river. In the silence of the winter night, as it fell around him, he thought: "I reckon I'll have to try to make her happy, even if I cut out my miserable talent and kill it." And as he straightened himself he felt the Presence there. The solemn Presence that had come with her to his workshop and kept him company, and it was so impressive that he passed his hand across his forehead as though dazed, and opened the door of his bedroom to see her and be assured. She was already asleep; by her side, the little basket prepared, waited for the life to come. He stepped in softly, and his heart melted. He knelt down and buried his face in the pillow by her side, and without waking she turned her face toward him in her sleep.

CHAPTER XXXII

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He did not go to the studio for a month, but though he remained with her the poor girl profited little by his company. He smoked countless cigarettes, in spite of the fact that he had doctor's bills to look forward to. In the long winter evenings he read books that he fetched from the library while the blizzards and storms swept round the window, and the next day his duties stared him in the face. He dreamed before the stove, his cigarette between his fingers, and Molly watched him; but Rainsford, when he came, did not find her any more alone.

Finally, in the last Sunday of January, after the noon dinner, she fetched him his coat and muffler.

"I can't let you stay home any more like this, Tony," she told him. "Take your things and go to the studio; I'm sure you're dying to, and don't hurry back. I'm feeling fine."

He caught her suggestion with an eagerness that made her bite her lip; she kept her face from him lest he should see her disappointment. He exclaimed joyously—

"Why, I reckon you're right, Molly. I *will* go for awhile. I'll work all the better for the holiday."

He might have said "sacrifice."

As he got into his things he asked her: "You're sure you'll not need anything, Molly? You think it's all right for me to go?"

She assured him she would rest and sleep, and that the woman "below stairs" would come up if she wanted anything. He mustn't hurry.

He took the studio key. He was gone, his uneven step echoed on the narrow stairs. She listened till it died away.

Fairfax before his panel during the afternoon worked as though Fate were at his heels. When he came in the room was bitter cold, and it took the big fire he built long to make the shed inhabitable; but no sooner had the chill left the air, and he unwrapped his plaster, than a score of ideas came beating upon him like emancipated ghosts and shades, and he saw the forms, though the faces were still veiled. He sang and whistled, he declaimed aloud as the clay he mixed softened and rolled under his fingers... It let him shape it, its magic was under his thumb, its plasticity, its response fascinated the sculptor. He tried now with the intensity of his being to fix his conception for the gate of Death and Eternal Life. He had already made his drawing for the new scaffolding, and it would take him two Sundays to build it up. Falutini would help him.

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It seemed strange to work without Molly sitting in her corner. He wondered how long the daylight would last; he had three months still until spring; that meant twelve Sundays. He thought of Molly's approaching illness, and a shadow crossed his face. Why had he come back only to tempt and tantalize himself with freedom and the joy of creation?

Sunday-Albany outside was as tranquil as the tomb, and scarcely a footstep passed under his window. The snow lay light upon the window-ledge and the roof, and as the room grew warmer the cordial light fell upon him as he worked, and a sense of the right to labour, the right to be free, made him take heart and inspired his hand. He began the sketch of his group on a large scale.

As he bent over his board the snow without shifted rustling from the roof, and the slipping, feathery shower fell gleaming before his window; the sound made him glance up and back towards the door. As he did so he recalled, with the artist's vivid vision, the form of his wife, as she had stood in the opened door, her arm along the panel, in the attitude of waiting and parting.

"By Jove!" he murmured, gazing as though it were reality. Half wondering, but with assurance, he

indicated what he recalled, and was drawing in rapidly, absorbed in his idea, when some one struck the door harshly from without, and Rainsford called him.

Fairfax started, threw down his pencil, and seized his hat and muffler—he worked in his overcoat because he was cold—to follow the man who had come to fetch him in haste.

CHAPTER XXXIII

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Over and over again that night in his watch that lasted until dawn, as he walked the floor of his little parlour-kitchen and listened, as he stood in the window before the soundless winter night and listened, Fairfax said the word he had said to her when she had paused in the doorway—

"Wait...!"

For what should she wait?

Did he want her to wait until he had caught the image of her on his mind and brain that he might call upon it for his inspiration?

He called her to "wait!"

Until he should become a great master and need her with her simplicity and her humble mind less than ever? Until he should be honoured by his kind and crowned successful and come at last into his own, and she be the only shadow on his glory? Not for that!

Until Fairfax one day should need the warmth of a perfectly unselfish woman's heart, a self-effacing tenderness, a breast to lean upon? She had given him all this.

He smelled the ether and strange drugs. The doctor came and went. The nurse he had engaged from the hospital, "the woman from below stairs" as well, came and went, spoke to him and shut him out.

He was conscious that in a chair in a corner, in a desperate position, his head in his hands, Rainsford was sitting. Of these things he was conscious afterward, but he felt now that he only listened, his every emotion concentrated in the sense of hearing. What was it he was so intent to hear? The passing of the Irrevocable or the advent of a new life? He stood at length close to her door, and it was nearly morning. A clock somewhere struck four presently, and the whistle of the Limited blew; but those were not the sounds he waited to hear.

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At five o'clock, whilst it was still dark in the winter morning, he started, his heart thumping against his breast, a sob in his throat. Out of the stillness which to him had been unbroken, came a cry, then another, terribly sweet and heart-touching—the cry of life. He opened the door of his wife's room and entered softly in his stocking feet. There seemed to be a multitude between him and his wife and child. He did not dare to approach, but stood leaning against the wall, cold with apprehension and stirred to his depths. He seemed to stand there for a lifetime, and his knees nearly gave way beneath him. His hand pressed against his cheek. He leaned forward.

"*Wait!*"

He almost murmured the word that came to his lips.

For what should Molly Fairfax wait? Life had given her a state too high. She had brought much grace to it and much love. She had given a great deal. To wait for return, for such gifts, was to wait for the unattainable.

She went through the open door that she saw open, perhaps not all unwillingly; and she was not alone, for the child went with her, and they came to Fairfax and told him that she had gone through gently murmuring his name.

CHAPTER XXXIV

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As Nut Street, with the destruction of his little statue, had been wiped out of his history, so the two rooms overlooking the river and steamboats knew Antony Fairfax no more. He turned the key in the door the day they carried away the body of his wife, and when he came back from the snowy earth and the snowy white city where he left her with his hour-old child, he went to the Delavan House as he had done before, and buried his head in his arms on his lowly bed in a hotel room and wept.

The following day he sent word to Rainsford to look out for another engineer in his place. He had driven his last trip.

Tito Falutini wrung his friend's hand, and told Fairfax, in his broken Italian-English, that he knew a fellow would take the rooms as they stood. "Would Tony give the job to him?" Save for his clothes and Molly's things, and they were few, he took nothing, not even the drawings decorating

the wall on which other Irish eyes should look with admiration.

He interviewed the jewellers again. They gave him four hundred dollars and took his mother's ring. He paid his doctor's bills and funeral expenses, and had fifty dollars left until he should finish his bas-relief. He went to live at the Canal Street studio and shut himself up with his visions, his freedom, his strange reproach and his sense of untrammelled wings.

He worked with impassioned fervour, for now he *knew*. He modelled with assurance, for now he *saw*. His hands were so eager to create the idea of his brain that he sighed as he worked, fairly panted at his task as though he ran a race with inspiration. Half-fed, sometimes quite sleepless, he lost weight and flesh. He missed the open-air life of the engine and the air at his ears. But now at his ears were the audible voices of his conceptions. February and March passed. His models were, a mannequin, his studies of Molly Fairfax, and once the daughter of the man who rented him the workshop stood before him draped in the long garment; but he sent her away: she was too *living* for his use. He ate in little cheap restaurants down by the riverside, or cooked himself coffee and eggs over his lamp, and wondered who would be the first to break the silence and isolation, for it was six weeks before he saw a single human being save those he passed in the street.

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"Rainsford," he said to the agent, who on the last day of March came slowly in at noon, walking like a man just out of a long illness, "I reckoned you'd be along when you were ready. I've waited for you here."

Fairfax's hand was listlessly touched by his friend's, then Rainsford went over and took Molly's place by the lamp. Fairfax checked the words, "Not *there*, for God's sake, Rainsford!" He thought, "Let the living come. Nothing can brush away the image of her sitting there in the lamplight, no matter how many fill the place."

Rainsford's eyes were hollow, and his tone as pale as his face, whose sunken cheeks and hollows, to Fairfax, marked the progress of a fatal disease. His voice sounded hoarse and strained; he spoke with effort.

"I've come to say good-bye. I've given up my job here in West Albany. I'm going to try another country, Tony."

The sculptor sat down on the lounge where he had used to sit near his wife, and said solicitously —

"I see you're not well, old man. I don't wonder you're going to try a better climate. I hope to heaven I shall never see another snow-flake fall. I assure you I feel them fall on graves."

There was a moment's silence. The agent passed his hand across his face and said, as if reluctant to speak at all—

"Yes, I am going to try another country." He glanced at Fairfax and coughed.

"California?" questioned Antony. "I hope you'll get a job in some such paradise. Do you think you will?"

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The other man did not reply. He looked about the studio, now living-room and workshop, and said —

"I should like to see what you have been doing, Fairfax. How are you getting on?"

Tony, however, did not rise from the sofa nor show any inclination to comply, and his friend irrelevantly, as though he took up the young man's problems where he had left them, before his own sentiment for Molly had estranged him from her husband—

"You must be pretty hard up by now, Tony." He drew from his waistcoat pocket his wallet, and took out a roll of bills which he folded mechanically and held in his transparent hand. "Ever since the day you came in to take your orders from me in West Albany, I've wanted to help you. Now I've got the money to do so, old man."

"No, my kind friend."

"Don't refuse me then, if I am that." The other's lip twitched. "Take it, Tony."

"You mustn't ask me to, Peter."

"I made a turnover last week in N. Y. U. I can afford it. I ask you for the sake of old times."

Fairfax covered the slender hand with his. He shook it warmly.

"I'm sorry, old man. I can't do it."

The near-sighted eyes of the paymaster met those of Fairfax with a melancholy appeal, and the other responded to his unspoken words—

"No, Rainsford, not for anything in the world."

"It's your *Pride*," Rainsford murmured, and he put on his shining glasses and looked through them fully at Fairfax. "It's your *Pride*, Tony. What are you going to do?"

For answer, Fairfax rose, stretched out his arms, walked toward his covered bas-relief and drew

away the curtain.

His friend followed him, stood by his side, and, with his thin hand covering his eyes, looked without speaking at the bas-relief. When he finally removed his hand and turned, Fairfax saw that his friend's face was transformed. Rainsford wore a strangely peaceful look, even an uplifted expression, such as a traveller might wear who sees the door open to a friendly shelter and foretastes his repose.

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Rainsford held out his hand. "Thank you, Tony," and his voice was clear. "You're a great artist."

When he had gone, Fairfax recalled his rapt expression, and thought, sadly, "I'm afraid he's a doomed man, dear old Rainsford! Poor old Peter, I doubt if any climate can save him now." And went heavy-hearted to prepare his little luncheon of sandwiches and milk.

CHAPTER XXXV

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Fairfax had finished his lunch and was preparing to work again when, in answer to a knock, he opened the door for Tito Falutini, who bore in in his Sunday clothes, behind him a rosy, smiling, embarrassed lady, whom Fairfax had not seen for a "weary while."

"Mrs. Falutini," grinned his fireman. "I married! Shakka de han."

"Cora!" exclaimed Fairfax, kissing the bride on both her cheeks; "I would have come to see your mother and you long ago, but I couldn't."

"Shure," said the Irish girl tenderly, her eyes full of tears. "I know, Mr. Fairfax, dear, and so does the all of us."

He realized more and more how well these simple people knew and how kindly is the heart of the poor, and he wondered if "Blessed are the poor in spirit" that the Canon had spoken of in church on Sunday did not refer to some peculiar kind of richness of which the millionaires of the world are ignorant. He made Falutini and his bride welcome, and Cora's brogue and her sympathy caused his grief to freshen. But their boisterous happiness and their own content was stronger than all else, and when at last Cora said, "Och, show us the statywary 't you're makin', Mither Fairfax, dear," he languidly rose and uncovered again his bas-relief. Then he watched curiously the Irish girl and the Italian workman before his labour.

"Shure," Cora murmured, her eyes full of tears, "it's Molly herself, Mr. Fairfax, dear. It's *living*."

He let the covering fall, and its folds suggested the garments of the tomb.

The young couple, starting out in life arm-in-arm, had seen only life in his production, and he was glad. He let them go without reluctance, eager to return to his modelling, and to retouch a line in the woman's figure, for the bas-relief was still warm clay, and had not been cast in plaster, and he kept at his work until five o'clock in the afternoon, when there was another knock at his door. He bade the intruder absently "Come in," heard the door softly open and close, and the sound jarred his nerves, as did every sound at that door, and with his scalpel in his hand, turned sharply. In the door close to his shadow stood the figure of a slender young girl. There was only the space of the room between them, and even in his surprise he thought, "Now, there is nothing else!"

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"Cousin Antony," she said from the doorway where he had seen the vision, "aren't you going to speak to me? Aren't you glad to see me?"

Her words were the first Fairfax had heard in the rich voice of a woman, for the child tone had changed, and there was a "timbre" now in the tone that struck the old and a new thrill. Her boldness, the bright assurance seemed gone. He thought her voice trembled.

"Why don't you speak to me, Cousin Antony? Do you think I'm a *ghost*?"

(A ghost!)

Bella came forward as she spoke, and he saw that she wore a girlish dress, a long dress, a womanly dress. With her old affectionate gesture she held out her hand, and on her dark hair was a little red bonnet of some fashion too modish for him to find familiar, but very bewitching and becoming, and he saw that she was a lovely woman, nearly seventeen.

"I lost the precious little paper you gave me, Cousin Antony, that day at church, and I only found it to-day in packing. I'm going home for the Easter holidays."

He realized that she was close to him, and that she innocently lifted up her face. Fairfax bent and kissed her under the red hat on the hair.

"Now," she cried, nodding at him, "I've hunted you down, tracked you to your lair, and you *can't* escape. I want to see your work. Show me everything."

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But Fairfax put his hand up quickly, and before her eyes rested on the bas-relief he had let the curtain fall.

"You're not an engineer any more, then, Cousin Antony?"

"No, Bella."

"Tell me why you ran away from us as you did? Oh!" she exclaimed, clasping her pretty hands, "I've thought over and over the questions I wanted to ask you, things I wanted to tell you, and now I forget them all. Cousin Antony, it wasn't *kind* to leave us as you did,—Gardiner and me."

He watched her as she took a chair, half-leaning on its back before his covered work. Bella's pose was graceful and elegant. Girl as she was, she was a little woman of the world. She swung her gloves between her fingers, looking up at him.

"It's nearly five years, Cousin Antony."

"I know it."

She laughed and blushed. "I've been running after you, *shockingly*, haven't I? I ran away from home and found you in the queer little street in the queer little home with those *angel* Irish people! How are they all, Cousin Antony, and the freckled children?"

"Bella," her cousin asked, "haven't they nearly finished with you in school? You are grown up."

She shook her head vehemently. "Nonsense, I'm a dreadful hoyden still. Think of it! I've never been on the roll of honour yet at St. Mary's."

"No?" he smiled. "They were wrong not to put you there. How is Aunt Caroline?"

The girl's face clouded, and she said half under her breath—

"*Why, don't you know?*"

Ah, there was another grave, then? What did Bella mean?

She exclaimed, stopped swinging her gloves, folded her hands gravely—

"Why, Cousin Antony, didn't you read in the papers?"

He saw a rush of colour fill her cheeks. It wasn't death, then? He hadn't seen any papers for some time, and he never should have expected to find his aunt's name in the papers.

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"I don't believe I can tell you, Cousin Antony."

He drew up a chair and sat down by her. "Yes, you can, little cousin."

Her face was troubled, but she smiled. "Yes, that was what you used to call me, didn't you? You see, I'm hardly supposed to know. It's not a thing a girl *should* know, Cousin Antony. Can't you guess?"

"Hardly, Bella."

Fairfax wiped his hands on a bunch of cloths, and the dry morsels of clay fell to the floor.

"Tell me what it is about Aunt Caroline."

"She is not my mother any more, Cousin Antony, nor father's wife either."

He waited. Bella's tone was low and embarrassed.

"I don't know how to tell it. She had a lovely voice, Cousin Antony."

"She had indeed, Bella."

"Well," slowly commented the young girl, "she took music lessons from a teacher who sang in the opera, and I used to hear them at it until I nearly lost my mind sometimes. I *hate music*—I mean that kind, Cousin Antony."

"Well," he interrupted, impatient to hear the *dénouement*. "What then, honey?"

"One night at dinner-time mother didn't come home; but she is often late, and we waited, and then went on without her.... She never came home, and no one ever told me anything, not even old Ann. Father said I was not to speak my mother's name again. And I never have, until now, to you."

Fairfax took in his Bella's hands that turned the little rolled kid gloves; they were cold. He bent his eyes on her. Young as she was, she saw there and recognized compassion and human understanding, qualities which, although she hardly knew their names, were sympathetic to her. He bent his eyes on her.

"Honey," Fairfax said, "you have spoken your mother's name in the right place. Don't judge her, Bella!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the young girl, crimsoning. She tossed her proud, dark head. "I do judge her, Cousin Antony, I do."

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"Hush!" he exclaimed sternly, "as you say, you are too young to understand what she has done, but not too young to be merciful."

She snatched her hands away, and sprang up, her eyes rebellious.

"Why should I not judge her?" Her voice was indignant. "It's a disgrace to my honourable father, to our name. How can you, Cousin Antony?" Fairfax did not remove his eyes from her intense little face. "She was never a mother to us," the young girl judged, with the cruelty of youth. "Think how I ran wild! Do you remember my awful clothes? My things that never met, the buttons off my shoes? Think of darling little Gardiner, Cousin Antony...!"

Her cousin again bade her be silent. She stamped her foot passionately.

"But I will speak! Why should you take her part?"

With an expression which Bella felt to be grave, Fairfax repeated—

"You must not speak her name, as your father told you. It's a mighty hard thing for one woman to judge another, little cousin. Wait until you are a woman yourself."

Fairfax understood. He thought how the way had opened to his weak, sentimental aunt; he fancied that he saw again the doe at the gate of the imposing park of the unreal forest; the gate had swung open, and, her eyes as mild as ever, the doe had entered the mystic world. To him this image of his aunt was perfect. Oh! mysterious, dreadful, wonderful heart of woman!

Bella stood by his side, looking up at him. "Cousin Antony," she breathed, "why do you take her part?"

"I want her daughter to take it, Bella, or say nothing."

Her dark eyes were on him intently, curiously. His throat was bare, his blond hair cut close around his neck; the marks of his recent grief and struggle had thinned and saddened his face. He had altered very much in five years.

"I remember," Bella said sharply, "you used to seem fond of her;" and added, "I loved my father best."

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Fairfax made no reply, and Bella walked slowly across the studio, and started to sit down under the green lamp.

"No," cried Fairfax, "not there, Bella!"

Her hand on the back of the chair, the young girl paused in surprise.

"Why, why not, Cousin Antony?"

Why not, indeed! He had not prevented Rainsford from sitting there.

"Is the chair weak in its legs?" she laughed. "I'm light—I'll risk it," and, half defiantly, she seated herself by the table, leaning both elbows on it. She looked back at him. "Now, make a little drawing of me as you used to do. I'll show it to the girls in school to prove what a genius we have in the family; and I must go back, too, or I'll have more bad marks than ever."

Fairfax did not obey her. Instead, he looked at her as though he saw through her to eternity.

Bella sprang up impulsively, and came toward him. "Cousin Antony," she murmured, "I'm perfectly dreadful. I'm selfish and inconsiderate. It's only because I'm a little wild. I don't mean it. You've told me nothing." She lifted his cravat from the chair. "You wear a black cravat and your clothes are black. Is it for Aunt Arabella still?"

Fairfax seemed to himself to look down on her from a height. Her brilliance, her sparkle and youth were far away. His heart ached within him.

"One goes mighty far in five years, Bella.... One loses many things."

"I know—Gardiner and your mother. But who else?"

He saw her face sadden; the young girl extended her hand to him, her eyes darkened.

"Who else?" she breathed.

Fairfax put out his arms toward her, but did not enfold her. He let his hands rest on her shoulders and murmured, "Bella, little Bella," and choked the other words back.

"No," she said, "I'm not little Bella any more. Please answer me, Cousin Antony."

He could not have told her for his life. He could tell her nothing; her charm, her lifted face, beautiful, ardent, were the most real, the most vital things the world had ever held for him. The fascination found him under his new grief. He exclaimed, turning brusquely toward his covered scaffolding—

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"Don't you want to see my work, Bella? I've been at it nearly a year."

He rapidly drew the curtain and exposed his bas-relief.

There was in the distance a vague indication of distant sky-line—a far horizon—upon which, into which, a door opened, held ajar by a woman's arm and hand. The woman's figure, draped in the clinging garment of the grave, was passing through, but in going her face was turned, uplifted, to

look back at a man without, who, apparently unconscious of her, gazed upon life and the world. That was all—the two figures and the feeling of the vast illimitable far-away.

It seemed to Fairfax as he unveiled his work that he looked upon it himself for the first time; it seemed to him finished, moreover, complete. He knew that he could do nothing more with it. He heard Bella ask, "Who is it, Cousin Antony? It is perfectly beautiful!" her old enthusiasm soft and warm in her voice.

At her repeated question, "Who is it?" he replied, "A dream woman." And his cousin said, "You have lovely dreams, but it is too sad."

He told her for what it was destined, and she listened, musing, and when she turned her face to him again there were tears in her eyes. She pointed to the panel.

"There should be a child there," she said, with trembling lips. "They go in too, Cousin Antony."

"Yes," he responded, "they go in too."

He crossed the floor with her toward the door, neither of them speaking. She drew on her gloves, but at the door he said—

"Stop a moment. I'm going a little way with you."

"No, Cousin Antony, you can't. Myra Scutfield, my best friend, is waiting for me with her brother. I'm supposed to be visiting her for Sunday. You mustn't come."

Her hand was on the door latch. He gently took her hand and pushed it aside. He did not wish her to open that door or to go through it alone. As they stood there silent, she lifted her face and said—

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"I'm going away for the Easter holidays. Kiss me good-bye."

And he stooped and kissed her—kissed Bella, the little cousin, the honey child—no, kissed Bella, the woman, on her lips.

CHAPTER XXXVI

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From the window he watched her fly up the street like a scarlet bird, and realized what a child she was still, and, whereas he had felt a hundred that day at church, he now felt as old as the ancient Egyptians, as the Sphinx, a Sage in suffering and knowledge of life, beside his cousin. He called her little, but she was tall and slender, standing as high as his shoulder.

He turned heavily about to his room which the night now filled. The street lamps were lit, and their frail glimmer flickered in, like the fingers of a ghost. His money was nearly gone. There was the expense of casting his work in plaster, the packing and shipping of the bas-relief. He lit his lamp, and, as he adjusted the green shade, under which Molly had used to sit and sew, he saw on the table the roll of bills which Rainsford had offered to him that morning. He picked up the money with a smile.

"Poor old Rainsford, dear old chap. He was determined, wasn't he?"

Fairfax wrapped up the heavy roll of money, marked it with Rainsford's name, and stood musing on his friend's failing health, his passion for Molly, and the fruitless, vanishing story that ended, as all seemed to end for him, in death. Suddenly, over his intense feelings, came the need of nourishment, and he wanted to escape from the room where he had been caged all day.

At the Delavan, George Washington welcomed him with delight.

"Yo' dun forgit yo' ol' friends, Massa' Kunnell Fairfax, sah. Yo doan favour dis ol' nigger any moh."

Fairfax told him that he was an expensive luxury, and enjoyed his quiet meal and his cigar, took a walk in a different direction from Canal Street, and at ten o'clock returned to find a boy waiting at the door with a note, whistling and staring up and down the street, waiting for the gentleman to whom he was to deliver his note in person.

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Fairfax went in with his letter, knowing before he opened it that Rainsford had something grave to tell him. He sat down in Molly's chair, around which the Presence had gathered and brooded until the young man's soul had seemed engulfed in the shadow of Death.

"My dear Tony,

"When you read this letter, it will be of no use to come to me. Don't come. I said my final word to you to-day when I went to make my will and testament. You will discover on your table all my fortune. It counts up to a thousand dollars. I have a feeling that it may help you to success. You know what a failure I have been. I should have been one right along. Now that I have found out that a mortal disease is upon me, my last spurt of courage is gone. When I stood before your work to-day, Tony, it was a benediction to me. Although I had fully decided to *go out*, I should have gone hopelessly; now there is something grand to me in the retreat. The uplift and the solemnity of the far horizon

charm me, and though I open the door for myself and have no right to any claim for mercy, nevertheless I think that I shall find it there, and I am going through the open door. God bless you, Fairfax. Don't let the incidents of your life in Albany cloud what I believe will be a great career.

"Thomas Rainsford."

CHAPTER XXXVII

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He was too young to be engulfed by death.

But he did not think or understand then that the great events which had racked his nerves in suffering were only incidents. Nor did he know that neither his soul nor his heart had suffered all they were capable of enduring. In spite of his deep heart-ache and his feelings that quivered with the memories of his wife, he was above all an artist, a creator. Hope sprang from this last grave. Desire in Fairfax had never been fully born; how then could it be fully satisfied or grow old and cold before it had lived!

Tony Fairfax was the sole mourner that followed Rainsford's coffin to the Potter's Field. They would not bury him in consecrated ground. Canon Prynne had been surprised by a visit at eight o'clock in the morning.

Fairfax was received by the Bishop in his bedroom, where the Bishop was shaving. Fairfax, as he talked, caught sight of his own face in the glass, deathly white, his burning eyes as blue as the heavens to which he was sure Rainsford had gone.

"My friend," the ecclesiastic said, "my friend, I have nothing to do with laws, thank God. I am glad that no responsibility has been given me but to do my work. But let me say, to comfort you, is not every whit of the earth that God made holy? What could make it more sacred than the fact that He created it?"

Fairfax thought of these words as he saw the dust scatter and heard the rattle of the stones on the lid of Rainsford's coffin, and in a clear and assured voice of one who knows in whom he has believed, he read from Bella's Prayer-book (he had never given it back to her), "I am the Resurrection and the Life." He could find no parson to go with him.

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On the way back to Albany he met the spring everywhere; it was just before the Easter holidays. Overhead the clouds rolled across a stainless sky, and they took ship-like forms to him and he felt a strong wish to escape—to depart. Rainsford had set him free. It would be months before he could hear from his competition. There was nothing in this continent to keep him. He had come North full of living hope and vital purpose, and meekly, solemnly, his graves had laid themselves out around him, and he alone stood living.

Was there nothing to keep him?

Bella Carew.

He had, of all people in the world, possibly the least right to her. She was his first cousin, nothing but a child; worth, the papers had said, a million in her own right. The heiress of a man who despised him.

But her name was music still; music as yet too delicate, sweet as it was, not to be drowned by the deeper, graver notes that were sounding through Fairfax. There was a call to labour, there was the imperious demand of his art. In him, something sang Glory, and if the other tones meant struggle and battle, nevertheless his desire was all toward them.

BOOK III

THE VISIONS

CHAPTER I

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The sea which he had just crossed lay gleaming behind him, every lovely ripple washing the shores of a new continent.

The cliffs which he saw rising white in the sunlight were the Norman cliffs. Beyond them the fields waved in the summer air and the June sky spread blue over France.

As he stepped down from the gang-plank and touched French soil, he gazed about him in delight.

The air was salt and indescribably sweet. The breeze came to him over the ripening fields and mingled with the breath of the sea.

They passed his luggage through the Customs quickly, and Antony was free to wonder and to explore. Not since he had left the oleanders and jasmines of New Orleans had he smelled such delicious odours as those of sea-girdled Havre. A few soldiers in red uniforms tramped down the streets singing the Marseillaise. A group of fish-wives offered him mussels and crabs.

In his grey travelling clothes, his soft grey hat, his bag in his hand, he went away from the port toward the wide avenue.

The bright colour of a red awning of a café caught his eye; he decided to breakfast before going on to Paris.

Paris! The word thrilled him through and through.

At a small table out of doors he ordered "boeuf à la mode" and "pommes de terre." It seemed agreeable to speak French again and his soft Creole accent charmed the ear of the waiter who bent smiling to take his order. [Pg 217]

Antony watched with interest the scene around him; those about him seemed to be good-humoured, contented travellers on the road of life. There was a neat alacrity about the waiters in their white aprons.

A girl with a bouquet of roses came up to him. Antony gave her a sou and in exchange she gave him a white rose.

"Thank you, Monsieur the Englishman."

He had never tasted steak and potatoes like these. He had never tasted red wine like this. And it cost only a franc! He ordered his coffee and smoked and mused in the bland June light.

He was happier than he had been for many a long day.

Eventful, tremulous, terrible and expressive, his past lay behind him on another shore. He felt as though he were about to seek his fortune for the first time.

As soon as Rainsford's generous gift became his own, the possession of his little fortune, even at such a tragic price, made a new man of Fairfax. He magnified its power, but it proved sufficient to buy him a gentlemanly outfit, the ticket to France, and leave him a little capital.

His plans unfolded themselves to him now, as he sat musing before the restaurant. He would study in the schools with Cormon or Julian. He had brought with him his studies of Molly—he would have them criticized by the great masters. All Paris was before him. The wonders of the galleries, whose masterpieces were familiar to him in casts and photographs, would disclose themselves to him now. He would see the Louvre, Notre Dame de Paris....

His spirits rose as he touched the soil of France. Now Paris should be his mistress, and art should be his passion!

His ticket took him second-class on a slow train and he found a seat amongst the humble travelling world; between a priest and a soldier, he smoked his cigarettes and offered them to his companions, and watched the river flowing between the poplars, the fields red with poppies, yellow with wheat. The summer light shining on all shone on him through the small window of the carriage, and though it was sunset it seemed to Fairfax sunrise. The hour grew late. The darkness fell and the motion of the cars made him drowsy, and he fell asleep. [Pg 218]

He was awakened by the stirring of his fellow-passengers, by the rich Norman voices, by the jostling and moving among the occupants of the carriage, and he gathered his thoughts together, took his valise in his hand and climbed down from the car.

He passed out with the crowd through the St. Lazare station. He had in Havre observed with interest the novel constructions of the engines and the rolling stock. The crowd of market-women, peasants, curés, was anonymous to him, but as he passed the engine which had brought him from Havre, he glanced up at the mechanic, a big, blond-moustached fellow in a blue blouse. The engineer's face streamed with perspiration and he was smoking a cigarette.

He had shunned engines and yards, and everything that had to do with his old existence, for months; now he nodded with a friendly sympathetic smile to the engine-driver.

"Bien le bonjour," he said cheerfully, as he had heard the people in the train say it, "Bien le bonjour."

The Frenchman nodded and grinned and watched him limp down and out with the others to the waiting-room called, picturesquely, the Hall of the Lost Footsteps—"La Salle des Pas Perdus."

And Antony's light step and his heavy step fell among the countless millions that come and go, go and come, unmarked, forgotten—to walk with the Paris multitudes into paths of obscurity or fame—"*les pas perdus*."

CHAPTER II

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It was the first beginning of summer dawn when he turned breathlessly into the Rue de Rome and stood at length in Paris. He shouldered his big bag and took his bearings. At that early hour there were few people abroad—here and there a small open carriage, drawn by a limp, melancholy horse and dominated by what he thought a picturesque cabby, passed him invitingly. A drive in a cab in America is not for a man of uncertain means, and the folly of taking a vehicle did not occur to him. Along the broad avenue at the street's foot, lights were still lit in the massive lamps, shops and houses were closed, and by a blue sign on the wall he read that he was crossing a great avenue. The Boulevard Haussmann was as tranquil as a village street. A couple of good-looking men, whom he thought were soldiers, caught his eye in their uniforms of white trousers and blue coats. He asked them, touching his hat, the first thing that came to his mind: "La Rue Mazarine, Messieurs—would they direct him?"

When he came out on the Place de la Concorde at four o'clock he was actually the only speck visible in the great circle. He stopped, enchanted, to look about him. The imaginative and inadequate picture of the Place de la Concorde his idea had drawn, faded. The light mists of the morning swept up the Avenue des Champs Élysées, and there stood out before his eyes the lines of the Triumphal Arch, which to Antony said: Napoleon!

On the left stretched gardens toward a great palace, all that has been left to France and the glory which was her doom.

From the spectral line of the Louvre, his eyes came back to the melancholy statues that rose near him—Strassburg, Luxemburg, Alsace and Lorraine. Huge iron wreaths hung about their bases, wreaths that blossomed as he looked, like flowers of blood and lilies of death.

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Then in front of him the calm, rose-hued obelisk lifted its finger, and once again the shadow of Egypt fell across the heart of a modern city. To Antony, the obelisk had an affinity with the Abydos Sphinx, but this obelisk did not rest on the backs of four bronze creatures!

The small cabs continued to tinkle slowly across the Place; a group of young fellows passed by, singing on their way to the Latin Quarter, from some fête in Montmartre—they were students going home before morning. In the distance, here and there, were a few foot passengers like himself, but to Antony it seemed that he was alone in Paris. And in the fresh beginning of a day untried and momentous, the city was like a personality. In the summer softness, in the tender, agreeable light, the welcome to him was caressing and as lovely as New York had been brutal.

Antony resumed his way to the river, followed the quays where at his side the Seine ran along, reddening in the summer's sunrise. Along the river, when he crossed the Pont des Arts, he saw the stirring of Parisian life. He went on down the quays, past quaint old houses whose traditions and history he wanted to know, turned off into a dark street—la Rue Mazarine. He smiled as he read the sign. What had this narrow Parisian alley to do with him? He had adopted it out of caprice, distinguished it from all Paris.

He scanned the shops and houses; many were still closed, neither milk-shops nor antiquity dealers suggested shelter. A modest sign over a dingy-looking building caught his eye. In the courtyard, in green wooden tubs, flourished two bay-trees.

"Hotel of the Universe"—Hotel de l'Univers.

That was hospitable enough, wide enough to take Antony Fairfax in. Behind the bay-trees a dirty, discouraged looking waiter, to whom the universe had apparently not been generous, welcomed, or at least glanced, at Fairfax. The fellow wore a frayed, colourless dress-suit; his linen was suspicious, but his head at this early hour was sleekly brushed and oiled.

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"No, the hotel is not yet full," he told the stranger, as though he said, "The entire universe, thank God, has not yet descended upon us."

For one franc fifty a room could be had on the sixth floor. Antony yielded up his bag and bade the man show the way.

CHAPTER III

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He could hardly wait to make his hasty toilet and set forth into the city. He saw something of it from the eave-window in his microscopic room. Chimney-pots, stained, mossy roofs, the flash of

old spires, the round of a dome, the river, the bridges, all under the supernal blue of, to him, a friendly sky—he felt that he must quaff it all at a draught. But the fatigue of his lame limb began to oppress him. There was the weight of sleep on his eyelids, and he turned gratefully to the small bed under the red rep curtains. It was ridiculously small for his six feet of body, but he threw himself down thankfully and slept.

Dreams chased each other through his brain and he stretched out his hands toward elusive forms in his sleep. He seized upon one, thinking it was Bella, and when he pressed his cheek to hers, the cheek was cold and the form was cold. He slept till afternoon and rose still with the daze upon him of his arrival and his dreams, and the first excitement somewhat calmed. He had enough change for his lodging and dinner, but nothing more.

He walked across the bridge and the light and brilliance of the city dazzled him. He went into the Louvre, and the coolness and breadth of the place fell on him like a spell. He wondered if any in that vast place was as athirst as he was and as mad for beauty. He wandered through the rooms enthralled, and made libations to the relics of old Egypt; he sent up hymns to the remains of ancient Greece, and before the Venus of Milo gave up his heart, standing long absorbed before the statue, swearing to slave for the production of beauty. He found himself stirred to his most passionate depths, musing on form and artistic creation, and when the pulse in his heart became too strong and the Venus oppressed his sense, he wandered out, limped up the staircase and delivered up his soul at the foot of the pedestal of the Winged Victory. He did not go to the paintings; the feast had been tremendous—he could bear no more.

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On his way out of the Louvre he passed through the Egyptian room. Ever since the Abydos Sphinx had been brought to America, from the Nile, Egypt had charmed him. He had read of Egypt, its treasures, in the Albany library now and then on Sunday afternoons. It had a tremendous attraction for him, and he entered the room where its relics were with worship of the antique in his soul.

He turned to go, when his foot touched something on the floor and he stooped to pick it up—a fine chain purse heavy with pieces of gold. He balanced it in his hand and looked around for the possible owner, but he was the only sightseer. He went, however, quickly from the museum, not knowing in just what manner to restore this property, and in front of him, passing out on to the gallery above the grand staircase, he saw a lady leisurely making her exit. She was beautifully dressed and had such an air of riches about her that he thought to himself, with every reason, why should she not be the possessor of a gold purse? He went up to her.

"I beg pardon," he began, and as she turned he recognized her in a moment as the woman by whose carriage he had stood in the crowd on the day of the unveiling of his statue—he recognized her as the woman who had drawn the veil of the Sphinx. She was Cedersholm's fiancée. "Have you lost anything, Madame?"

She exclaimed: "My purse! Oh, thank you very much." Then looked at him, smiling, and said, "But I think I have seen you before. Whom must I thank?"

He had his hat in his hand. His fine, clear brow over which the hair grew heavily, his beautiful face, his strength and figure, once seen and remembered as she had remembered them in that brief instant in New York, were not to be forgotten. Still the resemblance puzzled her.

"My name is Rainsford," he said quietly, "Thomas Rainsford. I am one of Mr Cedersholm's pupils."

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"If that is so," she said, "you are welcome at my house at any time. I am home Sundays. Won't you give me the pleasure of calling, Mr. Rainsford?"

He bowed, thanked her, and they walked down the stairs together, and she was unable to recall where she had seen this handsome young man.

CHAPTER IV

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In his little hotel that night he lighted a candle in a tall nickel candlestick, and, when he was ready for bed, he peered into his mirror at his own face, which he took pains to consider thoughtfully. Like a friend's it looked back at him, the marks of Life deep upon it.

At two o'clock he was in a heavy sleep when he was roused by the turning of the handle of his door. Some one had come into the room and Antony, bolt upright, heard the door drawn and the key turned. Then something slipped and fell with a thud. He lit his candle, shielded it, and to his amazement saw sitting on the floor, his big form taking up half the little room, a young fellow in full evening dress, an opera hat on the back of his head.

"Don't squeal," said the visitor gently with a hiccough; "I see I'm too late or too early, or shomething or other."

He was evidently a gentleman out of his room and evidently drunk. Antony laughed and got half-way out of bed.

"You're in the wrong room, that's clear, and how are you going to get out of it? Can you get up with a lift?"

"Look here"—the young man who was an American and who would have been agreeable-looking if he had not been drunk and hebetated, sat back and leaned comfortably against the door—"roomsh all right, good roomsh, just like mine; don't mind me, old man, go back to bed."

Antony came over and tried to pull him up, but the stranger was immense, as big as himself, and determined and happy. He had made up his mind to pass his night on the floor.

Antony rang his bell in vain, then sighed, himself overcome with sleep. To the young man who barricaded the door, and who was already beginning to drowse, he said pleasantly—

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"Give us your hat, anyway, and take off your coat."

"Now you go back to bed, sir," ordered the other with solemn dignity, "go back to bed, don't mind me. I'm nothing but a little mountain flower," he quoted pathetically. His head fell over, his big body followed it.

Antony took one of his pillows, put it under the fellow's head, and turned in himself, amused by his singularly companioned night.

"What the deuce!" he heard the next morning from a voice not unpleasant, although markedly Western. And he opened his eyes to see bending over him a ruffled, untidy, pasty-looking individual whom he remembered to have last seen sprawling on the floor.

"Say, are you in my bed or am I only out of my own?" asked the young man.

Antony told him.

"George!" exclaimed the other, sitting down on the bed and taking his head in his hands, "I was screwed all right, and I fell like a barrel in the Falls of Niagara. I'm ever so much obliged to you for not kicking up a row here. My room is next or opposite or somewhere, I guess—that is, if I'm in the Universe."

Antony said that he was.

"I feel," said the young man, "as though its revolutions had accelerated."

"There's water over there," said Antony; "you're welcome to have it."

"See here," said the total stranger, "if you're half the brick you seem—and you are or you wouldn't have let me snore all night on the carpet—ring for Alphonse and send him out to get some bromo seltzer. There's a chemist's bang up against the hotel, and he's got that line of drugs."

Fairfax put out his arm and rang from the bed. The young man waited dejectedly; having taken off his coat and collar, he looked somewhat mournfully at his silk hat which, the worse for his usage of it, had rolled in a corner of Fairfax's room.

Alphonse, who for a wonder was within a few steps of the room, answered the bell, his advent announced by the shuffling of his old slippers; but before he had knocked the young man slid across the room and stood flat behind the door so that, when it opened, his presence would not be observed by the valet.

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The man, for whom Fairfax had not yet had occasion to ring, opened the door and stood waiting for the order. He was a small, round-faced fellow in a green barege apron, that came up and down and all over him. In his hand he carried a melancholy feather duster.

"Le déjeuner, Monsieur?" smiled Alphonse cordially, "un café complet?"

"Yes," acquiesced Antony eagerly, "and as well, would you go to the pharmacy and get me a bottle of bromo seltzer?"

"Bien, Monsieur." The valet looked much surprised and considered Fairfax's handsome, healthy face. "Bien, Monsieur," and he waited.

Fairfax was about to say: "Give me my waistcoat," but remembering his secluded friend, sprang out of bed and gave to Alphonse a five-franc piece.

"You're a brick," said the young man, coming out from behind the door. "I'm awfully obliged. Now let me get my head in a basin of water and I'll be back with you in a jiffy." And he darted out evidently into the next room, for Fairfax heard the door bang and lock.

Fairfax threw back his head and laughed. He was not utterly alone in France, he had a drunken neighbour, a fellow companion on the sixth floor of the Universe, which, after all, divides itself more or less into stories in more ways than one. He opened his window and let in the June morning, serene and lovely. It shone on him over chimney-pots and many roofs and slender towers in the far distance. He heard the dim noise of the streets. He had gone as far in his toilet as mixing the shaving water, when the valet returned with a tray and presented Fairfax with his first "petit déjeuner" in France. The young man thought it tempting—butter in a golden pat, with a flower stamped on it. The little rolls and something about the appearance of the little meal suggested his New Orleans home—he half looked to see a dusky face beam on him—"Massa Tony,

"Voici, Monsieur." Alphonse indicated the bromide. "I think everything is here." The intelligent servant had perceived the crushed silk hat in the corner and gave a little cough behind his hand.

Fairfax, six feet and more in his stockings, blond and good to look at, his bright humour, his charm, his soft Creole accent, pleased Alphonse.

"I see Monsieur has not unpacked his things. If I can serve Monsieur he has only to ask me." Alphonse picked up the opera hat, straightened it out and looked at it. "Shall I hang this up, Monsieur?"

"Do, behind the door, Alphonse."

The man did so and withdrew, and no sooner his rapid, light footsteps patted down the hall-way than Fairfax eagerly seated himself before his breakfast and poured out his excellent café au lait. The door was softly pushed in again, shut to and locked—the dissipated young gentleman seemed extremely partial to locked doors—and Fairfax's companion of the night before said in an undertone—

"Go slow, nobody in the hotel knows I'm in it."

Fairfax, who was not going slow over his breakfast, indicated the opera hat behind the door and the bromide.

"Hurrah for you and Alphonse," exclaimed the young fellow, who prepared himself a pick-me-up eagerly, and without invitation seated himself at Fairfax's table.

A good-looking young man of twenty-five, not more, with a cheerful, intelligent face in sober moments, now pale, with parched lips and eyes not clear yet. He had washed and his hair was smoothly brushed. He had no regularity of features such as Fairfax, being a well-set-up, ordinary young fellow, such as one might see in any American college or university. But there was a fineness in the lines of his mouth, a drollery and wit in his eyes, and he was thoroughly agreeable.

"I'm from the West," he said, putting his glass down empty. "Robert Dearborn, from Cincinnati—and I'm no end obliged to you, old chap, whoever you are. You've got a good breakfast there, haven't you?"

"Have some," Antony offered with real generosity, for he was famished.

"Well," returned Dearborn, "to tell you the truth, I feel as if I were robbing a sleeping man to take it, for I know how fiendishly hungry you must be. But, by Jove, I haven't had a thing to eat since"—and he laughed—"since I was a child."

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He rinsed the glass that had held the bromide, poured out some black coffee for himself and took half of Fairfax's bread and half of his flower-stamped butter, and devoured it eagerly. When he had finished he wiped his mouth and genially held out his hand.

"Ever been hungry?"

Antony did not tell him how lately.

"Good," nodded Dearborn, "I understand. Passing through Paris?"

"Just arrived."

"Well, I've been here for two whole years. By the way," he questioned Antony, "you haven't told me your name."

Fairfax hesitated because of a fancy that had come into his mind when he had discovered the loss of his fortune.

"Thomas Rainsford," he said; then, for he could not deny his home, "from New Orleans."

"Ah!" exclaimed his companion, "that's why you speak such ripping French. Now, do you know, to hear me you wouldn't think I'd seen a gendarme or a Parisian pavement. My Western accent, you must have remarked it, refuses to mix with a foreign language. I can speak French," he said calmly, "but they can't understand me yet; I have been here two years."

There was a knock at the door. Dearborn started and held up his hand.

"If Monsieur will give me his boots," suggested the mellow voice of Alphonse, "I will clean them."

Fairfax picked up his boots, the big shoe and the smaller one, and handed out the pair through a crack in the door.

When once again the rabbit steps had pattered away—"Go on dressing," Dearborn said, "don't let me stop you. You don't mind my sitting here a minute until Alphonse does with his boot-cleaning operations. He's a magician at that. They keep their boots clean, here, if they don't wash."

Dearborn made himself comfortable, accepted a cigarette from the packet the landlady had given Fairfax, and put his feet on the chair that Fairfax had vacated.

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"I went out last night to a little supper with some friends of mine. The banquet rather used me

up."

He smiled, and Fairfax saw how he looked when he was more himself. His hair, as the water dried on it, was reddish, he was clean-shaven, his teeth were white and sound, his smile agreeable.

"Now, if I hadn't been drunk, I shouldn't have come back to the Universe. I was due a quarter of a mile away from here. They'll keep me when they find me. I haven't paid my bill here to Madame Poulet for six weeks. But they are decent, trustful sort of people and can't believe a chap won't ever pay. But I was fool enough to leave my father's cable in my room and Madame Poulet had it translated. I grant you it wasn't encouraging for a creditor, Rainsford."

Antony heard his name used for the first time, the R's rolled and made the most of. It seemed to bring back the dead.

"Listen to the cable," said the communicative young man: "You can go to the devil. Not a cent more from me or your mother."

Fairfax, who was tying his cravat, turned around and smiled, and he limped over to his visitor.

"It's not the most friendly telegram I ever heard," he said.

"Step-father," returned the other briefly. "She knows nothing about it—my mother, I mean. I've been living on her money here for two years and over and it's gone; but before I take a penny from him ..."

"I understand," said Fairfax, going back to the mirror and beginning to brush his hair.

"Did you ever have a mother?" asked the red-haired young man with a queer look on his face, and added, "I see you have. Well, let's drop the subject, then, but you may discuss step-fathers all you choose."

Fairfax, for he was not Rainsford, yet, took a fancy to his visitor, a fancy to his rough, deep voice; he liked the eyes that were clearing fast, liked the kindly spirited face and the ready, boy-like confidence.

"What are you up to in Paris?" he asked Dearborn, regarding him with interest.

"I'm a playwright," said the other simply.

CHAPTER V

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"A playwright," Fairfax repeated softly. If Dearborn had said "Ali Baba," Fairfax would scarcely have been more surprised.

"You must know the Bohemian life here?" he asked, "even possibly know some artists?"

"Well, rather," drawled his companion; "I live among them. I don't know a single chap who isn't doing something, burning the midnight oil or using the daylight in a studio."

As Dearborn spoke, Fairfax, looking at him more observantly, saw something in his countenance that responded to his own feelings.

"What are you over here for, Rainsford?" asked the Westerner.

"I am a sculptor."

"Delightful!" exclaimed his companion. "Where are you going to work? With Carrier-Belleuse or Rude?"

"Ah, I don't know—I don't know where I can go or what I can do."

His companion, with an understanding nod, said, "Didn't bring over a gold-mine with you, perhaps?"

As he said this he laughed, extended both his hands and jumped up from his seat.

"I like you exceedingly," he exclaimed heartily. "The governor had telegraphed me to go to the devil and I thought I'd take his advice. The little supper I was giving last night was to say good-bye to a hundred-franc note, some money that I won at poker. I might have paid some of this hotel bill, but I didn't. I wish you had been there, Rainsford! But, never mind, you had the afterglow anyway! No," he laughed, "let us surprise them at home. I don't quite know how, but let's surprise them."

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Fairfax shook his head as though he didn't quite understand.

"Is there no one who thinks you an insane fool for going in for art? Nobody that your success will be gall to?"

"No, I'm all alone."

"Come," urged the other, too excited to see the sadness on his companion's face. "Come, isn't there some one who will cringe when your statues are unveiled?"

"Stop!" cried Fairfax eagerly.

"Come on then," cried the boy; "whoever it may be, your enemy or my stepfather—we will surprise them yet!"

CHAPTER VI

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In January of the following year he leaned out of the window and smelled Paris, drank it in, penetrated by its fragrance and perfume. He saw the river milkily flowing between the shores, the stones of the quay parapet, the arches of the bridges, the wide domain of roofs and towers.

The Sacré-Coeur on Montmartre had not yet begun to rise, though they were laying its foundation stones, and his eyes travelled, as they always did, through the fog to the towers of Notre-Dame with its black, mellow front and its melancholy beauty. The bourdon of the bells smote sympathetically through him. No matter what his state of mind might be, Paris took him out of himself, and he adored it.

He was looking upon the first of the winter mists. The first grey mystery had obscured the form of the city. Paris had a new seduction. He could not believe now that he had not been born in France and been always part of the country he had adopted by temperament and spirit. Like all artists, his country was where he worked the best. For him now, unless the place were a workshop, it could never be a hearthstone, and he took satisfaction in recalling his ancestry on his mother's side—Debaillet, or, as they called it in New Orleans, Ballet. As Arabella Ballet his mother had been beautiful; as Mrs. Fairfax she had given him Irish and French blood.

"Atavism," he said to Dearborn, "you cannot love this place as I do, Bob. My grandfather escaped in the disguise of a French cook to save his head in 1793. I seem to see his figure walking before me when I cross the Place de la Concorde, and the shadow of the guillotine falls across his path."

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From his corner of the room Dearborn drawled, "If the substance of the guillotine had fallen across his neck, Tony, where would you be in our mutual history?"

Antony had asked his companion to call him Tony. He had not been able to disassociate himself with everything that recalled the past.

Fairfax's figure as he turned was dark against the light of the window and the room was full of the shadows of the early January twilight. He wore a pair of velveteen breeches whose original colour might have been a dark, rich blue. His flannel shirt (no longer red) was fastened loosely at the neck by a soft black cravat under a rolling collar. It was Sunday and he was working, the clay white upon his fingers and nails. He wore an old pair of slippers, and Dearborn on a couch in a corner watched him, a Turkish drapery wound around his shoulders, for the big room was chilly and it smelled of clay and tobacco smoke. The studio was an enormous attic, running the length of an hotel once of some magnificence, now a tumble-down bit of still beautiful architecture. The room was portioned off for the use of two people. Two couches served in the night-time as their beds, there was a small stove guiltless of fire, a few pieces of studio property, a skylight, a desk covered with papers and books and manuscripts, and in the part of the room near the window and under the skylight, Tony Fairfax, now Thomas Rainsford, worked among his casts and drawings, amidst the barrels of clay and plaster. To him, in spite of being almost always hungry, in spite of the discomfort, of the constant presence and companionship of another when he often longed for solitude, in spite of this, his domain was a heaven. He had come into the place in June with Dearborn.

Tony had paid a year's rent in advance. He was working as a common journeyman in the studio of Barye, and early in the morning, late at night, and on Sundays, worked for himself eagerly, hungrily, like the slave of old in Albany, and yet, with what a difference! He had no one but himself to consider, but had the interest of the atelier where he studied, even as he sold his skill that it might be lost in the creations of more advanced artists, and there, during the days of his apprenticeship, his visions came to him, and what conceptions he then had he tried to work out and to mature, when he had the chance, in his own room.

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Dearborn, who never left the studio except to eat, smoked and worked and read all day.

The two men were sufficiently of a size to wear each other's clothes. They had thought it out carefully and had preserved from the holocaust, of the different financial crises, one complete out-of-door outfit, from hat to boots—and those boots!

It was "déplorable" the bookseller, whose little shelf of books lay on the stone wall of the quay, said, it was "déplorable" that such a fine pair of men should be lame and in exactly the same fashion. Fairfax could not walk at all in the other man's shoes, so his normal friend made the sacrifice and the proper shoes were pawned, and Robert Dearborn and Tony Fairfax had shared alternately the big boot and the small one, the light and the heavy step. And they were directed by such different individuals, the boots went through Paris in such diverse ways!

"By Jove!" exclaimed Dearborn, examining the boots carefully, "it isn't fair. You're walking these boots of ours to death! Who the deuce will take them out in his bare feet to be repaired?"

They were just as absurdly poor as this. Nobody whose soul is not absorbed in art can ever understand what it is to be so stupidly poor.

Dearborn, when he could be forced out of the house, put on the shoes with reluctance; he was greatly annoyed by the clatter of the big boot. The shoes didn't fit him in the least. He would shuffle into the nearest café, if his credit was good enough to permit it, and there, under the small table on which he wrote page after page over his cigarette and cup of black coffee, he hid the big awkward shoe for as long as he could endure exile from the studio. Then he came home.

Fairfax swung the boot down the stairs, he swung it along the pavements of Paris! What distance he took it! It seemed to have a wing at the heel. It tramped through the quarters of the city from the quays to fine old streets, to forgotten alleys, to the Cité on the Ile, then again by the fresh gay avenues of the Champs Elysées to the Bois, again to the quays, and, when well up the river, he would sometimes board the boat and come back down the Seine, dreaming, musing, creating, and, floating home, would take the big boot upstairs.

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"By Jove, Tony!" Dearborn remarked, examining the boots closely, "it's not fair! One of us will have to *drive* if you don't let up, old man!"

Dearborn, when he did not haunt his café and when inspiration failed, would haunt the Bibliothèque Nationale, and amongst the "Rats de littérature"—savant, actor, poet, amongst the cold and weary who lounge in the chairs of the library to dream, to get warm, and to imagine real firesides with one's own books and one's own walls around them—Dearborn would sit for hours poring over old manuscripts from which he had hoped to extract inspiration, listening, as do his sort, for "the voices."

CHAPTER VII

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It was a year of privation, but there were moments spent on the threshold of Paradise.

His materials, barrels of clay and plaster, were costly. Dearborn said that he thanked God he had a "métier" requiring no further expenditure than a pot of ink and a lot of paper.

"The ideas," he told Fairfax, "are expensive, and I think, old man, that I shall have to *buy* some. I find that they will not come unless I invite them to dinner!"

Neither of the young men had made a hearty meal for an unconsciously long time. The weather grew colder and they lived as they could on Fairfax's day wage.

At this time, when during the hours of his freedom he was housed with his companion, Fairfax was overwhelmed by the rush of his ideas and his desire to create. He would not let himself long for solitude, for he was devoted to his friend and grateful for his companionship and affection, but a certain piece of work had haunted him since his first Sunday afternoon at the Louvre, and he was eager to finish the statue he had begun and to send it to the Salon.

The Visions no longer eluded him—ever present, sometimes they overpowered him by their obsession. They flattered the young man, seeming to embrace him, called to him, uplifted him until heights levelled before his eyes and became roads upon which he walked lightly, and his pride in his own power grew. Antony forgot to be humble. He was his own master—he had scorned the Academies. For several weeks, when he first came to Paris, he had posed as a model. Sitting there before the students, glowing with shame and pride, his heart was defiant, and not one of the students, who modelled the fine bust and head, imagined how ardent his heart was or what an artist posed for them. Often he longed to seize a tool from inefficient hands and say, "Here, my children, like this, don't you see?"

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He learned much from the rare visits of the Master and his cursory, hasty criticism, but he welcomed the impersonal labour in the atelier of Barye, where he was not a student but a worker, mechanical supposedly, yet creative to his fingertips. And as he watched Barye work, admiring him profoundly, eager for the man's praise, crushing down his own individuality, careful to do nothing but the technical, mechanical things he was given to do there—before his hand grew tired, while his brain was fresh, he would plan and dream of what he would do in his own attic, and he went back as a thirsty man to a source.

There came the dead season. Barye shut his atelier and went to Spain. There was nothing to do for Antony Fairfax and he was without any means of making his bread. After a few days of idleness, when his hands and feet were chilblained and he could hardly pass the cafés and restaurants, where the meals were cooking, without a tightening of the chest, he thought to himself, "Now is the time for the competition money to fall among us like a shower of gold"; but he had not heard one word from America or from Falutini, to whom the result was to have been written and who had Fairfax's address.

Dearborn, in a pair of old tennis trousers, a shabby black velvet jacket, sat Turkish fashion on his divan, his writing tablet on his knees. For weeks past he had been writing a five-act play—

"Too hungry, Tony, by Jove, to go on. Every time I start to write, the lines of some old-time menu run across the page—Canards à la presse, Potage à la Reine. Just now it was only pie and yellow cheese, such as we have out in Cincinnati."

Fairfax was breaking a mould. By common consent a fire had been built in the stove. Tony had taken advantage of the warm water to mix his plaster. Dearborn came over from his sofa.

"I wouldn't care to have a barrel of plaster roll on those chilblains of mine, Tony. It's a toss up with us now, isn't it, which of us *can* wear the boots?" [Pg 239]

Pinched and haggard, his hands in his pockets, the young fellow watched the sculptor. Fairfax skilfully released his statue from the mould. He had been working on this, with other things, for a month. He unprisoned the little figurine, a little nude dancer, her arms above her head, the face and smile faun-like.

"Pleine de malice," said Dearborn, "extrêmement fine, my dear Tony. As an object of 'luxe' I find it as exquisite as an article of food, if not as satisfying. It's not good enough to *eat*, Tony, and those are the only standards I judge by now."

Fairfax turned the figure between his fingers lovingly—lily-white, freshly cold, bits of the mould clinging to it, small and fine, it lay in the palm of his shapely hand.

"If you don't want the boots, Bob," he said, "I think I'll go out in them."

The legal owner of the boots went out in them into the damp, bitter cold. His big figure cut along through the mist and he limped over the Pont des Arts towards the Louvre. All Paris seemed to him blue with cold. The river flowed between its banks with suppressed intent and powerful westward rush, and its mighty flow expressed indifference to the life and passion of existence along its shores.

He leaned a moment on the bridge. Paris was personal to him and the river was like its soul. He was faint from lack of food and overstrain.

In the Louvre, other men of conglomerate costumes as well as he sought the warm rooms. Tramps, vagrants in pitiful rags, affected interest in the works of art, resting their worn figures on the benches, exulting in the public welcome of the museum. Fairfax was more presentable, if as poor. He wore a soft black hat of good make and quality, bought in a sporting moment by Dearborn early in his career. Tony wore his own clothes, retained because they were the newest and a soft black scarf, the vogue in the quarter, was tied under his collar in rather an extravagant bow. He wandered aimlessly through the rooms, glanced at the visitors and saw that they were many, and when he had become thoroughly warm, screwed his courage to the sticking point and went out of the front entrance. A little way from the guides he took his place, and from his pocket his figurine. It showed quite as a lily in the foggy light, pale and ashamed. Its nudity appealed more to the sculptor because of this wanton exposure to the vulgar herd. He trembled, began to regret, but offered it, holding it out for sale. [Pg 240]

Some dozen people passed him, glanced at him and his small statue, but he would have passed unnoticed had a lady not come slowly down the steps and seen him, stopped and looked at him, though he did not see her until she had approached. He flamed scarlet, covered his statuette and wished that the cobbles of the pavement would open and swallow him.

She was—he thought of it afterward a hundred times—a woman of singular tact and an illumined sympathy, as well as a woman of exquisite comprehension.

"Mr. Rainsford!" she exclaimed. "You have something to sell?" she added, and simply, as though she spoke to an ordinary vendor, yet he saw that as she spoke a lovely colour rose in her cheek under her veil, and he found that he was not ashamed any more.

She put out her hand. It came from a mantle of velvet and a cuff of costly fur—he couldn't have dreamt then how costly. He lifted his hat, bareheaded in the cold, and laid the little figure in her hand.

"How perfectly charming!" she murmured, holding it. And the dryad-like figure, with its slender arms above its head and the faun-like, brilliant little face, seemed perfection to her. She said so. "What a perfect thing! Of course, you have the clay original?"

Fairfax could not speak. The sight of this woman so worldly, elegant, sumptuous, at the first praise of his little statue, he realized that he was selling it, and it struck him as a crime—his creation, his vision, hawking it as a fish-wife might hawk crabs in the public street!

He felt a great humiliation and could have wept—indeed, tears did spring to his eyes and the cold dried them.

Two "sergents de ville" came up to them.

"Pardon, Monsieur," asked one of them, "have you a license?" [Pg 241]

Fairfax started, but the lady holding the little statue turned quickly to the officials—

"A license? *Pourquoi faire, mes amis?*"

"It is against the rules to sell anything in the streets of Paris without a license," said the

policeman.

"Well," she exclaimed, "my friend has just made me a gift. This gentleman is a friend of mine for whom I am waiting to take me to my carriage. Allez vous en," she smiled at them, "I will excuse you, and so will Monsieur."

She was so perfectly mistress of the situation that he had nothing to do but leave himself in her hands.

"You will let me take you home," she said, "in whatever direction you are going," and he followed her to her little carriage, waiting before the curb.

She got in, gave the address of his studio to her coachman, and the next thing he knew was that he was rolling over the pavement he had so painfully traversed a few hours before.

She talked to him of the master, Cedersholm, and Antony listened. She talked enthusiastically, admiringly, and he parried her questions as to when and where he had worked with the Swedish sculptor. The statuette lay on her lap.

At the studio door, when Fairfax left her, she said, taking up the self-same gold purse that he had restored to her in the Louvre seven months ago—

"I hope that I have enough money to pay for this treasure, Mr. Rainsford. It's so beautiful that it must be very dear. What is the price?"

And Fairfax, hot all over, warm indeed for the first time in long, stammered—

"Don't speak of price—of course, I don't know you well enough, but if you really like it, please take it."

"Take it!" Mrs. Faversham had cried, "but I mean to—I adore it. Mr. Cedersholm will tell you how valuable it is, but I must pay you for it, my dear Mr. Rainsford."

Holding the carriage door open, his fine face on fire and his blue eyes illumined, he had insisted, and Antony's voice, his personality, his outstretched hand bare, cold, shapely, charmed her and impressed her, and he saw her slowly, unwillingly accept his sudden gift. He had seen her embarrassed suddenly, as he was. Then she had driven away in her carriage, to be lost in the mists with other people who did not matter to him, and poor as he had started out, poorer, for he had not the statuette, he limped down the stairs again and into the street to forage for them both.

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He thought whimsically: "I must feed up the whole dramatis personæ of old Bob's play, for he can't get on until he's fed up the cast!"

He limped along the Rue du Bac, his cold hands in his pockets, his head a little bent. But no battle with life now, be it what it would, could compare with his battle in New York. Now, indeed, though he was cold and hungry and tired, he was the inhabitant of a city that he loved, he was working alone for the art he adored. He believed in himself—not once had he yet come to the period of artistic despair.

During these seven months the little personal work he had been able to do had only whetted his desire; he was young, possessed of great talent and of brilliant imagination, and he was happy and hopeful and determined; the physical wants did not weigh on his spirit nor did the long period of labour injure his power of production. He chafed, indeed, but he felt his strength even as he pulled against the material things from which he had to free himself.

And as Fairfax, part of the throng, walked aimlessly up the Rue du Bac with his problems, he walked less alone that night than ever in his life, for he was absorbed in the thought of the woman.

He realized now how keenly he had observed her, that she was very charming and very beautiful. He could have drawn those dear features, the contour of her neck and chin, the poise of her head, the curve of her shoulder, and, imperceptible, but no less real and strong, her grace and charm made her an entity to him, so much so that she actually seemed to have remained by his side, and he almost fancied, as he breathed the misty air, that he breathed again the odour of the scent that she used, sweet and delicate, and that he felt the touch of her velvet sleeve against his coat.

He still had in his possession one object, which, if pawned, might furnish enough money to pay for a meal. It was a little seal, belonging to his mother, set in old gold.

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This afternoon, before leaving the studio, he had thrust it in his waistcoat pocket, in case the little statuette did not sell.

They gave him five francs for it, and he laid in a stock of provisions, and with his little parcel once more he limped up the studio stairs to Dearborn, who, wrapped in the coverlet, waited by the stove.

He told his story, and Dearborn listened delightedly, his literary and dramatic sense pleased by the adventure.

They were talking of the lady when the concierge, toward nine o'clock, tapped at the door and handed Antony a thick blue envelope, inscribed "Mr. Thomas Rainsford" by a woman's hand.

"Tony, old man," said the playwright, as Antony's fingers trembled turning the page, "the romance of a poor young man has begun."

The letter ran as follows:—

"My dear Mr. Rainsford,

"I am anxious to have a small bas-relief of me, to give to Mr. Cedersholm when he shall come over. Would you have time to undertake this work? I can pose when you like.

"I know how many claims a man of talent has upon his time, and I want to secure some of yours and make it mine. I venture to send this sum in advance. I hope you will not refuse it. Perhaps you will dine with me to-morrow and we will talk things over.

"Yours faithfully,
"Mary Faversham."

Fairfax read this letter twice—the second time the words were not quite clear. He handed it across the table to his companion silently. The five-hundred-franc bill lay between the plate where the veal had been and the empty coffee cup.

Dearborn, when he had eagerly read the note, glanced up to speak to Fairfax and saw that he had turned away from him. In his figure, as he bowed over, leaning his head upon his hands, there were the first marks of weariness that Dearborn had ever seen. There had been weariness in the step that limped up the stairs and crossed the room when Fairfax had entered with the meagre bundle of food. Dearborn leaned over and saw his friend's fine profile, and there was unmistakably the mark of fatigue on the face, flushed by fire and lamp-light. Dearborn knew of his companion very little. The two had housed together, come together, bits of driftwood on the river of life, drawn by sympathy in the current, and few questions had been asked. He knew that Rainsford was from New Orleans, that he had studied in New York. Of Antony's life he knew nothing, although he had wondered much.

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He said now, lightly, as he handed the letter back, "You haven't been playing perfectly square with me, Tony. I'm afraid you have been wearing the boots under false pretences, but, nevertheless, I guess you will have to wear them to-morrow night, old man."

As Fairfax did not move, Dearborn finished more gravely—

"I would be glad to hear anything you are willing to tell me about it."

Fairfax turned slowly and put the letter back in his pocket. Then leaning across the table, in an undertone, he told Dearborn everything—everything. He spoke quietly and did not linger, sketching for him rapidly his life as far as it had gone. Twice Dearborn rose and fed the stove recklessly with fuel. Once he stood up, took a coverlet and wrapped it around him, and sat blinking like a resurrected mummy. And Fairfax talked till Bella flashed like a red bird across the shadows, lifted her lips to his and was gone. Molly shone from the shadows and passed like light through the open door. And, last of all, Mrs. Faversham came and brought a magic wand and she lingered, for Fairfax stopped here.

He had talked until morning. The dawn was grey across the frosty pane when he rose to throw himself down on his bed to sleep. The five-hundred-franc note lay where he had left it on the table between the empty plate and the empty cup. The fire was dead in the stove and the room was cold.

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Dearborn, excited and interested, watched with the visions of Antony's past and the visions of his own creations for a long time. And Fairfax, exhausted by the eventful day, troubled by it, touched by it, watched the vision of a woman coming toward him, coming fatally toward him, wonderfully toward him—but he was tired, and, before she had reached him, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER VIII

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Antony waited in the drawing-room of her hotel in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne some quarter of an hour before she came downstairs. He thought later that she had purposely given him this time to look about and grow accustomed to the atmosphere, to the room in which he afterward more or less lived for several months.

There was not a false note to disturb his beauty-loving sense. He stood waiting, on one side a long window giving on a rose garden, as he afterward discovered, on the other a group in marble by Cedersholm. He was studying this with interest when he heard Mrs. Faversham enter the room. She had foreseen that he would not be likely to wear an evening dress and she herself had put on the simplest of her frocks. But he thought her quite dazzling, and the grace of her hands, and her welcome as she greeted him, were divine to the young man.

"I'm so glad to see you, Mr. Rainsford."

Instantly he bent and kissed her hand. She saw him flush to his fair hair. He felt a gratitude to her, a thankfulness, which awakened in him immediately the strongest of emotions.

She seemed to consider him a distinguished guest. She told him that she was going to Rome when Mr. Cedersholm came over—there would be a little party going down to Italy.

Fairfax's eyes kindled, and in the few moments he stood with her there, in her fragrant drawing-room, where the fire in the logs sang and whispered and the lamp-light threw its long, fair shadows on the crimson floors and melted in the crimson hangings, he felt that he stood with an old friend, with some one he had known his life long and known well, even before he had known—and there was a poignancy in his treason—even before he had known his mother.

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When the doors were thrown open and another visitor was announced, he was jealous and regretful and glanced at Mrs. Faversham as though he thought she had done him a wrong.

"My wife, oui," said the gentleman who came in and who was of a nationality whose type was not yet familiar to Fairfax. "My wife is horsed to-night, chère Madame; she cannot come to the dinner—a thousand pardons."

"I am sorry the Countess is ill."

Potowski, who had been told by his hostess not to dress, had made up for the sacrifice as brilliantly as he could. His waistcoat was of embroidered satin, his cravat a flaming scarlet, and in his button-hole an exotic flower which went well with his dark, exotic face. He was a little ridiculous: short and fat, with a fashion of gesticulating with his hands as though he were swimming into society, but his expression was agreeable and candid. His near-sighted eyes were naïve, his voice sweet and caressing. Rainsford saw that his hostess liked Potowski. She was too sweet a lady to be annoyed by peculiarities.

In a few moments, the lame sculptor on one side and the flashy Slav on the other, she led them to the little dining-room, to an exquisite table, served by two men in livery.

There was an intimacy in the apartment shut in by the panelling from floor to ceiling of the walls. The windows were covered with yellow damask curtains and the footfalls made no sound on the thick carpet.

"Mr. Rainsford is a sculptor," his hostess told Potowski. "He has studied with Cedersholm, but we shall soon forget whose pupil he is when he is a master himself."

"Ah," murmured the young man, who was nevertheless thrilled.

"He is going to do a bas-relief of me, Potowski—that is, I hope he will not refuse to make my portrait."

"Ah, no," exclaimed Potowski, clasping his soft hands, "not a bas-relief, chère Madame, but a statuary, all of it. The figure, is not it, Mr. Rainsford? You hear people say of the face it is beautiful, or the hand, or the head of a woman. I think it is all of her. It should be the entirety always, I think. I think it is monstrous to dissect the parts of the human body even in art. When I go to the *Museo* and see a hand here, a foot there, a torso somewhere else—you will laugh, I am ridiculous, but it makes me think I look at a *haccident*."

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"*Therefore*," exclaimed Potowski, gaily swimming toward the fruit and flowers with his soft hand, "begin, cher Monsieur, by making a whole woman! I never, never sing part of a *hopera*. I sing a lyric, a little complete song, but in its entirety."

"But, my dear Potowski," Mrs. Faversham laughed, "a bas-relief or a bust is complete."

"But why," cried the Pole, "why behead a lady? As for a profile, it is destruction to the human face." He turned to Fairfax. "You think I am a pagan. In France they have an impolite proverb, 'Stupid as a musician,' but don't think it is true. We see harmony and melody in everything."

Apparently Potowski's lunacy had suggested something to Fairfax, for he said seriously—

"Perhaps Mrs. Faversham will let me make a figure of her some day"—he hesitated—"in the entirety," he quoted; and the words sounded madness, tremendously personal, tremendously daring. "A figure of her standing in a long cloak edged with fur, holding a little statuette in her hand."

"Charming," gurgled Potowski—he had a grape in his mouth which he had culled unceremoniously from the fruit dish. "That is a very modern idea, Rainsford, but I don't understand why she should hold a statuette in her hand."

"For my part," said the hostess, "I only understand what I have been taught. I am a commonplace public, and I prefer a classic bas-relief, a profile, just a little delicate study. Will you make it for me, Mr. Rainsford?"

The new name he had chosen, and which was never real to him, sounded pleasantly on her lips, and it gave him, for the first time, a personality. His past was slipping from him; he glanced around the oval room with its soft lights and its warm colouring. It glowed like a beautiful setting for the pearl which was the lady. The dinner before him was delicious. It ceased to be food—it was a delicate refreshment. The perfume of the flowers and wines and the cooking was intoxicating.

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"You eat and drink nothing," Mrs. Faversham said to him.

"No," exclaimed Potowski, sympathetically, peering across the table at Rainsford. "You are suffering perhaps—you diet?"

Antony drank the champagne in his glass and said he was thinking of his bas-relief.

Potowski, adjusting a single eye-glass in his eye, stared through it at Rainsford.

"You should do everything in its entirety, Mr. Rainsford. Eat, drink, sculpt and sing," and he swam out again gently toward Rainsford and Mrs. Faversham, "and love."

Antony smiled on them both his radiant smile. "Ah, sir," he said, "is not that just the thing it is hard for us all not to do? We mutilate the rest, our art and our endeavours, but a young man usually once in his life loves in entirety."

"I don't know," said the Pole thoughtfully, "I think perhaps not. Sometimes it's the head, or the hands, or the figure, something we call perfect or beautiful as long as it lasts, Mr. Rainsford, but if we loved the entirety there would be no broken marriages."

Mrs. Faversham, whom the musician entertained and amused, laughed softly and rose, and, a man on each side of her, went into the drawing-room, to the fire burning across the andirons. Coffee and liqueurs were brought and put on a small table.

"Potowski is a philosopher, is he not, Mr. Rainsford? When you hear him sing, though, you will find that his best argument."

Potowski stirred six lumps of sugar into his small coffee cup, drank the syrup, drank a glass of liqueur with a sort of cheerful eagerness, and stood without speaking, dangling his eyeglass and looking into the fire. Mrs. Faversham took a deep chair and her dark, slim figure was lost in it, and Antony, who had lit his cigarette, leaned on the chimney-piece near her.

She glanced at him, at the deformed shoe, at his shabby clothes. He had made his toilet as carefully as he could; his linen was spotless, his cravat new and fashioned in a big bow. His fine, thoughtful face, lit now by the pleasure of the evening, where spirit and courage were never absent if other marks were there; his fine brow with the slightly curling blond hair bright upon it, and the profound blue of his eyes—he was different from any man she had seen, and she had known many men and been a great favourite with them. It pleased her to think that she knew and understood them fairly well. She was thinking what she could do for this man. She had wondered this suddenly, the day Fairfax had met her and left her in the Louvre; she had wondered more sincerely the evening she left him at his door. She had asked him to her house in a spirit of real kindness, although she had already felt his charm. Looking at him now, she thought that no woman could see him and hear him speak, watch him for an hour, and not be conscious of that charm. She wondered what she could do for Mr. Rainsford.

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"Sit there, won't you?"—she indicated the sofa near her—"you will find that a comfortable place in which to listen. Count Potowski is the one unmaterial musician I ever knew. Time and place, food or feast, make no difference to him."

Potowski, without replying, turned abruptly and went toward the next room, separated from the salon by glass doors. In another moment they heard the prelude of Bohm's "Still as the Night," and then Potowski began to sing.

CHAPTER IX

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The studio underwent something of a transformation. Dearborn devoted himself to its decoration. The crisp banknote was divided between the two companions.

Fairfax ordered a suit of clothes on trust, a new pair of boots on trust, and bought outright sundry necessaries for his appearance in the world.

And Dearborn spent too much in making the studio decent, and bought an outfit of writing materials, a wadded dressing-gown with fur collar and deep pockets, the cast-off garment of some elegant rastaquouère, in a second-hand clothing shop on the boulevard. He had no plans for enjoying Paris. He philosophically looked at the cast-off shoes that had gallantly limped with the two of them up and down the stairs and here and there in the streets on such devious missions. If he should be inclined to go out he would wear them. His slippers were his real comfort. He devoted himself to the interior life and to his play. He had the place to himself, and after a long day's work he would read or plan, looking out on the quays and the Louvre, biting his fingers and weaving new plots and making youthful reflections upon life.

In the evenings Fairfax would limp home. Five days of the week he went to Barye's studio and worked for the master. Twice a week he went to the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne. Just how his friend spent his time when he was not in the studio Dearborn wondered vainly. The sculptor grew less and less communicative, almost morose. Tony took to smoking countless cigarettes and sitting in the corner of the big divan, his arms folded across his chest, his eyes fixed on some object which Dearborn could not see. He would listen, or appear to, whilst Dearborn read his play; or draw for him the scenario for a new play; or the young man would read aloud bits of verse or prose that he loved and found inspiring. And Antony, more than once, could hear his own

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voice as he had declaimed aloud to the little cousins on a winter's afternoon, "St. Agnes' Eve, how bitter chill it was," or some other favourite repeated to shining eyes and flushed attention. Very often what Dearborn read was neither familiar nor distinguishable, for Fairfax was thinking about other things. They were not always alone in the workroom. Dearborn had friends, and those of them who had not gone away on other quests or been starved out or pushed out, would come noisily in of an evening, bringing with them perhaps a man with a fiddle and a man with a flute, and they would dance and there would be beer and "madeleines" and gay amusement of a very inoffensive kind, of a youthful kind. There would be dancing and singing, and sometimes Fairfax would take part in it all and sing with them in his pleasant baritone and smile upon them; but he liked it best when they were alone, and Dearborn did too; and in Fairfax's silence and the other man's absorption they nevertheless daily grew firmer and faster friends.

"Bob," Fairfax said—and as he spoke he abruptly interrupted Dearborn in the most vital scene of his act—"I can't take a penny from her for this portrait."

Dearborn dropped his manuscript on his knee. His expression was that of a slightly hurt egotism, for he had sat up all night working over this scene and burned all day to read it to Fairfax.

"Well, anyhow, don't ask me to cough up the two hundred and fifty francs. That's all I ask," he said a little curtly.

"I shall give her some study, one of these other statuettes," Fairfax said moodily, "some kind of return for the five hundred francs."

"She wouldn't care for anything I have got, would she, Tony?" Dearborn put his hands in the ample pockets and displayed his voluminous wrapper. "I'm crazy about this dressing-gown," he said affectionately. "It has warmed and sheltered my best thoughts. It has wrapped around and comforted my fainting heart. It's hatched ideas for me; it's been a plaidie to the angry airs. Tony, she wouldn't take the dressing-gown, would she?"

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"Rot!" exclaimed his friend fiercely. "Don't be an ass. Don't you see how I feel?"

"No, I don't," said the other simply. "I am not a mind reader. I'm an imaginator. I can make up a lot of stuff about your feeling. I daresay I do invent. You will see this in my play some day. You are really an inspiration, old man, but as for having an accurate idea of your feelings...! For three weeks, ever since that banknote fluttered amongst the crumbs of our table, you have scarcely said a word to me, not a whole paragraph." He shook his finger emphatically. "If I were not absorbed myself, no doubt I should be beastly, diabolically lonesome."

Antony seemed entirely unmoved by this picture. "I think I shall go to Rome, Bob," he began, then cried: "No, I mean to St. Petersburg."

"It will be less expensive," Dearborn suggested dryly, "and considerably less travel, not to go to the Bois de Boulogne."

"I shall finish this portrait this week," Fairfax went on. "Now I can't scrape it out and begin again. I have done it twice. It would be desecration, for it's mightily like her, and my reason for my going there is over."

"Well, how about that full-length figure of her in furs and velvets, holding a little statuette in her hands, that you used to rave about doing? If at first you make a bas-relief, begin and begin again! There are busts and statues, as there are odes and sonnets and curtain-raisers and five-act tragedies."

"Yes," returned Fairfax, "there are tragedies, no doubt about it."

Fairfax, smoking, struggled with the emotions rising in him and which he had no notion of betraying to his friend. In the corner where Dearborn had rolled it, for he made the whole studio pretty much his own now, was the statue Fairfax was making of his mother. It was covered with a white cloth which took the lines and form of the head and shoulders. It stood ghostly amongst the shadows of the room and near it, on a stool, were Antony's sculpting tools, his broad wooden knives and a barrel of plaster. His gaze wandered to these inanimate objects, nothing in themselves, but which suggested and made possible and real his art—the reason for his existence. Now, when he stopped modelling Mrs. Faversham, he would go on with the bust of his mother. He turned his eyes to Dearborn.

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"I have been up there for five weeks; I have been entertained there like a friend; I have eaten and drunk; I have accepted her hospitality; I have gone with her to the plays and opera. I have pretty well lived on her money."

"All men of the world do that," Dearborn said reasonably. "It's an awfully nice thing for a woman to have a handsome young man whom she can call on when she likes."

Fairfax ignored this and went on. "I have met her friends, delightful and distinguished people, who have invited me to their houses. I have never gone, not once, not even to see Potowski. Now I shall go up next Sunday and finish my work, and then I'm going away."

Dearborn crossed his thin legs, his beloved knit slippers, a remnant of his mother's affection, dangling on the toe of his foot. He made a telescope of his manuscript and peered through it as though he saw some illumination at the other end.

"You are not serious, Tony?"

Antony left the sofa and came over to his friend. Five weeks of comparative comfort and comparative release from the anxiety of existence—that is, of material existence—had changed him wonderfully. His contact with worldly people, the entertainments of Paris, the stimulant to his mind and senses, his pleasures, had done him good. His face was something fuller. He had come home early from dining with Mrs. Faversham, and in his evening dress there was an elegance about him that added to his natural distinction. In the lapel of his coat drooped a few violets from the *boutonnière* that had been placed by his plate.

"Cedersholm is coming next week." He lit a fresh cigarette.

"Well," returned Dearborn, coolly, "he is neither the deluge nor the earthquake, but he may be the plague. What has he got to do with you, old man?" [Pg 255]

"She is going to marry him."

"That," said Dearborn with spirit, "is rotten. Now, I will grant you that, Tony. It's rotten for her. Things have got so mixed up in your scenario that you cannot frankly go and tell her what a hog he is. That is what ought to be done, though. She ought to know what kind of a cheat and poor sort she is going to marry. In real life or drama the simple thing never happens." Dearborn smiled finely. "She ought to know, but you can't tell her."

"No," said his friend slowly, "nor would I. But neither can I meet him in her house or anywhere else. I think I should strike him."

"You didn't strike him, though," said Dearborn, meaningly, "when you had a good impersonal chance."

"I wish I had."

"I thought you told me they were all going to Rome?"

"Mrs. Faversham doesn't want to go."

"Ah," murmured Dearborn, nodding, "she doesn't."

"No." Fairfax did not seem to observe his friend's tone. "She is mightily set on having me meet Cedersholm. She wants to have him patronize me, help me!" He laughed dryly and walked up and down the studio into the cold, away from the fire, and then back to Dearborn in his dressing-gown and slippers. "Patronize me, encourage me, pat me on the back—put me in the way of meeting men of the world of art and letters, possibly work with him. She has all sorts of kindly patronizing schemes. But she doesn't know that I have been hungry and cold, and have been housed and fed by her money. Perhaps she does, though," he cried furiously to Dearborn. "No doubt she does. Do you think she does, Bob?"

"No, no—don't be an ass, Tony, old man."

"You see, now don't you, that I can't stay in Paris, that I can't meet that man and knock him down—not tell her that I am not the poor insignificant creature that she thinks, that without me Cedersholm could not have whipped up his old brain and his tired imagination to have done the work that brought him so marked a success. I would have to tell her what I did, and that, crude and unschooled as I was, she would have to see that he was afraid of me, afraid of my future and my talent. Oh, Dearborn!" he cried, throwing up his arms. [Pg 256]

Dearborn left his chair and went to Fairfax and put his hand on his shoulder.

"That's right," he said heartily, "blurt it all out, old man. Some day, when the right time comes, you will let it out to him."

Fairfax leaned on Dearborn's arm. "There were eight of us at dinner to-night," he said, "and Cedersholm was the general topic. He is much admired. He is to have the Legion of Honour. Much of what they said about him was just, of course, perfectly just and fair, but it sickened me. They were enthusiastic about his character, his generosity to his pupils, his sympathy with struggling artists, and one man, who had been at the unveiling of the Sphinx, spoke of my Beasts."

Dearborn felt Antony's hand trembling on his arm.

"The gall rose up in my throat, Bob. I saw myself working in a sacred frenzy in his studio, sweating blood, and my joy over my creations. I saw myself eager, hopeful, ardent, devoted, with a happy, cheerful belief in everybody. I had it then, I did indeed. Then I saw my ruined life, my wasted years as an engineer in Albany, my miserable, my cruel marriage, the things I stooped to and the degradation I might have known. My mother, whom I never saw again, called me—my wife, my child, passed before me like ghosts. If I could have had a little encouragement from him then, only just my due, well.... I was thinking of all those things whilst they spoke of him, and then I looked over to her...." As he spoke Mrs. Faversham's name, Antony's voice softened. "... And she was looking at me so strangely, strangely, as though she felt something, knew something, and my silence seemed ungracious and proof of my jealousy; but I could not have said a warm word in praise of him to save my character in her eyes. When we were alone after dinner she asked me, in a voice different to any tone I have heard from her, 'Don't you like Mr. Cedersholm? You don't seem to admire him. I have never heard you speak his name, or say a

friendly word about him,' and I couldn't answer her properly, and she seemed troubled."

Fairfax stopped speaking. The two friends stood mutely side by side. Then Antony said more naturally—

"You see a little of how I feel, Bob."

And the other replied, "Yes, I see a little of how you feel"; but he continued with something of his old drollery: "I would like to know a little of how *she* feels."

"What do you mean?"

Antony's voice was so curt, and his words were so short, that Dearborn was quick to understand that it would not be wise to touch on the subject of the woman.

"Why, I mean, Tony, that it is a valuable study for a playwright. I should like to understand the psychology of all characters."

Fairfax shrugged impatiently. "Confound you, you are a brute. All artists are, I reckon. You drive your chariot over human hearts in order to get a dramatic point."

Here the post came and with it a blue letter whose colour was familiar to Dearborn now, and he busied himself with his own mail under the lamp. Fairfax opened his note. It had no beginning.

"If it does not rain to-morrow, will you take me to Versailles? Unless you send me word that you cannot go, I will call for you at ten o'clock. We will drive through the Bois and lunch at the Reservoirs."

For a moment it seemed as though Antony would hand over his note to Dearborn, as he had handed Mrs. Faversham's first letter the night it came. But he replaced it in its envelope and put it in his pocket.

CHAPTER X

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He wrote her that he should not be able to go to Versailles. He deserted his day's work at Barye's and remained at home modelling. And Dearborn, seeing Fairfax's distraction, went out early and did not return until dark. Fairfax found himself alone again, alone with his visions, alone with his pride, alone with powerful and new emotions.

Sometimes in January, in the middle of the month, days come that surprise the Parisians with their inconstancy and their softness. The sun shone out suddenly and the sky was as blue as in Italy.

Fairfax could see the people strolling along the quays, with coats open, and the little booksellers did a thriving business and the "*bateaux mouche*" shot off into the sunlight bound toward the suburbs which Fairfax had learned in the summer time to know and love. Versailles would be divine on such a day.

His hours spent at the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne must have been impersonal. His first essay he destroyed and began again. He did not want to bring these intimate visits suddenly to an end. But when his sitter very courteously began to question him, he was uncommunicative. He could not tell her the truth. He did not wish to romance or to lie to her. Mrs. Faversham, both sensitive and "fine," respected his reticence. But she found out about him. They talked of art and letters and life in general, circling around life in particular, and Fairfax revealed himself more than he knew, although of his actual existence he told nothing. He enjoyed the charm of the society of a worldly woman, of a clever woman. He fed his mind and cultivated his taste, delighted his eyes with the graceful picture she made, sitting, her head on her hand, posing for her portrait. Her features were not perfect, but the ensemble was lovely and he modelled with tenderness and pleasure until the little bas-relief was magically like her. He was forced to remember that the study was intended as a present for Cedersholm. He was very silent and very often wondered why she asked him so constantly to her house, why she should be so interested in so ungracious a companion. This morning, in his studio on the Quai, he unwrapped his statue of his mother. It was a figure sitting in her chair, a book in her hand, as he had seen her countless times on the veranda of the New Orleans house, dreaming, her face lifted, her eyes looking into the distance. He went back to his work with complicated feelings and a heart at which there was a new ache. He had hardly expected that this statue, left when he had gone to take up the study of another woman, would charm him as it did. He began to model. As he worked, he thought the face was singularly like Bella's—a touch to the head, to the lips, and it was still more like the young girl. Another year was gone. Bella was a woman now. Everything, as he modelled, came back to him vividly—all the American life, with its rush and struggle. So closely did it come, so near to him, that he threw down his tools to walk up and down in the sunlight pouring through the big

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window. He took up his tools and began modelling again. The statuette was tenderly like his mother. He smoothed the folds at her waist—and saw under the clay the colour of the violet lawn with its sprinkling flowers of darker violet. He touched the frills he had indicated around the throat—and felt the stirring of the Southern breeze across his hand and smelled the jasmine. He paused after working for two hours, standing back, resting his lame limb and musing on the little figure. It grew to suggest all womanhood: Molly, as he had seen her under the lamp-light—Mrs. Faversham, as he had watched her leaning on her hand—not Bella. He looked and thought. Bella was a child, a little girl. There was nothing reposeful or meditative about Bella, yet he had seen her pore over a book, her hair about her face. Would she ever sit like this, tranquil, reposeful, reading, dreaming? The face was like her, but the resemblance passed.

CHAPTER XI

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Mrs. Faversham's dresses and jewels, her luxuries, her carriages and her horses, the extravagance of her life, had not dazzled Antony; his eyes had been pleased, but her possessions were a distinct envelope surrounding her and separating them. After watching Potowski's natatorial gestures, Fairfax had longed to swim out of the elegance into a freer sea.

He had told her nothing of his companion or of his life. He often longed to stuff some of the dainties of the table into his pockets for Dearborn, to carry away some of the fire in his hands, to bring something of the comfort back, but he would not have spoken for the world. Once she had broached the subject of further payment, and had seen by his tightening lips that she had made a mistake. In spite of the fact of his reserve and that he was proud to coldness and sometimes not quite kind, intimacy grew between them. Mrs. Faversham was engaged to be married, but Fairfax did not believe that she loved Cedersholm. What her feelings were, or why she wanted to marry him, he could not guess. The intimacy between them was caused by what they knew of each other as human beings, unknown, unexplained, unformulated. There was a tremendous sympathy, and neither the man nor the woman knew how real it was. And although there was her life—she was five years his senior—and his life with its tragedies, its depths and its ascensions, although there was all this unread and unspoken between them, neither of them, when they were together, was conscious of any past. A word, a touch, a look, a hazard chance would have revealed to them how near they stood.

As he went on modelling, he found that he was beginning to think of her as he had not let himself do during the weeks when she had sat for him. He found that he could not go on with his work now and think of her. He had voluntarily denied himself this day at Versailles where he might have enjoyed her for hours. When she had told him that she had written to Cedersholm about him he had smiled.

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"He will not recall my name. I was an obscure pupil with others. He will not remember Tom Rainsford."

Evidently Cedersholm had not remembered him. The subject was never mentioned between them again. Except as he heard it in general conversation, Cedersholm's name was no longer frequently on Mrs. Faversham's lips. He stopped working, wrapped his plaster carefully and pushed the stool back into the corner. Near it was a pile of books which he had carefully done up to return to Mrs. Faversham. She had obtained orders for him from her friends, none of which he had accepted. Why should he be so churlish? Why should he refuse to take advantage of her kindness and generosity? Why should not her influence help him on his stony way? What part did his pride play in it? Was it on account of Cedersholm, or was it something else?

At noon he went out to eat his luncheon in a little café where he was known and popular. The little room was across a court-yard filled with potted plants on which the winter had laid icy fingers, but which to-day in the sunshine seemed to have garbed themselves with something like spring. The little restaurant was low, noisy, filled with the clatter and bustle of the noon meal served to hungry students and artists. The walls were painted by the brush of different skilful craftsmen, young artists who could not pay their accounts and had settled their scores by leaving paintings on the walls, and one could read distinguished names. When Fairfax came here, as he sometimes did, he always took a little table in the second and darker room by another window which gave on a quiet court on whose stones were heaped up the statues and remains of an old Louis XV palace. This room was reserved for the older and quieter clients, and here, at another table in the corner, a pretty girl with a shock of curly hair under a soft hat and an old cape and an old portfolio, always ate, and she sometimes smiled at him. He would catch her eye, and she was, as Fairfax, always alone.

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Girl-students and grisettes, and others less respectable, had eyed him and elbowed him, but not one had tempted him. There was no merit in his celibacy, but to-day, as he glanced over at the English girl-student, something about her caught his attention as never before. She was half turned to him; her portfolio lay on the table at her side with the remains of a scanty lunch. Her head was bowed on her hands. She looked dejected, forlorn, bringing her little unhappiness to the small restaurant where so many strugglers and aspirants brought their hopes and their inspirations. This little bit of humanity seemed on this day uninspired, cast down, and he had remarked her generally before because of her gaiety, her eagerness, and he had avoided her because he knew that she would be sympathetic with him.

In a sort of revenge possible on himself, and feeling his own loneliness, he permitted himself to look long at her and saw how miserably poor her dress was, how rusty and dusty her cape, how trodden down were her little shoes. She was all in brown, from the old beaver hat to her boots, in a soft, old-faded note of colour, and her hair was gloriously golden like a chrysanthemum. As Antony looked at her she took out her handkerchief and wiped something off her cheek and from her eyes. His luncheon of steak and potatoes had been served him. He took up his napkin and his dinner and limped over to the table where the English girl sat bowed over.

"Would you like a comrade for luncheon? Say so, if you don't want me." He saw her start, wipe her eyes and look up with a sob on her lips.

"Oh, yes, I don't mind." Her voice was stifled. "Sit down, it is good of you."

The girl covered her face with her hands for a second and then wiped her eyes determinedly, as if she fetched herself out of stony depths. She smiled tremulously and her lips were as red and full and sweet as a rose.

"Garcon," he ordered, "fetch two bocks. Yes, mademoiselle, it will do you good."

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"I say," she fluttered, "were you lonely over there in your corner?"

Fairfax nodded. She put out her little hand, stained with paint and oil, and it was cold and delicate as it touched his. It seemed to need the strength of the man's big, warm grasp.

"I have always liked your face, do you know—always," she said. "I knew that you could be a real pal if you wanted. You are not like the others. I expect you are a great swell at something. Writing?"

"No, I am a workman in Barye's studio—a sculptor."

"Oh," she said incredulously. "You look '*arrivé*,' awfully distinguished. I expect you really *are* something splendid."

The beer came foaming. The girl lifted her glass with a hand which trembled. Tears hung on her lashes still, ready to fall, but she was a little sport and full of character and life. She nodded at Fairfax and murmured—

"Here's to our being friends."

Her voice was sweet and musical. They drank the draught to friendship.

Fairfax asked cruelly: "What made you cry?"

She touched her portfolio. "There," she said, "that is the reason. My last fortnight's work. I draw at Julian's, and I had a fearful criticism this morning, most discouraging. I am here on my own." She stopped and said rather faintly: "Why should I tell you?"

"We drank just now to the reason why you should."

"That's true," she laughed. "Well, then, this is my last week in Paris. I will have to go back to England and drop painting, unless they tell me that I am sure to have a career and that it is worth while."

A career! She was a soft, sweet, tender little creature in spite of her good comradeship and the brave little tilt to her hat, and she was fit for a home nest, and no more fit to battle with the storm of a career than a young bird with a tempest.

"Let me see your portfolio, will you?"

"First," she said practically, "eat your steak and your potatoes." Touching her eyes, she added: "I thought of what Goethe said as I cried here—'*Wer nie sein Brot mit Thraenen ass*'—only it's not the first bread and tears that have gone together in this room, I expect."

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"No," returned Fairfax, "I reckon not, and you are lucky to have the bread, Mademoiselle. Some have only tears."

"I know," she returned softly, "and I have been most awfully lucky so far."

When they had finished he made the man clear away the things, and she spread out the contents of her portfolio before him, watching his face, as he felt, for every expression. He handled thoughtfully the bits of cardboard and paper, seeing on them only the evidence of a mediocre talent, a great deal of feeling, and the indications of a sensitive nature. One by one he looked at them and turned them over, and put them back and tied up the green portfolio by its black tapes. Then he looked at her, saw how white her little face had grown, how big and blue her eyes were, how childlike and inadequate she seemed to life.

"You need not speak," she faltered. "You were going to say I'm no good. I don't want to hear you say it."

Impulsively, he put out his strong hands and took hers that fluttered at her coat.

"Why should you care for what I say? You have your masters and your chiefs."

"Yes," she nodded, "and they have been awfully encouraging, all of them, until to-day."

Fairfax looked at her earnestly. "You must not mind if you feel that you have got it in you. Don't seek to hear others' opinions, just go boldly, courageously on. What I say has no meaning."

He dropped her hands and the colour came back somewhat into her face.

"What you say has importance, though," she answered. "I have the feeling that you are somebody. Anyhow, I have watched you every time you came. I think you know things. I believe you must be a great artist. I should believe you—I do believe you. I see you don't think I'm any good. Besnard didn't think so when he came to-day. I don't want to go on being a fool."

As she spoke, from the other restaurant came the notes of a fiddle and a flute, for two wandering musicians, habitués of these smaller cafés, had wandered in to earn the price of their luncheon. They were playing, not very well, but very plaintively, an old French song, one in vogue in the Latin Quarter. The sun, still magnificently brilliant, had found its way around to the back of the place, and over the court with the ruined marbles the light streamed through the window and fell on Fairfax and the little girl.

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"What do you say," he suggested abruptly, "to coming with me for the afternoon? Let's go on the top of a tram and ride off somewhere."

He rose, paid the man who came for his luncheon (the girl's score had already been settled), and stood waiting. She fingered the tapes of her closed portfolio, her lips still trembled. The sunlight was full on her, shining on her hair, on her old worn cape, on the worn felt hat, on the little figure which had been so full of courage and of dreams. Then she looked up at Antony and rose.

"I will go," she said, and he picked up the portfolio, tucked it under his arm, and they walked out together, through the smoky larger room where part of the lunchers were joining in the chorus of the song the musicians played. And this little handful of the Latin Quarter saw the two pass out together, as two pass together often from those Bohemian refuges. Some one, as the door opened and shut on Antony and the girl, cried: "Vive l'amour!"

CHAPTER XII

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On the way out to Versailles from the top of the tram, lifted high above Paris and the river, alongside of the vulgar head, alongside of the strange little English girl, Fairfax listened to the outpouring of her heart. She took his interest for granted. With an appreciative understanding of human nature, and as though she had been bearing a burden for years which she had never let slip, she rested it now, and her blue eyes on his, her hands in the old woollen gloves, which she had slipped on before they started, clasped in her lap, she talked to Fairfax. By the time the tram stopped before the Palace of Versailles, he had heard her story. She was the daughter of an Irish clergyman. Nora Scarlet was her name.

Nora and Molly!

But they were very different. This girl was as gay as a lark. She laughed frankly aloud, musically, and put her hand on his with a free "camaraderie." She made sparkling little faces at him and called him softly, "Ami."

"My name is Nora, Nora Scarlet, but I don't want you to tell me your name until the end of the day, please. It is just a silly idea, but I will call you 'Ami.' I daresay it is a great name you have got, and I would rather feel that I don't want to know it too soon."

She had shown talent in the school where she had started in Ireland, and had taken a scholarship and had come to Paris to study, to venture unprepared and quite wildly into the student life, to struggle on small means and insufficient food uphill toward art. She displayed in talking a touching confidence in herself and worship of beauty, as well as a simple and loyal attitude toward life in general. She occupied a furnished room near the studio and, as she expressed it, "fished for herself." She was the oldest of seven children, with a weight of responsibility on herself. Her father's salary was ridiculous, she told him, not enough to bring up one hungry child well, much less half a dozen.

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"I thought that I could support myself with my art," she told Fairfax, "and that I should soon be *arrivée, lancée*, but to-day, when the criticism discouraged me and I knew that I should have to write home for money soon, well ... I'd not like to tell you what strange fancies came." She lifted up her finger and pointed at the river as it lay between its shores. "And now," she glanced at him, "when you tell me, too, that I am no good at painting!"

"I haven't said that," remonstrated Fairfax; "but don't let's talk about work now, what do you say? Let's have a holiday."

They walked up the Palace over the cobbles of the courtyard and paused to look back at the Route de Paris, that Miss Nora Scarlet might thoroughly picture the procession of the fish-wives and the march of the Paris populace up to Versailles, where the people swept its violent sea over the royal courts and the foam rose to the windows where royal faces whitened against the panes. Nora Scarlet and Fairfax wandered through the great rooms, part of the tourist crowd. The handsome man limped, a student's stoop across his shoulders, by the side of the small blond girl

with her student cape and her soft hat, her hair like chrysanthemum petals. Fairfax took occasion in the portrait room to tell her that she looked like a Greuze. Nora Scarlet was an appreciative sightseer.

"Oh, if I could only paint," she murmured, "if I could only paint!" and she clasped her woollen gloves prayerfully before the portraits of the Filles de France. But the Nattiers and the Fragonards mocked her, and the green portfolio under Fairfax's arm mocked her still more. Side by side, they penetrated into the little rooms where a Queen lived, intrigued, loved, and played her part. And Fairfax had his envies before Houdon's head of Marie Antoinette.

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The wide, sweet, leaf-strewn alleys were very nearly deserted where they stood, for the day had grown colder and the winter sunlight left early to give place to a long still winter evening. Their footsteps made no sound on the brown carpet of the park. Antony had not stopped to ask what kind of a woman the girl student was when he spontaneously left his lonely seat in the restaurant to take his place at her side, but everything she said to him revealed a frank, innocent mind. He saw that she had come with him without thinking twice, and he should have been touched by it. He drew her arm within his as they passed the great fountain. The basin was empty and its curve as round and smooth as human lips.

"Now," he said, "the time has come to talk of you and what you want to do and can do, and how you can do it."

"That's awfully kind."

"No, those are just the questions that I have to ask myself every day and find on some days that I haven't got the answer. It's a riddle, you know. We don't every day quite find the answer to it. I reckon we would never go on if we did, but it's good sport to ask and try to find out, and, believe me, Miss Nora Scarlet, two are better than one at a riddle, aren't they?"

"Oh, very much." They went along leisurely and after a second she continued: "It's lonely in Paris for a girl who doesn't want to go in for lots of things, and I have been getting muddled. But the worst muddle is pounds, shillings and pence"—she laughed musically—"it's reduced to pence at last, but I don't find the muddle reduced a bit."

"You want to do portraits?" he asked.

"Yes, I haven't an idea about anything else."

The trees above their heads made leafy bowers in summer, but now between the fine bare branches, they saw the delicate wintry sky, pale with the fading light of what had been a rare January day.

"Suppose I get an order for you to paint a portrait and you are paid in advance."

She stopped, holding him back by the arm, and exclaimed, joyously—

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"Oh, but you could not!"

"Suppose that I can. If I do succeed and you paint the portrait, will you do something for me?"

She looked up at him quickly. He was much above her. Nora Scarlet had seen Fairfax several times a week for many months. She knew him as well as any person can know another by sight—she knew his clothes, the way he wore them. It had been easy to study his face attentively, for he was so absorbed in general that he was unconscious of scrutiny. She had learned every one of his features pretty well by heart. Solitary as she was, without companions or friends except for her studio mates, she had grown to think as women do of a man they choose, to surround him with fancies and images. She had idealized this unknown artist, and her thoughts kept her company, and he had become almost part of her life already. She looked up at him now and blushed. He put his hand down over hers lightly.

"I mean that when the portrait is finished, we will have it criticized by the subject first, then by some one in whom you have great confidence, and if you are certain then that you have a vocation, we will see what can be done—some way will open up. There is always sure to be a path toward the thing that is to be. But if the criticism is unfavourable, I want you to promise me to go back to England and to your people, and to give up art as bravely as you can—I mean, courageously, like a good soldier who has fought well and lost the battle. Perhaps," Fairfax said, smiling, "if I were not an artist my advice would be worth less, but the place is too full of half-successes. If you can't be at the top, don't fill up the ranks. Get down as soon as you can and be another kind of success."

The advice was sound and practical. She listened to his agreeable voice, softened by the Southern accent. She watched him as he talked, but his face was not that of an adviser. It was charmingly personal and his smile the sweetest she had ever seen. She murmured—

"You are awfully kind. I promise."

"Good," he exclaimed heartily, "you are a first-rate sort; however it turns out, you are plucky."

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The most delicious odours of moist earth, blessed with the day's unexpected warmth, rose on the winter air. Their footfalls were lost in the leaves. Far down at the end of the alley they could see other strollers, but where they stood they were quite alone. The excitement of the unusual outing, the pleasure of companionship, brought the colour to their cheeks, a light to their eyes.

The girl's helplessness, the human struggle so like to his own, her admiration and her frankness, appealed to him greatly. His late agitation, useless, hopeless, perilous moreover, and which he felt he must overcome because it could have neither issue nor satisfaction, made Fairfax turn here for satisfaction and repose. They wandered slowly down the alley, her hand within his arm, and he said, looking down at her—

"Meanwhile, you belong to me."

The words passed his lips before he realized what they meant, or their importance. He did so as soon as he spoke. He felt her start. She withdrew the hand from his arm. He stopped and said—

"Did I frighten you?" He took her little hand.

"A little," Nora Scarlet said. Her eyes were round and wide.

Antony held her hand, looking at her, trying to see a deeper beauty in her face than was there, greater depths in her eyes than they could contain, more of the woman to fill his need and his loneliness. He realized how great that loneliness was and how demanding. She seemed like a child or a bird that he had caught ruthlessly.

"Didn't you drink just now to our friendship?"

She nodded, bit her lips, smiled, and her humour returned.

"Yes, I drank to our friendship."

"Well," he said, and hesitated, "well...." He drew her a little toward him; she resisted faintly, and Fairfax stopped and quickly kissed her, a feeling of shame in his soul. He kissed her again, murmured something to her, and she kissed him. Then she pushed him gently away, her face crimson, her eyes full of tears.

"No, no," she murmured, "you shouldn't have done it. It is too awful. It's unworthy. Ami," she gasped, "do you know you are the first man I ever let do that? Do you believe me?" She was clinging to his hands, half laughing, half sobbing, and the kiss was sweet, sweet, and the moment was sweet. To one of them it was eternal, and could never come in all her lifetime like that again.

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He stifled his self-reproach. He would have taken her in his arms again, but she ran from him, swiftly, like the bird set free.

"Wait," he called; "Nora Scarlet, I promise." He hurried to her. "You forget I am a lame jackdaw."

Then she stood still. They were walking together, his arm around her waist, when they came out at the alley's end. Standing by a marble bust on its pedestal, quite alone and meditative, as if she had just looked up, seen something and nevertheless decided to wait, Fairfax saw Mrs. Faversham.

CHAPTER XIII

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His first sensation, as he saw her, was as if a sudden light had broken upon a soul's darkness which until this moment had blinded him, oppressed him, condemned him; then there came a great revulsion against himself. Mrs. Faversham was very pale, as white as the bust by whose side she stood. She held out her hand, in its delicate glove, and tried to greet him naturally.

"How do you do, Mr. Rainsford?"

He was conscious of how kind she was, how womanly. He had refused her invitation and flaunted in her sight a vulgar pastoral. His cheeks were hot, his lips hardly formed a greeting. This was the work he had offered as an excuse to her when he had said that he could not go to Versailles. "Then what is it to her?" he thought; "she is engaged to be married to Cedersholm. What am I or my vulgarities to her?" There was a fresh revulsion.

"Will you let me present Miss Scarlet," he said quietly, "Mrs. Faversham?"

Mrs. Faversham, who had recovered herself, gave her hand into the woollen glove of Nora Scarlet, and, looking at the young girl, said that perhaps they had been sketching.

"Not in January," replied Nora with perfect self-possession. From the crown of Mrs. Faversham's fur hat to the lady's shoes, the girl's honest eyes had taken in her elegance and her grace. "We have been walking a bit after Paris."

Fairfax felt as though he had been separated from this lady for a long time, as though he had just come back, after a voyage whose details were tiresome. She seemed too divine to him and at once cruelly near and cruelly removed, in her dark dress, her small walking hat with a spray of mistletoe shining against the fur, her faultless shoes, her face so sweet and high-bred under her veil, her aloofness from everything with which he came in contact, her freedom from care and struggle, from temptation, from the sordidness of which he had long been a part. He suffered horribly; short as the moment was, the acuteness of its sensations comprised for him a miserable eternity.

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"I have my carriage here, Mr. Rainsford. Will you not let me drive you both back to Paris?"

He wanted nothing but to go with her then, any way, the farther the better, and for ever. It came upon him suddenly, and he knew it. He refused, of course, angry to be obliged to do so, angrier still at what he was sure she would think was the reason for his doing so. She bade them both good-bye, now thoroughly mistress of herself, and reminded him that she would expect him the next day at three. She asked Miss Scarlet many questions about her work and the schools, as they walked along a little together, before Mrs. Faversham took the path that led to the gate where her carriage waited.

When they were together again alone, Fairfax and his companion, in the tram, he felt as though he had cut himself off once again, by his folly, from everything desirable in the world. The night was cold. He did not realize how silent he was or how silent she was. When they had nearly reached Paris, Miss Scarlet said—

"Is it her portrait you thought I might get to paint?"

The question startled him, the voice as well. It was like being spoken to suddenly by a perfect stranger.

"Yes," he answered, "she is wonderfully generous and open-hearted. I am sure that she would give you an order."

"Please don't bother," said the girl proudly. "I would not take the order."

Her tone was so curt and short that it brought Fairfax back to realities.

"Why, pray, don't you find her paintable?" he asked.

The girl's voice was contemptuous. "I don't know. I didn't look at her with that idea."

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Fairfax had nothing left him but his self-reproach, his humiliation, his sense of degradation, though God knows the outing was innocent enough! The Thing had happened. The Event had transpired. The veil had been drawn away from his heart when he saw her there in the park and spoke to her. The idea that she must think him light and vulgar-minded, an ordinary Bohemian, amusing himself as is the fashion in the Latin Quarter, was unbearable to him. He would have given his right hand to have been alone in the park and to have met her alone. Under the spell of his suffering, he said cruelly to the girl whom he had so wantonly captured—

"If you won't let me help you in my way, I'm afraid I can't help you at all."

And she returned, controlling her voice: "No, I am afraid you cannot help me."

He was unconscious of her until they reached the centre of Paris and he found himself in the street by her side, and they were crossing the Pond des Arts on foot. The lamps were lit. The tumult and stir of the city was around them, the odour of fires and the perfume of the city pungent to their nostrils. They walked along silently, and Fairfax asked her suddenly—

"Where shall I take you? Where do you live?" and realized as he spoke how little he knew of her, how unknown they were to each other, and yet what a factor she had been in his emotional life. He had held her in his arms and kissed her not three hours ago.

She put her hand out to him. "We will say good-bye here," she said evenly. "I can go home alone."

"Oh no," he objected, but he saw by her face that in her, too, a revulsion had taken place, perhaps stronger than his own. He was ashamed and annoyed. He put out his hand and hers just touched it.

"Thank you," she said, "for the excursion, and would you please give me my portfolio?"

He handed it to her. Then quite impulsively: "I don't want to part from you like this. Why should I? Let me take you home, won't you?"

He wanted to say, "Forgive me," but she had possessed herself of her little sketches, the poor, inadequate work of fruitless months. She turned and was gone almost running up the quays, as she had run before him down the alley of Versailles. He saw her go with great relief, and, when the little brown figure was lost in the Paris multitude, he turned and limped home to the studio in the Quais.

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CHAPTER XIV

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He did not go to the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne at the appointed hour, and was so ungracious as not to send her any word. He took the time for his own work, and from thence on devoted himself to finishing the portrait of his mother. Meanwhile, Dearborn, enveloped in smoke, dug into the mine of his imagination and brought up treasures and nearly completed his play. He recited from it copiously, read it aloud, wept at certain scenes which he assured Tony would

never be as sad to any spectator as they were to him.

"I wrote them on an empty stomach," he said.

Fairfax, meanwhile, finished his statuette and decided to send it to an exhibition of sculpture to be opened in the Rue de Sèvres. He had bitterly renounced his worldly life, and was shortly obliged to pawn his dress suit, and, indeed, anything else that the young men could gather together went to the Mont de Piété, and once more the comrades were nearly destitute and were really clad and fed by their visions and their dreams.

"You see," he said one day, shortly, to Dearborn, when the silence between the quays and the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne had grown intolerable to him, "you see how indifferent she is. She doesn't know what has become of me. For all she knows I may be drowned in the Seine."

"Or imprisoned for debt," said Dearborn, cheerfully, "that's more likely. The tailor doesn't believe you have gone to London, Fairfax. Try a more congenial place, Tony. Let it be Monte Carlo next time—every one goes there sooner or later."

When he came back from Versailles he told Dearborn nothing about his escapade in detail, simply mentioning the fact that he had taken out a little girl to spend the day in the woods and that she had bored him in the end, and that he had had the misfortune to meet Mrs. Faversham unexpectedly.

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Dearborn was one of those subtle spirits who do not need to be told everything. He rated Antony for playing what he called an ungallant part to the little Bohemian.

"You say her hair was like chrysanthemums and that she had violet eyes? Why, she is a priceless treasure, Tony! How could you desert her?"

And several times Dearborn tried to extract something more about the deserted little girl from his friend, but it was in vain.

"I am sorry," Dearborn said. "We need women, Tony—we need to see the flutter of their dresses, to watch them come and go in this little room. By Jove, I often want to open the door and invite up the concierge, the concierge's wife, his aunt 'and children three' or any, or all of Paris who would come and infuse new life into us. Anything that is real flesh and blood, to chase for a moment visions and dreams away and let us touch real hands."

"You don't go out enough, old man."

"And you went out too much, Fairfax. It's not going out—I want some one to come in. I want to see the studio peopled. You have grown so morose and I have become such a navvy that our points of view will be false the first thing we know."

The snow had been falling lightly. There was a little fringe of it along the sill, and toward sunset it had turned cold, and under the winter fog the sun hung like an orange ball behind a veil. The Seine flowed tawny and yellow under their eyes, as they stood together talking in the window.

Fairfax was in his painting clothes, the playwright in his beloved dressing-gown that Fairfax had not the heart to pawn for coffee and coal. There was a sound of footsteps on the stairs without.

"It's the fellows coming to take my statuette," said Fairfax.

"It's the tailor, the bootmaker and the shirtmaker," said Dearborn. "Go behind the screen, Tony—run to Monte Carlo."

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There was a tap at the door and a cheerful voice called—

"Mr. Rainsford, *c'est moi*."

"It is Potowski. I will have to let him in, Bob. Here's all Paris for you. You wanted it."

He opened the door for Count Potowski.

The Polish singer came quickly in, his silk hat and his cane in his hand. He looked around brightly.

"You don't hide from me," he said. "I have a fatal grasp when I take hold. You never call on me, Monsieur—so I call on you. Guerrea!—which means in Polish what 'altro' means in Italian, 'Doch' in German, 'Voilà' in French, and in unenthusiastic English, nothing at all."

Fairfax presented the Count to Dearborn, who beamed on him, amused, and Potowski glanced at the cold, cheerless Bohemia. It was meagre. It was cold. Privation was apparent. The place was not without a charm, and it had distinction. There were the evidences of intense work, of devotion to the ideal. There were the evidences of good taste and good breeding. The few bits of furniture were old and had been bought for a song, but selected with judgment. Fairfax's statuette waited on its pedestal to be carried away—in the winter light, softened and subdued by mist, Mrs. Fairfax read in her chair. Dearborn's table, strewn with his papers and books, told of hours spent at a beloved labour. There was nothing material to attract—no studio properties or decorations to speak of. Two long divans were placed against a wall of agreeable colour. There was nothing but the spirit of art and work, and the spirit of youth as well, but Potowski was delighted. He pointed to the statuette.

"This," he said, "is the lovely lady with whom you have been shut up all these days. It is charming, Monsieur."

"It is a study of my mother as I remember her."

"I salute it," said Potowski, making a little inclination. "I salute *you*. It is beautiful." He put his hand on Fairfax's arm. "You do my wife. You do the Contessa," said Potowski, "the same. I adore it. It looks my wife. It might be her, Monsieur. But all beauty is alike, is not it? One lovely woman is all women. Are you not of my opinion?"

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He swam toward Dearborn who was fascinated by Potowski's overcoat lined with fur, and with the huge fur collar, with his patent shoes with their white tops, with his bright waistcoat, his single eyeglass, his shining silk hat and, above all, by the gay foreign face, its waxed moustache and its sparkling dark eyes.

Dearborn wrapped his dressing-gown modestly around him to conceal his shirtless, collarless condition. Running his hands through dishevelled red hair, he responded—

"No, I don't agree with you. I guess your feminine psychology is at fault there, Count."

"*Rreally* not," murmured the Count, looking at him eagerly.

"Mr. Dearborn is a playwright," said Antony. "He is a great student of character."

Potowski waved his hand in its light glove. "You write plays, Monsieur? You shall write me a libretto. I have been looking for ever for some one to write the words for a *hopera* I am making."

Dearborn nodded. "Far from being all alike, I don't think that there have been two women alike since Eve."

"*Rreally!*"

Potowski looked at the red-headed man as if he wondered whether he had met and known all women.

"You find it so, Monsieur? Now I have been married three times. Every one of them were lovely women. I find them all the same."

"You must have a very adaptable, assimilating and modifying nature," said Dearborn, smiling.

"Modifying? What is that?" asked the Pole sweetly.

Neither of the young men made excuses for the icy cold room. They were too proud. They had nothing to offer Potowski, not even a cigarette, but the Pole forced his cigar-case upon them, telling them that he made his cigarettes with a machine by the thousand.

"My wife, Contessa Potowski, makes them, I mean. I do myself the pleasure to send you a box. They're contraband. You will be arrested if the police knows so."

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"That," said Dearborn, "would really disappoint the tailor. I think he would like to get in his own score first. But I would rather go to prison as a contrabander than as a debtor."

They sat on the sofa together and smoked, their breath white in the cold room. But the amiable Potowski beamed on them, and Antony saw Dearborn's delight at the outside element. And Dearborn sketched his scenario, the colour hot in his thin cheeks, and Potowski, rubbing his hands to warm them, hummed airs from his own opera in a heavenly voice, and the voice and the enthusiasm magnetized poor Dearborn, carried out of his rut, and before he knew it he had promised to write a libretto for "Fiametta."

Whilst they talked the porters came and took away the statuette of Mrs. Fairfax, and Potowski said—

"It was like seeing *they* carry away my wife." And, when they had gone, Antony lighted the candles and Potowski rose and cried, as though the idea had just come to him: "Guerrea! My friends, I am alone to-night. My wife has gone to sing in Brussels. I implore you to come out to dinner with me—I know not where." He glanced at the sculptor and playwright, as they stood in the candle light. He had only seen Fairfax a well-dressed visitor at Mrs. Faversham's entertainments. On him now a different light fell. In his working clothes, there was nothing poverty-stricken about him, but the marks of need were unmistakably in the environment. He spoke to Dearborn, but he looked at Fairfax. "I have grown very fond of him. I love to speak my thoughts at him. We don't always agree, but we are always good for each other. I have not seen him for some time. I thought he go away."

Dearborn smiled. "He *was* just going to Monte Carlo," he murmured.

Potowski, who did not hear, went on: "We will go and eat in some restaurant on this side of the river. I am tired of the Café de Paris. We will see a play afterwards. There is 'La Dame aux Camélias' with the divine Sarah. We laugh at dinner and we shall go and sob at La Dame aux Camélias. I like a happy weeping now and then." He swam toward them affably and appealingly. "I don't dress. I go as I am."

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Dearborn grasped one of the yellow-gloved hands and shook it.

"Hang it all! I'm going, Tony. There are two pair of boots, anyhow. I haven't been to a play," he laughed excitedly, "since I was a child. Hustle, Tony, we will toss up for the best suit of clothes."

The drama of Dumas gave Antony a beautiful escape from reality. La Dame aux Camélias disenchanted him from his own problems for the time. In the Count's box he sat in the background and fed his eyes and his ears with the romantic and ardent art of the Second Empire. He found the piece great, mobile, and palpitating, and he was not ashamed. The divine Sarah and Marguerite Gautier died before his eyes, and out of the ashes womanhood arose and called to him, as the Venus de Milo had called to him down the long gallery, and distractions he had known seemed soulless and unreal shapes. He worshipped Dumas in his creation.

"Rainsford," whispered Potowski, laying his hand on Antony's knee, "what do you t'ink, my friend?" The tears were raining down his mobile face; he sighed. "*Arrt*," he said in his mellow whisper, "is only the expression of the feeling, the beautiful expression of the feeling. That is the meaning of all *arrt*."

The big red curtain fell slowly and the three men, poet, singer and sculptor, kept their seats as though still under the spell of Dumas and unable to break it.

"Tony," said Dearborn, as they went out together, "I am going to burn up all four acts."

CHAPTER XV

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The middle of January arrived, and he thought Cedersholm would have come by that time and supposed that they would be off for Rome.

The study of his mother was accepted by the jury for the exhibition in the Rue de Sèvres, and Fairfax went on the opening day, saw his name in the catalogue, and his study on the red pedestal made a dark mellow note amongst the marbles. He stood with the crowd and listened with beating heart to the comments of the public. He watched the long-haired Bohemians and the worldly people, the Philistine and the élite as they surged, a little sea of criticism, approval, praise and blame, through the rooms.

"Pas mal, ça." "Here is a study that is worth looking at." "By whom is this?"

And each time that he heard his name read aloud—Thomas Rainsford—he was jealous of it for Antony. It seemed a sacrilege, a treachery. He wandered about, looking at the other exhibits, but could not keep away from his own, and came back timidly, happily, to stand by the figure of his mother in her chair. There was much peace in the little work of art, much repose. He seemed to see himself again a boy, as he had been that day when she asked for the cherries and he had run off to climb for them—and had gone limping ever since. She had sat languidly with her book that day, as she sat now, immortalized by her son in clay.

Some one came up and touched his arm. "Bonjour, Rainsford." It was Barye, his chief. He had been looking at the group behind the sculptor. He said briefly: "Je vous félicite, monsieur." He smiled on his journeyman from under shaggy brows. "They will talk about you in the *Figaro*. C'est exquis."

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Fairfax thanked him and watched Barye's face as the master scrutinized and went around the little figure. He put out his hand to Fairfax.

"Come and see me to-morrow. I want to talk to you."

Fairfax answered that he would be sure to come, just as though he were not modelling at the studio for ten francs a day. He had been careful all along not to repeat his error of years before. He had avoided personalities with his master, as he toiled like a common day-labourer, content to make his living and to display no originality; but now he felt a sense of fellowship with the great Frenchman and walked along by Barye's side to the door, proud to be so distinguished. He glanced over the crowd in the hope of seeing Her, but instead, walking through the rooms, his eyeglass in his eye, the little red badge of the Legion of Honour in his coat, he saw Cedersholm.

The following day, when he went to the exhibition, the man at the door handed a catalogue to Fairfax and pointed to No. 102, against which was the word "Sold." His price had been unpretentious.

"Moreover," said the man, "No. 102 will certainly have a medal."

Fairfax, his hands in his empty pockets, was less impressed by that prognostication than by the fact that there was money for him somewhere. The man opened the desk and handed Fairfax an envelope with five hundred francs in it.

"Who was the purchaser?" Fairfax looked at the receipt he was given to sign and read: "Sold to Mr. Cedersholm."

"Mais non," he exclaimed shortly, "ça, non!"

He was assured, however, that it was the American sculptor and no other. On his way home he reflected, "She sent him to purchase it." And the five hundred francs bill burned in his pocket.

Then he called himself a fool and asked what possible interest she could still have in Thomas Rainsford, whose news she had not taken in four weeks. And also, he reflected, that so far as Cedersholm was concerned, Thomas Rainsford had nothing to do with Antony Fairfax. "He merely admired my work," he reflected bitterly. "He has seemed always singularly to admire it."

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He paid some pressing debts, got his clothes out of pawn, left Dearborn what he wanted, and was relieved when the last sou of the money was gone.

"I wonder, Bob," he said to Dearborn, "when I shall ever have any 'serious money.'" And with sudden tenderness he thought of Bella.

Dearborn, who had also recovered a partially decent suit of clothes, displayed his trousers and said—

"I think some chap has been wearing my clothes and stretched them." They hung loose on him.

Fairfax laughed. "You have only shrunk, Bob, that's all. You need feeding up."

The studio had undergone a slight transformation, which the young men had been forced to accede to. A grand piano covered with a bright bit of brocade stood in the centre of the studio, a huge armchair, with a revolving smoking-table, by its side. The chair was for Dearborn to loll in and dream in whilst Potowski played and sang at the piano. Dearborn was thus supposed to work the libretto for "Fiametta."

Potowski, who came in at all hours, charmed the very walls with his voice, sang and improvised; Fairfax worked on the study he was making for Barye, and Dearborn, in the big chair, swathed in his wrapper, made notes, or more often fell serenely to sleep, for he worked all night on his own beloved drama, and if it had not been for Potowski he would have slept nearly all day. The Pole, at present, had gone to Belgium to fetch his wife, who had been away for several weeks.

When there was a knock on the door on this afternoon, the young men, used to unexpected visitors, cried out—

"Come in—entrez donc!"

But there was the murmur of a woman's voice without, and Fairfax, his sculpting tools in his hands, opened the door. It was Mrs. Faversham.

He stood for a dazed second unable even to welcome her. Dearborn sprang up in embarrassment and amusement. Mrs. Faversham herself was not embarrassed.

"Is not Potowski here?" shaking hands with Antony. "I had expected to meet him. Didn't he tell you that I was coming? I understood that you expected me."

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Fairfax shut the door behind her. "You are more than welcome. This is my friend, Mr. Dearborn. You may have heard Potowski speak of him."

She shook hands with the red-haired playwright, whom she captivated at once by her cordiality and her sweet smile. Of course she had heard of him and the libretto. Potowski had given her to understand that she might hear the overture of "Fiametta."

The young men exchanged glances and neither of them told her that Potowski was in Belgium. Dearborn rolled the chair toward her and waved to it gracefully.

"This is the chair of the muses, Mrs. Faversham, and not one of them has been good enough to sit in it before now."

She laughed and sat down, and Fairfax looked at her with joy.

"We must give Mrs. Faversham some tea," said Dearborn, "and if you will excuse me while we wait for Potowski, I will pop out and get some milk and you boil the tea-kettle."

He took his hat and cape and ran out, leaving them alone.

Mrs. Faversham looked at the sculptor in his velveteen working clothes, the background of his workshop, its disorder and its poverty around him.

"How nice it is here," she said. "I don't wonder you are a hermit."

"Oh," he exclaimed, "don't compliment this desolation."

She interrupted him. "I think it is charming. You feel the atmosphere of living and of work. You seem to see things here that are not visible in rooms where nothing is accomplished."

He sat down beside her. "Are there such rooms?" he asked. "I don't believe it. The most thrilling dramas take place, don't they, in the most commonplace settings?"

As though she feared that Dearborn would come back, she said quickly—

"I don't know why you should have been so unkind. I have heard nothing of you for weeks, do you know, excepting through Potowski. It wasn't kind, was it?"

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"I was rude and ungrateful, but I could not do otherwise."

She bent forward to him as he sat on the divan. "I wonder why?" she asked. "Were we not

friends? Could you not have trusted me? Do you think me so narrow and conventional—so stupid?"

"Oh!" he exclaimed, and he smiled a little, thinking of Nora Scarlet. "It is not quite what you think."

He was angry with her, with the facts of their existence, with her great fortune, and her engagement to the man he despised above all others, his own incognito and the fact that she had sent Cedersholm to buy his study, and that he could not express to her, without insult, his feelings or tell her frankly who he was.

"You were not kind, Mr. Rainsford."

He reflected that she thought him the lover of a Latin Quarter student, if she thought at all, which she probably did not. Without humility he confessed—

"Yes, I have been very rude indeed." He wiped his clay-covered hands slowly, each finger separately, his eyes bent. He rose abruptly. "Would you care to look at a study I am making for Barye?" He drew off the cloths from the clay he was engaged in modelling. She only glanced at the group and he asked her, almost roughly: "Why did you buy by proxy my little study in the exhibition? Why did you ask Cedersholm to do so?"

Mrs. Faversham looked at him in frank surprise. "Your study in the exhibition? I knew nothing of it. I did not know you had exhibited. I have been ill for a fortnight, and have not seen a paper or heard a hit of news."

He was softened. His emotions violently contradicted themselves, and he saw now that she had grown a little thinner and looked pale.

"Have you been ill? What a boor you must think me never to have returned!"

She was standing close to the pedestal and rested her hand on the support near his wooden tools. She wore a beautiful grey drees, such a one as only certain Parisian hands can create. It fitted her to perfection, displaying her shape, and, where the fur opened at the neck, amongst the lace he saw the gleaming and flashing of a jewel whose value would have made a man rich. Already the air was sweet with the fragrance of the scent she used. She had been in grey when he had first seen her on the day of the unveiling of the monument. Fairfax passed his hand across his eyes, as though to brush away a vision which, like a mist, was still between them. He put his hand down over hers on the pedestal.

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"I love you," he said very low. "That is the matter. That is the trouble. I love you. I want you to know it. I dare love you. I am perfectly penniless and I am glad of it. I want to owe everything to my art, to climb through the thorns to where I shall some day reach. I am proud of my poverty and of my emancipation from everything that others think is necessary to happiness. I am rude. I cannot help it. I shall never see you again. I ought not to speak to you in my barren room. I know that you are not free and that you are going to be married, but you must hear once what I have to tell you. I love you.... I love you."

She was as motionless as the grey study. He might himself have made and carved "the woman in her entirety," for she stood motionless before him.

"Tell Cedersholm," he said bitterly, "tell him that a poor sculptor, a struggler who lives to climb beyond him, who will some day climb beyond him, loves you."

The arrogance and pride of his words and her immobility affected him more than a reproof or even speech. He took her in his arms, and she was neither marble nor clay, but a woman there.

"Tell him," he murmured close to her cheek, "that I have kissed you and held you."

And here she said; "Hush!" almost inaudibly, and released herself. She was trembling. She put her hands to her eyes. "I shall tell him nothing. He is nothing to me. I sent him away when he first came, a fortnight ago. I shall never see Cedersholm again."

"What!" cried Tony, looking at her in rapture, "what, you are *free*?" At his heart there was triumph, excitement, wonder, all blending with the bigger emotion. He heard himself ask her eagerly: "Why, why did you do this?"

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There were tears on her eyelids.

His face flushing, his eyes illumined, he looked down on her and lifted her face to him in both his hands.

"Why?"

"I think you know," she murmured, her lips trembling.

He gave a cry, and as he was about again to embrace her they heard Dearborn's step upon the stairs.

Mrs. Faversham was in the window looking out upon Paris, and Fairfax was modelling on his

study when the playwright came in with a can of milk, some madeleines and a pot of jam.

After she had gone he wanted to escape and be alone, but Dearborn chatted, pacing the studio, whilst Fairfax dressed and shaved, praising the visitor.

"She's a great lady, Tony. What breeding and race! And she's not what the books call 'indifferent' to you."

"Go to the devil, Dearborn!"

Dearborn went to work instead, not to lose the inspiration of the lovely woman. He began a new scene, and dressed his character in dove grey with silver fox at her throat.

CHAPTER XVI

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Fairfax, at the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, found instead of the entrance he had expected, a note for him.

"I cannot see you to-night. Be generous,—understand me. Mr. Cedersholm leaves for Russia to-morrow, he has asked me as a last favour to let him see me. I have done him so much wrong that I cannot refuse him. Come early to-morrow morning, and we will walk in the Bois together.

"I am yours,
"Mary."

He read the letter before the footman, and the "yours, Mary" made his heart bound and his throat contract. He walked toward the Champs Elysées slowly, thinking. Cedersholm sailed to-morrow, away from France. He was sent away beaten, bruised, conquered. He must have loved her. No man could help it. Was this the beginning of Fairfax's triumph? Well, he could not help it—he was glad. Cedersholm had stolen his fire, the labour of his youth, and now he would not have been human if there had not been a thrill through him that the conqueror knows. He could spare him this farewell evening with the woman who signed herself "I am yours, Mary."

"Vade in Pace," he murmured.

Then the vision of the woman rose more poignant than anything else, and he saw her as she had stood under his hands, the tears in her eyes, and the fire and pallor of passion on her face.

What should he do now? Marry her, of course. He would be married, then, twice at thirty. He shook his broad shoulders as though instinctively he chafed under the sudden adjusting to them of a burden. He limped out into the Champs Elysées, under the rows of light where the lamps were like illumined oranges. The vehicles twinkled by like fire-flies in the mist. Before him was the Palais de l'Industrie and back of it stretched the Champ de Mars and Napoleon's tomb. The freedom of the night and the hour was sweet to him; and he dreamed as he limped slowly down the Avenue under the leafless trees. Probably wisdom would tell him that, if he married now, it would be the end of his career. Love was an inspiration, a sharp impelling power to art, but marriage, a home, another household, another hearth and family, beautiful as the picture was, seemed to him, even bright and keen as was his passion, to be captivity. And the memory of Albany came back to him, the cold winter months, the days on the engine, the blizzards against the tenement panes, household cares, small and petty, the buying of coal and food, and the constant duties which no man can shrink from and be a man, and which fret the free spirit of the creator. Moreover, the anguish of those days returned, biting his very entrails at the remembrance of his griefs, his remorse, his regrets. Molly by the study light, patient and wifely, rose before his eyes. There was his wife, and she seemed holy and stainless, set apart for that position and very perfect. He saw her lying pale and cold, beautiful as marble, with the little swathed form on her bosom, which had given and never nourished. He saw them both—his wife and child. Can a man begin over again? Can he create anew, perfectly anew, the same vision? He saw her go through the open door, holding it wide for him. So she should hold it at the last. He could give her this. He had defrauded her of so much. He could give to her to eternity a certain faithfulness.

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He was exalted. He walked freely, with his head uplifted. It was a misty evening and the mists blew about him as he limped along in his student's cape, his spirit communing with his ideals and with his dead. Before, his visions took form and floated down the Avenue. Now they seemed unearthly, without any stain of human desire, without any worldly tarnish. He must be free. The latitude of his life must be unbounded by any human law, otherwise he would never attain. The flying forms were sexless and his eyes pursued them like a worshipper. They were angelic. For the moment he had emancipated himself from passion.

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He reached the Place de la Concorde. It was ten o'clock. He could not go home to be questioned by Dearborn—indeed, he could not have stood a companion. He called a cab and told the man to drive him up to the Bois de Boulogne, and they rolled slowly up the Avenue down which he had just come. But in what position did he stand toward Mary Faversham? She had refused Cedersholm because she loved him and he loved her—more than he ever could love, more than he ever had loved. A cab passed him in which two forms were enlaced. The figures of two lovers

blotted in the darkness. Along the alleys, under the winter trees, every now and then he saw other lovers walking arm-in-arm, even in winter warmed by the eternal fire. He touched his pocket where her note lay and his emotions stirred afresh.

He dreamed of her.

He had been tortured day by day, these weeks, by jealousy of Cedersholm, and this helped him on in his sentimental progress. They passed the street, which a moment before he had taken from her house, to come out upon the Champs Elysées. They rolled into the Bois, under the damp darkness and the night, and the forest odours came to him through the window of the cab. She would have to wait until he was rich and famous. As far as her fortune was concerned, if she loved him she could give it to the poor. He could tell her how to use it. She should never spend a cent of it on herself. He must be able to suffice for her and for him. Rich or poor, the woman who married him would have to take him as he was. On the lake the mists blew over the water. They lay white as spirits among the trees. Everything about the dark and silent night was beautiful to him, made beautiful by the sacred warfare in his own mind. Above all came the human eagerness to see her again, to touch her again, to tell his love, to hear her say what Dearborn's coming had prevented. And he would see her to-morrow morning. It was profanity to walk in these woods without her.

"Go back," he called to the coachman, "go back quietly to the Quais."

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He hoped that he should be able to sleep and that the next day would come quickly. He became ardent and devoted as he dreamed, and all the way back his heart ached for her.

When he entered the studio and called Dearborn he received no response. There was a note from the playwright on the table—he would not be back until the next morning.

Fairfax, his hand under his pillow, crushed her letter, and the words: "I am yours, Mary," flushed his palm and his cheek.

He had been awake since dawn, fire in his blood and heart animating his brain and stimulating his creative power. In the early light he had seated himself to make a few sketches, drawing little exquisite studies of her, and the face on the paper was ideal, irritatingly so. The chin and the cheek was young and soft, too youthful for Mrs. Faversham. It suggested Bella.

When he went to see her that afternoon, for the first time he was shown upstairs. Each step was sacred to him as he mounted to the part of the house in which she lived her intimate life. The stairs were marble, covered by thick rugs; the iron balustrade had been brought from a château in the days of the Revolution. Along the wall at his side hung splendid tapestries, whose colours would have delighted him at another time. But his eyes now were blinded to material things. His soul, heart and nature were aflame, and he walked on air. When he was shown into a small room, Mrs. Faversham's own sitting-room, his agitation was so great that he seemed to walk through a mist.

She was not there. The day was fresh and the wood fire burning across the andirons called to him with a friendly voice. The objects by which she surrounded herself represented a fortune; the clock before him, which marked the hour in which he first came to see his love, had belonged to Marie Antoinette, and it beamed on the lover from its wise old clever face,—crystal water fell noiselessly, as the minutes passed, from a little golden mill over which watched two Loves like millers. There were her books on the table, bound with art and taste. There were her writing things on her desk, and a half-finished letter on the blotter. There was her "chaise-longue" with its protective pillows, its sable cover, and between the lace curtains Antony could see the trees of the park. On the footstool a Pekinese dog sat looking at him malevolently. It lifted its fluffy body daintily and raised its impertinent little face to the visitor. Then a door opened and she came in murmuring his name. Antony, seeing her through a mist of love which had not yet cleared, took her in his arms, calling her "Mary, Mary!" He felt the form and shape of her in his arms. As dream women had never given themselves to him, so she seemed to yield.

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When they sat side by side on the little sofa the Pekinese dog jumped up and sat between them. She caressed it with one hand, laying the other on Antony's shoulder.

"I must tell you my life," he said, and his sight cleared as he spoke, and he saw her face transformed by its emotion, her eyes adoring and beautiful, her lips parted as if the breath of life he had given to her left her wondering still.

"Don't tell me of anything to-day."

He took the hand that lay on his shoulder and raised it. "I must tell you now."

"I ask for nothing, Antony. What does the past matter?" She bent forward and kissed him on his eyes. "I would like to think they had never looked at anything before to-day."

He smiled. "But they have looked hard at many things, Mary. They will always look deeply, and I want you to look back with me."

She sighed. "Then, forward with me." The Pekinese dog sprang into her lap. "Go on," she said docilely; "but I am so divinely happy! Why should we think of anything else?"

He brushed away the mist that threatened again to cloud his vision. He took her hand and held it firmly and, lifting up his head, began frankly to tell her of his past.

"I am a Southerner, born in New Orleans...."

As he talked she listened spellbound by his power of narrative. In his speech he was as charming a creator as in his art. She saw the picture of his Louisiana home; she saw the exquisite figure of his mother; she saw the beginning of his genius and his poetic, dreaming years. When he began the more realistic part of his story, talking aloud like this of himself for the first time to a woman he loved, he forgot her entirely, carried back by a strong force to the beginning of his struggles in New York. She listened, unchanged and a little terrified, as he told her of his work in the sculptor's studio, disguising the name of the man for whom he worked. She stopped him, her hand on his. So had she asked previously Cedersholm. Her voice brought him back to the present, to a feeling that for nothing in the world would he tell her yet, and he said "No, no," veiling the fact so that he could not guess, and passed over the misery of his master's treachery and his defeat. But through his narrative like a flame, charming, brilliant, vivifying, flashed the personality of Bella, though a child only, still a woman, and again Mary Faversham, with her hand on his stopped him—

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"What a bewitching child," she said. "Don't speak of her with such fire. I believe you loved her! She must be a woman."

Antony stirred. He rose from the divan where he was sitting and crossed over to the fireplace and stood by the eighteenth-century clock where the crystal water fell with the passing moments. She looked at him as he stood there, powerfully built, strong, the light of his feeling and of his introspection kindling in his eyes and on his brow. It had been three o'clock when he began his story. The afternoon grew paler, the fire died down to ashes on the little hearth. He took a cigarette from his pocket, lit it and stood smoking a few moments. Then he went in his imagination to Albany and carried his hearer with him, and he began to speak of Molly. He waited for a moment before laying bare to her his intimate life. As he turned and met her eyes, he said—

"I do not know how to tell you this. You must listen as well as you can. It is life, you know, and there are many kinds."

Antony, absorbed in his speech, forgot her entirely. He told her of Molly Shannon with a tenderness that would have moved any woman. When he closed the chapter of his married life, with his last words a silence fell, and he saw that she was moved beyond what he had dreamed she would be. He went back to her, waited a moment, then sat down and put his arm around her.

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"That is my past," he murmured. "Can you forget what there is in it of defeat and forget its sorrow?"

She kissed him and murmured: "I love you the better for it. It seems you have come to me through thorny ways, Antony. Perhaps I can make you forget them."

He did not tell her that she would. Even in this moment, when she was in his arms, he knew that in her there would be no such oblivion for him. The marks were too deep upon him. He felt them now. With what he had been saying, there came back to him a sense of the tremendous burden he had borne when poor, a sense of the common burden we all bear and which in the heart of the poet nothing ever entirely lifts.

"Listen," he said urgently and with a certain solemnity. "Any other man would speak to you about nothing but love. I can do it some day perhaps too easily, but not now, for this is our beginning and between us both there must be nothing to conceal." He thought she started a little, and said hastily: "I mean, nothing for our souls to hide. What I have told you is my life, but it does not end there. I adore my work. I am a worker born, I don't know how much of one, but I must give my time and my talent to it."

"I know, I know," she breathed. "Do you think I don't realize it, Antony? Do you think I don't adore you for it? Why, it is part of what makes me love you."

"That is all," he said. "I could no more emancipate myself from my work than I can from my ideals; they are part of me. I am perfectly poor."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, softly, "don't, don't speak of that."

He turned his fine eyes on her with a light in them whose courage and beauty she did not understand.

"Why not speak of it?" he asked quietly. "I am not ashamed of the fact that I have no money. Such as money is, I shall make it some day, and I shall not value it then any more than I do now. It is necessary, I begin to see, but only that. Its only importance is the importance we give to it: to keep straight with our kind; to justify our existence, and," he continued, "to help the next man."

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His face took a firmer expression. More than in his recitation of his life he seemed to forget her. As he said so, his arms fell a little way away from her—she grew cold—he seemed a stranger. Only for a moment, however, for he turned, put out his arms, and drew her to him. He kissed her as he had not kissed her yet, and after a few moments said—

"Mary, I bring you my talent, and my manhood, and my courage—nothing else—and I want it to

be enough for you."

She said that it was. That it was more than enough.

Fairfax sighed, his arms dropped, he smiled and looked at her, and said—

"I wonder if it is?" He glanced round the room quietly, with an arrogance of which he was unconscious. "You must give all this up, Mary."

"Must I?" She flushed and laughed. "You mean to say you want me to come to Bohemia?"

"I want you to live as I can live," he said, "share what I must have ... that is, I should ask you that if you married me now ..."

He watched her face. It was still illuminated. Her love for him was too vital to be touched by this proposition which she did not wholly understand.

"Most men shrink," Fairfax said, "from taking the woman they love from her luxuries. I believe that I shall not be poor very long. It will be a struggle. If you marry me now, you will share it with me, otherwise ..." He waited a moment.

And she repeated: "Otherwise, Antony?"

"I shall go away," he answered, "and not come back again until I am rich and great."

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CHAPTER XVII

After he had left her he was dazed and incredulous. His egoism, his enthusiasm, his idea of his own self-sufficiency seemed preposterous. A man in love should entertain no idea but the thought of the woman herself. He began to chafe at poverty which he had assured her made no difference to him. Did he wish to live again terrible years of sacrifice and sordidness? If so, he could not hope a woman accustomed to luxury would choose to share his struggle. He was absurd.

"Money," Dearborn said, regarding his shabby cuffs, "opens many doors. I am inclined also to think that it shuts many doors. You remember the Kingdom of Heaven and the needle's eye; but," he continued whimsically, "I should not think of comparing Mrs. Faversham to a camel, Tony!"

"Don't be an ass," said Antony, proudly. "Mrs. Faversham and I feel alike about it. Money will play no part in our mutual future." And, as he said this, was sure neither of her nor of himself.

"Under which circumstances," said his companion, "I shall offer you another cup of coffee and tell you my secret. Going with my play to London is not the only one. I am in love. When you have drunk your coffee we'll go home. Potowski is going to play for us, and he is going to bring his wife at last."

The two friends sat that evening in a corner of a café on the Boulevard Montparnasse. There were Bohemians around them at their table, and they themselves were part of that happy, struggling world. Dearborn dropped his voice, and said softly to Fairfax—

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"And I have asked my little girl to come as well to-night to hear the music."

Fairfax, instead of drinking his coffee, stared at Dearborn, and when Dearborn murmured, "Nora Scarlet is her name. Isn't it a name for a drama?" Fairfax stared still harder and repeated the girl's name under his breath, flushing, but Dearborn did not observe it.

"I want you to see her, Tony; she is sweet and good."

"Bob," said Fairfax gravely, "you mean to tell me you have been falling in love and carrying on a romance without telling me a word about it?"

Dearborn smiled. "To tell the truth, old man," he replied, "you have been so absorbed; there was not room for two romances in the studio."

"I met her in the springtime, Gentle Annie," Dearborn said whimsically, "and it was raining cats and dogs—but for me it rained just love and Nora. We were both waiting for a 'bus. Neither one of us had an umbrella. Now that you speak of it, Tony, I think we have never mended that lack in our possessions. We climbed to the *impériale* together, and the rain beat upon us both. We laughed, and I said to myself, a girl that can laugh like that in a shower should be put aside for a rainy day. We talked and we giggled. The rain stopped. We forgot to get down. We went to the end of the line and still we forgot to get down. The conductor collected a double fare, and afterward I took her home."

(Antony thought to himself, "Just what I did not do.")

"She is angelic, Tony, delightful, an artist's dream, a writer's inspiration, and a poor man's fairy."

Fairfax laughed.

"Don't laugh, old man," said Dearborn simply. "I have never heard you rave like this about the peerless Mary."

Fairfax said, "No. But then you talk better than I do." He shook Dearborn's hand warmly. "You know I am most awfully glad, don't you?"

"I know I am," said Dearborn, lighting a cigarette.

He settled himself with a beautiful content, asking nothing better than to go on rehearsing his love affair.

"We have been engaged a long time, Tony. It is only a question of how little two people can dare to try to get on with, you know, and I have determined to risk it."

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As they went up the steps of the studio together, Fairfax said—

"She is coming to-night, Bob, you say? Does she know anything about me?"

At this Dearborn laughed aloud. "She knows a great deal about me, Tony. My dear boy, do you think we have talked much about anything but each other? Do you talk with Mrs. Faversham about me? Nora knows I live here with a chum. She doesn't even know your name."

As Dearborn threw open the door they could hear Potowski playing softly the old French ballad, "J'ai perdu ma tourterelle."

A woman sat by Potowski in a big chair, and the lamp on the piano shone yellow upon her. When the two men entered the studio she rose, and Potowski, still playing, said—

"Let me present, at last, my better half. Mes amis, la Comtesse Potowski."

Dearborn greeted her enthusiastically, and Tony stood petrified. The comtesse, more mistress of the moment than Tony was, put out one hand and smiled, but she had turned very pale.

It was his Aunt Caroline....

"Mr. Rainsford," she lifted her brows, "I think I have seen you before."

Tony bowed over her hand and Potowski, still smiling and nodding, cried—

"These are great men and geniuses, *ma chérie*. You have here two great artists together. They both have wings on their shoulders. Before they fly away from us and are lost on Olympus, be charming to them. Carolina, *ma chérie*, they shall hear you sing."

Robert Dearborn put his hand on Potowski's shoulder and said—

"We love your husband, madame. He has been such a bully friend to us, such a wonderful friend."

"Poof, my dear Bobbie," murmured Potowski.

("J'ai perdu ma tourterelle.")

Fairfax asked, looking directly at her, "Will you really sing for us, Madame Potowski? Can you sing some old English ballad? We have not heard a word of English for many a long day."

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Potowski wandered softly into a familiar tune. He smiled over his shoulder at his wife, and, standing by the piano, Caroline Carew—Carolina Potowski—put her hands over her husband's on the keys and indicated an accompaniment, humming.

"If you can, dear, I will sing Mr. Rainsford *this*."

Tony took his place on the divan.

Then Madame Potowski sang:

"Flow gently, sweet Afton."

In New York Tony had said, as he sat in the big Puritan parlour, that her voice was divine. No one who has ever heard Carolina Potowski sing "Flow gently, sweet Afton" can ever forget it. Tony covered his face with his hands and said to himself, being an artist as well, "No matter what she has done, it was worth it to produce such art as that."

"Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise,
My Mary is asleep by your turbulent stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream."

Little Gardiner once more leaned against his arm; restless little Bella in red, her hair down her back, slipped out of the room to read in peace, and he sat there, a homeless stranger in a Northern city without a cent of money in his pocket, and the desires of life and art shining in his soul.

"Flow gently, sweet Afton."

He indistinctly heard Dearborn open the door. A woman slipped in and went over and sat down by her lover. The two sat together holding hands, and "Sweet Afton" flowed on, and nobody's dream was disturbed. Little Gardiner slept his peaceful sleep in his child's grave; his mother slept

her sleep in a Southern cemetery; the Angel of Resurrection raised his spotless wings over the city of the silent dead, and Antony's heart swelled in his breast.

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When the Comtesse Potowski stopped singing no one said a word. Her husband played a few bars of Werther and she sang the "Love Letters." Then, before she ceased, Antony was conscious that Nora Scarlet had recognized him. Before any embarrassment could be between them, he went over to her and took her hand, saying warmly—

"I am so glad, Miss Scarlet. Dearborn has told me of his good fortune. He is the best fellow in the world, and I know how lucky he is," and Nora Scarlet murmured something, with her eyes turned away from him.

Tony turned to Madame Potowski and said ardently, "You must let me come to see you tomorrow. I want to thank you for this wonderful treat."

And when Potowski and his Aunt Caroline had gone, and when Dearborn had taken Nora Scarlet home, Antony stood in the studio, which still vibrated with the tones of the lovely voice. He had lived once again a part of his old life. This was his mother's sister, and she had made havoc of her home. He thought of little Bella's visit to him in Albany.

"Mother has done something perfectly terrible, Cousin Antony—something a daughter is not supposed to know."

Well, the something perfectly terrible was, she had set herself free from a man she did not love; that she was making Potowski happy; that she had found her sphere and soared into it.

Fairfax tried in vain to think of himself now and Mary Faversham, but he could not. The past rushed on him with its palpitating wings. He groaned and stretched out his arms into the shadows of the room.

"There is something that chains me, holds me prisoner. I am wedded to something—is it death and a tomb?"

CHAPTER XVIII

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During the following weeks it seemed to him he was chasing his soul and her own. In their daily intercourse—sweet, of course, tender, of course—there was a constant sense of limitation. He wanted her to share with him his love of the beautiful, but Mary Faversham was conventional. He would have spent hours with her in the Louvre, hanging over treasures, musing before pictures whose art he felt he could never sufficiently make his own. Mrs. Faversham followed him closely, but after a time watched the people. Whilst her lover—in love with all beauty—remained transfixed over the contemplation of a petrified rose found in the ruins of Pompeii, or intoxicated himself with the beauty of an urn, she would interrupt his meditation by speaking to him of unimportant things. She found resemblances in the little Grecian statues to her friends in society. Tony sighed and relinquished seeing museums with Mary. She patronized art with *largesse* and generosity but he discovered it was one way to her of spending money, an agreeable, satisfying way to a woman of breeding and refinement.

The bewitching charm of her clothes, her great expenditures on herself, made him open his blue eyes. Once he held her exquisitely shod foot in his hand, admiring its beauty and its slenderness. On the polished leather was the sparkle of her paste buckles; he admired the ephemeral web of her silk stocking, and was ashamed that the thought should cross his mind as to what this lovely foot represented of extravagance. But he had been with her when she bought the buckles on the Rue de la Paix; he knew the price they cost. Was the money making him sordid—hypercritical, unkind?

Life for six months whirled round him. Mary Faversham dazzled and bewitched him, charmed and flattered him. Their engagement had not been made public. He ceased to work; he was at her beck and call; he went with her everywhere. At her house, in her box at the opera, he met all Paris. She was hardly ever alone with him; he made one of a group. Nevertheless, they were talked about. Several orders for busts were the outcome of his meeting fashionable Paris; but he did not work. Toward March he received word from America that his bas-relief under the name of Thomas Rainsford had won the ten thousand dollar prize. He felt like a prince. For some singular reason he told no one, not even Dearborn. In writing to him the committee had told him that according to the contracts the money would not be forthcoming until July. He had gone through so many bitter disappointments in his life that he did not want in the minds of his friends to anticipate this payment and be disappointed anew.

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Among his fellow-workers in the Barye studio was the son of a millionaire pork-packer from Chicago. The young man took a tremendous liking to Antony. With a certain perspicacity, the rich young fellow divined much of his new friend's needs. He came to the studio, to their different reunions, and chummed heartily with Dearborn and Fairfax. Peterson was singularly lacking in talent and tremendously over-furnished with heart. One day, as they worked side by side in the studio of the big man, Peterson watched Antony's handling of a tiger's head.

"By Jove!" cried the Chicagoan, "you are simply great—you are simply great! I wonder if you

would be furious with me if I said something to you that is on my mind?"

The something on the simple young man's mind was that he wanted to lend Fairfax a sum of money, to be paid back when the sculptor saw fit. After a moment's hesitation Antony accepted the loan, making it one-third as much as the big-hearted chap had suggested. Fairfax set July as the date of payment, when his competitive money should come in. He borrowed just enough to keep him in food and clothes for the following months.

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There were no motors in Paris then. In the mornings he drove with Mrs. Faversham to the Bois and limped by her side in the *allées*, whilst the worldly people stared at the distinguished, conspicuous couple. One day Barye himself stopped them, and to the big man Antony presented Mrs. Faversham who did not happen to know her fiancé's chief.

Fairfax looked at her critically as she laughed and was sweet and gracious. Carriages filed past them; shining equipages, the froth and wine of life flowed around them under the trees, whose chestnut torches were lit with spring.

Barye said to Antony, "Not working, are you, Rainsford? *C'est dommage*", and turning to Mrs. Faversham he added, nodding, "*C'est dommage*."

Antony heard the words throughout the day, and they haunted him—*c'est dommage*. Barye's voice had been light, but the sculptor knew the underlying ring in it. There is, indeed, no greater pity than for a man of talent not to work. That day he lunched with her on the terrace of her hotel overlooking the rose garden. Fairfax ate scarcely anything. Below his eyes spread a *parterre* of perfect purple heliotropes. The roses were beginning to bloom on their high trees, and the moist earth odours from the garden he had thought so exquisite came to him delicately on the warm breeze. But this day the place seemed oppressive, shut in by its high iron walls. In the corner of the garden, the gardener, an old man in blue overalls, bent industriously over his potting, and to Antony he seemed the single worthy figure. At the table he was surrounded by idlers and millionaires. He judged them bitterly to-day, brutally and unreasonably, and hastily looked toward Mrs. Faversham, his future life's companion, hoping that something in her expression or in her would disenchant him from the growing horror that was threatening to destroy his peace of mind. Mary Faversham was all in white; from her ears hung the pearls given her by her husband, whom she had never loved; around her neck hung a creamy rope of pearls; she was discussing with her neighbour the rising value of different jewels. It seemed to them both a vital and interesting subject.

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It was the end of luncheon; the fragrance of the strawberries, the fragrance of the roses came heavily to Antony's nostrils.

His aunt, the Comtesse Potowski, sat at his right. She was saying—

"My dear boy, when are you going to be married? There is nothing like a happy marriage, Tony. A woman may have children, you know, and be miserable; she has not found the right man. I hope you will be very happy, Tony."

Some one asked her to sing, and Madame Potowski, languid, slim, with unmistakable distinction, rose to play. She suggested his mother to Antony. She sang selections from the opera then in vogue. Tony stood near the piano and listened. Her voice always affected him deeply, and as he had responded to it in the old days in New York he responded now, and there was a sense of misery at his heart as he listened to her singing the music of old times when he had been unable to carry out his ideals because of his suffering and poverty.

There was now a sense of soul discontent, of pitiless remorse. As if again to disenchant himself, he glanced at Mary as she, too, listened. Back of her in the vases were high branches of lilac, white and delicate, with the first beauty of spring; she sat gracefully indolent, smoking a cigarette, evidently dreaming of pleasant things. To Antony there was a blank wall now between him and his visions. How unreal everything but money seemed, and his soul stifled and his senses numbed. In this atmosphere of riches and luxury what place had he? Penniless, unknown, his stature stunted—for it had been dwarfed by his idleness. Again he heard Barye say, "*C'est dommage*."

His aunt's voice, bright as silver, filled the room. He believed she was singing for him expressly, for she had chosen an English ballad—"Roll on, silvery moon." Again, with a sadness which all imaginative and poetic natures understand, his present slipped away. He was back in Albany in the cab of his engine; the air bellied in his sleeve, the air of home whipped in his veins—he saw the fields as the engine flashed by them, whitening under the moonlight as the silvery moon rolled on! How he had sweated to keep himself a man, how he had toiled to keep his hope up and to live his life well, what a fight he had made in order that his visions might declare themselves to him!

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When his aunt ceased to sing and people gathered around her, Tony rose and limped over to Mrs. Faversham. He put out his hand.

"I must go, Mary," he said. "I have some work to do this afternoon."

She smiled at him. "Don't be ridiculous, Tony."

The others had moved away to speak to the Comtesse Potowski, and they were alone.

"I am becoming ridiculous," said Antony, "that is true, but it is not because I am going to work."

She did not seem to notice anything in his gravity. "Don't forget we are dining and driving out to Versailles; don't forget, Tony."

Fairfax made no response. On his face was a pitiless look, but Mrs. Faversham, happy in her successful breakfast and enchanted with the music, did not read his expression.

"I will come in to-morrow, Mary."

Mrs. Faversham, turning to a man who had come up to her, still understood nothing.

"Don't forget, Tony,"—she nodded at him—"this afternoon."

Antony bade her good-bye. He looked back at her across the room, and she seemed to him then the greatest stranger of them all.

CHAPTER XIX

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He went upstairs to his atelier with a strange eager hammering at his heart. For several weeks the studio had been, for him, little more than an ante-chamber—a dressing-room where he had made careful toilettes before going to Mrs. Faversham. His constant attendance upon a beautiful woman had turned him into something of a dandy, and the purchase of fine clothes and linen had eaten well into his borrowed money, which had been frankly used by Dearborn when in need.

"Dearborn, wear any of my things you like, only don't get ink spots on them, for God's sake!"

And Dearborn had responded, "I don't need to go courting in four-hundred-franc suits, Tony; Nora is my kind, you know."

And when Antony had flashed out, "What the devil do you mean?" Dearborn explained—

"Only that Nora and I are poor together. I didn't intend to be rude, old man."

Dearborn had gone to London third-class with his play under his arm and hope in his heart. Antony had not been sorry to find himself alone. When he was not with Mary he paced the floor, his idle hands in his pockets. At night he was restless, and he did not disturb any one when at two o'clock he would rise to smoke, and, leaning out of the window, watch the dawn come up over the Louvre, over the river and the quays. His easels, his tools, his covered busts mocked him as the dust settled down upon them. His part of the big room had fallen into disuse. In the salons of Mary Faversham nothing seemed important but the possession of riches; they talked of art there, but they discussed it easily, and no one ever spoke of work. They talked of books there, but the makers of them seemed men of another sphere. His aunt and the Comte Potowski sang there indeed, but to Antony their voices were only echoes. He had grown accustomed to objects whose possession meant small fortunes. His own few belongings seemed pitiful and sordid. Poverty at Albany had appalled him, but as yet his soul had been untarnished. Life seemed then a beautiful struggle. Here in Paris, too, as he worked with Dearborn in his studio, the lack of money had been unimportant, and privation only a step on which men of talent poised before going on. Lessons had been precious to him, and in his meagre existence all his untrammelled senses had been keen. Now his lack of material resource was terrible, degrading, sickening.

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He threw open wide the window and let in the May sunlight, and the noise of the streets came with it. Below his window paused the "goat's milkman," calling sweetly on his little pipe; a girl cried lilies of the valley; there was a cracking of whips, the clattering of horses' feet, and the rattling of the little cabs. The peculiar impersonality of the few of the big city, the passing of the anonymous throng, had a soothing effect upon him. The river flowed quietly, swiftly past the Louvre, on which great white clouds massed themselves like snow. Fairfax drew a long breath and turned to the studio, put on his old corduroy clothes, filled himself a pipe, and uncovered one of his statues in the corner, and with his tools in his hand took his position before his discarded work.

This study had not struck him as being successful when he had thrown the cloth over it in February, when he had gone up to the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne. Since that time he had not touched his clay. Now the piece of work struck his critical sense with its several qualities of merit. He was too real an artist not to see its value and to judge it. Was it possible that he had created that charming thing—had there been in him sufficient talent to form those plastic lines? It was impossible for Antony to put himself in the frame of mind in which he had been before he left his work; in vain he tried to bring back the old inspiration of feeling. The work was strange to him, and almost beautiful too. He was jealous of it, angry at it. Had he become in so short a time a useless man? He should have been gaining in experience. A man is all the richer for being in love and being loved. The image of Mary would not come to him to soothe his irritation. He seemed to see her surrounded by people and things. Evidently his love had not inspired him, nor did luxury and the intercourse with worldly people. He had been the day before with Mary to see the crowning exhibition of a celebrated painter's work, the fruits of four years of labour. The artist himself, frightfully obese, smiling and self-satisfied, stood surrounded by his canvases. None of the paintings had the spontaneity and beauty of his early works—not one. Fairfax had

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heard a Latin Quarter student say, "B— used to paint with his soul before he was rich, now he paints with his stomach." The marks of the beast had stamped out the divine seal.

As Fairfax mixed his clay in the silent room where he and Dearborn had half starved together, he said, "I have never yet become so frightfully rich as to imperil my soul."

In the declining spring light he began to model. He did not look like a happy man, like a happy lover, like a man destined to marry a beautiful woman with several millions of dollars. "Damn money," he muttered as he worked, and, after a little, "Damn poverty," he murmured. What was it, then, he could bless? In his present point of view nothing seemed blessed. He was working savagely and heavily, but hungrily too, as though he besought his hands to find again for him the sacred touch that should electrify him again, or as though he prayed his brain to send its enlightened message to his hand, or as though he called on his emotion to warm his hardened heart—a combination which he believed was needful to work and art. Fairfax was so working when the porter brought him a letter.

It was from Dearborn, and Antony read it eagerly, holding it up to the fading light. As he saw Dearborn's handwriting he realized that he missed his companion, and also realized the strong link between them which is so defined between those who work at a kindred art.

"Dear old man,"—the letter was dated London—"I am sky-high in a room for which I pay a shilling a night. A thing in the roof is called a window. Through it I see a field of pots—not flower-pots, but chimney-pots—and the smoke from them is hyacinthine. The smoke of endless winters and innumerable fogs has grimed every blessed thing in this filthy room. My bed-spread is grey cloth, once meant to be white. Other lodgers have left burnt matches on the faded carpet, whose flowers have long since been put out by the soot. Out of this hole in the roof I see London, the sky-line of London in a spring sky. There is a singular sort of beauty in this sky, as if it had trailed its cerulean mantle over fields of English bluebells. For another shilling I dine; for another I lunch. I skip breakfast. I calculate I can stay here ten days, then the shillings will be all gone, Tony. In these ten days, old man, I shall sell my play. I am writing you this on the window-sill; without is the mutter of soft thunder of London—the very word London thrills me to the marrow. Such great things have come out of London—such prose—such verse—such immortality!

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"To-day I passed 'Jo,' Dickens's street-sweeper, in Dickens's 'Bleak House.' I felt like saying to him, 'I am as poor as you are, Jo, to-day,' but I remembered there were a few shillings between us.

"Well, old man, as I sit here I seem to have risen high above the roof-tops and to look down on the struggle in this great vortex of life, and here and there a man goes amongst them all, carrying a wreath of laurel. Tony, my eyes are upon him! Call me a fool if you will, call me mad; at any rate I have faith. I know I will succeed. Something tells me I will stand before the curtain when they call my name. It is growing late. I must go out and forage for food ... Tony. I kiss the hand of the beautiful Mrs. Favershams."

Antony turned the pages between his fingers. The reading of the letter had smoothed the creases from his brow. He sighed as he lifted his head to say "Come in," for some one had knocked timidly at the door.

"Hello!" Fairfax said, and now that they were alone he called her "Aunt Caroline."

Madame Potowski came forward and kissed him.

He drew a big chair into the window. He was always solicitous of her and a little pitiful.

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Madame Potowski's hair had been soft brown once; it was golden, frankly so, now, and her fine lips were a little rouged. In her dress of changeable silk, her cape of tulle, her hat with a bunch of roses, her tiny gloved hands, she was a very elegant little lady. She rested her hands on her parasol and had suggested his mother to Antony. Then, as that resemblance passed, came the fleeting suggestion which he never cared to hold—of Bella.

"I have come, my dear Tony, to see you. I wanted to see you alone."

Tony lit a cigar and sat by her side. The Comtesse Potowski had a little diamond watch with a chain on her breast. Outside the clock struck five.

"I have only a second to stay—my husband misses me if I am five minutes out of his sight."

"I do not wonder, Aunt Caroline."

"Isn't it all strange, Tony," she asked, "how very far up we have come?"

He shook the ashes off his cigar. "Well, I don't feel myself very far up, Aunt Caroline."

"My dear Tony, aren't you going to marry an immense fortune?"

"Is that what people say, Aunt Caroline?"

"You are going to do a very brilliant thing, Tony."

"Is that what you call going very far up?"

His aunt shook her pretty head. "Money is the greatest power in the world, dear boy. Art is very well, but there is nothing in the wide world like an income, dear."

Her nephew stirred in his chair. Caroline Potowski looked down at her little diamond watch, her dress shining like a bunch of many-hued roses. Antony knew that her husband was rich; he also made a good income from his singing and she must have made not an inconsiderable fortune.

"What are you thinking about?" said his aunt later, her hand on his own. "You have shown great wisdom, great worldly wisdom."

"My God!" exclaimed her nephew between his teeth.

If Madame Potowski heard this exclamation, it was not tragic to her. She lowered her tone, although there was no one to hear them.

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"Tony, I am very anxious about money."

Her nephew laughed aloud. In spite of himself there came over him in a flash the memory of the day nearly ten years ago when she sat on the side of his miserable little bed in his miserable little room in New York and took from him as a loan—which she never meant to pay back—all the money he had in the world. He put his hands in his pockets.

"Has your husband any financial difficulties?"

"My husband knows nothing about it," she said serenely. "You don't suppose I could tell him, do you? I must have five thousand francs, dear Tony, before to-morrow."

Tony said lightly, "I am afraid economy is not your strong point."

"Tony," she exclaimed reproachfully, "I am a wonderful manager; I can make a franc go further than my husband can a louis, and I have a real gift for bargains. Think of it! I only had one hundred dollars a month to dress myself and Bella and poor little Gardiner, and for all my little expenses." The children's names on her lips seemed sacrilege to him. He did not wish her to speak those sacred names, or destroy his sacred past, whose charm and tenderness persisted over all the suffering and which nothing could destroy. "I have been buying a quantity of old Chinese paintings—a great bargain; in ten years they will be worth double the money. You must come and see them. The dealer will deliver them to-morrow."

"History," Antony thought, "how it repeats itself!"

Caroline Potowski leaned toward her nephew persuasively, and even in the softened twilight he saw the weakness and the caprices of her pretty face, and he pitied Potowski.

"I must have five thousand francs before to-morrow," said his aunt, "otherwise these dealers will make me trouble."

Fairfax laughed again. With a touch of bitterness he said—

"And I must have an income of five times as much as that a year—ten times as much as that a year—unless I wish to feel degraded because I am a poor labourer."

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The comtesse did not reply to this. As she did not, Fairfax saw the humour of it.

"You do not really think I could give you five thousand francs, auntie?"

"I know you haven't a great deal of money, dear boy——"

"Not a great deal, auntie."

"But you seem to have such a lot of time to spend to amuse yourself."

He nodded. "So I seem to have."

The comtesse looked at him a little askance. "You are going to make such a brilliant marriage. Mrs. Faversham is so fearfully rich."

Fairfax exclaimed, but shut down on the words that came to his lips. He realized that his aunt was a toy woman, utterly irresponsible, a pretty fool. He said simply—

"You had better frankly tell your husband."

She swung her parasol to and fro. "You think so, Tony?"

"Decidedly."

"And you couldn't possibly manage, Tony?"

Tony pointed to his studies. "These are my only assets; these are my finances, auntie. I shall have to sell something to live on—if I am so lucky as to be able to find a customer."

"If I could give the dealer a thousand francs tomorrow I think he would wait," said his aunt.

Tony shook his head. "I wish I were a millionaire for five minutes, Aunt Caroline."

His aunt rose and smoothed her glove. "I shall have to pawn my watch and necklace," she said tranquilly. "Bella is fearfully rich," she drawled, nodding at him, "and she is of age. Her father will settle a million on her when she marries."

A pang went through Fairfax's heart. Another heiress!

"They say she is awfully pretty and awfully sought after."

Antony murmured, "Yes, yes, of course," and took a few paces up and down the room.

"Do you know," said his aunt, who had slowly walked over to the door and stood with her hand on the knob, "I used to think you were a little in love with Bella. She was such a funny, old-fashioned child, so grown up." [Pg 314]

Fairfax exclaimed fiercely, "Aunt Caroline, I don't like to re-live the past!"

"I don't wonder," she murmured quietly; "and you are going to make such a brilliant marriage."

He saw her go with relief. She was terrible to him—like a vampire in her silks and jewels. Would she ruin her innocent, kindly husband? What would she do if she could not raise the money? He believed her capable of anything.

For three days he worked feverishly, and then he wrote to Mrs. Faversham that he was a little seedy and working, and that as Dearborn was away he would rather she would not come to the studio. Mrs. Faversham accepted his decision and wrote that she was organizing a charity concert for some fearfully poor people whom the Comtesse Potowski was patronizing; the comte and comtesse would both sing at the *musicale*, and he must surely come. "We must raise five thousand francs," she wrote, "and perhaps you may have some little figurine that we could raffle off in chances."

Tony laughed as he read the letter. He sent her a statuette to be raffled off for his aunt's Chinese paintings. She was ignorant of any sense of honour.

When Dearborn came back from London he found Antony working like mad.

Dearborn threw his suit-case down in the corner, his hat on top of it, and extended his hands.

"Empty-handed, Tony!"

But Fairfax, as he scanned his friend's face, saw no expression of defeat there.

"Which means you left your play in London, Bob."

"Tony," said Dearborn, linking his arm in Fairfax's and marching him up and down the studio, "we are going to be very rich."

"Only that," said Tony shortly.

"This is the beginning of fame and fortune, old man!" [Pg 315]

Dearborn sat down on the worn sofa, drew his wallet out of his pocket, took from it a sheaf of English notes, which he held up to Fairfax.

"Count it, old chap."

Fairfax shook his head. "No; tell me how much for two years' flesh and blood and soul—how you worked here, Bob, starved here, how you felt and suffered!"

"I forget it all," said the playwright quietly; "but it can never be paid for with such chaff as this,"—he touched the notes. "But the applause, the people's voices, the tears and laughter, that will pay."

"By heaven!" exclaimed Fairfax, grasping Dearborn's hand, "I bless you for saying that!"

Dearborn regarded him quietly. "Do you think I care for money?" he said simply. "I thought you knew me better than that."

Fairfax exclaimed, "Oh, I don't know what I know or think; I am in a bad dream."

Dearborn laid the notes down on the sofa. "It is for you and me and Nora, the bunch, just as long as it lasts."

Between Dearborn and himself, since Antony's engagement, there had been a distinct reserve.

Antony lit a cigarette and Dearborn lighted his from Antony's. The two friends settled themselves comfortably. It was the close of the day. Without, as usual, rolled the sea of the Paris streets, going to, going with the river's tide, and going away from it; the impersonal noise always made for them an accompaniment not disagreeable. The last light of the spring day fell on Fairfax's uncovered work, on the damp clay with the fresh marks of his instruments. He sat in his corduroys, a red scarf at his throat, a beautiful manly figure half curled up on the divan. The last of the day's light fell too on Dearborn's reddish hair, on his fine intelligent face. Fairfax said—

"Now tell me everything, Bob, from the beginning, from the window as you looked over the chimney-pots with the hyacinthine smoke curling up in the air—tell me everything, to the last word the manager said."

"Hark!" exclaimed Dearborn, lifting his hand. "Nora is coming. I want to tell it to her as well. No one can tell twice alike the story of his first success—the first agony of first success." He caught [Pg 316]

his breath and struck Fairfax a friendly blow on his chest. "It will be a success, thank God! There is Nora," and he crossed the studio to let Nora Scarlet in.

CHAPTER XX

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The third day he went up to see her and found her in the garden, a basket on her arm, cutting flowers. She wore a garden hat covered with roses and carried a pair of gilded shears with which to snip her flowers. As Antony came down the steps of the house she dropped the scissors into the basket with her garden gloves. She lifted her cheek to him.

"You may kiss me, dear," she said; "no one will see us but the flowers and the birds."

Antony bent to kiss her. It seemed to him as though his arms were full of flowers.

"If you had not come to-day, I should have gone to you. You look well, Tony," she said. "I don't believe you have been ill at all."

"My work, Mary."

She took his arm and started towards the house. "You must let me come and see what wonderful things you are doing."

"I am doing nothing wonderful," he said slowly. "It has taken me all this time to realize I was never a sculptor; I have been so atrociously idle, Mary."

"But you need rest, my dear Tony."

"I shall not need any rest until I am an old man."

He caressed the hand that lay on his arm. They walked past the flower-beds, and she picked the dead roses, cutting the withered leaves, and talking to him gaily, telling him all she had done during the days of their separation, and suddenly he said—

"You do not seem to have missed me."

"Everywhere," she answered, pressing his arm.

They walked together slowly to the house, where she left her roses in the hall and took him into the music-room, where they had been last when he left her, the afternoon following the luncheon.

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"I must impress her indelibly on my mind," Antony thought. "I may never see her again."

When she had seated herself by the window through which he could see the roses on the high rose trees and the iron balcony on whose other side was the rumble of Paris, he stood before her gravely.

"Come and sit beside me," she invited, slowly. "You seem suddenly like a stranger."

"Mary," he said simply, "the time has come for me to ask you——" The words stuck in his throat. What in God's name was he going to ask her? What a fanatic he was! Utterly unconscious of his thoughts, she interrupted him.

"I know what you want to ask me, Tony, and I have been waiting." She leaned against him. "You see, I have had the foolish feeling that perhaps you didn't care as you thought you did. It is that dreadful difference in our age."

"Do you care, Mary?"

She might have answered him, "Why otherwise should I marry a penniless man, five years my junior, when the world is before me?"

She said, "Yes, I care deeply."

"Ah," he breathed, "then it is all right, Mary; that is all we need." After a few seconds he said gently: "Now look at me." Her face was flushed and her eyes humid. She raised them to him. He was holding one of her hands in both of his as he spoke, and from time to time touched it with his lips. "Listen to me; try to understand. I am a Bohemian, an artist; say that over and over. Do you think me crazy? I have not been ill. I went into a retreat. I shut myself up with my soul. This life here,—he gestured to the room as though it held a host of enemies,—"this life here has crushed me. I had begun to think myself a miserable creature just because I am poor. Now, if money is the only thing that counts in the world, of course I am a miserable creature, and then let us drink life to its dregs; and if it is not the only thing, well then, let us drink the other things to their dregs." She said, "What other things?"

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"Why, the beauty of struggling together with every material consideration cast out! Think how beautiful it is to work for one you love; think of the beauty of being all in all to each other, Mary!"

"But we are that, Tony."

Now that Antony had embarked, he spoke rapidly. "You owe your luxury to your husband whom

you never loved. Now I cannot let you owe him anything more, Mary."

She began, "But I don't think of my fortune in connection with him."

Antony did not hear her. "I feel lately as though I had been selling my soul," he said passionately. "And what can a man have in exchange for his soul? Of course, it was presumptuous folly of me to have asked you to marry me."

She put both her hands over his and breathed his name. He spoke desperately, and the picture rose up before him of his bare studio and his meagre life.

"Will you marry me now?"

"I said I was quite ready."

"The day will come when I will be rich and great." He paused. He saw that her eyes were already troubled, and asked eagerly, "You believe that, don't you?"

"Of course."

"Great enough, rich enough, not to make a woman ashamed. You must wait for that time with me."

Mary Faversham said quietly, "You have been shutting yourself up with a lot of fanatical ideas."

He covered her lips gently with his hands. His face became grave.

"Oh," he said, "don't speak—wait. You don't dream what every word you say is going to mean—wait. You don't understand what I mean!"

And he began to tell her the gigantic sacrifice he was about to impose upon her. If he had been assured of his love for her, assured of her love for him, he might have made a magnetic appeal, but he seemed to be talking to her through a veil. He shook his head.

"No, I cannot ask it, Mary."

Mary Faversham's face had undergone a change. It was never lovelier than now, as with gravity and sweetness she put her arms around his neck and looked up at him with great tenderness. She said—

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"I think I know what you mean. You want me to give up my fortune and go to you."

She seemed to radiate before Fairfax's eyes, and his worship of her at this moment increased a thousandfold. He leaned forward and laid his head against her breast.

In the love of all women there is a strong quality of the maternal. Mary bent over the blond head and pressed her lips to his hair. When Antony lifted his face there were tears in his eyes. He cried—

"Heaven bless you, darling! You don't know how high I will take you, how far I will carry us both. The world shall talk of us! Mary—Mary!"

She smoothed his forehead. She knew there would never be another moment in her life like this one.

He said, "I will take you to the studio, of course. I haven't told you that in June I shall have fifty thousand francs, and from then on I will be succeeding so fast that we will forget we were ever poor." He saw her faintly smile, and said sharply, "I suppose you spend fifty thousand francs now on your clothes!"

She said frankly, "And more; but that makes no difference," and ventured, "You don't seem to think, Tony, what a pleasure it would be to me to do for you." She paused at his exclamation. "Oh, of course, I understand your pride," and asked, "What shall I do with my fortune, Tony?"

"This money on which you are living," he said gravely, "that you have accepted from a man you never loved, give it all to the poor. Keep the commandment for once, and we will see what the treasures of heaven are like."

He thought she clung to him desperately, and there was an ardour in the return of her caress that made him say—

"Mary, don't answer me to-day, please; I want you to think it calmly over. Just now you have shown me what I wanted to see."

She asked, "What?"

"That you love me."

She said, "Yes, I do love you. Will you believe it always?"

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Bending over her he said passionately, "I shall believe it when I have your answer, and you are going to make me divinely happy."

She echoed the word softly, "Happy!" and her lips trembled. Across the ante-chamber came the sound of voices. Their retreat was about to be invaded by the people of the world who never very

long left Mary Faversham alone.

"Oh!" she cried, "I cannot see any one. Why did they let any one in?" And, lifting her face to him, she said in a low tone, "Tony, kiss me again."

Antony, indifferent as to who might come and who might not, caught her to him and held her for a second, then crossed the room to the curtained door and went down the terrace steps and across the garden.

By the big wall he turned and looked back to where, through the long French windows, he could see the music-room with the palms and gilt furniture. Mary Faversham was already surrounded by the Comte de B—— and the Baron de F——. He knew them vaguely. Before going to get his hat and stick from the vestibule, he watched her for a few moments, with a strange adoration in his heart. She was his, she was ready to give up everything for the sake of his ideals. He thought he could never love more than at this moment. He believed that he was not asking her to make a ridiculous sacrifice, but on the contrary to accept a spiritual gain—a sacrifice of all for love and art and honour, too! As he looked across the room a distinguished figure came to Mary Faversham. He was welcomed very cordially. It was Cedersholm. He had been in Russia for months. Fairfax's heart grew cold.

As though Mary fancied that her mad lover might linger, she came over to the window and drew down the Venetian shade. It fell, rippling softly, and blotted out the room for Fairfax. A wave of anger swept him, a sudden uncertainty regarding the woman herself followed, and immediately he saw himself ridiculous, crude and utterly fantastical in his ultimatum. The egoism and childishness of what he had done stood out to him, and in that second he knew that he had lost her—lost her for ever.

CHAPTER XXI

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He did not go home. He went into the Bois and walked for miles. His unequal, limping strides tired him to death and he was finally the only wanderer there. Over the exquisite forest of new-leaf trees the stars came out at length, and the guardians began to observe him. At eight o'clock in the morning he had not eaten. He went into a small restaurant and made a light meal. For the first time since Albany, when he had drunk too much in despair and grief, he took now too much red wine. He walked on feathers and felt his blood dance. He rang the bell at Mary Faversham's at nine-thirty in the morning, and the butler, intensely surprised, informed him that Mary had gone out riding in the Bois with Monsieur Cedersholm. Antony had given this servant more fees than he could afford. He found a piece of money in his pocket and gave it to Ferdinand.

"But, monsieur," said the man, embarrassed, and handled the piece. It was a louis. Antony waved magnificently and started away. He took a cab back to the studio, but could not pay the cabman, for the louis was his last piece of money. He waked Dearborn out of a profound sleep, in which the playwright was dreaming of two hundred night performances.

"Bob, can you let me have a few francs?"

"In my vest pocket," said Dearborn. "Take what you like."

Tony paid his cab out of the change and realized that it was some of the money from Dearborn's advance royalties. It gave him pleasure to think that he was spending money which had been made by art. It was "serious money." He did not hesitate to use it. He sat by the table when he came in from paying his cab and fell into a heavy sleep, his head upon his arm. Thus the two friends slumbered until noon, Dearborn dreaming of fame and Antony of despair.

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At two o'clock that afternoon, bathed and dressed, himself again save for a certain bewilderment in his head, he stood in his window looking out on the quays. Underneath, Nora Scarlet and Dearborn passed arm-in-arm. They were going to Versailles to talk of love, of fame and artistic struggle, under the trees. Antony heard the shuffling of his old concierge on the stairs. He knew that the man was bringing him a letter and that it would be from Mary.

With the letter between his hands, he waited some few minutes before opening it. He finally read it, sitting forward on the divan, his face set.

"Dearest," it began, and then there was a long space as though the woman could not bear to write the words, "You will never be able to judge me fairly. I cannot ask it of you. You are too much of a genius to understand a mere woman. I am writing you in my boudoir, just where you came to me that day when you told me your love and when I wept to hear it, dearest. I shall cry again, thinking of it, many times. I have done you a great wrong in taking ever so little of you, and taking even those few months from the work which shall mean so much to the world. Now I am glad I have found it out before it is too late. I have no right to you, Tony. In answer to what you asked me yesterday, I say no. You will not believe it is for your sake, dear, but it is. I see you could not share my life in any way, and keep your ideals. How could I ask you to? I see I could not share your struggle and leave you free enough to keep your ideals.

"I can never quite believe that love is a mistake. I shall think of mine for you the rest of

my life. When you read this letter I shall have left Paris. Do not try to find me or follow me. I know your pride, dear, the greatest pride I ever saw or dreamed of. I wonder if it is a right one. At any rate, it will not let you follow me; I am sure of that. I wish to put between us an immeasurable distance, one which no folly on your part and no weakness on mine could bridge. Cedersholm has returned from Russia, and I told him last night that I would marry him.—Mary."

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Then, for the first time, Tony knew how he loved her. Crushing the letter between his hands, he snatched up his hat and rushed out, took a cab, and drove like mad to her house.

The little horse galloped with him, the driver cracked his whip with utterances like the sparks flying, and they tore up the Champs Elysées, part of the great multitude, yet distinct, as is every individual with their definite sufferings and their definite joys.

Her house stood white and distinct at the back of the garden, the windows were flung open. On the steps of the terrace a man-servant, to whom Antony had given fat tips which he could not afford, stood in an undress uniform, blue apron and duster over his arm; painters came out with ladders and placed them against the wall. The old gardener, Félicien, who had given him countless *bouttonnières*, mounted the steps with a flower-pot in his hand and talked with the man-servant; he was joined by two maids. The place was left, then, to servants. Everything seemed changed. She might never—he was sure she would never—return as Mrs. Faversham. Immeasurably far away indeed, as she said—immeasurably far—she seemed to have gone into another sphere, and yet he had held her in his arms! The thought of his tenderness was too real to permit of any other consideration holding its place. He sprang out of his cab, rang the door-bell, and when the door was opened he asked the surprised servant for Mrs. Faversham's address.

"But I have no idea of it, monsieur," said the man with a comprehensive gesture. "None."

"You are not sending any letters?"

"None, monsieur."

Fairfax's blue eyes, his pale, handsome face, appealed very much to Ferdinand. He liked Monsieur Rainsford. Although the chap did not know it himself, Tony had been far more generous than were the millionaires. Ferdinand called one of the maids.

"Where's madame's maid stopping in London?" asked the butler.

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"Why, at the Ritz," said Louise promptly. "She is always at the Ritz, monsieur."

Tony had no more gold to reward this treachery.

When Dearborn came home that night from Versailles he found a note on the table, leaning up against the box in which the two comrades kept their mutual fund of money. Dearborn's advance royalty was all gone but a hundred francs.

"I have gone to London," Fairfax's note ran. "Sell anything of mine you like before I get back, if you are hard up.—Tony."

He spent two pounds on a pistol. If he had chanced to meet Cedersholm with her, he would have shot him. From the hour he had received her letter and learned that she was going to marry Cedersholm, he had been hardly sane.

At five o'clock on a bland, sweet afternoon, three days after he had left Paris, he was shown up to her sitting-room at the Whiteheart Hotel, in Windsor. He had traced her there from the Ritz.

Mary Faversham, who was alone, rose to meet him, white as death.

"Tony," she said, "don't come nearer—stand there, Tony. Dear Tony, it is too late, too late!"

He limped across the room and took her in his arms, looking at her wildly. Her lips trembled, her eyes filled.

"I married him by special license yesterday, Tony. Go, go, before he comes."

He saw she could not stand. He put her in a chair, fell on his knees and buried his head in her lap. He clung to her, to the Woman, to his Vision of the Woman, to the form, the substance, the reality which he thought at last he had really caught for ever. She bent over him and kissed his hair, weeping.

"Go," she said. "Go, my darling."

Fairfax had not spoken a word. Curses, invectives, prayers were in his heart. He crushed them down.

"I love you for your pride," she said. "I adore you for the brave demand you made me. I could not fulfil it, Tony, for your sake."

Then he spoke, and meant what he said, "You have ruined my life."

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"Oh no!" she cried. "Don't say such a thing!"

"Some day I shall kill him." He had risen, with tears in his eyes. "You loved me," he challenged, "you did love me!"

She did not dare to say "I love you still." She saw what the tragedy would be.

"We could not have been poor," she said, "could we, dear?"

He exclaimed bitterly, "If you thought of that, you could not have cared." And she was strong enough to take advantage of his change.

"I suppose I could not have cared as you mean, or I should never have done this."

Then Fairfax cursed under his breath, and once again, this time brutally, caught her in his arms and kissed her, crying to her as he had cried once before—

"Tell him how I kissed you—tell him!"

White as death, Mary Faversham pushed him from her. "For the love of God, Tony, go!"

And he went, stumbling down the stairs. Out in Windsor the bugles for some solemn festivity were blowing.

"The flowers of the forest are all wiled away."

BOOK IV

BELLA

CHAPTER I

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From the Western world he heard nothing for four years. Meanwhile he brought his new skill, his maturer knowledge, the result of seven years' study and creation in the workshops of masters and in his own studio, to the sculpturing of the second tomb—the Open Door.

There were crowds around his marble in the Salon, and he mingled with them, watching them muse, discuss, criticize, grow sad and thoughtful before his conception of Life and Death. Some of them looked as poor Tom Rainsford had looked, yearningly toward the door of the tomb. Others hurried past the inscrutable beauty of the Open Door. Purely white, stainless, slender, luminous and yet cold, Molly stood immortalized by Antony. His conception made him famous.

He had exhibited each year with increasing success at private exhibitions, but never at the Salon, and had been called "poseur" because of his reluctance to expose his work in national academies. His bas-reliefs had made him favourably known, but nothing equalled the solemn marble that came now from his studio. Antony's work occupied some twenty feet in the Champ de Mars.

His lame foot touched a pile of newspapers on the floor, in which the critics spoke of him in terms he thought fulsome and ridiculous, and they pained him while they dazzled him. He thought of Bella. He had thought of Bella constantly of late, and there were no answers to his questions. She would be twenty-three, a woman, married, no doubt, always enchanting. How she had stood before his bas-relief in Albany, musing, and her eyes had been wet when she had turned to him and asked, "Who is it, Cousin Antony? It is perfectly beautiful, beautiful!" He would have liked to have led Bella to his work in the Salon, and, hand-in-hand with her, until the crowd around them should have melted away, have stood there with her alone. From the night her inspiring little hand had stolen into his, Bella's hand had seemed a mate for his.

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"Who is it, Cousin Antony?"

Indeed, who was the woman going through the Open Door? What woman's face and form constantly inspired him, haunting him, promising to haunt him until the end? He was always seeking to unveil the face of his visions and find the one woman, the supplement, the mate, the companion.

Who would inspire him now? His memories, his dead, his past, had done their work. What fresh inspiration would urge him now to create?

The public had no fault to find with him. The tomb made him celebrated in twenty-four hours. At a time when all Paris was laughing at Rodin's Balzac, there was a place for a sculptor like Antony, for the idealist and dreamer, gifted with a strong and faultless technique.

He read hastily and with surprise the exaggerated praise which the "Open Door" called forth from the reviews. "It is not as good as all that," he thought, "and it is too soon to hear thunder about my ears."

He seemed to see the door of his future open and himself standing there, the burden of proof upon him. What work he must continue to produce in order to sustain such sudden fame! The

Figaro called him a "giant," and several critics said he was the sculptor of the time. His mail was full of letters from friends and strangers. By ten o'clock the night of the "Vernissage" all his acquaintances and intimates in Paris had brought him their felicitations. He turned back to his table where his letters lay. He had just read an affectionate, enthusiastic expression of praise and belief from Potowski. There was another note which he had read first with anger, then with keen satisfaction, and then with as much malice as his heart could hold.

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"My dear Sir,

"I have the honour to represent in France the committee for the construction in Boston of a triumphal arch to be raised in commemoration of the men who first fell in the battle of the Revolution. The idea is to crown this arch with a group of figures, either realistic or symbolical, as the sculptor shall see fit. After carefully considering the modern work of men in France, I am inclined to offer this commission to you if you can accept it. Your 'Open Door' is the most beautiful piece of sculpture, according to my opinion, in modern times. An appointment would gratify me very much.

"I have the honour to be, sir, etc.,
"Gunner Cedersholm."

Antony had given the appointment with excitement, and he was waiting now to see for the first time in ten years the man who had stolen from him fame, honour, and love.

He had heard nothing of the Cedersholms for six years. As far as he knew, during this time they had never returned to France. Once he vaguely understood that they were travelling for Mrs. Cedersholm's health.

His eyes ached to look upon the man whom he regarded as his bitterest enemy. Of Mrs. Cedersholm he thought now only as he thought of woman, of vain visions which he might never, never grasp or hold. He had bitterly torn his love out of his heart.

After leaving her at Windsor he had remained for some time in London where Dearborn had followed him, and where Dearborn and Nora Scarlet were married. Fairfax had sat with them in the gallery at Regent's Theatre when the curtain rose on Dearborn's successful play. Fairfax took a position as professor of drawing in a girls' school in the West End and taught a group of schoolgirls for several months. Between times he modelled on his statues for his new conception of the "Open Door." Then in the following spring, with a yearning in his heart and homesickness for France, he returned into the city with the May. He could scarcely look up at the windows of the old studio on the quays. He rented a barren place in the Vaugirard quarter and began his work in terrible earnestness.

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Now, as he waited for his visitor, he wondered if Mary Cedersholm had visited the Salon, if with others she had stood before his sculpture. His servant announced "Monsieur Cedersholm," then let in the visitor and shut the door behind him. Cedersholm entered the vast studio in the soft light of late afternoon with which the spring twilight, rapidly withdrawing, filled the room. Antony did not stir from his chair, where he sat enveloped in a cloud of tobacco smoke.

The small man—Fairfax had forgotten how small he was—entered cautiously as though he were entering the room of a foe, which, indeed, he was doing, without being aware of it. Fairfax remembered that he had seen Cedersholm wearing a single eyeglass, and now spectacles of extraordinary thickness covered his eyes. He evidently saw with difficulty. As Fairfax did not rise to greet him, Cedersholm approached, saying tentatively—

"Mr. Rainsford? I believe I have an appointment with Mr. Rainsford."

"Yes," said Fairfax curtly, "I am here. Sit down, will you?"

His lame foot, which would have disclosed his identity, was withdrawn under his chair.

"I have just come from the Soudan," said Cedersholm, "where I had a sunstroke of the eyes. I see badly."

"Blindness," said Fairfax shortly, "is a common failing, but many of us don't know we have anything the matter with our eyes."

"It is, however, a tragedy for a sculptor," said Cedersholm, taking the chair to which Fairfax had pointed.

From the box on the table Fairfax offered his guest a cigar, which was refused. Antony lit a fresh one; it was evident he had not been recognized.

"I have not touched a tool for five years," Cedersholm said. "A man like you who must adore his work can easily imagine what this means."

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"For two or three years I did not touch a tool. I know what it means."

"Ah!" exclaimed Cedersholm with interest. "What was your infirmity?"

"Poverty," returned Fairfax. Then added, "You have not come to talk with me about the short and simple annals of the poor."

"All that which goes to make the education and career of a great man," said Cedersholm, "is

deeply interesting, especially to a confrère. You have executed a very great piece of work, Mr. Rainsford."

Fairfax made no response.

"You seem," said Cedersholm, "to doubt my sincerity. You received my letter?"

"Yes."

"Would you be reluctant to undertake such a work?"

The man who stood before Fairfax was so altered from his former self that Tony was obliged to whip up his memories, to call up all his past in order to connect this visitor with the man who had ruined him. Pale, meagre, so thin that his clothes hung upon him, disfigured by his thick glasses, he seemed to have shrunk into a little insignificant creature. No man could connect him with the idea of greatness or success. Fairfax answered it would depend upon circumstances.

"I expect you are very much overrun with orders, Mr. Rainsford. I can understand that. I do not take up a newspaper without reading some appreciative criticism of your work." The Swedish sculptor removed his glasses and wiped his eyes with a fragrant silk handkerchief. Then carefully replacing his spectacles, begged Fairfax's pardon. "I have suffered dreadfully with these infirm eyes," he said.

Fairfax leaned forward a little, continuing to whip up his memories, and, once goaded, like all revengeful and evil things, they came now quickly to bring back to him his anger of the past. Hatred and malice had disappeared—his nature was too sweet, too generous and forgiving to brood upon that which was irrevocably gone. He had been living fast; he had been working intensely; he had been loved, and he had shut his eyes and sighed and tried to think he loved in return. But the walls of his studio in the Rue Vaugirard melted away, and, instead, Cedersholm's rich, extravagant New York workshop rose up before his eyes. He saw himself again the young, ardent student, his blood beating with hope and trust, and his hands busy over what he had supposed was to be immortal labour; it had been given for this man then, the greatest living sculptor, to adopt it for his own. Now his heart began to beat fast. He clasped his hands strongly together, his voice trembling in his throat.

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"I should ask a tremendous price," he said slowly, "a tremendous price."

"Quite right," returned the Swedish sculptor. "Talent such as yours should be paid for generously. I used to think so. I have commanded my price, Mr. Rainsford."

"I know your reputation and your fame," said Fairfax.

The other accepted what his host said as a compliment, and continued—

"The committee is very rich; there are men of enormous fortunes interested in the monument. They can pay—in reason," he added; "of course, in reason—and as you are an American there would be in your mind the ideal of patriotism."

"My demand would not be in reason," said Fairfax.

Cedersholm, struck at length by his tone, finding him lacking in courtesy and manners, began to peer at him keenly in the rapidly deepening twilight.

"In a way," he said sententiously, eager to be understood and approved of by the man who, in his judgment, was important in the sculpture of the time, he continued courteously, "there is no price too much to pay for art. I have followed your work for years."

"Have you?" said Antony.

"Six years ago I bought a little statue in an exhibition of the works of the pupils of Barye's studio." Cedersholm again took out his fine silk handkerchief and pressed it to his eyes. "Since then I have looked for comments on your work everywhere, and, whenever I saw you mentioned, I reminded the fact to my wife, who was an admirer of your talent."

Antony grew cold. At the mention of her name his blood chilled. Mary! Mary Faversham-Cedersholm. He drew his breath hard, clasped one hand across his forehead, and still back in the far remote past he did not bid this vision of Mary Cedersholm to linger.

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"When I came back to Paris, I found you had justified my faith in your work. The question of payment now, in case you undertake this group, for instance, I dare say the matter would be satisfactorily adjusted."

"I doubt it, Mr. Cedersholm."

Cedersholm, already interested in the man as a worker, became now interested in his personality, and found him curious, settled himself comfortably in his chair and swung his monocle, which he still wore, by its string. He saw the face of his host indistinctly, and his eyes wandered around the vast, shadowy studio where the swathed casts stood in the corners. The place gave him a twinge of jealousy and awakened all his longings as an artist.

"It makes me acutely suffer," he said, "to come into the workshop of the sculptor. Four years of enforced idleness—" Then he broke in abruptly and said, "You have apparently settled already in your mind—decided not to accept this work for us. I think you are determined not to meet us,

Mr. Rainsford."

"The price," said Antony, leaning fully forward, his blue eyes, whose sight was unimpeded, fixed on Cedersholm, "must be great enough to buy me back my lost youth."

His companion laughed gently and said indulgently, "My dear Mr. Rainsford."

"To buy me back my loss of faith in men's honour, in human kindness, in justice, in woman's love."

"He is a true genius," Cedersholm thought to himself, "just a bit over the line of mental balance." And he almost envied Antony this frenzy, for he had always judged himself too sane to be a great artist.

"It must buy me back three years of bitter struggle, of degrading manual toil."

"My dear man," said the sculptor indulgently. "I think I understand you, but no material price could ever do what you ask. Money, unfortunately, has nothing to do with the past; it can take care of the future more or less, but the past is beyond repurchase, you know."

It was growing constantly darker. The corners of the studio were deep in shadows, and the forms of Antony's casts shone like spectres in their white clothes; the scaffoldings looked ghostly and spirit-like. Cedersholm sighed.

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"Why have you come to me?" he heard Fairfax ask in his cutting tone, and he understood that for some reason or other this stranger was purposely impolite and unfriendly to him. He had not even found Fairfax's face familiar. There he sat before Antony, small, insignificant. How often he had crossed Tony's mind in some ugly dream when he had longed to crush him like a reptile. Now that he stood before him in flesh and blood it was astonishing to Fairfax to see how little real he was.

"I have been absent from France for six years," continued the Swede, and paused.... And Antony knew he was going back in his mind over the past six years of his married life with Mary. "I returned to Paris this week, and wandered into the Salon and stood with a crowd before your bas-relief. I stood for quite half an hour there, I should think, and at least one hundred men and women passed and paused as I had paused. I listened to their comments. I saw your popularity and your power, and saw how you touched the mass by the real beauty of real emotion, by your expression of feeling in plastic art. This is not often achieved nowadays, Mr. Rainsford. Sculpture is the least emotional of all the arts; literature, painting, and music stir the emotions and bring our tears, but that calm, sublime marble, that cold stone awes us by its harmonious perfection. Before sculpture we are content to marvel and worship, and in the 'Open Door' you have made us do all this and made us weep. I do not doubt that amongst those people many had lost their own by death." He paused. It was so dark now that the two men saw each other's face indistinctly. In the shadows Cedersholm's form had softened; the shadows blurred him before Fairfax's eyes; his voice was intensely melancholy. "To every man and woman who has lost your bas-relief is profoundly appealing. Every one of us must go through that door. Your conception, Mr. Rainsford, and your execution are sublime."

Fairfax murmured something which Cedersholm did not make out. He paused a moment, apparently groping in thought as he groped with his weak eyes, and as Fairfax did not respond, he continued—

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"You spoke just now of the price we must pay you, the price which you say must buy you back—what I judge you to mean by your progress, by these years of labour and education, by your apprenticeship to art, and, let me say, to life. My dear man, they have already purchased for you your present achievement, your present power. Everything we have, you know, must be paid for. Some things are paid for in coin, and others in flesh and blood and tears. To judge by what we know of the progress of the world in spiritual things and in art, it is the things that are purchased by this travail of the spirit that render eternal possessions, the eternal impressions. No man who has not suffered as you have apparently suffered, no man who has not walked upon thorns, could have produced the 'Open Door.' Do not degrade the value of your past life and the value of every hour of your agony. Why, it is above price." He paused ... his voice shook. "It is the gift of God!"

Antony's hands were clasped lightly together; they had been holding each other with a grip of steel; now they relaxed a bit. He bowed his head a little from its proud hauteur, and said—

"You are right; you are right."

"Four years ago," continued the voice—Cedersholm had become to him now only a voice to which he listened in the darkness—"four years ago, if I had seen the 'Open Door,' I would have appreciated its art as I recognized the value of your figure which I bought at the Exposition, but I could not have understood it; its spiritual lesson would have been lost upon me. You do not know me," he continued, "and I can in no way especially interest you. But these six years of my life, especially the last two, have been my Garden of Gethsemane."

He stopped. Antony knew that he had taken out the silk handkerchief again and wiped his eyes. After a second, Cedersholm said—

"You must have lost some one very near you."

"My wife," said Antony Fairfax.

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The other man put out his hand, and he touched Antony's closed hands.

"I have lost my wife as well; she died two years ago."

Cedersholm heard Antony's exclamation and felt him start violently.

"Your wife," he cried, "Mary ... dead ... dead?"

"Yes. Why do you exclaim like that?"

"Not Mary Faversham?"

"Mary Faversham-Cedersholm. Did you know her?"

With a supreme effort Antony controlled himself. His voice suffocated him.

Dead! He felt again the touch of her lips; he heard again her voice; he felt her arms around him as she held him in Windsor—"Tony, darling, go! It is too late."

Oh! the Open Door!

Cedersholm, in the agitation that his own words had produced in himself, and in his grief, did not notice that Fairfax murmured he had known Mrs. Cedersholm in Paris.

"My wife was very delicate," he said. "We travelled everywhere. She faded and my life stopped when she died. To-day, when I saw the 'Open Door,' it had a message for me that brought me the first solace." Again his hands sought Fairfax's. "Thank you, brother artist," he murmured; "you have suffered as I have. You understand."

From where he sat, Fairfax struck a match and lit the candle. Its pale light flickered up in the big dark room like a lily shining in a tomb. He said, with a great effort—

"I made a little bas-relief of Mrs. Cedersholm. Did she never speak of me?"

"Never," said Cedersholm thoughtfully. "She met so many people in France; she was so surrounded. She admired greatly the little figure I bought at the Exposition; it was always in our salon. We spoke of you as a coming power, but I do not recall that she ever mentioned having known you."

To Antony this was the greatest proof she could have given him of her love for him. That careful silence, the long silence, not once speaking his name. He had triumphed over Cedersholm. She had loved him. Cedersholm murmured—

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"And you did that bas-relief—a head silhouetted against a lattice? It never left her room, but she never mentioned it to me although I greatly admired it. It was a perfect likeness." Fairfax saw Cedersholm peer at him through the candle light. "Curious," he continued, "curious."

And Antony knew that Cedersholm would never forget his cry of "Mary—Mary dead!" And her silence regarding his existence and his name, and that silence and that cry would go together in the husband's memory.

The door of the studio was opened by Dearborn, who came in calling—

"Tony, Tony, old man."

Cedersholm rose, and Antony rose as well, putting out his hand, saying—

"I will undertake the work you speak of, if your committee will write me confirming your suggestion. And I leave the price to you, you know; you understand what such work is worth. I place myself in your hands."

Dearborn had come up to them. "Tony," said Dearborn, "what are you plotting in the dark with a single candle?"

Fairfax presented him. "Mr. Cedersholm, Robert Dearborn, the playwright, the author of 'All Roads Meet.'"

Dearborn shook the sculptor's hand lightly. He wondered how this must have been for his friend. He looked curiously from one to the other.

"All Roads Meet," he quoted keenly. "Good name, don't you think? They all do meet somewhere"—he put his hand affectionately on Tony's shoulder—"even if it is only at the Open Door." Then he asked, partly smiling, "And the beautiful Mrs. Cedersholm, is she in Paris too?"

"My wife," said Cedersholm shortly, "died two years ago."

"Dead!" exclaimed Robert Dearborn in a low tone of regret, the tone of every man who regrets the passing of a lovely creature that they have admired. "Dead! I beg your pardon, I did not know. I am too heartily sorry."

He put out his kindly hand. Cedersholm scarcely touched it. He was excited, overwhelmed, and began to take his leave, to walk rapidly across the big room.

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As the three men went together toward the door of the studio, Fairfax turned up an electric light. It shone brightly on them all, on Dearborn's grave, charming face, touched with the news of the

death of the woman his friend had loved, on Cedersholm's almost livid face, on his thick glasses, and on Antony limping at his side. Cedersholm saw the limp, the unmistakable limp, the heavy boot, his stature, his beautiful head, and in spite of his infirmity he saw enough of his host to make him know him, to make him remember him, and his heart, which had begun to ache at Fairfax's cry of Mary, seemed to die within him. He remembered the man whom he had cheated out of his work and out of public acknowledgment. He knew now what Fairfax meant by the repurchase of his miserable youth. He had believed Antony Fairfax dead years ago. He had been told that he was dead. Now he limped beside him, powerful, clever, acknowledged, and moreover, there he stood beside him with memories that Cedersholm would never know, with memories that linked him with Mary Faversham-Cedersholm. In an unguarded moment that cry had escaped from the heart of a man who must have loved her. He thought of the bas-relief that hung always above her bed, and he thought of her silence, more eloquent now to him even than Antony's cry, and that silence and that cry would haunt him till the end, and the silence could never be broken now that she had gone through the Open Door.

Dearborn had not been with him all day until now. He had come up radiant to Tony, and putting his hand on his shoulder, said—

"My dear Tony, I had to come in to-day just to bring you a piece of news—to tell you a rumour, rather. The 'Open Door' has been bought by the Government. Your fame is made. I wanted to be the first to tell you. I went into the Embassy for a little while to hear them talk about you, and I can assure you that I did hear them. The ambassador himself told me this news is official. Every one will know to-morrow."

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They talked together until the morning light came grey across the panes of the atelier, and the light was full of new creations, of new ideals of fame and life, of new ambitions and dreams for them both. Enthralled and inspired each by the other, the two artists talked and dreamed. Dearborn's new play was running into its two-hundredth performance. He was a rich man. Now Antony paused on the threshold of his studio, looking back into the deserted workroom filling with the April evening. In every corner, one by one, the visions rose and floated. They became new statues, new creations, indistinct and ethereal. Only the space, where the work that had been carried away to the Salon had once stood, was bare. As he shut the door he felt that he shut the door for ever upon his past, upon his young manhood and upon his youth.

CHAPTER II

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In the early days of July he found himself once more alone in the empty studio, where he had worked for twelve months at the "Open Door."

The place where the huge marble had stood was empty; in its stead fame remained.

Looking back, it seemed now that his hardships had not been severe enough. Had success really come? Would it stay? Was he only the child of an hour? Could he sustain? He recalled the little statuettes which he had made out of the clay of the levee when he was a boy. He remembered his beautiful mother's praise—

"Why, Tony, they are extraordinary, my darling."

And the constant fever had run through his veins all his life. He had made his apprenticeship over theft and death. He said to himself—

"I shall sustain."

As he mused there, the praise he had received ringing in his ears, he entertained fame and saw the shadow of laurel on the floor, under the lamplight, where his marble had stood, long and white.

He had made warm friends and bound them to him. He loved the city and its beauties. His refinement and sense of taste had matured. Antony knew that in his soul he was unaltered, that he was marked by his past, and that the scars upon him were deep.

He was very much alone; there was no one with whom he could share his glory. Should he become the greatest living sculptor, to whom could he bring his honours, his joys?

For a long time Bella went with him in everything he did. His visions were banished by the vivid thought of her. When he came into his studio at twilight he would fancy he saw her sitting by the table.

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She would lean there, not like a spirit-like woman under the shaded lamp, sewing at little children's garments ... not like that! Nevertheless, Bella sat there as a woman who waits for a return, the charming figure, the charming head with its crown of dark hair, and the lovely, brilliantly coloured face. Now there was nothing spirit-like in Antony's picture.

Then again he would imagine that he saw her in the crowd before his bas-relief at the Salon; he

would select some woman dressed in an unusually smart spring gown and call her Bella to himself, until he saw her turn.

Once indeed, there, on the edge of the crowd, leaning with her hands upon the handle of her parasol, he was sure he saw her. The pose of the body was charming, the turn of the head almost as haughty as his own mother's, but the slenderness and the magnetism were Bella's own.

Antony chose this woman upon whom to fix his attention, and he thought that when she would move the resemblance would be gone.

The young girl suddenly altered her pose, and Antony saw her fully; he saw the proud beautiful face, piquant, alluring, a trifle sad; the brilliant lips, the colour in the cheeks, like a snow-set peach, the wonderful eyes, could belong to but one woman.

Separated from her by a little concourse of people, Antony could only cry, "Bella!" to himself. He started eagerly toward the place where he had seen her, but she vanished as the mirage on the desert's face.

What had he seen? A real woman, or only a trick of resemblance?

It was real enough to make him search the newspapers and the hotel lists and the bankers. Now he could not think of her name without a mighty emotion. If that were Bella, she was too lovely to be true! She *must* be his, no matter at what price, no matter what her life might be.

A fortnight after he received in his mail a letter from America. The address, "Mr. Thomas Rainsford," was in a round full hand, a handsome hand; first he thought it a man's. He opened it with slight interest. The paper exhaled an intangible odour; it was not perfume, but a delicate scent which recalled to him, for some reason, or other, the smell of the vines around the verandatrellis in New Orleans. He read—

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"Mr. Thomas Rainsford.

"Dear Sir,—

"This will seem to be a very extraordinary letter, I know. I hardly know how to write such a letter. When I was in Paris a few weeks ago, I stood before the most beautiful piece of sculpture I have ever seen. I do not know that any one could do a more wonderful, a more deeply spiritual thing in clay or marble. But it is not what I think about it in that way, which is of interest. It cannot be of any interest to you, as you do not know me, nor is it for this that I am writing to you. Again, I do not know how to tell you.

"Where did you get your ideas for your statue? That is what I want to know. Years ago, a bas-relief, very much like yours—I should almost say identically yours—was made by my cousin, Antony Fairfax, in Albany. That bas-relief took the ten-thousand-dollar prize in Chicago. It was, unfortunately, destroyed in a fire, and no record of it was kept. My cousin is dead. For this reason I write to ask you where you got your inspiration for the 'Open Door.' It can be nothing to him that his beautiful work has been more beautifully done by a stranger, can do him no harm, but I want to know. Will you write me to the care of the Women's Art League, 5th Avenue, New York? Perhaps you will not deign to answer this letter. Do not think that I am making any reproach to you. It can be nothing to my cousin; he is dead but it would be a comfort to me. Once again, I hope you will let me hear from you.

"Yours faithfully,
"Bella Carew."

The man reading in his studio looked at the signature, looked at the handwriting, held it before his eyes, to which the tears rushed. He pressed the faintly scented pages to his lips. Gallant little Bella ... He stretched out his arms in the darkness, called to her across three thousand miles—

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"Little cousin, please Heaven he can show you some day, Bella Carew."

It was at this time that he modelled his wonderful bust of Bella Carew.

When he finished the "Open Door," he said that he would not work for a year, that he was exhausted bodily and mentally; certainly he had lacked inspiration. But the afternoon of the day on which he had read this letter—this letter that opened for him a future—he set feverishly to work and modelled. He made a head of Bella which the critics have likened to the busts of Houdon, Carpeaux, and other masters. He modelled from memory, guided by his recollections of that picturesque face he had seen under the big hat on the outskirts of the crowd before his bas-relief. He modelled from memory, from imagination, with hope and new love, from old love too; told himself he had fallen in love with Bella the first night he had seen her, when she had comforted him about his heavy step.

Into the beautiful head and face he worked upon he put all his ideal of what a woman's face should be. He fell in love with his creation, in love with the clay that he moulded. Once more he had a companion in the studio from which had been removed his study for the tomb, and this represented a living woman. It seemed almost to become flesh and blood under his ardent hand. "Bella!" he called to her as he smoothed the lovely cheek and saw the peach bloom under it.

"Little cousin," he breathed, as he touched the hair along her neck, and remembered the wild, tangled forest that had fallen across his face when he carried her in his arms during their childish romps. "Honey child," he murmured as he modelled and moulded the youthful lines of the mouth and lips and stood yearning before them, all his heart and soul in his hands that made before his eyes a lovely woman. She became to him the very conception and expression of what he wanted his wife to be.

They say that men have fallen in love with that beautiful face of Bella Carew as modelled by Fairfax.

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Arch and subtle, tender and provoking, distinguished, youthful, alluring, it is the most charming expression of young womanhood that an artist's hand could give to the world.

"Beloved," he murmured like a man half in sleep and half awakening, and he folded the lines of her bodice across her breast and fastened them there by a single rose.

With a sweep of her lovely hair, with an uplift of the corners of her beautiful lips, with the rose at her breast, Bella Carew will charm the artistic world so long as the clay endures.

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CHAPTER III

On the promenade deck of one of the big steamers, as it pushed around into its pier, a man stood in his long overcoat, his hands in his pockets, hoping to avoid the reporters whom he had reason to suppose were ready to make him their prey.

He was entering New York Harbour at an early hour in the morning. It was November, and over the river and over the city hung the golden haze. If the lines of the objects, if the shore and buildings were crude, their impression was not so to him. To and fro the ferries plied from shore to shore, and their whistles and the whistles of the tugs spoke shrilly and loudly to the morning, but there was nothing nasal or blatant to him in the noises. He found the scene, the light of the morning, the greeting of the city as it stirred to life, enchanting. He had gone away from it six years ago, a broken-hearted man, and it seemed now as though he had made his history in an incredibly short time. Down in the hold of the boat, in their cases, reposed his sculptures, some thirty statues and models that he had brought for his exposition in New York. He had come back celebrated. His visions and his dreams so far had been fulfilled.

Once again all his past, all his emotions, his tears and aspirations, culminated in this hour. This was his return, but not as Antony Fairfax. He did not know that he should ever take his old name again. He had made the name of Thomas Rainsford famous, and the fact gave him a singular tender satisfaction, linking him with a dear man who had loved him. He felt almost as though his friend were resurrected or given a new draught of immortal life every time the name was said.

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A young man came up to him, pencil in hand, his look eager and appealing, and Fairfax recognized a reporter in search of a good newspaper story. He understood the poor clothes, the dogged determination.

"You want a story?" he said. "Well, sit down."

The newspaper man, highly delighted with the sculptor's sympathy and understanding, wrote his interview with enthusiasm.

Fairfax talked for five minutes, and said at the close, "I had not intended to be interviewed. But you are a rising man; you have secured me against my will."

The reporter put up his pad. "Thank you, Mr. Rainsford; but this is so impersonal. I would like some of your views on art. They tell me you have had a tough fight for success and existence."

"Many of us have that," said Fairfax.

"Your ideals, sir?"

The young chap was only twenty-one. It was his first interview. Fairfax smiled.

"Downstairs in the hold are thirty cases of my work, the labour of the last six years. Go to my exposition, and you will see my ideals."

As the other took his leave Antony saw himself again, poor, unknown, as he had set foot in New York. There was a deputation on the wharf to meet him from the Academy of Design, and he walked down the gang-plank alone, leaving no one behind him in France who stood to him for family, and he would find no one in America who should mean to him hearth and home.

They had taken rooms for him in the old Hotel Plaza overlooking 59th Street; there, toward the afternoon of the first day, he found himself at three o'clock, alone in his parlour overlooking Central Park.

The trees were still in leaf. November was mild and golden. The air of America, of the city which had once been unfriendly to him, and which now opened its doors, blew in upon him through the open window like a caress. He looked musingly at the little park where he had wandered with

Gardiner and Bella, on the Sunday holiday, when Bella had told him "all things she wanted to do were wicked."

Amongst his statues he had brought over was one lately bought by France and presented to the Metropolitan Museum. It was the marble of a little girl mourning over a dead blackbird. Everything in the city was connected now with Bella Carew. [Pg 347]

There was a sheaf of invitations on the table from well-known New Yorkers, invitations to dinners, invitations to lecture, and he knew that he would be taken into the kindest heart of New York. Well, if work can give a man what he wants, he had worked enough for it; there was no doubt about that. It had been nearly a year since his interview with Cedersholm. He brought with him casts and statues for the triumphal arch in Boston, and he intended taking a studio here and continuing his work in America, but he had no plans. In spite of his success and the prices he could command, his thoughts and his mind were all at sea. His personality had not yet developed to the point where he was at peace. He knew that such peace could only come to him through the companionship of a woman.

No commonplace woman would satisfy Fairfax now.

Money and position meant absolutely nothing to him. If Bella Carew were a rich and brilliant heiress it would probably alienate him from her. His need called for a woman who could work at his side with a kindred interest, a woman who knew beauty, who loved art, whose appreciation and criticism could not leave him cold.

What would Bella Carew, when he found her—as he should—prove herself to be? Spoiled she was, no doubt, mistress for several years of a large fortune, coquette, flirt; of these things he was partly sure, because she had not married. Children with her great promise develop sometimes into nonentities, but Bella, at sixteen, had surpassed his wildest prophecies for her. Bella, as he had seen her on the outskirts of the crowd, had driven him mad. He knew that it had been she; there was no doubt about it in his mind. Now to find her, to see what she had become.

He knew that Bella, when she opened the morning papers the next day—if she were in New York—would discover who he was. There would be descriptions of him as a lame sculptor; there would be reproductions of his "Open Door"; there would be the fact that he was born in New Orleans; that he assumed the name of Rainsford. Now that he had no longer any secret to keep, his own name, Antony Fairfax, would appear. Bella would not fail to know him. [Pg 348]

CHAPTER IV

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He took his gloves and his hat and started out. He drove to the address which Bella had given him, where her letters were to be sent. It was a studio building, and the woman stenographer at the general desk knew that Miss Carew was absent in Europe and had not returned.

This was a blow; the woman saw the disappointment on his face.

"Miss Carew's letters?" he asked.

She pointed to the empty box. They were all sent to her to Europe.

He wandered in the little office whilst the woman did her work. He glanced around him. On the walls there were framed sketches; there were busts in plaster on pedestals.

It struck him as strange that Bella should have her letters sent to her to a studio. He wanted to question the secretary, hesitated, then asked—

"You know Miss Carew?"

"Very well."

"I reckon she patronizes this academy."

It would not have been surprising if she had given it some large donation.

The stenographer repeated the word, "Patronizes? Miss Carew works here when she is in America; she has a small studio here."

"Works here? Do you mean she paints?"

The woman smiled. "Yes; she has been studying in Florence. I expect her home every day."

Fairfax still lingered, drawing his soft gloves through his hands.

"There's nothing to do, then, but to wait,"—he smiled on her his light smile. He turned to go, hesitated. The temptation was too strong. [Pg 350]

"Miss Carew paints portraits?"

"Yes," said the stenographer, "beautiful portraits."

He smiled, biting his lips. He remembered the parallel lines, the reluctant little hand drawing

them across the board.

"No more parallel lines, Cousin Antony."

He did not believe that she painted beautiful portraits. He would have loved to see her work, oh, how much! There must be some of it here.

"There is nothing of hers here, I suppose?"

He went across the little room to the door. He could hardly bear to go from here, from the only place that had any knowledge of Bella as far as he knew.

He took out his card, scribbled his address upon it, handed it to the stenographer, without asking anything of her but to let him know when she would come back.

The woman nodded sympathetically.

"It is unusual for a great heiress, like Miss Carew, to paint portraits."

"She is not a great heiress; Mr. Carew lost all his money two years ago. I think Miss Carew is almost quite poor."

A radiant look came over Antony's face. "Thank you very much indeed," he said. "I count on you to take care of this little commission for me," and he went out of the room in ecstasy, closing the door behind him.

CHAPTER V

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He left his hansom at the entrance of the park, at 72nd Street.

There, on the corner, stood his uncle's house, a monument, to him, of the past. His heart beat hard as he looked at the unfriendly dwelling from whose doors he had rushed on the night of the winter blizzard, when, as it had seemed to him then, little Gardiner's spirit rushed with him out into the storm. From those windows Bella had waved her hand.

How his spirits had risen high with hope, the night on which he had first gone up those steps. It was on that night Bella had said to him, "Why, you have got a light step and a heavy step, Cousin Antony. I never heard any one walk like that before."

He tramped into Central Park, taking his way to the Metropolitan Museum. At the door he was informed that the museum was closed. He gave his card, and, after a few words with the man in charge, Thomas Rainsford the sculptor was let in and found himself, to all intents and purposes, alone. He wandered about the sculptures, wondering where the statue of little "Bella" would be placed.

The rooms were delightfully restful. He chose a bench and sat down, resting and musing.

In front of one of the early Italian pictures stood an easel with a copy exposed upon it to his view. A reproduction of a sixteenth-century Madonna with a child upon her breast. The copy showed the hand of an adept in colour and drawing. Antony looked at it with keen pleasure, musing upon the beauty of the child.

Afterwards he rose and went into the Egyptian room, lingering there. But when he came back the painter was there before her easel, and Antony stood in the doorway to watch her at work.

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She wore a long brown linen painting apron that covered her form, evidently a slender form, evidently a young form. She painted ardently, with confidence and absorption. As Antony watched her, her pose, her ardour, the poise of her body, the lovely dark head, the gestures, the fire of her, brought all of a sudden his past rushing back to him. The sight of her came to him with a thrilling, wonderful remembrance. He came forward, his light step and his heavy step falling on the hard wood floors of the museum.

She turned before he was close to her, her palette and her brushes in her hand. She stood for a moment immovable, then gave a little cry, dropped her palette and brushes on the floor, grew white, then blushed deeply and held out both her hands to him.

"Cousin Antony!"

He took her hands in his, could not find his voice even to say her name. He heard her say—

"They told me you were dead! I thought you had died long ago—I thought another man had taken your genius and your fame."

She spoke fast, with catching breath, in a low vibrant tone that he remembered—how he did remember it! His very life seemed to breathe on her lips in the sound of her voice. "Flow gently, sweet Afton"—the music was here—here—all the music in the world!

"I know who you are now; I saw it in the paper. I read it this morning. I saw your picture, and I knew." She stopped to catch her breath deeply. "Oh, I'm so glad!"

She was more beautiful than he had dreamed she would be; brilliant, bewitching, and the flowers of his past clustered round her.

"I heard them falling through the rooms, the light step and the heavy step."

Slowly by both her hands which he held he drew her toward him, and as he held her cheek against his lips he heard her murmur—

"Back from the dead! Cousin Antony.... No, just Antony!"

"Little cousin!" he said. "Bella!"

THE END

Transcriber's Notes

Obvious misprints and the correction of inconsistent spelling or punctuation are noted with hover notes.

Other than the corrections noted by hover information, printer's inconsistencies in spelling and hyphenation have been retained.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FAIRFAX AND HIS PRIDE: A NOVEL ***

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