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A HAZARD OF NEW FORTUNES

By William Dean Howells

PART FIFTH

I.

Superficially, the affairs of 'Every Other Week' settled into their wonted form again, and for Fulkerson they seemed thoroughly reinstated. But March had a feeling of impermanency from what had happened, mixed with a fantastic sense of shame toward Lindau. He did not sympathize with Lindau's opinions; he thought his remedy for existing evils as wildly impracticable as Colonel Woodburn's. But while he thought this, and while he could justly blame Fulkerson for Lindau's presence at Dryfoos's dinner, which his zeal had brought about in spite of March's protests, still he could not rid himself of the reproach of uncandor with Lindau. He ought to have told him frankly about the ownership of the magazine, and what manner of man the man was whose money he was taking. But he said that he never could have imagined that he was serious in his preposterous attitude in regard to a class of men who embody half the prosperity of the country; and he had moments of revolt against his own humiliation before Lindau, in which he found it monstrous that he should return Dryfoos's money as if it had been the spoil of a robber. His wife agreed with him in these moments, and said it was a great relief not to have that tiresome old German coming about. They had to account for his absence evasively to the children, whom they could not very well tell that their father was living on money that Lindau disdained to take, even though Lindau was wrong and their father was right. This heightened Mrs. March's resentment toward both Lindau and Dryfoos, who between them had placed her husband in a false

position. If anything, she resented Dryfoos's conduct more than Lindau's. He had never spoken to March about the affair since Lindau had renounced his work, or added to the apologetic messages he had sent by Fulkerson. So far as March knew, Dryfoos had been left to suppose that Lindau had simply stopped for some reason that did not personally affect him. They never spoke of him, and March was too proud to ask either Fulkerson or Conrad whether the old man knew that Lindau had returned his money. He avoided talking to Conrad, from a feeling that if he did he should involuntarily lead him on to speak of his differences with his father. Between himself and Fulkerson, even, he was uneasily aware of a want of their old perfect friendliness. Fulkerson had finally behaved with honor and courage; but his provisional reluctance had given March the measure of Fulkerson's character in one direction, and he could not ignore the fact that it was smaller than he could have wished.

He could not make out whether Fulkerson shared his discomfort or not. It certainly wore away, even with March, as time passed, and with Fulkerson, in the bliss of his fortunate love, it was probably far more transient, if it existed at all. He advanced into the winter as radiantly as if to meet the spring, and he said that if there were any pleasanter month of the year than November, it was December, especially when the weather was good and wet and muddy most of the time, so that you had to keep indoors a long while after you called anywhere.

Colonel Woodburn had the anxiety, in view of his daughter's engagement, when she asked his consent to it, that such a dreamer must have in regard to any reality that threatens to affect the course of his reveries. He had not perhaps taken her marriage into account, except as a remote contingency; and certainly Fulkerson was not the kind of son-in-law that he had imagined in dealing with that abstraction. But because he had nothing of the sort definitely in mind, he could not oppose the selection of Fulkerson with success; he really knew nothing against him, and he knew, many things in his favor; Fulkerson inspired him with the liking that every one felt for him in a measure; he amused him, he cheered him; and the colonel had been so much used to leaving action of all kinds to his daughter that when he came to close quarters with the question of a son-in-law he felt helpless to decide it, and he let her decide it, as if it were still to be decided when it was submitted to him. She was competent to treat it in all its phases: not merely those of personal interest, but those of duty to the broken Southern past, sentimentally dear to him, and practically absurd to her. No such South as he remembered had ever existed to her knowledge, and no such civilization as he imagined would ever exist, to her belief, anywhere. She took the world as she found it, and made the best of it. She trusted in Fulkerson; she had proved his magnanimity in a serious emergency; and in small things she was willing fearlessly to chance it with him. She was not a sentimentalist, and there was nothing fantastic in her expectations; she was a girl of good sense and right mind, and she liked the immediate practicality as well as the final honor of Fulkerson. She did not idealize him, but in the highest effect she realized him; she did him justice, and she would not have believed that she did him more than justice if she had sometimes known him to do himself less.

Their engagement was a fact to which the Leighton household adjusted itself almost as simply as the lovers themselves; Miss Woodburn told the ladies at once, and it was not a thing that Fulkerson could keep from March very long. He sent word of it to Mrs. March by her husband; and his engagement perhaps did more than anything else to confirm the confidence in him which had been shaken by his early behavior in the Lindau episode, and not wholly restored by his tardy fidelity to March. But now she felt that a man who wished to get married so obviously and entirely for love was full of all kinds of the best instincts, and only needed the guidance of a wife, to become very noble. She interested herself intensely in balancing the respective merits of the engaged couple, and after her call upon Miss Woodburn in her new character she prided herself upon recognizing the worth of some strictly Southern qualities in her, while maintaining the general average of New England superiority. She could not reconcile herself to the Virginian custom illustrated in her having been christened with the surname of Madison; and she said that its pet form of Mad, which Fulkerson promptly invented, only made it more ridiculous.

Fulkerson was slower in telling Beaton. He was afraid, somehow, of Beaton's taking the matter in the cynical way; Miss Woodburn said she would break off the engagement if Beaton was left to guess it or find it out by accident, and then Fulkerson plucked up his courage. Beaton received the news with gravity, and with a sort of melancholy meekness that strongly moved Fulkerson's sympathy, and made him wish that Beaton was engaged, too.

It made Beaton feel very old; it somehow left him behind and forgotten; in a manner, it made him feel trifled with. Something of the unfriendliness of fate seemed to overcast his resentment, and he allowed the sadness of his conviction that he had not the means to marry on to tinge his recognition of the fact that Alma Leighton would not have wanted him to marry her if he had. He was now often in that martyr mood in which he wished to help his father; not only to deny himself Chianti, but to forego a fur-lined overcoat which he intended to get for the winter. He postponed the moment of actual sacrifice as regarded the Chianti, and he bought the overcoat in an anguish of self-reproach. He wore it the first

evening after he got it in going to call upon the Leightons, and it seemed to him a piece of ghastly irony when Alma complimented his picturesqueness in it and asked him to let her sketch him.

"Oh, you can sketch me," he said, with so much gloom that it made her laugh.

"If you think it's so serious, I'd rather not."

"No, no! Go ahead! How do you want me?"

Oh, fling yourself down on a chair in one of your attitudes of studied negligence; and twist one corner of your mustache with affected absence of mind."

"And you think I'm always studied, always affected?"

"I didn't say so."

"I didn't ask you what you said."

"And I won't tell you what I think."

"Ah, I know what you think."

"What made you ask, then?" The girl laughed again with the satisfaction of her sex in cornering a man.

Beaton made a show of not deigning to reply, and put himself in the pose she suggested, frowning.

"Ah, that's it. But a little more animation—

"As when a great thought strikes along the brain,
And flushes all the cheek."

She put her forehead down on the back of her hand and laughed again. "You ought to be photographed. You look as if you were sitting for it."

Beaton said: "That's because I know I am being photographed, in one way. I don't think you ought to call me affected. I never am so with you; I know it wouldn't be of any use."

"Oh, Mr. Beaton, you flatter."

"No, I never flatter you."

"I meant you flattered yourself."

"How?"

"Oh, I don't know. Imagine."

"I know what you mean. You think I can't be sincere with anybody."

"Oh no, I don't."

"What do you think?"

"That you can't—try." Alma gave another victorious laugh.

Miss Woodburn and Fulkerson would once have both feigned a great interest in Alma's sketching Beaton, and made it the subject of talk, in which they approached as nearly as possible the real interest of their lives. Now they frankly remained away in the dining-room, which was very cozy after the dinner had disappeared; the colonel sat with his lamp and paper in the gallery beyond; Mrs. Leighton was about her housekeeping affairs, in the content she always felt when Alma was with Beaton.

"They seem to be having a pretty good time in there," said Fulkerson, detaching himself from his own absolute good time as well as he could.

"At least Alma does," said Miss Woodburn.

"Do you think she cares for him?"

"Quahte as moch as he desoves."

"What makes you all down on Beaton around here? He's not such a bad fellow."

"We awe not all doan on him. Mrs. Leighton isn't doan on him."

"Oh, I guess if it was the old lady, there wouldn't be much question about it."

They both laughed, and Alma said, "They seem to be greatly amused with something in there."

"Me, probably," said Beaton. "I seem to amuse everybody to-night."

"Don't you always?"

"I always amuse you, I'm afraid, Alma."

She looked at him as if she were going to snub him openly for using her name; but apparently she decided to do it covertly. "You didn't at first. I really used to believe you could be serious, once."

"Couldn't you believe it again? Now?"

"Not when you put on that wind-harp stop."

"Wetmore has been talking to you about me. He would sacrifice his best friend to a phrase. He spends his time making them."

"He's made some very pretty ones about you."

"Like the one you just quoted?"

"No, not exactly. He admires you ever so much. He says" She stopped, teasingly.

"What?"

"He says you could be almost anything you wished, if you didn't wish to be everything."

"That sounds more like the school of Wetmore. That's what you say, Alma. Well, if there were something you wished me to be, I could be it."

"We might adapt Kingsley: 'Be good, sweet man, and let who will be clever.'" He could not help laughing. She went on: "I always thought that was the most patronizing and exasperating thing ever addressed to a human girl; and we've had to stand a good deal in our time. I should like to have it applied to the other 'sect' a while. As if any girl that was a girl would be good if she had the remotest chance of being clever."

"Then you wouldn't wish me to be good?" Beaton asked.

"Not if you were a girl."

"You want to shock me. Well, I suppose I deserve it. But if I were one-tenth part as good as you are, Alma, I should have a lighter heart than I have now. I know that I'm fickle, but I'm not false, as you think I am."

"Who said I thought you were false?"

"No one," said Beaton. "It isn't necessary, when you look it—live it."

"Oh, dear! I didn't know I devoted my whole time to the subject."

"I know I'm despicable. I could tell you something—the history of this day, even—that would make you despise me." Beaton had in mind his purchase of the overcoat, which Alma was getting in so effectively, with the money he ought to have sent his father. "But," he went on, darkly, with a sense that what he was that moment suffering for his selfishness must somehow be a kind of atonement, which would finally leave him to the guiltless enjoyment of the overcoat, "you wouldn't believe the depths of baseness I could descend to."

"I would try," said Alma, rapidly shading the collar, "if you'd give me some hint."

Beaton had a sudden wish to pour out his remorse to her, but he was afraid of her laughing at him. He said to himself that this was a very wholesome fear, and that if he could always have her at hand he should not make a fool of himself so often. A man conceives of such an office as the very noblest for a woman; he worships her for it if he is magnanimous. But Beaton was silent, and Alma put back her head for the right distance on her sketch. "Mr. Fulkerson thinks you are the sublimest of human beings for advising him to get Colonel Woodburn to interview Mr. Dryfoos about Lindau. What have you ever done with your Judas?"

"I haven't done anything with it. Nadel thought he would take hold of it at one time, but he dropped it again. After all, I don't suppose it could be popularized. Fulkerson wanted to offer it as a premium to subscribers for 'Every Other Week,' but I sat down on that."

Alma could not feel the absurdity of this, and she merely said, "'Every Other Week' seems to be going on just the same as ever."

"Yes, the trouble has all blown over, I believe. Fulkerson," said Beaton, with a return to what they were saying, "has managed the whole business very well. But he exaggerates the value of my advice."

"Very likely," Alma suggested, vaguely. "Or, no! Excuse me! He couldn't, he couldn't!" She laughed delightedly at Beaton's foolish look of embarrassment.

He tried to recover his dignity in saying, "He's 'a very good fellow, and he deserves his happiness."

"Oh, indeed!" said Alma, perversely. "Does any one deserve happiness?"

"I know I don't," sighed Beaton.

"You mean you don't get it."

"I certainly don't get it."

"Ah, but that isn't the reason."

"What is?"

"That's the secret of the universe," She bit in her lower lip, and looked at him with eyes, of gleaming fun.

"Are you never serious?" he asked.

"With serious people always."

"I am serious; and you have the secret of my happiness—" He threw himself impulsively forward in his chair.

"Oh, pose, pose!" she cried.

"I won't pose," he answered, "and you have got to listen to me. You know I'm in love with you; and I know that once you cared for me. Can't that time—won't it—come back again? Try to think so, Alma!"

"No," she said, briefly and seriously enough.

"But that seems impossible. What is it I've done what have you against me?"

"Nothing. But that time is past. I couldn't recall it if I wished. Why did you bring it up? You've broken your word. You know I wouldn't have let you keep coming here if you hadn't promised never to refer to it."

"How could I help it? With that happiness near us—Fulkerson—"

"Oh, it's that? I might have known it!"

"No, it isn't that—it's something far deeper. But if it's nothing you have against me, what is it, Alma, that keeps you from caring for me now as you did then? I haven't changed."

"But I have. I shall never care for you again, Mr. Beaton; you might as well understand it once for all. Don't think it's anything in yourself, or that I think you unworthy of me. I'm not so self-satisfied as that; I know very well that I'm not a perfect character, and that I've no claim on perfection in anybody else. I think women who want that are fools; they won't get it, and they don't deserve it. But I've learned a good deal more about myself than I knew in St. Barnaby, and a life of work, of art, and of art alone that's what I've made up my mind to."

"A woman that's made up her mind to that has no heart to hinder her!"

"Would a man have that had done so?"

"But I don't believe you, Alma. You're merely laughing at me. And, besides, with me you needn't give up art. We could work together. You know how much I admire your talent. I believe I could help it—serve it; I would be its willing slave, and yours, Heaven knows!"

"I don't want any slave—nor any slavery. I want to be free always. Now do you see? I don't care for you, and I never could in the old way; but I should have to care for some one more than I believe I ever shall to give up my work. Shall we go on?" She looked at her sketch.

"No, we shall not go on," he said, gloomily, as he rose.

"I suppose you blame me," she said, rising too.

"Oh no! I blame no one—or only myself. I threw my chance away."

"I'm glad you see that; and I'm glad you did it. You don't believe me, of course. Why do men think life can be only the one thing to women? And if you come to the selfish view, who are the happy women? I'm sure that if work doesn't fail me, health won't, and happiness won't."

"But you could work on with me—"

"Second fiddle. Do you suppose I shouldn't be woman enough to wish my work always less and lower than yours? At least I've heart enough for that!"

"You've heart enough for anything, Alma. I was a fool to say you hadn't."

"I think the women who keep their hearts have an even chance, at least, of having heart—"

"Ah, there's where you're wrong!"

"But mine isn't mine to give you, anyhow. And now I don't want you ever to speak to me about this again."

"Oh, there's no danger!" he cried, bitterly. "I shall never willingly see you again."

"That's as you like, Mr. Beaton. We've had to be very frank, but I don't see why we shouldn't be friends. Still, we needn't, if you don't like."

"And I may come—I may come here—as—as usual?"

"Why, if you can consistently," she said, with a smile, and she held out her hand to him.

He went home dazed, and feeling as if it were a bad joke that had been put upon him. At least the affair went so deep that it estranged the aspect of his familiar studio. Some of the things in it were not very familiar; he had spent lately a great deal on rugs, on stuffs, on Japanese bric-a-brac. When he saw these things in the shops he had felt that he must have them; that they were necessary to him; and he was partly in debt for them, still without having sent any of his earnings to pay his father. As he looked at them now he liked to fancy something weird and conscious in them as the silent witnesses of a broken life. He felt about among some of the smaller objects on the mantel for his pipe. Before he slept he was aware, in the luxury of his despair, of a remote relief, an escape; and, after all, the understanding he had come to with Alma was only the explicit formulation of terms long tacit between them. Beaton would have been puzzled more than he knew if she had taken him seriously. It was inevitable that he should declare himself in love with her; but he was not disappointed at her rejection of his love; perhaps not so much as he would have been at its acceptance, though he tried to think otherwise, and to give himself airs of tragedy. He did not really feel that the result was worse than what had gone before, and it left him free.

But he did not go to the Leightons again for so long a time that Mrs. Leighton asked Alma what had happened. Alma told her.

"And he won't come any more?" her mother sighed, with reserved censure.

"Oh, I think he will. He couldn't very well come the next night. But he has the habit of coming, and with Mr. Beaton habit is everything—even the habit of thinking he's in love with some one."

"Alma," said her mother, "I don't think it's very nice for a girl to let a young man keep coming to see her after she's refused him."

"Why not, if it amuses him and doesn't hurt the girl?"

"But it does hurt her, Alma. It—it's indelicate. It isn't fair to him; it gives him hopes."

"Well, mamma, it hasn't happened in the given case yet. If Mr. Beaton comes again, I won't see him, and you can forbid him the house."

"If I could only feel sure, Alma," said her mother, taking up another branch of the inquiry, "that you

really knew your own mind, I should be easier about it."

"Then you can rest perfectly quiet, mamma. I do know my own mind; and, what's worse, I know Mr. Beaton's mind."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that he spoke to me the other night simply because Mr. Fulkerson's engagement had broken him all up."

"What expressions!" Mrs. Leighton lamented.

"He let it out himself," Alma went on. "And you wouldn't have thought it was very flattering yourself. When I'm made love to, after this, I prefer to be made love to in an off-year, when there isn't another engaged couple anywhere about."

"Did you tell him that, Alma?"

"Tell him that! What do you mean, mamma? I may be indelicate, but I'm not quite so indelicate as that."

"I didn't mean you were indelicate, really, Alma, but I wanted to warn you. I think Mr. Beaton was very much in earnest."

"Oh, so did he!"

"And you didn't?"

"Oh yes, for the time being. I suppose he's very much in earnest with Miss Vance at times, and with Miss Dryfoos at others. Sometimes he's a painter, and sometimes he's an architect, and sometimes he's a sculptor. He has too many gifts—too many tastes."

"And if Miss Vance and Miss Dryfoos—"

"Oh, do say Sculpture and Architecture, mamma! It's getting so dreadfully personal!"

"Alma, you know that I only wish to get at your real feeling in the matter."

"And you know that I don't want to let you—especially when I haven't got any real feeling in the matter. But I should think—speaking in the abstract entirely—that if either of those arts was ever going to be in earnest about him, it would want his exclusive devotion for a week at least."

"I didn't know," said Mrs. Leighton, "that he was doing anything now at the others. I thought he was entirely taken up with his work on 'Every Other Week.'"

"Oh, he is! he is!"

"And you certainly can't say, my dear, that he hasn't been very kind—very useful to you, in that matter."

"And so I ought to have said yes out of gratitude? Thank you, mamma! I didn't know you held me so cheap."

"You know whether I hold you cheap or not, Alma. I don't want you to cheapen yourself. I don't want you to trifle with any one. I want you to be honest with yourself."

"Well, come now, mamma! Suppose you begin. I've been perfectly honest with myself, and I've been honest with Mr. Beaton. I don't care for him, and I've told him I didn't; so he may be supposed to know it. If he comes here after this, he'll come as a plain, unostentatious friend of the family, and it's for you to say whether he shall come in that capacity or not. I hope you won't trifle with him, and let him get the notion that he's coming on any other basis."

Mrs. Leighton felt the comfort of the critical attitude far too keenly to abandon it for anything constructive. She only said, "You know very well, Alma, that's a matter I can have nothing to do with."

"Then you leave him entirely to me?"

"I hope you will regard his right to candid and open treatment."

"He's had nothing but the most open and candid treatment from me, mamma. It's you that wants to

play fast and loose with him. And, to tell you the truth, I believe he would like that a good deal better; I believe that, if there's anything he hates, it's openness and candor." Alma laughed, and put her arms round her mother, who could not help laughing a little, too.

II.

The winter did not renew for Christine and Mela the social opportunity which the spring had offered. After the musicale at Mrs. Horn's, they both made their party-call, as Mela said, in due season; but they did not find Mrs. Horn at home, and neither she nor Miss Vance came to see them after people returned to town in the fall. They tried to believe for a time that Mrs. Horn had not got their cards; this pretence failed them, and they fell back upon their pride, or rather Christine's pride. Mela had little but her good-nature to avail her in any exigency, and if Mrs. Horn or Miss Vance had come to call after a year of neglect, she would have received them as amiably as if they had not lost a day in coming. But Christine had drawn a line beyond which they would not have been forgiven; and she had planned the words and the behavior with which she would have punished them if they had appeared then. Neither sister imagined herself in anywise inferior to them; but Christine was suspicious, at least, and it was Mela who invented the hypothesis of the lost cards. As nothing happened to prove or to disprove the fact, she said, "I move we put Coonrod up to gittun' it out of Miss Vance, at some of their meetun's."

"If you do," said Christine, "I'll kill you."

Christine, however, had the visits of Beaton to console her, and, if these seemed to have no definite aim, she was willing to rest in the pleasure they gave her vanity; but Mela had nothing. Sometimes she even wished they were all back on the farm.

"It would be the best thing for both of you," said Mrs. Dryfoos, in answer to such a burst of desperation. "I don't think New York is any place for girls."

"Well, what I hate, mother," said Mela, "is, it don't seem to be any place for young men, either." She found this so good when she had said it that she laughed over it till Christine was angry.

"A body would think there had never been any joke before."

"I don't see as it's a joke," said Mrs. Dryfoos. "It's the plain truth."

"Oh, don't mind her, mother," said Mela. "She's put out because her old Mr. Beaton ha'r't been round for a couple o' weeks. If you don't watch out, that fellow 'll give you the slip yit, Christine, after all your pains."

"Well, there ain't anybody to give you the slip, Mela," Christine clawed back.

"No; I ha'n't ever set my traps for anybody." This was what Mela said for want of a better retort; but it was not quite true. When Kendricks came with Beaton to call after her father's dinner, she used all her cunning to ensnare him, and she had him to herself as long as Beaton stayed; Dryfoos sent down word that he was not very well and had gone to bed. The novelty of Mela had worn off for Kendricks, and she found him, as she frankly told him, not half as entertaining as he was at Mrs. Horn's; but she did her best with him as the only flirtable material which had yet come to her hand. It would have been her ideal to have the young men stay till past midnight, and her father come down-stairs in his stocking-feet and tell them it was time to go. But they made a visit of decorous brevity, and Kendricks did not come again. She met him afterward, once, as she was crossing the pavement in Union Square to get into her coupe, and made the most of him; but it was necessarily very little, and so he passed out of her life without having left any trace in her heart, though Mela had a heart that she would have put at the disposition of almost any young man that wanted it. Kendricks himself, Manhattan cockney as he was, with scarcely more out look into the average American nature than if he had been kept a prisoner in New York society all his days, perceived a property in her which forbade him as a man of conscience to trifle with her; something earthly good and kind, if it was simple and vulgar. In revising his impressions of her, it seemed to him that she would come even to better literary effect if this were recognized in her; and it made her sacred, in spite of her willingness to fool and to be fooled, in her merely human quality. After all, he saw that she wished honestly to love and to be loved, and the lures she threw out to that end seemed to him pathetic rather than ridiculous; he could not join Beaton in laughing at her; and he did not like Beaton's laughing at the other girl, either. It seemed to Kendricks, with the code of honor which he mostly kept to himself because he was a little ashamed to find there

were so few others like it, that if Beaton cared nothing for the other girl—and Christine appeared simply detestable to Kendricks—he had better keep away from her, and not give her the impression he was in love with her. He rather fancied that this was the part of a gentleman, and he could not have penetrated to that aesthetic and moral complexity which formed the consciousness of a nature like Beaton's and was chiefly a torment to itself; he could not have conceived of the wayward impulses indulged at every moment in little things till the straight highway was traversed and well-nigh lost under their tangle. To do whatever one likes is finally to do nothing that one likes, even though one continues to do what one will; but Kendricks, though a sage of twenty-seven, was still too young to understand this.

Beaton scarcely understood it himself, perhaps because he was not yet twenty-seven. He only knew that his will was somehow sick; that it spent itself in caprices, and brought him no happiness from the fulfilment of the most vehement wish. But he was aware that his wishes grew less and less vehement; he began to have a fear that some time he might have none at all. It seemed to him that if he could once do something that was thoroughly distasteful to himself, he might make a beginning in the right direction; but when he tried this on a small scale, it failed, and it seemed stupid. Some sort of expiation was the thing he needed, he was sure; but he could not think of anything in particular to expiate; a man could not expiate his temperament, and his temperament was what Beaton decided to be at fault. He perceived that it went deeper than even fate would have gone; he could have fulfilled an evil destiny and had done with it, however terrible. His trouble was that he could not escape from himself; and, for the most part, he justified himself in refusing to try. After he had come to that distinct understanding with Alma Leighton, and experienced the relief it really gave him, he thought for a while that if it had fallen out otherwise, and she had put him in charge of her destiny, he might have been better able to manage his own. But as it was, he could only drift, and let all other things take their course. It was necessary that he should go to see her afterward, to show her that he was equal to the event; but he did not go so often, and he went rather oftener to the Dryfooses; it was not easy to see Margaret Vance, except on the society terms. With much sneering and scorning, he fulfilled the duties to Mrs. Horn without which he knew he should be dropped from her list; but one might go to many of her Thursdays without getting many words with her niece. Beaton hardly knew whether he wanted many; the girl kept the charm of her innocent stylishness; but latterly she wanted to talk more about social questions than about the psychical problems that young people usually debate so personally. Son of the working-people as he was, Beaton had never cared anything about such matters; he did not know about them or wish to know; he was perhaps too near them. Besides, there was an embarrassment, at least on her part, concerning the Dryfooses. She was too high-minded to blame him for having tempted her to her failure with them by his talk about them; but she was conscious of avoiding them in her talk. She had decided not to renew the effort she had made in the spring; because she could not do them good as fellow-creatures needing food and warmth and work, and she would not try to befriend them socially; she had a horror of any such futile sentimentality. She would have liked to account to Beaton in this way for a course which she suspected he must have heard their comments upon, but she did not quite know how to do it; she could not be sure how much or how little he cared for them. Some tentative approaches which she made toward explanation were met with such eager disclaim of personal interest that she knew less than before what to think; and she turned the talk from the sisters to the brother, whom it seemed she still continued to meet in their common work among the poor.

"He seems very different," she ventured.

"Oh, quite," said Beaton. "He's the kind of person that you might suppose gave the Catholics a hint for the cloistral life; he's a cloistered nature—the nature that atones and suffers for. But he's awfully dull company, don't you think? I never can get anything out of him."

"He's very much in earnest."

"Remorselessly. We've got a profane and mundane creature there at the office who runs us all, and it's shocking merely to see the contact of the tyro natures. When Fulkerson gets to joking Dryfoos—he likes to put his joke in the form of a pretence that Dryfoos is actuated by a selfish motive, that he has an eye to office, and is working up a political interest for himself on the East Side—it's something inexpressible."

"I should think so," said Miss Vance, with such lofty disapproval that Beaton felt himself included in it for having merely told what caused it. He could not help saying, in natural rebellion, "Well, the man of one idea is always a little ridiculous."

"When his idea is right?" she demanded. "A right idea can't be ridiculous."

"Oh, I only said the man that held it was. He's flat; he has no relief, no projection."

She seemed unable to answer, and he perceived that he had silenced her to his own, disadvantage. It appeared to Beaton that she was becoming a little too exacting for comfort in her idealism. He put down the cup of tea he had been tasting, and said, in his solemn staccato: "I must go. Good-bye!" and got instantly away from her, with an effect he had of having suddenly thought of something imperative.

He went up to Mrs. Horn for a moment's hail and farewell, and felt himself subtly detained by her through fugitive passages of conversation with half a dozen other people. He fancied that at crises of this strange interview Mrs. Horn was about to become confidential with him, and confidential, of all things, about her niece. She ended by not having palpably been so. In fact, the concern in her mind would have been difficult to impart to a young man, and after several experiments Mrs. Horn found it impossible to say that she wished Margaret could somehow be interested in lower things than those which occupied her. She had watched with growing anxiety the girl's tendency to various kinds of self-devotion. She had dark hours in which she even feared her entire withdrawal from the world in a life of good works. Before now, girls had entered the Protestant sisterhoods, which appeal so potently to the young and generous imagination, and Margaret was of just the temperament to be influenced by them. During the past summer she had been unhappy at her separation from the cares that had engrossed her more and more as their stay in the city drew to an end in the spring, and she had hurried her aunt back to town earlier in the fall than she would have chosen to come. Margaret had her correspondents among the working-women whom she befriended. Mrs. Horn was at one time alarmed to find that Margaret was actually promoting a strike of the button-hole workers. This, of course, had its ludicrous side, in connection with a young lady in good society, and a person of even so little humor as Mrs. Horn could not help seeing it. At the same time, she could not help foreboding the worst from it; she was afraid that Margaret's health would give way under the strain, and that if she did not go into a sisterhood she would at least go into a decline. She began the winter with all such counteractive measures as she could employ. At an age when such things weary, she threw herself into the pleasures of society with the hope of dragging Margaret after her; and a sympathetic witness must have followed with compassion her course from ball to ball, from reception to reception, from parlor-reading to parlor-reading, from musicale to musicale, from play to play, from opera to opera. She tasted, after she had practically renounced them, the bitter and the insipid flavors of fashionable amusement, in the hope that Margaret might find them sweet, and now at the end she had to own to herself that she had failed. It was coming Lent again, and the girl had only grown thinner and more serious with the diversions that did not divert her from the baleful works of beneficence on which Mrs. Horn felt that she was throwing her youth away. Margaret could have borne either alone, but together they were wearing her out. She felt it a duty to undergo the pleasures her aunt appointed for her, but she could not forego the other duties in which she found her only pleasure.

She kept up her music still because she could employ it at the meetings for the entertainment, and, as she hoped, the elevation of her working-women; but she neglected the other aesthetic interests which once occupied her; and, at sight of Beaton talking with her, Mrs. Horn caught at the hope that he might somehow be turned to account in reviving Margaret's former interest in art. She asked him if Mr. Wetmore had his classes that winter as usual; and she said she wished Margaret could be induced to go again: Mr. Wetmore always said that she did not draw very well, but that she had a great deal of feeling for it, and her work was interesting. She asked, were the Leightons in town again; and she murmured a regret that she had not been able to see anything of them, without explaining why; she said she had a fancy that if Margaret knew Miss Leighton, and what she was doing, it might stimulate her, perhaps. She supposed Miss Leighton was still going on with her art? Beaton said, Oh yes, he believed so.

But his manner did not encourage Mrs. Horn to pursue her aims in that direction, and she said, with a sigh, she wished he still had a class; she always fancied that Margaret got more good from his instruction than from any one else's.

He said that she was very good; but there was really nobody who knew half as much as Wetmore, or could make any one understand half as much. Mrs. Horn was afraid, she said, that Mr. Wetmore's terrible sincerity discouraged Margaret; he would not let her have any illusions about the outcome of what she was doing; and did not Mr. Beaton think that some illusion was necessary with young people? Of course, it was very nice of Mr. Wetmore to be so honest, but it did not always seem to be the wisest thing. She begged Mr. Beaton to try to think of some one who would be a little less severe. Her tone assumed a deeper interest in the people who were coming up and going away, and Beaton perceived that he was dismissed.

He went away with vanity flattered by the sense of having been appealed to concerning Margaret, and then he began to chafe at what she had said of Wetmore's honesty, apropos of her wish that he still had a class himself. Did she mean, confound her? that he was insincere, and would let Miss Vance suppose she had more talent than she really had? The more Beaton thought of this, the more furious he became, and the more he was convinced that something like it had been unconsciously if not consciously in her mind. He framed some keen retorts, to the general effect that with the atmosphere

of illusion preserved so completely at home, Miss Vance hardly needed it in her art studies. Having just determined never to go near Mrs. Horn's Thursdays again, he decided to go once more, in order to plant this sting in her capacious but somewhat callous bosom; and he planned how he would lead the talk up to the point from which he should launch it.

In the mean time he felt the need of some present solace, such as only unqualified worship could give him; a cruel wish to feel his power in some direction where, even if it were resisted, it could not be overcome, drove him on. That a woman who was to Beaton the embodiment of artificiality should intimate, however innocently—the innocence made it all the worse—that he was less honest than Wetmore, whom he knew to be so much more honest, was something that must be retaliated somewhere before his self-respect could be restored. It was only five o'clock, and he went on up-town to the Dryfooses', though he had been there only the night before last. He asked for the ladies, and Mrs. Mandel received him.

"The young ladies are down-town shopping," she said, "but I am very glad of the opportunity of seeing you alone, Mr. Beaton. You know I lived several years in Europe."

"Yes," said Beaton, wondering what that could have to do with her pleasure in seeing him alone. "I believe so?" He involuntarily gave his words the questioning inflection.

"You have lived abroad, too, and so you won't find what I am going to ask so strange. Mr. Beaton, why do you come so much to this house?" Mrs. Mandel bent forward with an aspect of ladylike interest and smiled.

Beaton frowned. "Why do I come so much?"

"Yes."

"Why do I—Excuse me, Mrs. Mandel, but will you allow me to ask why you ask?"

"Oh, certainly. There's no reason why I shouldn't say, for I wish you to be very frank with me. I ask because there are two young ladies in this house; and, in a certain way, I have to take the place of a mother to them. I needn't explain why; you know all the people here, and you understand. I have nothing to say about them, but I should not be speaking to you now if they were not all rather helpless people. They do not know the world they have come to live in here, and they cannot help themselves or one another. But you do know it, Mr. Beaton, and I am sure you know just how much or how little you mean by coming here. You are either interested in one of these young girls or you are not. If you are, I have nothing more to say. If you are not—" Mrs. Mandel continued to smile, but the smile had grown more perfunctory, and it had an icy gleam.

Beaton looked at her with surprise that he gravely kept to himself. He had always regarded her as a social nullity, with a kind of pity, to be sure, as a civilized person living among such people as the Dryfooses, but not without a humorous contempt; he had thought of her as Mandel, and sometimes as Old Mandel, though she was not half a score of years his senior, and was still well on the sunny side of forty. He reddened, and then turned an angry pallor. "Excuse me again, Mrs. Mandel. Do you ask this from the young ladies?"

"Certainly not," she said, with the best temper, and with something in her tone that convicted Beaton of vulgarity, in putting his question of her authority in the form of a sneer. "As I have suggested, they would hardly know how to help themselves at all in such a matter. I have no objection to saying that I ask it from the father of the young ladies. Of course, in and for myself I should have no right to know anything about your affairs. I assure you the duty of knowing isn't very pleasant." The little tremor in her clear voice struck Beaton as something rather nice.

"I can very well believe that, Mrs. Mandel," he said, with a dreamy sadness in his own. He lifted his eyes and looked into hers. "If I told you that I cared nothing about them in the way you intimate?"

"Then I should prefer to let you characterize your own conduct in continuing to come here for the year past, as you have done, and tacitly leading them on to infer differently." They both mechanically kept up the fiction of plurality in speaking of Christine, but there was no doubt in the mind of either which of the young ladies the other meant. A good many thoughts went through Beaton's mind, and none of them were flattering. He had not been unconscious that the part he had played toward this girl was ignoble, and that it had grown meaner as the fancy which her beauty had at first kindled in him had grown cooler. He was aware that of late he had been amusing himself with her passion in a way that was not less than cruel, not because he wished to do so, but because he was listless and wished nothing. He rose in saying: "I might be a little more lenient than you think, Mrs. Mandel; but I won't trouble you with any palliating theory. I will not come any more."

He bowed, and Mrs. Mandel said, "Of course, it's only your action that I am concerned with."

She seemed to him merely triumphant, and he could not conceive what it had cost her to nerve herself up to her too easy victory. He left Mrs. Mandel to a far harder lot than had fallen to him, and he went away hating her as an enemy who had humiliated him at a moment when he particularly needed exalting. It was really very simple for him to stop going to see Christine Dryfoos, but it was not at all simple for Mrs. Mandel to deal with the consequences of his not coming. He only thought how lightly she had stopped him, and the poor woman whom he had left trembling for what she had been obliged to do embodied for him the conscience that accused him of unpleasant things.

"By heavens! this is piling it up," he said to himself through his set teeth, realizing how it had happened right on top of that stupid insult from Mrs. Horn. Now he should have to give up his place on 'Every Other Week; he could not keep that, under the circumstances, even if some pretence were not made to get rid of him; he must hurry and anticipate any such pretence; he must see Fulkerson at once; he wondered where he should find him at that hour. He thought, with bitterness so real that it gave him a kind of tragical satisfaction, how certainly he could find him a little later at Mrs. Leighton's; and Fulkerson's happiness became an added injury.

The thing had, of course, come about just at the wrong time. There never had been a time when Beaton needed money more, when he had spent what he had and what he expected to have so recklessly. He was in debt to Fulkerson personally and officially for advance payments of salary. The thought of sending money home made him break into a scoffing laugh, which he turned into a cough in order to deceive the passers. What sort of face should he go with to Fulkerson and tell him that he renounced his employment on 'Every Other Week;' and what should he do when he had renounced it? Take pupils, perhaps; open a class? A lurid conception of a class conducted on those principles of shameless flattery at which Mrs. Horn had hinted—he believed now she had meant to insult him—presented itself. Why should not he act upon the suggestion? He thought with loathing for the whole race of women—dabblers in art. How easy the thing would be: as easy as to turn back now and tell that old fool's girl that he loved her, and rake in half his millions. Why should not he do that? No one else cared for him; and at a year's end, probably, one woman would be like another as far as the love was concerned, and probably he should not be more tired if the woman were Christine Dryfoos than if she were Margaret Vance. He kept Alma Leighton out of the question, because at the bottom of his heart he believed that she must be forever unlike every other woman to him.

The tide of his confused and aimless reverie had carried him far down-town, he thought; but when he looked up from it to see where he was he found himself on Sixth Avenue, only a little below Thirty-ninth Street, very hot and blown; that idiotic fur overcoat was stifling. He could not possibly walk down to Eleventh; he did not want to walk even to the Elevated station at Thirty-fourth; he stopped at the corner to wait for a surface-car, and fell again into his bitter fancies. After a while he roused himself and looked up the track, but there was no car coming. He found himself beside a policeman, who was lazily swinging his club by its thong from his wrist.

"When do you suppose a car will be along?" he asked, rather in a general sarcasm of the absence of the cars than in any special belief that the policeman could tell him.

The policeman waited to discharge his tobacco-juice into the gutter. "In about a week," he said, nonchalantly.

"What's the matter?" asked Beaton, wondering what the joke could be.

"Strike," said the policeman. His interest in Beaton's ignorance seemed to overcome his contempt of it. "Knocked off everywhere this morning except Third Avenue and one or two cross-town lines." He spat again and kept his bulk at its incline over the gutter to glance at a group of men on the corner below: They were neatly dressed, and looked like something better than workingmen, and they had a holiday air of being in their best clothes.

"Some of the strikers?" asked Beaton.

The policeman nodded.

"Any trouble yet?"

"There won't be any trouble till we begin to move the cars," said the policeman.

Beaton felt a sudden turn of his rage toward the men whose action would now force him to walk five blocks and mount the stairs of the Elevated station. "If you'd take out eight or ten of those fellows," he said, ferociously, "and set them up against a wall and shoot them, you'd save a great deal of bother."

"I guess we sha'n't have to shoot much," said the policeman, still swinging his locust. "Anyway, we shant begin it. If it comes to a fight, though," he said, with a look at the men under the scooping rim of his helmet, "we can drive the whole six thousand of 'em into the East River without pullin' a trigger."

"Are there six thousand in it?"

"About."

"What do the infernal fools expect to live on?"

"The interest of their money, I suppose," said the officer, with a grin of satisfaction in his irony. "It's got to run its course. Then they'll come back with their heads tied up and their tails between their legs, and plead to be taken on again."

"If I was a manager of the roads," said Beaton, thinking of how much he was already inconvenienced by the strike, and obscurely connecting it as one of the series with the wrongs he had suffered at the hands of Mrs. Horn and Mrs. Mandel, "I would see them starve before I'd take them back—every one of them."

"Well," said the policeman, impartially, as a man might whom the companies allowed to ride free, but who had made friends with a good many drivers and conductors in the course of his free riding, "I guess that's what the roads would like to do if they could; but the men are too many for them, and there ain't enough other men to take their places."

"No matter," said Beaton, severely. "They can bring in men from other places."

"Oh, they'll do that fast enough," said the policeman.

A man came out of the saloon on the corner where the strikers were standing, noisy drunk, and they began, as they would have said, to have some fun with him. The policeman left Beaton, and sauntered slowly down toward the group as if in the natural course of an afternoon ramble. On the other side of the street Beaton could see another officer sauntering up from the block below. Looking up and down the avenue, so silent of its horse-car bells, he saw a policeman at every corner. It was rather impressive.

III.

The strike made a good deal of talk in the office of 'Every Other Week' that is, it made Fulkerson talk a good deal. He congratulated himself that he was not personally incommoded by it, like some of the fellows who lived uptown, and had not everything under one roof, as it were. He enjoyed the excitement of it, and he kept the office boy running out to buy the extras which the newsmen came crying through the street almost every hour with a lamentable, unintelligible noise. He read not only the latest intelligence of the strike, but the editorial comments on it, which praised the firm attitude of both parties, and the admirable measures taken by the police to preserve order. Fulkerson enjoyed the interviews with the police captains and the leaders of the strike; he equally enjoyed the attempts of the reporters to interview the road managers, which were so graphically detailed, and with such a fine feeling for the right use of scare-heads as to have almost the value of direct expression from them, though it seemed that they had resolutely refused to speak. He said, at second-hand from the papers, that if the men behaved themselves and respected the rights of property, they would have public sympathy with them every time; but just as soon as they began to interfere with the roads' right to manage their own affairs in their own way, they must be put down with an iron hand; the phrase "iron hand" did Fulkerson almost as much good as if it had never been used before. News began to come of fighting between the police and the strikers when the roads tried to move their cars with men imported from Philadelphia, and then Fulkerson rejoiced at the splendid courage of the police. At the same time, he believed what the strikers said, and that the trouble was not made by them, but by gangs of roughs acting without their approval. In this juncture he was relieved by the arrival of the State Board of Arbitration, which took up its quarters, with a great many scare-heads, at one of the principal hotels, and invited the roads and the strikers to lay the matter in dispute before them; he said that now we should see the working of the greatest piece of social machinery in modern times. But it appeared to work only in the alacrity of the strikers to submit their grievance. The roads were as one road in declaring that there was nothing to arbitrate, and that they were merely asserting their right to manage their own affairs in their own way. One of the presidents was reported to have told a member

of the Board, who personally summoned him, to get out and to go about his business. Then, to Fulkerson's extreme disappointment, the august tribunal, acting on behalf of the sovereign people in the interest of peace, declared itself powerless, and got out, and would, no doubt, have gone about its business if it had had any. Fulkerson did not know what to say, perhaps because the extras did not; but March laughed at this result.

"It's a good deal like the military manoeuvre of the King of France and his forty thousand men. I suppose somebody told him at the top of the hill that there was nothing to arbitrate, and to get out and go about his business, and that was the reason he marched down after he had marched up with all that ceremony. What amuses me is to find that in an affair of this kind the roads have rights and the strikers have rights, but the public has no rights at all. The roads and the strikers are allowed to fight out a private war in our midst as thoroughly and precisely a private war as any we despise the Middle Ages for having tolerated—as any street war in Florence or Verona—and to fight it out at our pains and expense, and we stand by like sheep and wait till they get tired. It's a funny attitude for a city of fifteen hundred thousand inhabitants."

"What would you do?" asked Fulkerson, a good deal daunted by this view of the case.

"Do? Nothing. Hasn't the State Board of Arbitration declared itself powerless? We have no hold upon the strikers; and we're so used to being snubbed and disobliged by common carriers that we have forgotten our hold on the roads and always allow them to manage their own affairs in their own way, quite as if we had nothing to do with them and they owed us no services in return for their privileges."

"That's a good deal so," said Fulkerson, disordering his hair. "Well, it's nuts for the colonel nowadays. He says if he was boss of this town he would seize the roads on behalf of the people, and man 'em with policemen, and run 'em till the managers had come to terms with the strikers; and he'd do that every time there was a strike."

"Doesn't that rather savor of the paternalism he condemned in Lindau?" asked March.

"I don't know. It savors of horse sense."

"You are pretty far gone, Fulkerson. I thought you were the most engaged man I ever saw; but I guess you're more father-in-lawed. And before you're married, too."

"Well, the colonel's a glorious old fellow, March. I wish he had the power to do that thing, just for the fun of looking on while he waltzed in. He's on the keen jump from morning till night, and he's up late and early to see the row. I'm afraid he'll get shot at some of the fights; he sees them all; I can't get any show at them: haven't seen a brickbat shied or a club swung yet. Have you?"

"No, I find I can philosophize the situation about as well from the papers, and that's what I really want to do, I suppose. Besides, I'm solemnly pledged by Mrs. March not to go near any sort of crowd, under penalty of having her bring the children and go with me. Her theory is that we must all die together; the children haven't been at school since the strike began. There's no precaution that Mrs. March hasn't used. She watches me whenever I go out, and sees that I start straight for this office."

Fulkerson laughed and said: "Well, it's probably the only thing that's saved your life. Have you seen anything of Beaton lately?"

"No. You don't mean to say he's killed!"

"Not if he knows it. But I don't know—What do you say, March? What's the reason you couldn't get us up a paper on the strike?"

"I knew it would fetch round to 'Every Other Week,' somehow."

"No, but seriously. There'll be plenty of news paper accounts. But you could treat it in the historical spirit—like something that happened several centuries ago; De Foe's Plague of London style. Heigh? What made me think of it was Beaton. If I could get hold of him, you two could go round together and take down its aesthetic aspects. It's a big thing, March, this strike is. I tell you it's imposing to have a private war, as you say, fought out this way, in the heart of New York, and New York not minding it a bit. See? Might take that view of it. With your descriptions and Beaton's sketches—well, it would just be the greatest card! Come! What do you say?"

"Will you undertake to make it right with Mrs. March if I'm killed and she and the children are not killed with me?"

"Well, it would be difficult. I wonder how it would do to get Kendricks to do the literary part?"

"I've no doubt he'd jump at the chance. I've yet to see the form of literature that Kendricks wouldn't lay down his life for."

"Say!" March perceived that Fulkerson was about to vent another inspiration, and smiled patiently. "Look here! What's the reason we couldn't get one of the strikers to write it up for us?"

"Might have a symposium of strikers and presidents," March suggested.

"No; I'm in earnest. They say some of those fellows—especially the foreigners—are educated men. I know one fellow—a Bohemian—that used to edit a Bohemian newspaper here. He could write it out in his kind of Dutch, and we could get Lindau to translate it."

"I guess not," said March, dryly.

"Why not? He'd do it for the cause, wouldn't he? Suppose you put it up on him the next time you see him."

"I don't see Lindau any more," said March. He added, "I guess he's renounced me along with Mr. Dryfoos's money."

"Pshaw! You don't mean he hasn't been round since?"

"He came for a while, but he's left off coming now. I don't feel particularly gay about it," March said, with some resentment of Fulkerson's grin. "He's left me in debt to him for lessons to the children."

Fulkerson laughed out. "Well, he is the greatest old fool! Who'd 'a' thought he'd 'a' been in earnest with those 'brincibles' of his? But I suppose there have to be just such cranks; it takes all kinds to make a world."

"There has to be one such crank, it seems," March partially assented. "One's enough for me."

"I reckon this thing is nuts for Lindau, too," said Fulkerson. "Why, it must act like a schooner of beer on him all the while, to see 'gabidal' embarrassed like it is by this strike. It must make old Lindau feel like he was back behind those barricades at Berlin. Well, he's a splendid old fellow; pity he drinks, as I remarked once before."

When March left the office he did not go home so directly as he came, perhaps because Mrs. March's eye was not on him. He was very curious about some aspects of the strike, whose importance, as a great social convulsion, he felt people did not recognize; and, with his temperance in everything, he found its negative expressions as significant as its more violent phases. He had promised his wife solemnly that he would keep away from these, and he had a natural inclination to keep his promise; he had no wish to be that peaceful spectator who always gets shot when there is any firing on a mob. He interested himself in the apparent indifference of the mighty city, which kept on about its business as tranquilly as if the private war being fought out in its midst were a vague rumor of Indian troubles on the frontier; and he realized how there might once have been a street feud of forty years in Florence without interfering materially with the industry and prosperity of the city. On Broadway there was a silence where a jangle and clatter of horse-car bells and hoofs had been, but it was not very noticeable; and on the avenues, roofed by the elevated roads, this silence of the surface tracks was not noticeable at all in the roar of the trains overhead. Some of the cross-town cars were beginning to run again, with a policeman on the rear of each; on the Third Avenue line, operated by non-union men, who had not struck, there were two policemen beside the driver of every car, and two beside the conductor, to protect them from the strikers. But there were no strikers in sight, and on Second Avenue they stood quietly about in groups on the corners. While March watched them at a safe distance, a car laden with policemen came down the track, but none of the strikers offered to molest it. In their simple Sunday best, March thought them very quiet, decent-looking people, and he could well believe that they had nothing to do with the riotous outbreaks in other parts of the city. He could hardly believe that there were any such outbreaks; he began more and more to think them mere newspaper exaggerations in the absence of any disturbance, or the disposition to it, that he could see. He walked on to the East River.

Avenues A, B, and C presented the same quiet aspect as Second Avenue; groups of men stood on the corners, and now and then a police-laden car was brought unmolested down the tracks before them; they looked at it and talked together, and some laughed, but there was no trouble.

March got a cross-town car, and came back to the West Side. A policeman, looking very sleepy and tired, lounged on the platform.

"I suppose you'll be glad when this cruel war is over," March suggested, as he got in.

The officer gave him a surly glance and made him no answer.

His behavior, from a man born to the joking give and take of our life, impressed March. It gave him a fine sense of the ferocity which he had read of the French troops putting on toward the populace just before the coup d'etat; he began to feel like the populace; but he struggled with himself and regained his character of philosophical observer. In this character he remained in the car and let it carry him by the corner where he ought to have got out and gone home, and let it keep on with him to one of the farthest tracks westward, where so much of the fighting was reported to have taken place. But everything on the way was as quiet as on the East Side.

Suddenly the car stopped with so quick a turn of the brake that he was half thrown from his seat, and the policeman jumped down from the platform and ran forward.

IV

Dryfoos sat at breakfast that morning with Mrs. Mandel as usual to pour out his coffee. Conrad had gone down-town; the two girls lay abed much later than their father breakfasted, and their mother had gradually grown too feeble to come down till lunch. Suddenly Christine appeared at the door. Her face was white to the edges of her lips, and her eyes were blazing.

"Look here, father! Have you been saying anything to Mr. Beaton?"

The old man looked up at her across his coffee-cup through his frowning brows. "No."

Mrs. Mandel dropped her eyes, and the spoon shook in her hand.

"Then what's the reason he don't come here any more?" demanded the girl; and her glance darted from her father to Mrs. Mandel. "Oh, it's you, is it? I'd like to know who told you to meddle in other people's business?"

"I did," said Dryfoos, savagely. "I told her to ask him what he wanted here, and he said he didn't want anything, and he stopped coming. That's all. I did it myself."

"Oh, you did, did you?" said the girl, scarcely less insolently than she had spoken to Mrs. Mandel. "I should like to know what you did it for? I'd like to know what made you think I wasn't able to take care of myself. I just knew somebody had been meddling, but I didn't suppose it was you. I can manage my own affairs in my own way, if you please, and I'll thank you after this to leave me to myself in what don't concern you."

"Don't concern me? You impudent jade!" her father began.

Christine advanced from the doorway toward the table; she had her hands closed upon what seemed trinkets, some of which glittered and dangled from them. She said, "Will you go to him and tell him that this meddlesome minx, here, had no business to say anything about me to him, and you take it all back?"

"No!" shouted the old man. "And if—"

"That's all I want of you!" the girl shouted in her turn. "Here are your presents." With both hands she flung the jewels—pins and rings and earrings and bracelets—among the breakfast-dishes, from which some of them sprang to the floor. She stood a moment to pull the intaglio ring from the finger where Beaton put it a year ago, and dashed that at her father's plate. Then she whirled out of the room, and they heard her running up-stairs.

The old man made a start toward her, but he fell back in his chair before she was gone, and, with a fierce, grinding movement of his jaws, controlled himself. "Take—take those things up," he gasped to Mrs. Mandel. He seemed unable to rise again from his chair; but when she asked him if he were unwell, he said no, with an air of offence, and got quickly to his feet. He mechanically picked up the intaglio ring from the table while he stood there, and put it on his little finger; his hand was not much bigger than Christine's. "How do you suppose she found it out?" he asked, after a moment.

"She seems to have merely suspected it," said Mrs. Mandel, in a tremor, and with the fright in her eyes which Christine's violence had brought there.

"Well, it don't make any difference. She had to know, somehow, and now she knows." He started toward the door of the library, as if to go into the hall, where his hat and coat hung.

"Mr. Dryfoos," palpitated Mrs. Mandel, "I can't remain here, after the language your daughter has used to me—I can't let you leave me—I—I'm afraid of her—"

"Lock yourself up, then," said the old man, rudely. He added, from the hall before he went out, "I reckon she'll quiet down now."

He took the Elevated road. The strike seemed a vary far-off thing, though the paper he bought to look up the stockmarket was full of noisy typography about yesterday's troubles on the surface lines. Among the millions in Wall Street there was some joking and some swearing, but not much thinking, about the six thousand men who had taken such chances in their attempt to better their condition. Dryfoos heard nothing of the strike in the lobby of the Stock Exchange, where he spent two or three hours watching a favorite stock of his go up and go down under the betting. By the time the Exchange closed it had risen eight points, and on this and some other investments he was five thousand dollars richer than he had been in the morning. But he had expected to be richer still, and he was by no means satisfied with his luck. All through the excitement of his winning and losing had played the dull, murderous rage he felt toward the child who had defied him, and when the game was over and he started home his rage mounted into a sort of frenzy; he would teach her, he would break her. He walked a long way without thinking, and then waited for a car. None came, and he hailed a passing coupe.

"What has got all the cars?" he demanded of the driver, who jumped down from his box to open the door for him and get his direction.

"Been away?" asked the driver. "Hasn't been any car along for a week. Strike."

"Oh yes," said Dryfoos. He felt suddenly giddy, and he remained staring at the driver after he had taken his seat.

The man asked, "Where to?"

Dryfoos could not think of his street or number, and he said, with uncontrollable fury: "I told you once! Go up to West Eleventh, and drive along slow on the south side; I'll show you the place."

He could not remember the number of 'Every Other Week' office, where he suddenly decided to stop before he went home. He wished to see Fulkerson, and ask him something about Beaton: whether he had been about lately, and whether he had dropped any hint of what had happened concerning Christine; Dryfoos believed that Fulkerson was in the fellow's confidence.

There was nobody but Conrad in the counting-room, whither Dryfoos returned after glancing into Fulkerson's empty office. "Where's Fulkerson?" he asked, sitting down with his hat on.

"He went out a few moments ago," said Conrad, glancing at the clock. "I'm afraid he isn't coming back again today, if you wanted to see him."

Dryfoos twisted his head sidewise and upward to indicate March's room. "That other fellow out, too?"

"He went just before Mr. Fulkerson," answered Conrad.

"Do you generally knock off here in the middle of the afternoon?" asked the old man.

"No," said Conrad, as patiently as if his father had not been there a score of times and found the whole staff of "Every Other Week" at work between four and five. "Mr. March, you know, always takes a good deal of his work home with him, and I suppose Mr. Fulkerson went out so early because there isn't much doing to-day. Perhaps it's the strike that makes it dull."

"The strike-yes! It's a pretty piece of business to have everything thrown out because a parcel of lazy hounds want a chance to lay off and get drunk." Dryfoos seemed to think Conrad would make some answer to this, but the young man's mild face merely saddened, and he said nothing. "I've got a coupe out there now that I had to take because I couldn't get a car. If I had my way I'd have a lot of those vagabonds hung. They're waiting to get the city into a snarl, and then rob the houses—pack of dirty, worthless whelps. They ought to call out the militia, and fire into 'em. Clubbing is too good for them." Conrad was still silent, and his father sneered, "But I reckon you don't think so."

"I think the strike is useless," said Conrad.

"Oh, you do, do you? Comin' to your senses a little. Gettin' tired walkin' so much. I should like to know what your gentlemen over there on the East Side think about the strike, anyway."

The young fellow dropped his eyes. "I am not authorized to speak for them."

"Oh, indeed! And perhaps you're not authorized to speak for yourself?"

"Father, you know we don't agree about these things. I'd rather not talk—"

"But I'm goin' to make you talk this time!" cried Dryfoos, striking the arm of the chair he sat in with the side of his fist. A maddening thought of Christine came over him. "As long as you eat my bread, you have got to do as I say. I won't have my children telling me what I shall do and sha'n't do, or take on airs of being holier than me. Now, you just speak up! Do you think those loafers are right, or don't you? Come!"

Conrad apparently judged it best to speak. "I think they were very foolish to strike—at this time, when the Elevated roads can do the work."

"Oh, at this time, heigh! And I suppose they think over there on the East Side that it 'd been wise to strike before we got the Elevated." Conrad again refused to answer, and his father roared, "What do you think?"

"I think a strike is always bad business. It's war; but sometimes there don't seem any other way for the workingmen to get justice. They say that sometimes strikes do raise the wages, after a while."

"Those lazy devils were paid enough already," shrieked the old man.

"They got two dollars a day. How much do you think they ought to 'a' got? Twenty?"

Conrad hesitated, with a beseeching look at his father. But he decided to answer. "The men say that with partial work, and fines, and other things, they get sometimes a dollar, and sometimes ninety cents a day."

"They lie, and you know they lie," said his father, rising and coming toward him. "And what do you think the upshot of it all will be, after they've ruined business for another week, and made people hire hacks, and stolen the money of honest men? How is it going to end?"

"They will have to give in."

"Oh, give in, heigh! And what will you say then, I should like to know? How will you feel about it then? Speak!"

"I shall feel as I do now. I know you don't think that way, and I don't blame you—or anybody. But if I have got to say how I shall feel, why, I shall feel sorry they didn't succeed, for I believe they have a righteous cause, though they go the wrong way to help themselves."

His father came close to him, his eyes blazing, his teeth set. "Do you dare so say that to me?"

"Yes. I can't help it. I pity them; my whole heart is with those poor men."

"You impudent puppy!" shouted the old man. He lifted his hand and struck his son in the face. Conrad caught his hand with his own left, and, while the blood began to trickle from a wound that Christine's intaglio ring had made in his temple, he looked at him with a kind of grieving wonder, and said, "Father!"

The old man wrenched his fist away and ran out of the house. He remembered his address now, and he gave it as he plunged into the coupe. He trembled with his evil passion, and glared out of the windows at the passers as he drove home; he only saw Conrad's mild, grieving, wondering eyes, and the blood slowly trickling from the wound in his temple.

Conrad went to the neat-set bowl in Fulkerson's comfortable room and washed the blood away, and kept bathing the wound with the cold water till it stopped bleeding. The cut was not deep, and he thought he would not put anything on it. After a while he locked up the office and started out, he hardly knew where. But he walked on, in the direction he had taken, till he found himself in Union Square, on the pavement in front of Brentano's. It seemed to him that he heard some one calling gently to him, "Mr. Dryfoos!"

V.

Conrad looked confusedly around, and the same voice said again, "Mr. Dryfoos!" and he saw that it was a lady speaking to him from a coupe beside the curbing, and then he saw that it was Miss Vance.

She smiled when he gave signs of having discovered her, and came up to the door of her carriage. "I am so glad to meet you. I have been longing to talk to somebody; nobody seems to feel about it as I do. Oh, isn't it horrible? Must they fail? I saw cars running on all the lines as I came across; it made me sick at heart. Must those brave fellows give in? And everybody seems to hate them so—I can't bear it." Her face was estranged with excitement, and there were traces of tears on it. "You must think me almost crazy to stop you in the street this way; but when I caught sight of you I had to speak. I knew you would sympathize—I knew you would feel as I do. Oh, how can anybody help honoring those poor men for standing by one another as they do? They are risking all they have in the world for the sake of justice! Oh, they are true heroes! They are staking the bread of their wives and children on the dreadful chance they've taken! But no one seems to understand it. No one seems to see that they are willing to suffer more now than other poor men may suffer less hereafter. And those wretched creatures that are coming in to take their places—those traitors—"

"We can't blame them for wanting to earn a living, Miss Vance," said Conrad.

"No, no! I don't blame them. Who am I, to do such a thing? It's we—people like me, of my class—who make the poor betray one another. But this dreadful fighting—this hideous paper is full of it!" She held up an extra, crumpled with her nervous reading. "Can't something be done to stop it? Don't you think that if some one went among them, and tried to make them see how perfectly hopeless it was to resist the companies and drive off the new men, he might do some good? I have wanted to go and try; but I am a woman, and I mustn't! I shouldn't be afraid of the strikers, but I'm afraid of what people would say!" Conrad kept pressing his handkerchief to the cut in his temple, which he thought might be bleeding, and now she noticed this. "Are you hurt, Mr. Dryfoos? You look so pale."

"No, it's nothing—a little scratch I've got."

"Indeed, you look pale. Have you a carriage? How will you get home? Will you get in here with me and let me drive you?"

"No, no," said Conrad, smiling at her excitement. "I'm perfectly well—"

"And you don't think I'm foolish and wicked for stopping you here and talking in this way? But I know you feel as I do!"

"Yes, I feel as you do. You are right—right in every way—I mustn't keep you—Good-bye." He stepped back to bow, but she put her beautiful hand out of the window, and when he took it she wrung his hand hard.

"Thank you, thank you! You are good and you are just! But no one can do anything. It's useless!"

The type of irreproachable coachman on the box whose respectability had suffered through the strange behavior of his mistress in this interview drove quickly off at her signal, and Conrad stood a moment looking after the carriage. His heart was full of joy; it leaped; he thought it would burst. As he turned to walk away it seemed to him as if he mounted upon the air. The trust she had shown him, the praise she had given him, that crush of the hand: he hoped nothing, he formed no idea from it, but it all filled him with love that cast out the pain and shame he had been suffering. He believed that he could never be unhappy any more; the hardness that was in his mind toward his father went out of it; he saw how sorely he had tried him; he grieved that he had done it, but the means, the difference of his feeling about the cause of their quarrel, he was solemnly glad of that since she shared it. He was only sorry for his father. "Poor father!" he said under his breath as he went along. He explained to her about his father in his reverie, and she pitied his father, too.

He was walking over toward the West Side, aimlessly at first, and then at times with the longing to do something to save those mistaken men from themselves forming itself into a purpose. Was not that what she meant when she bewailed her woman's helplessness? She must have wished him to try if he, being a man, could not do something; or if she did not, still he would try, and if she heard of it she would recall what she had said and would be glad he had understood her so. Thinking of her pleasure in what he was going to do, he forgot almost what it was; but when he came to a street-car track he remembered it, and looked up and down to see if there were any turbulent gathering of men whom he might mingle with and help to keep from violence. He saw none anywhere; and then suddenly, as if at

the same moment, for in his exalted mood all events had a dream-like simultaneity, he stood at the corner of an avenue, and in the middle of it, a little way off, was a street-car, and around the car a tumult of shouting, cursing, struggling men. The driver was lashing his horses forward, and a policeman was at their heads, with the conductor, pulling them; stones, clubs, brickbats hailed upon the car, the horses, the men trying to move them. The mob closed upon them in a body, and then a patrol-wagon whirled up from the other side, and a squad of policemen leaped out and began to club the rioters. Conrad could see how they struck them under the rims of their hats; the blows on their skulls sounded as if they had fallen on stone; the rioters ran in all directions.

One of the officers rushed up toward the corner where Conrad stood, and then he saw at his side a tall, old man, with a long, white beard, who was calling out at the policemen: "Ah, yes! Glup the strikerss—gif it to them! Why don't you co and glup the bresidents that insoalt your lawsss, and gick your Boart of Arpidration out-of-toors? Glup the strikerss—they cot no friendts! They cot no money to pribe you, to dreat you!"

The officer lifted his club, and the old man threw his left arm up to shield his head. Conrad recognized Lindau, and now he saw the empty sleeve dangle in the air over the stump of his wrist. He heard a shot in that turmoil beside the car, and something seemed to strike him in the breast. He was going to say to the policeman: "Don't strike him! He's an old soldier! You see he has no hand!" but he could not speak, he could not move his tongue. The policeman stood there; he saw his face: it was not bad, not cruel; it was like the face of a statue, fixed, perdurable—a mere image of irresponsible and involuntary authority. Then Conrad fell forward, pierced through the heart by that shot fired from the car.

March heard the shot as he scrambled out of his car, and at the same moment he saw Lindau drop under the club of the policeman, who left him where he fell and joined the rest of the squad in pursuing the rioters. The fighting round the car in the avenue ceased; the driver whipped his horses into a gallop, and the place was left empty.

March would have liked to run; he thought how his wife had implored him to keep away from the rioting; but he could not have left Lindau lying there if he would. Something stronger than his will drew him to the spot, and there he saw Conrad, dead beside the old man.

VI.

In the cares which Mrs. March shared with her husband that night she was supported partly by principle, but mainly by the, potent excitement which bewildered Conrad's family and took all reality from what had happened. It was nearly midnight when the Marches left them and walked away toward the Elevated station with Fulkerson. Everything had been done, by that time, that could be done; and Fulkerson was not without that satisfaction in the business-like despatch of all the details which attends each step in such an affair and helps to make death tolerable even to the most sorely stricken. We are creatures of the moment; we live from one little space to another; and only one interest at a time fills these. Fulkerson was cheerful when they got into the street, almost gay; and Mrs. March experienced a rebound from her depression which she felt that she ought not to have experienced. But she condoned the offence a little in herself, because her husband remained so constant in his gravity; and, pending the final accounting he must make her for having been where he could be of so much use from the first instant of the calamity, she was tenderly, gratefully proud of all the use he had been to Conrad's family, and especially his miserable old father. To her mind, March was the principal actor in the whole affair, and much more important in having seen it than those who had suffered in it. In fact, he had suffered incomparably.

"Well, well," said Fulkerson. "They'll get along now. We've done all we could, and there's nothing left but for them to bear it. Of course it's awful, but I guess it 'll come out all right. I mean," he added, "they'll pull through now."

"I suppose," said March, "that nothing is put on us that we can't bear. But I should think," he went on, musingly, "that when God sees what we poor finite creatures can bear, hemmed round with this eternal darkness of death, He must respect us."

"Basil!" said his wife. But in her heart she drew nearer to him for the words she thought she ought to rebuke him for.

"Oh, I know," he said, "we school ourselves to despise human nature. But God did not make us despicable, and I say, whatever end He meant us for, He must have some such thrill of joy in our adequacy to fate as a father feels when his son shows himself a man. When I think what we can be if we must, I can't believe the least of us shall finally perish."

"Oh, I reckon the Almighty won't scoop any of us," said Fulkerson, with a piety of his own.

"That poor boy's father!" sighed Mrs. March. "I can't get his face out of my sight. He looked so much worse than death."

"Oh, death doesn't look bad," said March. "It's life that looks so in its presence. Death is peace and pardon. I only wish poor old Lindau was as well out of it as Conrad there."

"Ah, Lindau! He has done harm enough," said Mrs. March. "I hope he will be careful after this."

March did not try to defend Lindau against her theory of the case, which inexorably held him responsible for Conrad's death.

"Lindau's going to come out all right, I guess," said Fulkerson. "He was first-rate when I saw him at the hospital to-night." He whispered in March's ear, at a chance he got in mounting the station stairs: "I didn't like to tell you there at the house, but I guess you'd better know. They had to take Lindau's arm off near the shoulder. Smashed all to pieces by the clubbing."

In the house, vainly rich and foolishly unfit for them, the bereaved family whom the Marches had just left lingered together, and tried to get strength to part for the night. They were all spent with the fatigue that comes from heaven to such misery as theirs, and they sat in a torpor in which each waited for the other to move, to speak.

Christine moved, and Mela spoke. Christine rose and went out of the room without saying a word, and they heard her going up-stairs. Then Mela said:

"I reckon the rest of us better be goun' too, father. Here, let's git mother started."

She put her arm round her mother, to lift her from her chair, but the old man did not stir, and Mela called Mrs. Mandel from the next room. Between them they raised her to her feet.

"Ain't there anybody agoin' to set up with it?" she asked, in her hoarse pipe. "It appears like folks hain't got any feelin's in New York. Woon't some o' the neighbors come and offer to set up, without waitin' to be asked?"

"Oh, that's all right, mother. The men 'll attend to that. Don't you bother any," Mela coaxed, and she kept her arm round her mother, with tender patience.

"Why, Mely, child! I can't feel right to have it left to hirelin's so. But there ain't anybody any more to see things done as they ought. If Coonrod was on'y here—"

"Well, mother, you are pretty mixed!" said Mela, with a strong tendency to break into her large guffaw. But she checked herself and said: "I know just how you feel, though. It keeps acomun' and agoun'; and it's so and it ain't so, all at once; that's the plague of it. Well, father! Ain't you goun' to come?"

"I'm goin' to stay, Mela," said the old man, gently, without moving. "Get your mother to bed, that's a good girl."

"You goin' to set up with him, Jacob?" asked the old woman.

"Yes, 'Liz'beth, I'll set up. You go to bed."

"Well, I will, Jacob. And I believe it 'll do you good to set up. I wished I could set up with you; but I don't seem to have the stren'th I did when the twins died. I must git my sleep, so's to—I don't like very well to have you broke of your rest, Jacob, but there don't appear to be anybody else. You wouldn't have to do it if Coonrod was here. There I go ag'in! Mercy! mercy!"

"Well, do come along, then, mother," said Mela; and she got her out of the room, with Mrs. Mandel's help, and up the stairs.

From the top the old woman called down, "You tell Coonrod—" She stopped, and he heard her groan out, "My Lord! my Lord!"

He sat, one silence in the dining-room, where they had all lingered together, and in the library beyond the hireling watcher sat, another silence. The time passed, but neither moved, and the last noise in the house ceased, so that they heard each other breathe, and the vague, remote rumor of the city invaded the inner stillness. It grew louder toward morning, and then Dryfoos knew from the watcher's deeper breathing that he had fallen into a doze.

He crept by him to the drawing-room, where his son was; the place was full of the awful sweetness of the flowers that Fulkerson had brought, and that lay above the pulseless breast. The old man turned up a burner in the chandelier, and stood looking on the majestic serenity of the dead face.

He could not move when he saw his wife coming down the stairway in the hall. She was in her long, white flannel bed gown, and the candle she carried shook with her nervous tremor. He thought she might be walking in her sleep, but she said, quite simply, "I woke up, and I couldn't git to sleep ag'in without comin' to have a look." She stood beside their dead son with him, "well, he's beautiful, Jacob. He was the prettiest baby! And he was always good, Coonrod was; I'll say that for him. I don't believe he ever give me a minute's care in his whole life. I reckon I liked him about the best of all the children; but I don't know as I ever done much to show it. But you was always good to him, Jacob; you always done the best for him, ever since he was a little feller. I used to be afraid you'd spoil him sometimes in them days; but I guess you're glad now for every time you didn't cross him. I don't suppose since the twins died you ever hit him a lick." She stooped and peered closer at the face. "Why, Jacob, what's that there by his pore eye?" Dryfoos saw it, too, the wound that he had feared to look for, and that now seemed to redden on his sight. He broke into a low, wavering cry, like a child's in despair, like an animal's in terror, like a soul's in the anguish of remorse.

VII.

The evening after the funeral, while the Marches sat together talking it over, and making approaches, through its shadow, to the question of their own future, which it involved, they were startled by the twitter of the electric bell at their apartment door. It was really not so late as the children's having gone to bed made it seem; but at nine o'clock it was too late for any probable visitor except Fulkerson. It might be he, and March was glad to postpone the impending question to his curiosity concerning the immediate business Fulkerson might have with him. He went himself to the door, and confronted there a lady deeply veiled in black and attended by a very decorous serving-woman.

"Are you alone, Mr. March—you and Mrs. March?" asked the lady, behind her veil; and, as he hesitated, she said: "You don't know me! Miss Vance"; and she threw back her veil, showing her face wan and agitated in the dark folds. "I am very anxious to see you—to speak with you both. May I come in?"

"Why, certainly, Miss Vance," he answered, still too much stupefied by her presence to realize it.

She promptly entered, and saying, with a glance at the hall chair by the door, "My maid can sit here?" followed him to the room where he had left his wife.

Mrs. March showed herself more capable of coping with the fact. She welcomed Miss Vance with the liking they both felt for the girl, and with the sympathy which her troubled face inspired.

"I won't tire you with excuses for coming, Mrs. March," she said, "for it was the only thing left for me to do; and I come at my aunt's suggestion." She added this as if it would help to account for her more on the conventional plane, and she had the instinctive good taste to address herself throughout to Mrs. March as much as possible, though what she had to say was mainly for March. "I don't know how to begin—I don't know how to speak of this terrible affair. But you know what I mean. I feel as if I had lived a whole lifetime since it happened. I don't want you to pity me for it," she said, forestalling a politeness from Mrs. March. "I'm the last one to be thought of, and you mustn't mind me if I try to make you. I came to find out all of the truth that I can, and when I know just what that is I shall know what to do. I have read the inquest; it's all burned into my brain. But I don't care for that—for myself: you must let me say such things without minding me. I know that your husband—that Mr. March was there; I read his testimony; and I wished to ask him—to ask him—" She stopped and looked distractedly about. "But what folly! He must have said everything he knew—he had to." Her eyes wandered to him from his wife, on whom she had kept them with instinctive tact.

"I said everything—yes," he replied. "But if you would like to know—"

"Perhaps I had better tell you something first. I had just parted with him—it couldn't have been more than half an hour—in front of Brentano's; he must have gone straight to his death. We were talking, and I—I said, Why didn't some one go among the strikers and plead with them to be peaceable, and keep them from attacking the new men. I knew that he felt as I did about the strikers: that he was their friend. Did you see—do you know anything that makes you think he had been trying to do that?"

"I am sorry," March began, "I didn't see him at all till—till I saw him lying dead."

"My husband was there purely by accident," Mrs. March put in. "I had begged and entreated him not to go near the striking anywhere. And he had just got out of the car, and saw the policeman strike that wretched Lindau—he's been such an anxiety to me ever since we have had anything to do with him here; my husband knew him when he was a boy in the West. Mr. March came home from it all perfectly prostrated; it made us all sick! Nothing so horrible ever came into our lives before. I assure you it was the most shocking experience."

Miss Vance listened to her with that look of patience which those who have seen much of the real suffering of the world—the daily portion of the poor—have for the nervous woes of comfortable people. March hung his head; he knew it would be useless to protest that his share of the calamity was, by comparison, infinitesimally small.

After she had heard Mrs. March to the end even of her repetitions, Miss Vance said, as if it were a mere matter of course that she should have looked the affair up, "Yes, I have seen Mr. Lindau at the hospital—"

"My husband goes every day to see him," Mrs. March interrupted, to give a final touch to the conception of March's magnanimity throughout.

"The poor man seems to have been in the wrong at the time," said Miss Vance.

"I could almost say he had earned the right to be wrong. He's a man of the most generous instincts, and a high ideal of justice, of equity—too high to be considered by a policeman with a club in his hand," said March, with a bold defiance of his wife's different opinion of Lindau. "It's the policeman's business, I suppose, to club the ideal when he finds it inciting a riot."

"Oh, I don't blame Mr. Lindau; I don't blame the policeman; he was as much a mere instrument as his club was. I am only trying to find out how much I am to blame myself. I had no thought of Mr. Dryfoos's going there—of his attempting to talk with the strikers and keep them quiet; I was only thinking, as women do, of what I should try to do if I were a man.

"But perhaps he understood me to ask him to go—perhaps my words sent him to his death."

She had a sort of calm in her courage to know the worst truth as to her responsibility that forbade any wish to flatter her out of it. "I'm afraid," said March, "that is what can never be known now." After a moment he added: "But why should you wish to know? If he went there as a peacemaker, he died in a good cause, in such a way as he would wish to die, I believe."

"Yes," said the girl; "I have thought of that. But death is awful; we must not think patiently, forgivingly of sending any one to their death in the best cause."—"I fancy life was an awful thing to Conrad Dryfoos," March replied. "He was thwarted and disappointed, without even pleasing the ambition that thwarted and disappointed him. That poor old man, his father, warped him from his simple, lifelong wish to be a minister, and was trying to make a business man of him. If it will be any consolation to you to know it, Miss Vance, I can assure you that he was very unhappy, and I don't see how he could ever have been happy here."

"It won't," said the girl, steadily. "If people are born into this world, it's because they were meant to live in it. It isn't a question of being happy here; no one is happy, in that old, selfish way, or can be; but he could have been of great use."

"Perhaps he was of use in dying. Who knows? He may have been trying to silence Lindau."

"Oh, Lindau wasn't worth it!" cried Mrs. March.

Miss Vance looked at her as if she did not quite understand. Then she turned to March. "He might have been unhappy, as we all are; but I know that his life here would have had a higher happiness than we wish for or aim for." The tears began to run silently down her cheeks.

"He looked strangely happy that day when he left me. He had hurt himself somehow, and his face was bleeding from a scratch; he kept his handkerchief up; he was pale, but such a light came into his face

when he shook hands—ah, I know he went to try and do what I said!" They were all silent, while she dried her eyes and then put her handkerchief back into the pocket from which she had suddenly pulled it, with a series of vivid, young-ladyish gestures, which struck March by their incongruity with the occasion of their talk, and yet by their harmony with the rest of her elegance. "I am sorry, Miss Vance," he began, "that I can't really tell you anything more—"

"You are very kind," she said, controlling herself and rising quickly. "I thank you—thank you both very much." She turned to Mrs. March and shook hands with her and then with him. "I might have known—I did know that there wasn't anything more for you to tell. But at least I've found out from you that there was nothing, and now I can begin to bear what I must. How are those poor creatures—his mother and father, his sisters? Some day, I hope, I shall be ashamed to have postponed them to the thought of myself; but I can't pretend to be yet. I could not come to the funeral; I wanted to."

She addressed her question to Mrs. March, who answered: "I can understand. But they were pleased with the flowers you sent; people are, at such times, and they haven't many friends."

"Would you go to see them?" asked the girl. "Would you tell them what I've told you?"

Mrs. March looked at her husband.

"I don't see what good it would do. They wouldn't understand. But if it would relieve you—"

"I'll wait till it isn't a question of self-relief," said the girl.
"Good-bye!"

She left them to long debate of the event. At the end Mrs. March said, "She is a strange being; such a mixture of the society girl and the saint."

Her husband answered: "She's the potentiality of several kinds of fanatic. She's very unhappy, and I don't see how she's to be happier about that poor fellow. I shouldn't be surprised if she did inspire him to attempt something of that kind."

"Well, you got out of it very well, Basil. I admired the way you managed. I was afraid you'd say something awkward."

"Oh, with a plain line of truth before me, as the only possible thing, I can get on pretty well. When it comes to anything decorative, I'd rather leave it to you, Isabel."

She seemed insensible of his jest. "Of course, he was in love with her. That was the light that came into his face when he was going to do what he thought she wanted him to do."

"And she—do you think that she was—"

"What an idea! It would have been perfectly grotesque!"

VIII.

Their affliction brought the Dryfooses into humaner relations with the Marches, who had hitherto regarded them as a necessary evil, as the odious means of their own prosperity. Mrs. March found that the women of the family seemed glad of her coming, and in the sense of her usefulness to them all she began to feel a kindness even for Christine. But she could not help seeing that between the girl and her father there was an unsettled account, somehow, and that it was Christine and not the old man who was holding out. She thought that their sorrow had tended to refine the others. Mela was much more subdued, and, except when she abandoned herself to a childish interest in her mourning, she did nothing to shock Mrs. March's taste or to seem unworthy of her grief. She was very good to her mother, whom the blow had left unchanged, and to her father, whom it had apparently fallen upon with crushing weight. Once, after visiting their house, Mrs. March described to March a little scene between Dryfoos and Mela, when he came home from Wall Street, and the girl met him at the door with a kind of country simpleness, and took his hat and stick, and brought him into the room where Mrs. March sat, looking tired and broken. She found this look of Dryfoos's pathetic, and dwelt on the sort of stupefaction there was in it; he must have loved his son more than they ever realized. "Yes," said March, "I suspect he did. He's never been about the place since that day; he was always dropping in

before, on his way up-town. He seems to go down to Wall Street every day, just as before, but I suppose that's mechanical; he wouldn't know what else to do; I dare say it's best for him. The sanguine Fulkerson is getting a little anxious about the future of 'Every Other Week.' Now Conrad's gone, he isn't sure the old man will want to keep on with it, or whether he'll have to look up another Angel. He wants to get married, I imagine, and he can't venture till this point is settled."

"It's a very material point to us too, Basil," said Mrs. March.

"Well, of course. I hadn't overlooked that, you may be sure. One of the things that Fulkerson and I have discussed is a scheme for buying the magazine. Its success is pretty well assured now, and I shouldn't be afraid to put money into it—if I had the money."

"I couldn't let you sell the house in Boston, Basil!"

"And I don't want to. I wish we could go back and live in it and get the rent, too! It would be quite a support. But I suppose if Dryfoos won't keep on, it must come to another Angel. I hope it won't be a literary one, with a fancy for running my department."

"Oh, I guess whoever takes the magazine will be glad enough to keep you!"

"Do you think so? Well, perhaps. But I don't believe Fulkerson would let me stand long between him and an Angel of the right description."

"Well, then, I believe he would. And you've never seen anything, Basil, to make you really think that Mr. Fulkerson didn't appreciate you to the utmost."

"I think I came pretty near an undervaluation in that Lindau trouble. I shall always wonder what put a backbone into Fulkerson just at that crisis. Fulkerson doesn't strike me as the stuff of a moral hero."

"At any rate, he was one," said Mrs. March, "and that's quite enough for me."

March did not answer. "What a noble thing life is, anyway! Here I am, well on the way to fifty, after twenty-five years of hard work, looking forward to the potential poor-house as confidently as I did in youth. We might have saved a little more than we have saved; but the little more wouldn't avail if I were turned out of my place now; and we should have lived sordidly to no purpose. Some one always has you by the throat, unless you have some one else in your grip. I wonder if that's the attitude the Almighty intended His respectable creatures to take toward one another! I wonder if He meant our civilization, the battle we fight in, the game we trick in! I wonder if He considers it final, and if the kingdom of heaven on earth, which we pray for—"

"Have you seen Lindau to-day?" Mrs. March asked.

"You inferred it from the quality of my piety?" March laughed, and then suddenly sobered. "Yes, I saw him. It's going rather hard with him, I'm afraid. The amputation doesn't heal very well; the shock was very great, and he's old. It 'll take time. There's so much pain that they have to keep him under opiates, and I don't think he fully knew me. At any rate, I didn't get my piety from him to-day."

"It's horrible! Horrible!" said Mrs. March. "I can't get over it! After losing his hand in the war, to lose his whole arm now in this way! It does seem too cruel! Of course he oughtn't to have been there; we can say that. But you oughtn't to have been there, either, Basil."

"Well, I wasn't exactly advising the police to go and club the railroad presidents."

"Neither was poor Conrad Dryfoos."

"I don't deny it. All that was distinctly the chance of life and death. That belonged to God; and no doubt it was law, though it seems chance. But what I object to is this economic chance-world in which we live, and which we men seem to have created. It ought to be law as inflexible in human affairs as the order of day and night in the physical world that if a man will work he shall both rest and eat, and shall not be harassed with any question as to how his repose and his provision shall come. Nothing less ideal than this satisfies the reason. But in our state of things no one is secure of this. No one is sure of finding work; no one is sure of not losing it. I may have my work taken away from me at any moment by the caprice, the mood, the indigestion of a man who has not the qualification for knowing whether I do it well, or ill. At my time of life—at every time of life—a man ought to feel that if he will keep on doing his duty he shall not suffer in himself or in those who are dear to him, except through natural causes. But no man can feel this as things are now; and so we go on, pushing and pulling, climbing and crawling, thrusting aside and trampling underfoot; lying, cheating, stealing; and then we get to the end, covered with blood and dirt and sin and shame, and look back over the way we've come to a palace of our own, or the poor-house, which is about the only possession we can claim in common with our

brother-men, I don't think the retrospect can be pleasing."

"I know, I know!" said his wife. "I think of those things, too, Basil. Life isn't what it seems when you look forward to it. But I think people would suffer less, and wouldn't have to work so hard, and could make all reasonable provision for the future, if they were not so greedy and so foolish."

"Oh, without doubt! We can't put it all on the conditions; we must put some of the blame on character. But conditions make character; and people are greedy and foolish, and wish to have and to shine, because having and shining are held up to them by civilization as the chief good of life. We all know they are not the chief good, perhaps not good at all; but if some one ventures to say so, all the rest of us call him a fraud and a crank, and go moiling and toiling on to the palace or the poor-house. We can't help it. If one were less greedy or less foolish, some one else would have and would shine at his expense. We don't moil and toil to ourselves alone; the palace or the poor-house is not merely for ourselves, but for our children, whom we've brought up in the superstition that having and shining is the chief good. We dare not teach them otherwise, for fear they may falter in the fight when it comes their turn, and the children of others will crowd them out of the palace into the poor-house. If we felt sure that honest work shared by all would bring them honest food shared by all, some heroic few of us, who did not wish our children to rise above their fellows—though we could not bear to have them fall below—might trust them with the truth. But we have no such assurance, and so we go on trembling before Dryfooses and living in gimcrackeries."

"Basil, Basil! I was always willing to live more simply than you. You know I was!"

"I know you always said so, my dear. But how many bell-ratchets and speaking-tubes would you be willing to have at the street door below? I remember that when we were looking for a flat you rejected every building that had a bell-ratchet or a speaking-tube, and would have nothing to do with any that had more than an electric button; you wanted a hall-boy, with electric buttons all over him. I don't blame you. I find such things quite as necessary as you do."

"And do you mean to say, Basil," she asked, abandoning this unprofitable branch of the inquiry, "that you are really uneasy about your place? that you are afraid Mr. Dryfoos may give up being an Angel, and Mr. Fulkerson may play you false?"

"Play me false? Oh, it wouldn't be playing me false. It would be merely looking out for himself, if the new Angel had editorial tastes and wanted my place. It's what any one would do."

"You wouldn't do it, Basil!"

"Wouldn't I? Well, if any one offered me more salary than 'Every Other Week' pays—say, twice as much—what do you think my duty to my suffering family would be? It's give and take in the business world, Isabel; especially take. But as to being uneasy, I'm not, in the least. I've the spirit of a lion, when it comes to such a chance as that. When I see how readily the sensibilities of the passing stranger can be worked in New York, I think of taking up the role of that desperate man on Third Avenue who went along looking for garbage in the gutter to eat. I think I could pick up at least twenty or thirty cents a day by that little game, and maintain my family in the affluence it's been accustomed to."

"Basil!" cried his wife. "You don't mean to say that man was an impostor! And I've gone about, ever since, feeling that one such case in a million, the bare possibility of it, was enough to justify all that Lindau said about the rich and the poor!"

March laughed teasingly. "Oh, I don't say he was an impostor. Perhaps he really was hungry; but, if he wasn't, what do you think of a civilization that makes the opportunity of such a fraud? that gives us all such a bad conscience for the need which is that we weaken to the need that isn't? Suppose that poor fellow wasn't personally founded on fact: nevertheless, he represented the truth; he was the ideal of the suffering which would be less effective if realistically treated. That man is a great comfort to me. He probably rioted for days on that quarter I gave him; made a dinner very likely, or a champagne supper; and if 'Every Other Week' wants to get rid of me, I intend to work that racket. You can hang round the corner with Bella, and Tom can come up to me in tears, at stated intervals, and ask me if I've found anything yet. To be sure, we might be arrested and sent up somewhere. But even in that extreme case we should be provided for. Oh no, I'm not afraid of losing my place! I've merely a sort of psychological curiosity to know how men like Dryfoos and Fulkerson will work out the problem before them."

IX.

It was a curiosity which Fulkerson himself shared, at least concerning Dryfoos. "I don't know what the old man's going to do," he said to March the day after the Marches had talked their future over. "Said anything to you yet?"

"No, not a word."

"You're anxious, I suppose, same as I am. Fact is," said Fulkerson, blushing a little, "I can't ask to have a day named till I know where I am in connection with the old man. I can't tell whether I've got to look out for something else or somebody else. Of course, it's full soon yet."

"Yes," March said, "much sooner than it seems to us. We're so anxious about the future that we don't remember how very recent the past is."

"That's something so. The old man's hardly had time yet to pull himself together. Well, I'm glad you feel that way about it, March. I guess it's more of a blow to him than we realize. He was a good deal bound up in Coonrod, though he didn't always use him very well. Well, I reckon it's apt to happen so oftentimes; curious how cruel love can be. Heigh? We're an awful mixture, March!"

"Yes, that's the marvel and the curse, as Browning says."

"Why, that poor boy himself," pursued Fulkerson, had streaks of the mule in him that could give odds to Beaton, and he must have tried the old man by the way he would give in to his will and hold out against his judgment. I don't believe he ever budged a hairs-breadth from his original position about wanting to be a preacher and not wanting to be a business man. Well, of course! I don't think business is all in all; but it must have made the old man mad to find that without saying anything, or doing anything to show it, and after seeming to come over to his ground, and really coming, practically, Coonrod was just exactly where he first planted himself, every time."

"Yes, people that have convictions are difficult. Fortunately, they're rare."

"Do you think so? It seems to me that everybody's got convictions. Beaton himself, who hasn't a principle to throw at a dog, has got convictions the size of a barn. They ain't always the same ones, I know, but they're always to the same effect, as far as Beaton's being Number One is concerned. The old man's got convictions or did have, unless this thing lately has shaken him all up—and he believes that money will do everything. Colonel Woodburn's got convictions that he wouldn't part with for untold millions. Why, March, you got convictions yourself!"

"Have I?" said March. "I don't know what they are."

"Well, neither do I; but I know you were ready to kick the trough over for them when the old man wanted us to bounce Lindau that time."

"Oh yes," said March; he remembered the fact; but he was still uncertain just what the convictions were that he had been so stanch for.

"I suppose we could have got along without you," Fulkerson mused aloud. "It's astonishing how you always can get along in this world without the man that is simply indispensable. Makes a fellow realize that he could take a day off now and then without deranging the solar system a great deal. Now here's Coonrod—or, rather, he isn't. But that boy managed his part of the schooner so well that I used to tremble when I thought of his getting the better of the old man and going into a convent or something of that kind; and now here he is, snuffed out in half a second, and I don't believe but what we shall be sailing along just as chipper as usual inside of thirty days. I reckon it will bring the old man to the point when I come to talk with him about who's to be put in Coonrod's place. I don't like very well to start the subject with him; but it's got to be done some time."

"Yes," March admitted. "It's terrible to think how unnecessary even the best and wisest of us is to the purposes of Providence. When I looked at that poor young fellow's face sometimes—so gentle and true and pure—I used to think the world was appreciably richer for his being in it. But are we appreciably poorer for his being out of it now?"

"No, I don't reckon we are," said Fulkerson. "And what a lot of the raw material of all kinds the Almighty must have, to waste us the way He seems to do. Think of throwing away a precious creature like Coonrod Dryfoos on one chance in a thousand of getting that old fool of a Lindau out of the way of being clubbed! For I suppose that was what Coonrod was up to. Say! Have you been round to see Lindau to-day?"

Something in the tone or the manner of Fulkerson startled March. "No! I haven't seen him since yesterday."

"Well, I don't know," said Fulkerson. "I guess I saw him a little while after you did, and that young doctor there seemed to feel kind of worried about him."

"Or not worried, exactly; they can't afford to let such things worry them, I suppose; but—"

"He's worse?" asked March.

"Oh, he didn't say so. But I just wondered if you'd seen him to-day."

"I think I'll go now," said March, with a pang at heart. He had gone every day to see Lindau, but this day he had thought he would not go, and that was why his heart smote him. He knew that if he were in Lindau's place Lindau would never have left his side if he could have helped it. March tried to believe that the case was the same, as it stood now; it seemed to him that he was always going to or from the hospital; he said to himself that it must do Lindau harm to be visited so much. But he knew that this was not true when he was met at the door of the ward where Lindau lay by the young doctor, who had come to feel a personal interest in March's interest in Lindau.

He smiled without gayety, and said, "He's just going."

"What! Discharged?"

"Oh no. He has been failing very fast since you saw him yesterday, and now—" They had been walking softly and talking softly down the aisle between the long rows of beds. "Would you care to see him?"

The doctor made a slight gesture toward the white canvas screen which in such places forms the death-chamber of the poor and friendless. "Come round this way—he won't know you! I've got rather fond of the poor old fellow. He wouldn't have a clergyman—sort of agnostic, isn't he? A good many of these Germans are—but the young lady who's been coming to see him—"

They both stopped. Lindau's grand, patriarchal head, foreshortened to their view, lay white upon the pillow, and his broad, white beard flowed upon the sheet, which heaved with those long last breaths. Beside his bed Margaret Vance was kneeling; her veil was thrown back, and her face was lifted; she held clasped between her hands the hand of the dying man; she moved her lips inaudibly.

X.

In spite of the experience of the whole race from time immemorial, when death comes to any one we know we helplessly regard it as an incident of life, which will presently go on as before. Perhaps this is an instinctive perception of the truth that it does go on somewhere; but we have a sense of death as absolutely the end even for earth only if it relates to some one remote or indifferent to us. March tried to project Lindau to the necessary distance from himself in order to realize the fact in his case, but he could not, though the man with whom his youth had been associated in a poetic friendship had not actually reentered the region of his affection to the same degree, or in any like degree. The changed conditions forbade that. He had a soreness of heart concerning him; but he could not make sure whether this soreness was grief for his death, or remorse for his own uncandor with him about Dryfoos, or a foreboding of that accounting with his conscience which he knew his wife would now exact of him down to the last minutest particular of their joint and several behavior toward Lindau ever since they had met him in New York.

He felt something knock against his shoulder, and he looked up to have his hat struck from his head by a horse's nose. He saw the horse put his foot on the hat, and he reflected, "Now it will always look like an accordion," and he heard the horse's driver address him some sarcasms before he could fully awaken to the situation. He was standing bareheaded in the middle of Fifth Avenue and blocking the tide of carriages flowing in either direction. Among the faces put out of the carriage windows he saw that of Dryfoos looking from a coupe. The old man knew him, and said, "Jump in here, Mr. March"; and March, who had mechanically picked up his hat, and was thinking, "Now I shall have to tell Isabel about this at once, and she will never trust me on the street again without her," mechanically obeyed. Her confidence in him had been undermined by his being so near Conrad when he was shot; and it went through his mind that he would get Dryfoos to drive him to a hatter's, where he could buy a new hat,

and not be obliged to confess his narrow escape to his wife till the incident was some days old and she could bear it better. It quite drove Lindau's death out of his mind for the moment; and when Dryfoos said if he was going home he would drive up to the first cross-street and turn back with him, March said he would be glad if he would take him to a hat-store. The old man put his head out again and told the driver to take them to the Fifth Avenue Hotel. "There's a hat-store around there somewhere, seems to me," he said; and they talked of March's accident as well as they could in the rattle and clatter of the street till they reached the place. March got his hat, passing a joke with the hatter about the impossibility of pressing his old hat over again, and came out to thank Dryfoos and take leave of him.

"If you ain't in any great hurry," the old man said, "I wish you'd get in here a minute. I'd like to have a little talk with you."

"Oh, certainly," said March, and he thought: "It's coming now about what he intends to do with 'Every Other Week.' Well, I might as well have all the misery at once and have it over."

Dryfoos called up to his driver, who bent his head down sidewise to listen: "Go over there on Madison Avenue, onto that asphalt, and keep drivin' up and down till I stop you. I can't hear myself think on these pavements," he said to March. But after they got upon the asphalt, and began smoothly rolling over it, he seemed in no haste to begin. At last he said, "I wanted to talk with you about that—that Dutchman that was at my dinner—Lindau," and March's heart gave a jump with wonder whether he could already have heard of Lindau's death; but in an instant he perceived that this was impossible. "I been talkin' with Fulkerson about him, and he says they had to take the balance of his arm off."

March nodded; it seemed to him he could not speak. He could not make out from the close face of the old man anything of his motive. It was set, but set as a piece of broken mechanism is when it has lost the power to relax itself. There was no other history in it of what the man had passed through in his son's death.

"I don't know," Dryfoos resumed, looking aside at the cloth window-strap, which he kept fingering, "as you quite understood what made me the maddest. I didn't tell him I could talk Dutch, because I can't keep it up with a regular German; but my father was Pennsylvania Dutch, and I could understand what he was saying to you about me. I know I had no business to understand it, after I let him think I couldn't but I did, and I didn't like very well to have a man callin' me a traitor and a tyrant at my own table. Well, I look at it differently now, and I reckon I had better have tried to put up with it; and I would, if I could have known—" He stopped with a quivering lip, and then went on: "Then, again, I didn't like his talkin' that paternalism of his. I always heard it was the worst kind of thing for the country; I was brought up to think the best government was the one that governs the least; and I didn't want to hear that kind of talk from a man that was livin' on my money. I couldn't bear it from him. Or I thought I couldn't before—before—" He stopped again, and gulped. "I reckon now there ain't anything I couldn't bear." March was moved by the blunt words and the mute stare forward with which they ended. "Mr. Dryfoos, I didn't know that you understood Lindau's German, or I shouldn't have allowed him he wouldn't have allowed himself—to go on. He wouldn't have knowingly abused his position of guest to censure you, no matter how much he condemned you." "I don't care for it now," said Dryfoos. "It's all past and gone, as far as I'm concerned; but I wanted you to see that I wasn't tryin' to punish him for his opinions, as you said."

"No; I see now," March assented, though he thought his position still justified. "I wish—"

"I don't know as I understand much about his opinions, anyway; but I ain't ready to say I want the men dependent on me to manage my business for me. I always tried to do the square thing by my hands; and in that particular case out there I took on all the old hands just as fast as they left their Union. As for the game I came on them, it was dog eat dog, anyway."

March could have laughed to think how far this old man was from even conceiving of Lindau's point of view, and how he was saying the worst of himself that Lindau could have said of him. No one could have characterized the kind of thing he had done more severely than he when he called it dog eat dog.

"There's a great deal to be said on both sides," March began, hoping to lead up through this generality to the fact of Lindau's death; but the old man went on:

"Well, all I wanted him to know is that I wasn't trying to punish him for what he said about things in general. You naturally got that idea, I reckon; but I always went in for lettin' people say what they please and think what they please; it's the only way in a free country."

"I'm afraid, Mr. Dryfoos, that it would make little difference to Lindau now—"

"I don't suppose he bears malice for it," said Dryfoos, "but what I want to do is to have him told so. He could understand just why I didn't want to be called hard names, and yet I didn't object to his thinkin'

whatever he pleased. I'd like him to know—"

"No one can speak to him, no one can tell him," March began again, but again Dryfoos prevented him from going on.

"I understand it's a delicate thing; and I'm not askin' you to do it. What I would really like to do—if you think he could be prepared for it, some way, and could stand it—would be to go to him myself, and tell him just what the trouble was. I'm in hopes, if I done that, he could see how I felt about it."

A picture of Dryfoos going to the dead Lindau with his vain regrets presented itself to March, and he tried once more to make the old man understand. "Mr. Dryfoos," he said, "Lindau is past all that forever," and he felt the ghastly comedy of it when Dryfoos continued, without heeding him.

"I got a particular reason why I want him to believe it wasn't his ideas I objected to—them ideas of his about the government carryin' everything on and givin' work. I don't understand 'em exactly, but I found a writin'—among—my son's—things" (he seemed to force the words through his teeth), "and I reckon he—thought—that way. Kind of a diary—where he—put down—his thoughts. My son and me—we differed about a good—many things." His chin shook, and from time to time he stopped. "I wasn't very good to him, I reckon; I crossed him where I guess I got no business to cross him; but I thought everything of—Coonrod. He was the best boy, from a baby, that ever was; just so patient and mild, and done whatever he was told. I ought to 'a' let him been a preacher! Oh, my son! my son!" The sobs could not be kept back any longer; they shook the old man with a violence that made March afraid for him; but he controlled himself at last with a series of hoarse sounds like barks. "Well, it's all past and gone! But as I understand you from what you saw, when Coonrod was—killed, he was tryin' to save that old man from trouble?"

Yes, yes! It seemed so to me."

"That 'll do, then! I want you to have him come back and write for the book when he gets well. I want you to find out and let me know if there's anything I can do for him. I'll feel as if I done it—for my—son. I'll take him into my own house, and do for him there, if you say so, when he gets so he can be moved. I'll wait on him myself. It's what Coonrod 'd do, if he was here. I don't feel any hardness to him because it was him that got Coonrod killed, as you might say, in one sense of the term; but I've tried to think it out, and I feel like I was all the more beholden to him because my son died tryin' to save him. Whatever I do, I'll be doin' it for Coonrod, and that's enough for me." He seemed to have finished, and he turned to March as if to hear what he had to say.

March hesitated. "I'm afraid, Mr. Dryfoos—Didn't Fulkerson tell you that Lindau was very sick?"

"Yes, of course. But he's all right, he said."

Now it had to come, though the fact had been latterly playing fast and loose with March's consciousness. Something almost made him smile; the willingness he had once felt to give this old man pain; then he consoled himself by thinking that at least he was not obliged to meet Dryfoos's wish to make atonement with the fact that Lindau had renounced him, and would on no terms work for such a man as he, or suffer any kindness from him. In this light Lindau seemed the harder of the two, and March had the momentary force to say—

"Mr. Dryfoos—it can't be. Lindau—I have just come from him—is dead."

XI.

"How did he take it? How could he bear it? Oh, Basil! I wonder you could have the heart to say it to him. It was cruel!"

"Yes, cruel enough, my dear," March owned to his wife, when they talked the matter over on his return home. He could not wait till the children were out of the way, and afterward neither he nor his wife was sorry that he had spoken of it before them. The girl cried plentifully for her old friend who was dead, and said she hated Mr. Dryfoos, and then was sorry for him, too; and the boy listened to all, and spoke with a serious sense that pleased his father. "But as to how he took it," March went on to answer his wife's question about Dryfoos—"how do any of us take a thing that hurts? Some of us cry out, and

some of us don't. Dryfoos drew a kind of long, quivering breath, as a child does when it grieves—there's something curiously simple and primitive about him—and didn't say anything. After a while he asked me how he could see the people at the hospital about the remains; I gave him my card to the young doctor there that had charge of Lindau. I suppose he was still carrying forward his plan of reparation in his mind—to the dead for the dead. But how useless! If he could have taken the living Lindau home with him, and cared for him all his days, what would it have profited the gentle creature whose life his worldly ambition vexed and thwarted here? He might as well offer a sacrifice at Conrad's grave. Children," said March, turning to them, "death is an exile that no remorse and no love can reach. Remember that, and be good to every one here on earth, for your longing to retrieve any harshness or unkindness to the dead will be the very ecstasy of anguish to you. I wonder," he mused, "if one of the reasons why we're shut up to our ignorance of what is to be hereafter isn't because if we were sure of another world we might be still more brutal to one another here, in the hope of making reparation somewhere else. Perhaps, if we ever come to obey the law of love on earth, the mystery of death will be taken away."

"Well"—the ancestral Puritanism spoke in Mrs. March—"these two old men have been terribly punished. They have both been violent and wilful, and they have both been punished. No one need ever tell me there is not a moral government of the universe!"

March always disliked to hear her talk in this way, which did both her head and heart injustice. "And Conrad," he said, "what was he punished for?"

"He?"—she answered, in an exaltation—"he suffered for the sins of others."

"Ah, well, if you put it in that way, yes. That goes on continually. That's another mystery."

He fell to brooding on it, and presently he heard his son saying, "I suppose, papa, that Mr. Lindau died in a bad cause?"

March was startled. He had always been so sorry for Lindau, and admired his courage and generosity so much, that he had never fairly considered this question. "Why, yes," he answered; "he died in the cause of disorder; he was trying to obstruct the law. No doubt there was a wrong there, an inconsistency and an injustice that he felt keenly; but it could not be reached in his way without greater wrong."

"Yes; that's what I thought," said the boy. "And what's the use of our ever fighting about anything in America? I always thought we could vote anything we wanted."

"We can, if we're honest, and don't buy and sell one another's votes," said his father. "And men like Lindau, who renounce the American means as hopeless, and let their love of justice hurry them into sympathy with violence—yes, they are wrong; and poor Lindau did die in a bad cause, as you say, Tom."

"I think Conrad had no business there, or you, either, Basil," said his wife.

"Oh, I don't defend myself," said March. "I was there in the cause of literary curiosity and of conjugal disobedience. But Conrad—yes, he had some business there: it was his business to suffer there for the sins of others. Isabel, we can't throw aside that old doctrine of the Atonement yet. The life of Christ, it wasn't only in healing the sick and going about to do good; it was suffering for the sins of others. That's as great a mystery as the mystery of death. Why should there be such a principle in the world? But it's been felt, and more or less dumbly, blindly recognized ever since Calvary. If we love mankind, pity them, we even wish to suffer for them. That's what has created the religious orders in all times—the brotherhoods and sisterhoods that belong to our day as much as to the mediaeval past. That's what is driving a girl like Margaret Vance, who has everything that the world can offer her young beauty, on to the work of a Sister of Charity among the poor and the dying."

"Yes, yes!" cried Mrs. March. "How—how did she look there, Basil?" She had her feminine misgivings; she was not sure but the girl was something of a poseuse, and enjoyed the picturesqueness, as well as the pain; and she wished to be convinced that it was not so.

"Well," she said, when March had told again the little there was to tell, "I suppose it must be a great trial to a woman like Mrs. Horn to have her niece going that way."

"The way of Christ?" asked March, with a smile.

"Oh, Christ came into the world to teach us how to live rightly in it, too. If we were all to spend our time in hospitals, it would be rather dismal for the homes. But perhaps you don't think the homes are worth minding?" she suggested, with a certain note in her voice that he knew.

He got up and kissed her. "I think the gimcrackeries are." He took the hat he had set down on the parlor table on coming in, and started to put it in the hall, and that made her notice it.

"You've been getting a new hat!"

"Yes," he hesitated; "the old one had got—was decidedly shabby."

"Well, that's right. I don't like you to wear them too long. Did you leave the old one to be pressed?"

"Well, the hatter seemed to think it was hardly worth pressing," said March. He decided that for the present his wife's nerves had quite all they could bear.

XII.

It was in a manner grotesque, but to March it was all the more natural for that reason, that Dryfoos should have Lindau's funeral from his house. He knew the old man to be darkly groping, through the payment of these vain honors to the dead, for some atonement to his son, and he imagined him finding in them such comfort as comes from doing all one can, even when all is useless.

No one knew what Lindau's religion was, and in default they had had the Anglican burial service read over him; it seems so often the refuge of the homeless dead. Mrs. Dryfoos came down for the ceremony. She understood that it was for Coonrod's sake that his father wished the funeral to be there; and she confided to Mrs. March that she believed Coonrod would have been pleased. "Coonrod was a member of the 'Piscopal Church; and fawther's doin' the whole thing for Coonrod as much as for anybody. He thought the world of Coonrod, fawther did. Mela, she kind of thought it would look queer to have two funerals from the same house, hand-runnin', as you might call it, and one of 'em no relation, either; but when she saw how fawther was bent on it, she give in. Seems as if she was tryin' to make up to fawther for Coonrod as much as she could. Mela always was a good child, but nobody can ever come up to Coonrod."

March felt all the grotesqueness, the hopeless absurdity of Dryfoos's endeavor at atonement in these vain obsequies to the man for whom he believed his son to have died; but the effort had its magnanimity, its pathos, and there was a poetry that appealed to him in the reconciliation through death of men, of ideas, of conditions, that could only have gone warring on in life. He thought, as the priest went on with the solemn liturgy, how all the world must come together in that peace which, struggle and strive as we may, shall claim us at last. He looked at Dryfoos, and wondered whether he would consider these rites a sufficient tribute, or whether there was enough in him to make him realize their futility, except as a mere sign of his wish to retrieve the past. He thought how we never can atone for the wrong we do; the heart we have grieved and wounded cannot kindle with pity for us when once it is stilled; and yet we can put our evil from us with penitence, and somehow, somewhere, the order of loving kindness, which our passion or our wilfulness has disturbed, will be restored.

Dryfoos, through Fulkerson, had asked all the more intimate contributors of 'Every Other Week' to come. Beaton was absent, but Fulkerson had brought Miss Woodburn, with her father, and Mrs. Leighton and Alma, to fill up, as he said. Mela was much present, and was official with the arrangement of the flowers and the welcome of the guests. She imparted this impersonality to her reception of Kendricks, whom Fulkerson met in the outer hall with his party, and whom he presented in whisper to them all. Kendricks smiled under his breath, as it were, and was then mutely and seriously polite to the Leightons. Alma brought a little bunch of flowers, which were lost in those which Dryfoos had ordered to be unsparingly provided.

It was a kind of satisfaction to Mela to have Miss Vance come, and reassuring as to how it would look to have the funeral there; Miss Vance would certainly not have come unless it had been all right; she had come, and had sent some Easter lilies.

"Ain't Christine coming down?" Fulkerson asked Mela.

"No, she ain't a bit well, and she ain't been, ever since Coonrod died. I don't know, what's got over her," said Mela. She added, "Well, I should 'a' thought Mr. Beaton would 'a' made out to 'a' come!"

"Beaton's peculiar," said Fulkerson. "If he thinks you want him he takes a pleasure in not letting you have him."

"Well, goodness knows, I don't want him," said the girl.

Christine kept her room, and for the most part kept her bed; but there seemed nothing definitely the matter with her, and she would not let them call a doctor. Her mother said she reckoned she was beginning to feel the spring weather, that always perfectly pulled a body down in New York; and Mela said if being as cross as two sticks was any sign of spring-fever, Christine had it bad. She was faithfully kind to her, and submitted to all her humors, but she recompensed herself by the freest criticism of Christine when not in actual attendance on her. Christine would not suffer Mrs. Mandel to approach her, and she had with her father a sullen submission which was not resignation. For her, apparently, Conrad had not died, or had died in vain.

"Pshaw!" said Mela, one morning when she came to breakfast, "I reckon if we was to send up an old card of Mr. Beaton's she'd rattle down-stairs fast enough. If she's sick, she's love-sick. It makes me sick to see her."

Mela was talking to Mrs. Mandel, but her father looked up from his plate and listened. Mela went on: "I don't know what's made the fellow quit comun'. But he was an aggravatun' thing, and no more dependable than water. It's just like Air. Fulkerson said, if he thinks you want him he'll take a pleasure in not lettun' you have him. I reckon that's what's the matter with Christine. I believe in my heart the girl 'll die if she don't git him."

Mela went on to eat her breakfast with her own good appetite. She now always came down to keep her father company, as she said, and she did her best to cheer and comfort him. At least she kept the talk going, and she had it nearly all to herself, for Mrs. Mandel was now merely staying on provisionally, and, in the absence of any regrets or excuses from Christine, was looking ruefully forward to the moment when she must leave even this ungentle home for the chances of the ruder world outside.

The old man said nothing at table, but, when Mela went up to see if she could do anything for Christine, he asked Mrs. Mandel again about all the facts of her last interview with Beaton.

She gave them as fully as she could remember them, and the old man made no comment on them. But he went out directly after, and at the 'Every Other Week' office he climbed the stairs to Fulkerson's room and asked for Beaton's address. No one yet had taken charge of Conrad's work, and Fulkerson was running the thing himself, as he said, till he could talk with Dryfoos about it. The old man would not look into the empty room where he had last seen his son alive; he turned his face away and hurried by the door.

XIII.

The course of public events carried Beaton's private affairs beyond the reach of his simple first intention to renounce his connection with 'Every Other Week.' In fact, this was not perhaps so simple as it seemed, and long before it could be put in effect it appeared still simpler to do nothing about the matter—to remain passive and leave the initiative to Dryfoos, to maintain the dignity of unconsciousness and let recognition of any change in the situation come from those who had caused the change. After all, it was rather absurd to propose making a purely personal question the pivot on which his relations with 'Every Other Week' turned. He took a hint from March's position and decided that he did not know Dryfoos in these relations; he knew only Fulkerson, who had certainly had nothing to do with Mrs. Mandel's asking his intentions. As he reflected upon this he became less eager to look Fulkerson up and make the magazine a partner of his own sufferings. This was the soberer mood to which Beaton trusted that night even before he slept, and he awoke fully confirmed in it. As he examined the offence done him in the cold light of day, he perceived that it had not come either from Mrs. Mandel, who was visibly the faltering and unwilling instrument of it, or from Christine, who was altogether ignorant of it, but from Dryfoos, whom he could not hurt by giving up his place. He could only punish Fulkerson by that, and Fulkerson was innocent. Justice and interest alike dictated the passive course to which Beaton inclined; and he reflected that he might safely leave the punishment of Dryfoos to Christine, who would find out what had happened, and would be able to take care of herself in any encounter of tempers with her father.

Beaton did not go to the office during the week that followed upon this conclusion; but they were used there to these sudden absences of his, and, as his work for the time was in train, nothing was

made of his staying away, except the sarcastic comment which the thought of him was apt to excite in the literary department. He no longer came so much to the Leightons, and Fulkerson was in no state of mind to miss any one there except Miss Woodburn, whom he never missed. Beaton was left, then, unmolestedly awaiting the course of destiny, when he read in the morning paper, over his coffee at Maroni's, the deeply scare-headed story of Conrad's death and the clubbing of Lindau. He probably cared as little for either of them as any man that ever saw them; but he felt a shock, if not a pang, at Conrad's fate, so out of keeping with his life and character. He did not know what to do; and he did nothing. He was not asked to the funeral, but he had not expected that, and, when Fulkerson brought him notice that Lindau was also to be buried from Dryfoos's house, it was without his usual sullen vindictiveness that he kept away. In his sort, and as much as a man could who was necessarily so much taken up with himself, he was sorry for Conrad's father; Beaton had a peculiar tenderness for his own father, and he imagined how his father would feel if it were he who had been killed in Conrad's place, as it might very well have been; he sympathized with himself in view of the possibility; and for once they were mistaken who thought him indifferent and merely brutal in his failure to appear at Lindau's obsequies.

He would really have gone if he had known how to reconcile his presence in that house with the terms of his effective banishment from it; and he was rather forgivingly finding himself wronged in the situation, when Dryfoos knocked at the studio door the morning after Lindau's funeral. Beaton roared out, "Come in!" as he always did to a knock if he had not a model; if he had a model he set the door slightly ajar, and with his palette on his thumb frowned at his visitor and told him he could not come in. Dryfoos fumbled about for the knob in the dim passageway outside, and Beaton, who had experience of people's difficulties with it, suddenly jerked the door open. The two men stood confronted, and at first sight of each other their quiescent dislike revived. Each would have been willing to turn away from the other, but that was not possible. Beaton snorted some sort of inarticulate salutation, which Dryfoos did not try to return; he asked if he could see him alone for a minute or two, and Beaton bade him come in, and swept some paint-blotched rags from the chair which he told him to take. He noticed, as the old man sank tremulously into it, that his movement was like that of his own father, and also that he looked very much like Christine. Dryfoos folded his hands tremulously on the top of his horn-handled stick, and he was rather finely haggard, with the dark hollows round his black eyes and the fall of the muscles on either side of his chin. He had forgotten to take his soft, wide-brimmed hat off; and Beaton felt a desire to sketch him just as he sat.

Dryfoos suddenly pulled himself together from the dreary absence into which he fell at first. "Young man," he began, "maybe I've come here on a fool's errand," and Beaton rather fancied that beginning.

But it embarrassed him a little, and he said, with a shy glance aside, "I don't know what you mean." "I reckon," Dryfoos answered, quietly, "you got your notion, though. I set that woman on to speak to you the way she done. But if there was anything wrong in the way she spoke, or if you didn't feel like she had any right to question you up as if we suspected you of anything mean, I want you to say so."

Beaton said nothing, and the old man went on.

"I ain't very well up in the ways of the world, and I don't pretend to be. All I want is to be fair and square with everybody. I've made mistakes, though, in my time—" He stopped, and Beaton was not proof against the misery of his face, which was twisted as with some strong physical ache. "I don't know as I want to make any more, if I can help it. I don't know but what you had a right to keep on comin', and if you had I want you to say so. Don't you be afraid but what I'll take it in the right way. I don't want to take advantage of anybody, and I don't ask you to say any more than that."

Beaton did not find the humiliation of the man who had humiliated him so sweet as he could have fancied it might be. He knew how it had come about, and that it was an effect of love for his child; it did not matter by what ungracious means she had brought him to know that he loved her better than his own will, that his wish for her happiness was stronger than his pride; it was enough that he was now somehow brought to give proof of it. Beaton could not be aware of all that dark coil of circumstance through which Dryfoos's present action evolved itself; the worst of this was buried in the secret of the old man's heart, a worm of perpetual torment. What was apparent to another was that he was broken by the sorrow that had fallen upon him, and it was this that Beaton respected and pitied in his impulse to be frank and kind in his answer.

"No, I had no right to keep coming to your house in the way I did, unless—unless I meant more than I ever said." Beaton added: "I don't say that what you did was usual—in this country, at any rate; but I can't say you were wrong. Since you speak to me about the matter, it's only fair to myself to say that a good deal goes on in life without much thinking of consequences. That's the way I excuse myself."

"And you say Mrs. Mandel done right?" asked Dryfoos, as if he wished simply to be assured of a point of etiquette.

"Yes, she did right. I've nothing to complain of."

"That's all I wanted to know," said Dryfoos; but apparently he had not finished, and he did not go, though the silence that Beaton now kept gave him a chance to do so. He began a series of questions which had no relation to the matter in hand, though they were strictly personal to Beaton. "What countryman are you?" he asked, after a moment.

"What countryman?" Beaton frowned back at him.

"Yes, are you an American by birth?"

"Yes; I was born in Syracuse."

"Protestant?"

"My father is a Scotch Seceder."

"What business is your father in?"

Beaton faltered and blushed; then he answered:

"He's in the monument business, as he calls it. He's a tombstone cutter." Now that he was launched, Beaton saw no reason for not declaring, "My father's always been a poor man, and worked with his own hands for his living." He had too slight esteem socially for Dryfoos to conceal a fact from him that he might have wished to blink with others.

"Well, that's right," said Dryfoos. "I used to farm it myself. I've got a good pile of money together, now. At first it didn't come easy; but now it's got started it pours in and pours in; it seems like there was no end to it. I've got well on to three million; but it couldn't keep me from losin' my son. It can't buy me back a minute of his life; not all the money in the world can do it!"

He grieved this out as if to himself rather than to Beaton, who, scarcely ventured to say, "I know—I am very sorry—"

"How did you come," Dryfoos interrupted, "to take up paintin'?"

"Well, I don't know," said Beaton, a little scornfully. "You don't take a thing of that kind up, I fancy. I always wanted to paint."

"Father try to stop you?"

"No. It wouldn't have been of any use. Why—"

"My son, he wanted to be a preacher, and I did stop him or I thought I did. But I reckon he was a preacher, all the same, every minute of his life. As you say, it ain't any use to try to stop a thing like that. I reckon if a child has got any particular bent, it was given to it; and it's goin' against the grain, it's goin' against the law, to try to bend it some other way. There's lots of good business men, Mr. Beaton, twenty of 'em to every good preacher?"

"I imagine more than twenty," said Beaton, amused and touched through his curiosity as to what the old man was driving at by the quaint simplicity of his speculations.

"Father ever come to the city?"

"No; he never has the time; and my mother's an invalid."

"Oh! Brothers and sisters?"

"Yes; we're a large family."

"I lost two little fellers—twins," said Dryfoos, sadly. "But we hain't ever had but just the five. Ever take portraits?"

"Yes," said Beaton, meeting this zigzag in the queries as seriously as the rest. "I don't think I am good at it."

Dryfoos got to his feet. "I wish you'd paint a likeness of my son. You've seen him plenty of times. We won't fight about the price, don't you be afraid of that."

Beaton was astonished, and in a mistaken way he was disgusted. He saw that Dryfoos was trying to

undo Mrs. Mandel's work practically, and get him to come again to his house; that he now conceived of the offence given him as condoned, and wished to restore the former situation. He knew that he was attempting this for Christine's sake, but he was not the man to imagine that Dryfoos was trying not only to tolerate him, but to like him; and, in fact, Dryfoos was not wholly conscious himself of this end. What they both understood was that Dryfoos was endeavoring to get at Beaton through Conrad's memory; but with one this was its dedication to a purpose of self sacrifice, and with the other a vulgar and shameless use of it.

"I couldn't do it," said Beaton. "I couldn't think of attempting it."

"Why not?" Dryfoos persisted. "We got some photographs of him; he didn't like to sit very well; but his mother got him to; and you know how he looked."

"I couldn't do it—I couldn't. I can't even consider it. I'm very sorry. I would, if it were possible. But it isn't possible."

"I reckon if you see the photographs once"

"It isn't that, Mr. Dryfoos. But I'm not in the way of that kind of thing any more."

"I'd give any price you've a mind to name—"

"Oh, it isn't the money!" cried Beaton, beginning to lose control of himself.

The old man did not notice him. He sat with his head fallen forward, and his chin resting on his folded hands. Thinking of the portrait, he saw Conrad's face before him, reproachful, astonished, but all gentle as it looked when Conrad caught his hand that day after he struck him; he heard him say, "Father!" and the sweat gathered on his forehead. "Oh, my God!" he groaned. "No; there ain't anything I can do now."

Beaton did not know whether Dryfoos was speaking to him or not. He started toward him. "Are you ill?"

"No, there ain't anything the matter," said the old man. "But I guess I'll lay down on your settee a minute." He tottered with Beaton's help to the aesthetic couch covered with a tiger-skin, on which Beaton had once thought of painting a Cleopatra; but he could never get the right model. As the old man stretched himself out on it, pale and suffering, he did not look much like a Cleopatra, but Beaton was struck with his effectiveness, and the likeness between him and his daughter; she would make a very good Cleopatra in some ways. All the time, while these thoughts passed through his mind, he was afraid Dryfoos would die. The old man fetched his breath in gasps, which presently smoothed and lengthened into his normal breathing. Beaton got him a glass of wine, and after tasting it he sat up.

"You've got to excuse me," he said, getting back to his characteristic grimness with surprising suddenness, when once he began to recover himself. "I've been through a good deal lately; and sometimes it ketches me round the heart like a pain."

In his life of selfish immunity from grief, Beaton could not understand this experience that poignant sorrow brings; he said to himself that Dryfoos was going the way of angina pectoris; as he began shuffling off the tiger-skin he said: "Had you better get up? Wouldn't you like me to call a doctor?"

"I'm all right, young man." Dryfoos took his hat and stick from him, but he made for the door so uncertainly that Beaton put his hand under his elbow and helped him out, and down the stairs, to his coupe.

"Hadn't you better let me drive home with you?" he asked.

"What?" said Dryfoos, suspiciously.

Beaton repeated his question.

"I guess I'm able to go home alone," said Dryfoos, in a surly tone, and he put his head out of the window and called up "Home!" to the driver, who immediately started off and left Beaton standing beside the curbstone.

XIV.

Beaton wasted the rest of the day in the emotions and speculations which Dryfoos's call inspired. It was not that they continuously occupied him, but they broke up the train of other thoughts, and spoiled him for work; a very little spoiled Beaton for work; he required just the right mood for work. He comprehended perfectly well that Dryfoos had made him that extraordinary embassy because he wished him to renew his visits, and he easily imagined the means that had brought him to this pass. From what he knew of that girl he did not envy her father his meeting with her when he must tell her his mission had failed. But had it failed? When Beaton came to ask himself this question, he could only perceive that he and Dryfoos had failed to find any ground of sympathy, and had parted in the same dislike with which they had met. But as to any other failure, it was certainly tacit, and it still rested with him to give it effect. He could go back to Dryfoos's house, as freely as before, and it was clear that he was very much desired to come back. But if he went back it was also clear that he must go back with intentions more explicit than before, and now he had to ask himself just how much or how little he had meant by going there. His liking for Christine had certainly not increased, but the charm, on the other hand, of holding a leopardess in leash had not yet palled upon him. In his life of inconstancies, it was a pleasure to rest upon something fixed, and the man who had no control over himself liked logically enough to feel his control of some one else. The fact cannot other wise be put in terms, and the attraction which Christine Dryfoos had for him, apart from this, escapes from all terms, as anything purely and merely passionate must. He had seen from the first that she was a cat, and so far as youth forecasts such things, he felt that she would be a shrew. But he had a perverse sense of her beauty, and he knew a sort of life in which her power to molest him with her temper could be reduced to the smallest proportions, and even broken to pieces. Then the consciousness of her money entered. It was evident that the old man had mentioned his millions in the way of a hint to him of what he might reasonably expect if he would turn and be his son-in-law. Beaton did not put it to himself in those words; and in fact his cogitations were not in words at all. It was the play of cognitions, of sensations, formlessly tending to the effect which can only be very clumsily interpreted in language. But when he got to this point in them, Beaton rose to magnanimity and in a flash of dramatic reverie disposed of a part of Dryfoos's riches in placing his father and mother, and his brothers and sisters, beyond all pecuniary anxiety forever. He had no shame, no scruple in this, for he had been a pensioner upon others ever since a Syracusan amateur of the arts had detected his talent and given him the money to go and study abroad. Beaton had always considered the money a loan, to be repaid out of his future success; but he now never dreamt of repaying it; as the man was rich, he had even a contempt for the notion of repaying him; but this did not prevent him from feeling very keenly the hardships he put his father to in borrowing money from him, though he never repaid his father, either. In this reverie he saw himself sacrificed in marriage with Christine Dryfoos, in a kind of admiring self-pity, and he was melted by the spectacle of the dignity with which he suffered all the lifelong trials ensuing from his unselfishness. The fancy that Alma Leighton came bitterly to regret him, contributed to soothe and flatter him, and he was not sure that Margaret. Vance did not suffer a like loss in him.

There had been times when, as he believed, that beautiful girl's high thoughts had tended toward him; there had been looks, gestures, even words, that had this effect to him, or that seemed to have had it; and Beaton saw that he might easily construe Mrs. Horn's confidential appeal to him to get Margaret interested in art again as something by no means necessarily offensive, even though it had been made to him as to a master of illusion. If Mrs. Horn had to choose between him and the life of good works to which her niece was visibly abandoning herself, Beaton could not doubt which she would choose; the only question was how real the danger of a life of good works was.

As he thought of these two girls, one so charming and the other so divine, it became indefinitely difficult to renounce them for Christine Dryfoos, with her sultry temper and her earthbound ideals. Life had been so flattering to Beaton hitherto that he could not believe them both finally indifferent; and if they were not indifferent, perhaps he did not wish either of them to be very definite. What he really longed for was their sympathy; for a man who is able to walk round quite ruthlessly on the feelings of others often has very tender feelings of his own, easily lacerated, and eagerly responsive to the caresses of compassion. In this frame Beaton determined to go that afternoon, though it was not Mrs. Horn's day, and call upon her in the hope of possibly seeing Miss Vance alone. As he continued in it, he took this for a sign and actually went. It did not fall out at once as he wished, but he got Mrs. Horn to talking again about her niece, and Mrs. Horn again regretted that nothing could be done by the fine arts to reclaim Margaret from good works.

"Is she at home? Will you let me see her?" asked Beaton, with something of the scientific interest of a physician inquiring for a patient whose symptoms have been rehearsed to him. He had not asked for her before.

"Yes, certainly," said Mrs. Horn, and she went herself to call Margaret, and she did not return with her. The girl entered with the gentle grace peculiar to her; and Beaton, bent as he was on his own consolation, could not help being struck with the spiritual exaltation of her look. At sight of her, the

vague hope he had never quite relinquished, that they might be something more than aesthetic friends, died in his heart. She wore black, as she often did; but in spite of its fashion her dress received a nun-like effect from the pensive absence of her face. "Decidedly," thought Beaton, "she is far gone in good works."

But he rose, all the same, to meet her on the old level, and he began at once to talk to her of the subject he had been discussing with her aunt. He said frankly that they both felt she had unjustifiably turned her back upon possibilities which she ought not to neglect.

"You know very well," she answered, "that I couldn't do anything in that way worth the time I should waste on it. Don't talk of it, please. I suppose my aunt has been asking you to say this, but it's no use. I'm sorry it's no use, she wishes it so much; but I'm not sorry otherwise. You can find the pleasure at least of doing good work in it; but I couldn't find anything in it but a barren amusement. Mr. Wetmore is right; for me, it's like enjoying an opera, or a ball."

"That's one of Wetmore's phrases. He'd sacrifice anything to them."

She put aside the whole subject with a look. "You were not at Mr. Dryfoos's the other day. Have you seen them, any of them, lately?"

"I haven't been there for some time, no," said Beaton, evasively. But he thought if he was to get on to anything, he had better be candid. "Mr. Dryfoos was at my studio this morning. He's got a queer notion. He wants me to paint his son's portrait."

She started. "And will you—"

"No, I couldn't do such a thing. It isn't in my way. I told him so. His son had a beautiful face an antique profile; a sort of early Christian type; but I'm too much of a pagan for that sort of thing."

"Yes."

"Yes," Beaton continued, not quite liking her assent after he had invited it. He had his pride in being a pagan, a Greek, but it failed him in her presence, now; and he wished that she had protested he was none. "He was a singular creature; a kind of survival; an exile in our time and place. I don't know: we don't quite expect a saint to be rustic; but with all his goodness Conrad Dryfoos was a country person. If he were not dying for a cause you could imagine him milking." Beaton intended a contempt that came from the bitterness of having himself once milked the family cow.

His contempt did not reach Miss Vance. "He died for a cause," she said. "The holiest."

"Of labor?"

"Of peace. He was there to persuade the strikers to be quiet and go home."

"I haven't been quite sure," said Beaton. "But in any case he had no business there. The police were on hand to do the persuading."

"I can't let you talk so!" cried the girl. "It's shocking! Oh, I know it's the way people talk, and the worst is that in the sight of the world it's the right way. But the blessing on the peacemakers is not for the policemen with their clubs."

Beaton saw that she was nervous; he made his reflection that she was altogether too far gone in good works for the fine arts to reach her; he began to think how he could turn her primitive Christianity to the account of his modern heathenism. He had no deeper design than to get flattered back into his own favor far enough to find courage for some sort of decisive step. In his heart he was trying to will whether he should or should not go back to Dryfoos's house. It could not be from the caprice that had formerly taken him; it must be from a definite purpose; again he realized this. "Of course; you are right," he said. "I wish I could have answered that old man differently. I fancy he was bound up in his son, though he quarrelled with him, and crossed him. But I couldn't do it; it wasn't possible." He said to himself that if she said "No," now, he would be ruled by her agreement with him; and if she disagreed with him, he would be ruled still by the chance, and would go no more to the Dryfooses'. He found himself embarrassed to the point of blushing when she said nothing, and left him, as it were, on his own hands. "I should like to have given him that comfort; I fancy he hasn't much comfort in life; but there seems no comfort in me."

He dropped his head in a fit attitude for compassion; but she poured no pity upon it.

"There is no comfort for us in ourselves," she said. "It's hard to get outside; but there's only despair

within. When we think we have done something for others, by some great effort, we find it's all for our own vanity."

"Yes," said Beaton. "If I could paint pictures for righteousness' sake, I should have been glad to do Conrad Dryfoos for his father. I felt sorry for him. Did the rest seem very much broken up? You saw them all?"

"Not all. Miss Dryfoos was ill, her sister said. It's hard to tell how much people suffer. His mother seemed bewildered. The younger sister is a simple creature; she looks like him; I think she must have something of his spirit."

"Not much spirit of any kind, I imagine," said Beaton. "But she's amiably material. Did they say Miss Dryfoos was seriously ill?"

"No. I supposed she might be prostrated by her brother's death."

"Does she seem that kind of person to you, Miss Vance?" asked Beaton.

"I don't know. I haven't tried to see so much of them as I might, the past winter. I was not sure about her when I met her; I've never seen much of people, except in my own set, and the—very poor. I have been afraid I didn't understand her. She may have a kind of pride that would not let her do herself justice."

Beaton felt the unconscious dislike in the endeavor of praise. "Then she seems to you like a person whose life—its trials, its chances—would make more of than she is now?"

"I didn't say that. I can't judge of her at all; but where we don't know, don't you think we ought to imagine the best?"

"Oh yes," said Beaton. "I didn't know but what I once said of them might have prejudiced you against them. I have accused myself of it." He always took a tone of conscientiousness, of self-censure, in talking with Miss Vance; he could not help it.

"Oh no. And I never allowed myself to form any judgment of her. She is very pretty, don't you think, in a kind of way?"

"Very."

"She has a beautiful brunette coloring: that flourey white and the delicate pink in it. Her eyes are beautiful."

"She's graceful, too," said Beaton. "I've tried her in color; but I didn't make it out."

"I've wondered sometimes," said Miss Vance, "whether that elusive quality you find in some people you try to paint doesn't characterize them all through. Miss Dryfoos might be ever so much finer and better than we would find out in the society way that seems the only way."

"Perhaps," said Beaton, gloomily; and he went away profoundly discouraged by this last analysis of Christine's character. The angelic imperviousness of Miss Vance to properties of which his own wickedness was so keenly aware in Christine might have made him laugh, if it had not been such a serious affair with him. As it was, he smiled to think how very differently Alma Leighton would have judged her from Miss Vance's premises. He liked that clear vision of Alma's even when it pierced his own disguises. Yes, that was the light he had let die out, and it might have shone upon his path through life. Beaton never felt so poignantly the disadvantage of having on any given occasion been wanting to his own interests through his self-love as in this. He had no one to blame but himself for what had happened, but he blamed Alma for what might happen in the future because she shut out the way of retrieval and return. When he thought of the attitude she had taken toward him, it seemed incredible, and he was always longing to give her a final chance to reverse her final judgment. It appeared to him that the time had come for this now, if ever.

XV.

While we are still young we feel a kind of pride, a sort of fierce pleasure, in any important experience, such as we have read of or heard of in the lives of others, no matter how painful. It was this pride, this

pleasure, which Beaton now felt in realizing that the toils of fate were about him, that between him and a future of which Christine Dryfoos must be the genius there was nothing but the will, the mood, the fancy of a girl who had not given him the hope that either could ever again be in his favor. He had nothing to trust to, in fact, but his knowledge that he had once had them all; she did not deny that; but neither did she conceal that he had flung away his power over them, and she had told him that they never could be his again. A man knows that he can love and wholly cease to love, not once merely, but several times; he recognizes the fact in regard to himself, both theoretically and practically; but in regard to women he cherishes the superstition of the romances that love is once for all, and forever. It was because Beaton would not believe that Alma Leighton, being a woman, could put him out of her heart after suffering him to steal into it, that he now hoped anything from her, and she had been so explicit when they last spoke of that affair that he did not hope much. He said to himself that he was going to cast himself on her mercy, to take whatever chance of life, love, and work there was in her having the smallest pity on him. If she would have none, then there was but one thing he could do: marry Christine and go abroad. He did not see how he could bring this alternative to bear upon Alma; even if she knew what he would do in case of a final rejection, he had grounds for fearing she would not care; but he brought it to bear upon himself, and it nerved him to a desperate courage. He could hardly wait for evening to come, before he went to see her; when it came, it seemed to have come too soon. He had wrought himself thoroughly into the conviction that he was in earnest, and that everything depended upon her answer to him, but it was not till he found himself in her presence, and alone with her, that he realized the truth of his conviction. Then the influences of her grace, her gayety, her arch beauty, above all, her good sense, penetrated his soul like a subtle intoxication, and he said to himself that he was right; he could not live without her; these attributes of hers were what he needed to win him, to cheer him, to charm him, to guide him. He longed so to please her, to ingratiate himself with her, that he attempted to be light like her in his talk, but lapsed into abysmal absences and gloomy recesses of introspection.

"What are you laughing at?" he asked, suddenly starting from one of these.

"What you are thinking of."

"It's nothing to laugh at. Do you know what I'm thinking of?"

"Don't tell, if it's dreadful."

"Oh, I dare say you wouldn't think it's dreadful," he said, with bitterness. "It's simply the case of a man who has made a fool of himself and sees no help of retrieval in himself."

"Can any one else help a man unmake a fool of himself?" she asked, with a smile.

"Yes. In a case like this."

"Dear me! This is very interesting."

She did not ask him what the case was, but he was launched now, and he pressed on. "I am the man who has made a fool of himself—"

"Oh!"

"And you can help me out if you will. Alma, I wish you could see me as I really am."

"Do you, Mr. Beacon? Perhaps I do."

"No; you don't. You formulated me in a certain way, and you won't allow for the change that takes place in every one. You have changed; why shouldn't I?"

"Has this to do with your having made a fool of yourself?"

"Yes."

"Oh! Then I don't see how you have changed."

She laughed, and he too, ruefully. "You're cruel. Not but what I deserve your mockery. But the change was not from the capacity of making a fool of myself. I suppose I shall always do that more or less—unless you help me. Alma! Why can't you have a little compassion? You know that I must always love you."

"Nothing makes me doubt that like your saying it, Mr. Beacon. But now you've broken your word—"

"You are to blame for that. You knew I couldn't keep it!"

"Yes, I'm to blame. I was wrong to let you come—after that. And so I forgive you for speaking to me in that way again. But it's perfectly impossible and perfectly useless for me to hear you any more on that subject; and so-good-bye!"

She rose, and he perforce with her. "And do you mean it?" he asked. "Forever?"

"Forever. This is truly the last time I will ever see you if I can help it. Oh, I feel sorry enough for you!" she said, with a glance at his face. "I do believe you are in earnest. But it's too late now. Don't let us talk about it any more! But we shall, if we meet, and so,—"

"And so good-bye! Well, I've nothing more to say, and I might as well say that. I think you've been very good to me. It seems to me as if you had been—shall I say it?—trying to give me a chance. Is that so?" She dropped her eyes and did not answer.

"You found it was no use! Well, I thank you for trying. It's curious to think that I once had your trust, your regard, and now I haven't it. You don't mind my remembering that I had? It'll be some little consolation, and I believe it will be some help. I know I can't retrieve the past now. It is too late. It seems too preposterous—perfectly lurid—that I could have been going to tell you what a tangle I'd got myself in, and to ask you to help untangle me. I must choke in the infernal coil, but I'd like to have the sweetness of your pity in it—whatever it is."

She put out her hand. "Whatever it is, I do pity you; I said that."

"Thank you." He kissed the hand she gave him and went.

He had gone on some such terms before; was it now for the last time? She believed it was. She felt in herself a satiety, a fatigue, in which his good looks, his invented airs and poses, his real trouble, were all alike repulsive. She did not acquit herself of the wrong of having let him think she might yet have liked him as she once did; but she had been honestly willing to see whether she could. It had mystified her to find that when they first met in New York, after their summer in St. Barnaby, she cared nothing for him; she had expected to punish him for his neglect, and then fancy him as before, but she did not. More and more she saw him selfish and mean, weak-willed, narrow-minded, and hard-hearted; and aimless, with all his talent. She admired his talent in proportion as she learned more of artists, and perceived how uncommon it was; but she said to herself that if she were going to devote herself to art, she would do it at first-hand. She was perfectly serene and happy in her final rejection of Beaton; he had worn out not only her fancy, but her sympathy, too.

This was what her mother would not believe when Alma reported the interview to her; she would not believe it was the last time they should meet; death itself can hardly convince us that it is the last time of anything, of everything between ourselves and the dead. "Well, Alma," she said, "I hope you'll never regret what you've done."

"You may be sure I shall not regret it. If ever I'm low-spirited about anything, I'll think of giving Mr. Beaton his freedom, and that will cheer me up."

"And don't you expect to get married? Do you intend to be an old maid?" demanded her mother, in the bonds of the superstition women have so long been under to the effect that every woman must wish to get married, if for no other purpose than to avoid being an old maid.

"Well, mamma," said Alma, "I intend being a young one for a few years yet; and then I'll see. If I meet the right person, all well and good; if not, not. But I shall pick and choose, as a man does; I won't merely be picked and chosen."

"You can't help yourself; you may be very glad if you are picked and chosen."

"What nonsense, mamma! A girl can get any man she wants, if she goes about it the right way. And when my 'fated fairy prince' comes along, I shall just simply make furious love to him and grab him. Of course, I shall make a decent pretence of talking in my sleep. I believe it's done that way more than half the time. The fated fairy prince wouldn't see the princess in nine cases out of ten if she didn't say something; he would go mooning along after the maids of honor."

Mrs. Leighton tried to look unspeakable horror; but she broke down and laughed. "Well, you are a strange girl, Alma."

"I don't know about that. But one thing I do know, mamma, and that is that Prince Beaton isn't the F. P. for me. How strange you are, mamma! Don't you think it would be perfectly disgusting to accept a person you didn't care for, and let him go on and love you and marry you? It's sickening."

"Why, certainly, Alma. It's only because I know you did care for him once—"

"And now I don't. And he didn't care for me once, and now he does. And so we're quits."

"If I could believe—"

"You had better brace up and try, mamma; for as Mr. Fulkerson says, it's as sure as guns. From the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, he's loathsome to me; and he keeps getting loathsomer. Ugh! Goodnight!"

XVI.

"Well, I guess she's given him the grand bounce at last," said Fulkerson to March in one of their moments of confidence at the office. "That's Mad's inference from appearances—and disappearances; and some little hints from Alma Leighton."

"Well, I don't know that I have any criticisms to offer," said March. "It may be bad for Beaton, but it's a very good thing for Miss Leighton. Upon the whole, I believe I congratulate her."

"Well, I don't know. I always kind of hoped it would turn out the other way. You know I always had a sneaking fondness for the fellow."

"Miss Leighton seems not to have had."

"It's a pity she hadn't. I tell you, March, it ain't so easy for a girl to get married, here in the East, that she can afford to despise any chance."

"Isn't that rather a low view of it?"

"It's a common-sense view. Beaton has the making of a first-rate fellow in him. He's the raw material of a great artist and a good citizen. All he wants is somebody to take him in hand and keep him from makin' an ass of himself and kickin' over the traces generally, and ridin' two or three horses bareback at once."

"It seems a simple problem, though the metaphor is rather complicated," said March. "But talk to Miss Leighton about it. I haven't given Beaton the grand bounce."

He began to turn over the manuscripts on his table, and Fulkerson went away. But March found himself thinking of the matter from time to time during the day, and he spoke to his wife about it when he went home. She surprised him by taking Fulkerson's view of it.

"Yes, it's a pity she couldn't have made up her mind to have him. It's better for a woman to be married."

"I thought Paul only went so far as to say it was well. But what would become of Miss Leighton's artistic career if she married?"

"Oh, her artistic career!" said Mrs. March, with matronly contempt of it.

"But look here!" cried her husband. "Suppose she doesn't like him?"

"How can a girl of that age tell whether she likes any one or not?"

"It seems to me you were able to tell at that age, Isabel. But let's examine this thing. (This thing! I believe Fulkerson is characterizing my whole parlance, as well as your morals.) Why shouldn't we rejoice as much at a non-marriage as a marriage? When we consider the enormous risks people take in linking their lives together, after not half so much thought as goes to an ordinary horse trade, I think we ought to be glad whenever they don't do it. I believe that this popular demand for the matrimony of others comes from our novel-reading. We get to thinking that there is no other happiness or good-fortune in life except marriage; and it's offered in fiction as the highest premium for virtue, courage, beauty, learning, and saving human life. We all know it isn't. We know that in reality marriage is dog cheap, and anybody can have it for the asking—if he keeps asking enough people. By-and-by some fellow will wake up and see that a first-class story can be written from the anti-marriage point of view; and he'll begin with an engaged couple, and devote his novel to disengaging them and rendering them

separately happy ever after in the denouement. It will make his everlasting fortune."

"Why don't you write it, Basil?" she asked. "It's a delightful idea. You could do it splendidly."

He became fascinated with the notion. He developed it in detail; but at the end he sighed and said: "With this 'Every Other Week' work on my hands, of course I can't attempt a novel. But perhaps I sha'n't have it long."

She was instantly anxious to know what he meant, and the novel and Miss Leighton's affair were both dropped out of their thoughts. "What do you mean? Has Mr. Fulkerson said anything yet?"

"Not a word. He knows no more about it than I do. Dryfoos hasn't spoken, and we're both afraid to ask him. Of course, I couldn't ask him."

"No."

"But it's pretty uncomfortable, to be kept hanging by the gills so, as Fulkerson says."

"Yes, we don't know what to do."

March and Fulkerson said the same to each other; and Fulkerson said that if the old man pulled out, he did not know what would happen. He had no capital to carry the thing on, and the very fact that the old man had pulled out would damage it so that it would be hard to get anybody else to put it. In the mean time Fulkerson was running Conrad's office-work, when he ought to be looking after the outside interests of the thing; and he could not see the day when he could get married.

"I don't know which it's worse for, March: you or me. I don't know, under the circumstances, whether it's worse to have a family or to want to have one. Of course—of course! We can't hurry the old man up. It wouldn't be decent, and it would be dangerous. We got to wait."

He almost decided to draw upon Dryfoos for some money; he did not need any, but, he said maybe the demand would act as a hint upon him. One day, about a week after Alma's final rejection of Beaton, Dryfoos came into March's office. Fulkerson was out, but the old man seemed not to have tried to see him.

He put his hat on the floor by his chair, after he sat down, and looked at March awhile with his old eyes, which had the vitreous glitter of old. eyes stimulated to sleeplessness. Then he said, abruptly, "Mr. March, how would you like to take this thing off my hands?"

"I don't understand, exactly," March began; but of course he understood that Dryfoos was offering to let him have 'Every Other Week' on some terms or other, and his heart leaped with hope.

The old man knew he understood, and so he did not explain. He said: "I am going to Europe, to take my family there. The doctor thinks it might do my wife some good; and I ain't very well myself, and my girls both want to go; and so we're goin'. If you want to take this thing off my hands, I reckon I can let you have it in 'most any shape you say. You're all settled here in New York, and I don't suppose you want to break up, much, at your time of life, and I've been thinkin' whether you wouldn't like to take the thing."

The word, which Dryfoos had now used three times, made March at last think of Fulkerson; he had been filled too full of himself to think of any one else till he had mastered the notion of such wonderful good fortune as seemed about falling to him. But now he did think of Fulkerson, and with some shame and confusion; for he remembered how, when Dryfoos had last approached him there on the business of his connection with 'Every Other Week,' he had been very haughty with him, and told him that he did not know him in this connection. He blushed to find how far his thoughts had now run without encountering this obstacle of etiquette.

"Have you spoken to Mr. Fulkerson?" he asked.

"No, I hain't. It ain't a question of management. It's a question of buying and selling. I offer the thing to you first. I reckon Fulkerson couldn't get on very well without you."

March saw the real difference in the two cases, and he was glad to see it, because he could act more decisively if not hampered by an obligation to consistency. "I am gratified, of course, Mr. Dryfoos; extremely gratified; and it's no use pretending that I shouldn't be happy beyond bounds to get possession of 'Every Other Week.' But I don't feel quite free to talk about it apart from Mr. Fulkerson."

"Oh, all right!" said the old man, with quick offence.

March hastened to say: "I feel bound to Mr. Fulkerson in every way. He got me to come here, and I couldn't even seem to act without him."

He put it questioningly, and the old man answered:

"Yes, I can see that. When 'll he be in? I can wait." But he looked impatient.

"Very soon, now," said March, looking at his watch. "He was only to be gone a moment," and while he went on to talk with Dryfoos, he wondered why the old man should have come first to speak with him, and whether it was from some obscure wish to make him reparation for displeasures in the past, or from a distrust or dislike of Fulkerson. Whichever light he looked at it in, it was flattering.

"Do you think of going abroad soon?" he asked.

"What? Yes—I don't know—I reckon. We got our passage engaged. It's on one of them French boats. We're goin' to Paris."

"Oh! That will be interesting to the young ladies."

"Yes. I reckon we're goin' for them. 'Tain't likely my wife and me would want to pull up stakes at our age," said the old man, sorrowfully.

"But you may find it do you good, Mr. Dryfoos," said March, with a kindness that was real, mixed as it was with the selfish interest he now had in the intended voyage.

"Well, maybe, maybe," sighed the old man; and he dropped his head forward. "It don't make a great deal of difference what we do or we don't do, for the few years left."

"I hope Mrs. Dryfoos is as well as usual," said March, finding the ground delicate and difficult.

"Middlin', middlin'," said the old man. "My daughter Christine, she ain't very well."

"Oh," said March. It was quite impossible for him to affect a more explicit interest in the fact. He and Dryfoos sat silent for a few moments, and he was vainly casting about in his thought for something else which would tide them over the interval till Fulkerson came, when he heard his step on the stairs.

"Hello, hello!" he said. "Meeting of the clans!" It was always a meeting of the clans, with Fulkerson, or a field day, or an extra session, or a regular conclave, whenever he saw people of any common interest together. "Hain't seen you here for a good while, Mr. Dryfoos. Did think some of running away with 'Every Other Week' one while, but couldn't seem to work March up to the point."

He gave Dryfoos his hand, and pushed aside the papers on the corner of March's desk, and sat down there, and went on briskly with the nonsense he could always talk while he was waiting for another to develop any matter of business; he told March afterward that he scented business in the air as soon as he came into the room where he and Dryfoos were sitting.

Dryfoos seemed determined to leave the word to March, who said, after an inquiring look at him, "Mr. Dryfoos has been proposing to let us have 'Every Other Week,' Fulkerson."

"Well, that's good; that suits yours truly; March & Fulkerson, publishers and proprietors, won't pretend it don't, if the terms are all right."

"The terms," said the old man, "are whatever you want 'em. I haven't got any more use for the concern—" He gulped, and stopped; they knew what he was thinking of, and they looked down in pity. He went on: "I won't put any more money in it; but what I've put in a'ready can stay; and you can pay me four per cent."

He got upon his feet; and March and Fulkerson stood, too.

"Well, I call that pretty white," said Fulkerson. "It's a bargain as far as I'm concerned. I suppose you'll want to talk it over with your wife, March?"

"Yes; I shall," said March. "I can see that it's a great chance; but I want to talk it over with my wife."

"Well, that's right," said the old man. "Let me hear from you tomorrow."

He went out, and Fulkerson began to dance round the room. He caught March about his stalwart girth and tried to make him waltz; the office-boy came to the door and looked on with approval.

"Come, come, you idiot!" said March, rooting himself to the carpet.

"It's just throwing the thing into our mouths," said Fulkerson. "The wedding will be this day week. No cards! Teedle-lumpty-diddle! Teedle-lumpty-dee! What do you suppose he means by it, March?" he asked, bringing himself soberly up, of a sudden. "What is his little game? Or is he crazy? It don't seem like the Dryfoos of my previous acquaintance."

"I suppose," March suggested, "that he's got money enough, so that he don't care for this—"

"Pshaw! You're a poet! Don't you know that the more money that kind of man has got, the more he cares for money? It's some fancy of his—like having Lindau's funeral at his house—By Jings, March, I believe you're his fancy!"

"Oh, now! Don't you be a poet, Fulkerson!"

"I do! He seemed to take a kind of shine to you from the day you wouldn't turn off old Lindau; he did, indeed. It kind of shook him up. It made him think you had something in you. He was deceived by appearances. Look here! I'm going round to see Mrs. March with you, and explain the thing to her. I know Mrs. March! She wouldn't believe you knew what you were going in for. She has a great respect for your mind, but she don't think you've got any sense. Heigh?"

"All right," said March, glad of the notion; and it was really a comfort to have Fulkerson with him to develop all the points; and it was delightful to see how clearly and quickly she seized them; it made March proud of her. She was only angry that they had lost any time in coming to submit so plain a case to her.

Mr. Dryfoos might change his mind in the night, and then everything would be lost. They must go to him instantly, and tell him that they accepted; they must telegraph him.

"Might as well send a district messenger; he'd get there next week," said Fulkerson. "No, no! It 'll all keep till to-morrow, and be the better for it. If he's got this fancy for March, as I say, he ain't agoing to change it in a single night. People don't change their fancies for March in a lifetime. Heigh?"

When Fulkerson turned up very early at the office next morning, as March did, he was less strenuous about Dryfoos's fancy for March. It was as if Miss Woodburn might have blown cold upon that theory, as something unjust to his own merit, for which she would naturally be more jealous than he.

March told him what he had forgotten to tell him the day before, though he had been trying, all through their excited talk, to get it in, that the Dryfooses were going abroad.

"Oh, ho!" cried Fulkerson. "That's the milk in the cocoanut, is it? Well, I thought there must be something."

But this fact had not changed Mrs. March at all in her conviction that it was Mr. Dryfoos's fancy for her husband which had moved him to make him this extraordinary offer, and she reminded him that it had first been made to him, without regard to Fulkerson. "And perhaps," she went on, "Mr. Dryfoos has been changed—softened; and doesn't find money all in all any more. He's had enough to change him, poor old man!"

"Does anything from without change us?" her husband mused aloud. "We're brought up to think so by the novelists, who really have the charge of people's thinking, nowadays. But I doubt it, especially if the thing outside is some great event, something cataclysmal, like this tremendous sorrow of Dryfoos's."

"Then what is it that changes us?" demanded his wife, almost angry with him for his heresy.

"Well, it won't do to say, the Holy Spirit indwelling. That would sound like cant at this day. But the old fellows that used to say that had some glimpses of the truth. They knew that it is the still, small voice that the soul heeds, not the deafening blasts of doom. I suppose I should have to say that we didn't change at all. We develop. There's the making of several characters in each of us; we are each several characters, and sometimes this character has the lead in us, and sometimes that. From what Fulkerson has told me of Dryfoos, I should say he had always had the potentiality of better things in him than he has ever been yet; and perhaps the time has come for the good to have its chance. The growth in one direction has stopped; it's begun in another; that's all. The man hasn't been changed by his son's death; it stunned, it benumbed him; but it couldn't change him. It was an event, like any other, and it had to happen as much as his being born. It was forecast from the beginning of time, and was as entirely an effect of his coming into the world—"

"Basil! Basil!" cried his wife. "This is fatalism!"

"Then you think," he said, "that a sparrow falls to the ground without the will of God?" and he laughed provokingly. But he went on more soberly: "I don't know what it all means Isabel though I

believe it means good. What did Christ himself say? That if one rose from the dead it would not avail. And yet we are always looking for the miraculous! I believe that unhappy old man truly grieves for his son, whom he treated cruelly without the final intention of cruelty, for he loved him and wished to be proud of him; but I don't think his death has changed him, any more than the smallest event in the chain of events remotely working through his nature from the beginning. But why do you think he's changed at all? Because he offers to sell me Every Other Week on easy terms? He says himself that he has no further use for the thing; and he knows perfectly well that he couldn't get his money out of it now, without an enormous shrinkage. He couldn't appear at this late day as the owner, and sell it to anybody but Fulkerson and me for a fifth of what it's cost him. He can sell it to us for all it's cost him; and four per cent. is no bad interest on his money till we can pay it back. It's a good thing for us; but we have to ask whether Dryfoos has done us the good, or whether it's the blessing of Heaven. If it's merely the blessing of Heaven, I don't propose being grateful for it."

March laughed again, and his wife said, "It's disgusting."

"It's business," he assented. "Business is business; but I don't say it isn't disgusting. Lindau had a low opinion of it."

"I think that with all his faults Mr. Dryfoos is a better man than Lindau," she proclaimed.

"Well, he's certainly able to offer us a better thing in 'Every Other Week,'" said March.

She knew he was enamoured of the literary finish of his cynicism, and that at heart he was as humbly and truly grateful as she was for the good-fortune opening to them.

XVII.

Beaton was at his best when he parted for the last time with Alma Leighton, for he saw then that what had happened to him was the necessary consequence of what he had been, if not what he had done. Afterward he lost this clear vision; he began to deny the fact; he drew upon his knowledge of life, and in arguing himself into a different frame of mind he alleged the case of different people who had done and been much worse things than he, and yet no such disagreeable consequence had befallen them. Then he saw that it was all the work of blind chance, and he said to himself that it was this that made him desperate, and willing to call evil his good, and to take his own wherever he could find it. There was a great deal that was literary and factitious and tawdry in the mood in which he went to see Christine Dryfoos, the night when the Marches sat talking their prospects over; and nothing that was decided in his purpose. He knew what the drift of his mind was, but he had always preferred to let chance determine his events, and now since chance had played him such an ill turn with Alma, he left it the whole responsibility. Not in terms, but in effect, this was his thought as he walked on up-town to pay the first of the visits which Dryfoos had practically invited him to resume. He had an insolent satisfaction in having delayed it so long; if he was going back he was going back on his own conditions, and these were to be as hard and humiliating as he could make them. But this intention again was inchoate, floating, the stuff of an intention, rather than intention; an expression of temperament chiefly.

He had been expected before that. Christine had got out of Mela that her father had been at Beaton's studio; and then she had gone at the old man and got from him every smallest fact of the interview there. She had flung back in his teeth the good-will toward herself with which he had gone to Beaton. She was furious with shame and resentment; she told him he had made bad worse, that he had made a fool of himself to no end; she spared neither his age nor his grief-broken spirit, in which his will could not rise against hers. She filled the house with her rage, screaming it out upon him; but when her fury was once spent, she began to have some hopes from what her father had done. She no longer kept her bed; every evening she dressed herself in the dress Beaton admired the most, and sat up till a certain hour to receive him. She had fixed a day in her own mind before which, if he came, she would forgive him all he had made her suffer: the mortification, the suspense, the despair. Beyond this, she had the purpose of making her father go to Europe; she felt that she could no longer live in America, with the double disgrace that had been put upon her.

Beaton rang, and while the servant was coming the insolent caprice seized him to ask for the young ladies instead of the old man, as he had supposed of course he should do. The maid who answered the

bell, in the place of the reluctant Irishman of other days, had all his hesitation in admitting that the young ladies were at home.

He found Mela in the drawing-room. At sight of him she looked scared; but she seemed to be reassured by his calm. He asked if he was not to have the pleasure of seeing Miss Dryfoos, too; and Mela said she reckoned the girl had gone up-stairs to tell her. Mela was in black, and Beaton noted how well the solid sable became her rich red-blond beauty; he wondered what the effect would be with Christine.

But she, when she appeared, was not in mourning. He fancied that she wore the lustrous black silk, with the breadths of white Venetian lace about the neck which he had praised, because he praised it. Her cheeks burned with a Jacqueminot crimson; what should be white in her face was chalky white. She carried a plumed ostrich fan, black and soft, and after giving him her hand, sat down and waved it to and fro slowly, as he remembered her doing the night they first met. She had no ideas, except such as related intimately to herself, and she had no gabble, like Mela; and she let him talk. It was past the day when she promised herself she would forgive him; but as he talked on she felt all her passion for him revive, and the conflict of desires, the desire to hate, the desire to love, made a dizzying whirl in her brain. She looked at him, half doubting whether he was really there or not. He had never looked so handsome, with his dreamy eyes floating under his heavy overhanging hair, and his pointed brown beard defined against his lustrous shirtfront. His mellowly modulated, mysterious voice lulled her; when Mela made an errand out of the room, and Beaton crossed to her and sat down by her, she shivered.

"Are you cold?" he asked, and she felt the cruel mockery and exultant consciousness of power in his tone, as perhaps a wild thing feels captivity in the voice of its keeper. But now, she said she would still forgive him if he asked her.

Mela came back, and the talk fell again to the former level; but Beaton had not said anything that really meant what she wished, and she saw that he intended to say nothing. Her heart began to burn like a fire in her breast.

"You been tellun' him about our gown' to Europe?" Mela asked.

"No," said Christine, briefly, and looking at the fan spread out on her lap.

Beaton asked when; and then he rose, and said if it was so soon, he supposed he should not see them again, unless he saw them in Paris; he might very likely run over during the summer. He said to himself that he had given it a fair trial with Christine, and he could not make it go.

Christine rose, with a kind of gasp; and mechanically followed him to the door of the drawing-room; Mela came, too; and while he was putting on his overcoat, she gurgled and bubbled in good-humor with all the world. Christine stood looking at him, and thinking how still handsomer he was in his overcoat; and that fire burned fiercer in her. She felt him more than life to her and knew him lost, and the frenzy, that makes a woman kill the man she loves, or fling vitriol to destroy the beauty she cannot have for all hers, possessed her lawless soul. He gave his hand to Mela, and said, in his wind-harp stop, "Good-bye."

As he put out his hand to Christine, she pushed it aside with a scream of rage; she flashed at him, and with both hands made a feline pass at the face he bent toward her. He sprang back, and after an instant of stupefaction he pulled open the door behind him and ran out into the street.

"Well, Christine Dryfoos!" said Mela, "Sprang at him like a wild-cat!"

"I don't care," Christine shrieked. "I'll tear his eyes out!" She flew up-stairs to her own room, and left the burden of the explanation to Mela, who did it justice.

Beaton found himself, he did not know how, in his studio, reeking with perspiration and breathless. He must almost have run. He struck a match with a shaking hand, and looked at his face in the glass. He expected to see the bleeding marks of her nails on his cheeks, but he could see nothing. He grovelled inwardly; it was all so low and coarse and vulgar; it was all so just and apt to his deserts.

There was a pistol among the dusty bric-a-brac on the mantel which he had kept loaded to fire at a cat in the area. He took it and sat looking into the muzzle, wishing it might go off by accident and kill him. It slipped through his hand and struck the floor, and there was a report; he sprang into the air, feeling that he had been shot. But he found himself still alive, with only a burning line along his cheek, such as one of Christine's finger-nails might have left.

He laughed with cynical recognition of the fact that he had got his punishment in the right way, and that his case was not to be dignified into tragedy.

XVIII.

The Marches, with Fulkerson, went to see the Dryfooses off on the French steamer. There was no longer any business obligation on them to be civil, and there was greater kindness for that reason in the attention they offered. 'Every Other Week' had been made over to the joint ownership of March and Fulkerson, and the details arranged with a hardness on Dryfoos's side which certainly left Mrs. March with a sense of his incomplete regeneration. Yet when she saw him there on the steamer, she pitied him; he looked wearied and bewildered; even his wife, with her twitching head, and her prophecies of evil, croaked hoarsely out, while she clung to Mrs. March's hand where they sat together till the leave-takers were ordered ashore, was less pathetic. Mela was looking after both of them, and trying to cheer them in a joyful excitement. "I tell 'em it's gown' to add ten years to both their lives," she said. "The voyage 'll do their healths good; and then, we're gittun' away from that miser'ble pack o' servants that was eatun' us up, there in New York. I hate the place!" she said, as if they had already left it. "Yes, Mrs. Mandel's gown', too," she added, following the direction of Mrs. March's eyes where they noted Mrs. Mandel, speaking to Christine on the other side of the cabin. "Her and Christine had a kind of a spat, and she was gown' to leave, but here only the other day, Christine offered to make it up with her, and now they're as thick as thieves. Well, I reckon we couldn't very well 'a' got along without her. She's about the only one that speaks French in this family."

Mrs. March's eyes still dwelt upon Christine's face; it was full of a furtive wildness. She seemed to be keeping a watch to prevent herself from looking as if she were looking for some one. "Do you know," Mrs. March said to her husband as they jingled along homeward in the Christopher Street bob-tail car, "I thought she was in love with that detestable Mr. Beaton of yours at one time; and that he was amusing himself with her."

"I can bear a good deal, Isabel," said March, "but I wish you wouldn't attribute Beaton to me. He's the invention of that Mr. Fulkerson of yours."

"Well, at any rate, I hope, now, you'll both get rid of him, in the reforms you're going to carry out."

These reforms were for a greater economy in the management of 'Every Other Week;' but in their very nature they could not include the suppression of Beaton. He had always shown himself capable and loyal to the interests of the magazine, and both the new owners were glad to keep him. He was glad to stay, though he made a gruff pretence of indifference, when they came to look over the new arrangement with him. In his heart he knew that he was a fraud; but at least he could say to himself with truth that he had not now the shame of taking Dryfoos's money.

March and Fulkerson retrenched at several points where it had seemed indispensable to spend, as long as they were not spending their own: that was only human. Fulkerson absorbed Conrad's department into his, and March found that he could dispense with Kendricks in the place of assistant which he had lately filled since Fulkerson had decided that March was overworked. They reduced the number of illustrated articles, and they systematized the payment of contributors strictly according to the sales of each number, on their original plan of co-operation: they had got to paying rather lavishly for material without reference to the sales.

Fulkerson took a little time to get married, and went on his wedding journey out to Niagara, and down the St. Lawrence to Quebec over the line of travel that the Marches had taken on their wedding journey. He had the pleasure of going from Montreal to Quebec on the same boat on which he first met March.

They have continued very good friends, and their wives are almost without the rivalry that usually embitters the wives of partners. At first Mrs. March did not like Mrs. Fulkerson's speaking of her husband as the Ownah, and March as the Edito'; but it appeared that this was only a convenient method of recognizing the predominant quality in each, and was meant neither to affirm nor to deny anything. Colonel Woodburn offered as his contribution to the celebration of the copartnership, which Fulkerson could not be prevented from dedicating with a little dinner, the story of Fulkerson's magnanimous behavior in regard to Dryfoos at that crucial moment when it was a question whether he should give up Dryfoos or give up March. Fulkerson winced at it; but Mrs. March told her husband that now, whatever happened, she should never have any misgivings of Fulkerson again; and she asked him if he did not think he ought to apologize to him for the doubts with which he had once inspired her. March said that he did not think so.

The Fulkersons spent the summer at a seaside hotel in easy reach of the city; but they returned early to Mrs. Leighton's, with whom they are to board till spring, when they are going to fit up Fulkerson's bachelor apartment for housekeeping. Mrs. March, with her Boston scruple, thinks it will be odd, living

over the 'Every Other Week' offices; but there will be a separate street entrance to the apartment; and besides, in New York you may do anything.

The future of the Leightons promises no immediate change. Kendricks goes there a good deal to see the Fulkersons, and Mrs. Fulkerson says he comes to see Alma. He has seemed taken with her ever since he first met her at Dryfoos's, the day of Lindau's funeral, and though Fulkerson objects to dating a fancy of that kind from an occasion of that kind, he justly argues with March that there can be no harm in it, and that we are liable to be struck by lightning any time. In the mean while there is no proof that Alma returns Kendricks's interest, if he feels any. She has got a little bit of color into the fall exhibition; but the fall exhibition is never so good as the spring exhibition. Wetmore is rather sorry she has succeeded in this, though he promoted her success. He says her real hope is in black and white, and it is a pity for her to lose sight of her original aim of drawing for illustration.

News has come from Paris of the engagement of Christine Dryfoos. There the Dryfooses met with the success denied them in New York; many American plutocrats must await their apotheosis in Europe, where society has them, as it were, in a translation. Shortly after their arrival they were celebrated in the newspapers as the first millionaire American family of natural-gas extraction who had arrived in the capital of civilization; and at a French watering-place Christine encountered her fate—a nobleman full of present debts and of duels in the past. Fulkerson says the old man can manage the debtor, and Christine can look out for the duellist. "They say those fellows generally whip their wives. He'd better not try it with Christine, I reckon, unless he's practised with a panther."

One day, shortly after their return to town in the autumn from the brief summer outing they permitted themselves, the Marches met Margaret Vance. At first they did not know her in the dress of the sisterhood which she wore; but she smiled joyfully, almost gayly, on seeing them, and though she hurried by with the sister who accompanied her, and did not stay to speak, they felt that the peace that passeth understanding had looked at them from her eyes.

"Well, she is at rest, there can't be any doubt of that," he said, as he glanced round at the drifting black robe which followed her free, nun-like walk.

"Yes, now she can do all the good she likes," sighed his wife. "I wonder—I wonder if she ever told his father about her talk with poor Conrad that day he was shot?"

"I don't know. I don't care. In any event, it would be right. She did nothing wrong. If she unwittingly sent him to his death, she sent him to die for God's sake, for man's sake."

"Yes—yes. But still—"

"Well, we must trust that look of hers."

PG EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Affected absence of mind
Be good, sweet man, and let who will be clever
Comfort of the critical attitude
Conscience weakens to the need that isn't
Death is an exile that no remorse and no love can reach
Death is peace and pardon
Did not idealize him, but in the highest effect she realized him
Does any one deserve happiness
Does anything from without change us?
Europe, where society has them, as it were, in a translation
Favorite stock of his go up and go down under the betting
Hemmed round with this eternal darkness of death
Indispensable
Love of justice hurry them into sympathy with violence
Married for no other purpose than to avoid being an old maid
Nervous woes of comfortable people
Novelists, who really have the charge of people's thinking
People that have convictions are difficult
Rejoice as much at a non-marriage as a marriage

Respect for your mind, but she don't think you've got any sense
Superstition of the romances that love is once for all
Superstition that having and shining is the chief good
To do whatever one likes is finally to do nothing that one likes
Took the world as she found it, and made the best of it
What we can be if we must
When you look it—live it
Would sacrifice his best friend to a phrase

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