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Title: The Boy Grew Older

Author: Heywood Broun

Release date: May 8, 2011 [EBook #36057]

Language: English

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BOY GREW OLDER ***

THE BOY GREW OLDER

BY

HEYWOOD BROUN



G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York & London
The Knickerbocker Press
1923

Copyright, 1922,
by
Heywood Broun

Made in the United States of America

First Printing, October 1922
Second Printing, October 1922
Third Printing, November 1922
Fourth Printing, December 1922
Fifth Printing, February 1923
Sixth Printing, March 1923



Made in the United States of America

**DEDICATED
TO
HERBERT BAYARD SWOPE**

The Boy Grew Older

Book I

CHAPTER I

"Your son was born ten minutes ago," said the voice at the other end of the wire.

"I'll be up," replied Peter Neale, "right away."

But it wasn't right away. First he had to go upstairs to the card room and settle his losses. Indeed he played one more pot for when he returned to the table his deal had come around again. He felt that it was not the thing to quit just then. The other men might think he had timed his departure in order to save the dollar ante. He dealt the cards and picked up four spades and a heart. Eventually, he paid five dollars to draw and again he had four spades and a heart. Nevertheless, he bet ten dollars but it was no go. His hands shook as he dropped the two blue chips in the centre of the table. The man with a pair of jacks noticed that and called. Peter threw his cards away.

"I've got nothing—a busted flush. I want to cash in now. I owe for two stacks. That's right, isn't it? I haven't any chips left. If somebody'll lend me a fountain pen I'll make out a check. I guess I need a check too. Any kind'll do. I can cross the name off."

"Why are you quitting so soon?" asked the banker as Peter waved the check back and forth to let it dry. "We're all going to quit at seven o'clock."

"Two rounds and a consolation pot," corrected somebody across the table.

Peter was curiously torn between reticence and an impulse to tell. He felt a little as if he might begin to cry. When he spoke his voice was thick. "I've got to go up to see my son," he said. "He's just been born."

He shoved the check over to the banker and was out of the room before anybody could say anything.

He thought that the banker said, "Congratulations," as he slammed the door behind him, but he could not be certain of it.

All the way up in the taxi he worried. The hospital was half a mile away. He wished that the nurse had said, "A fine boy," but he remembered it was just, "Your son was born ten minutes ago."

"If anything had been wrong," he thought, "she wouldn't have said it over the telephone."

"Is everything all right?" was his first question when a nurse came to the door of the small private hospital and let him in. "My name's Peter Neale," he explained. "My son's just been born half an hour ago."

"Everything's fine, Mr. Neale," she said and she smiled. "The baby weighs nine pounds. Mrs. Neale is fine too. You can see them both, but she's asleep now. You can't really see her today, but I think they'll let you have a good look at your son. He's a little darling."

Peter was reassured but irritated. Formula was all over the remark, "He's a little darling." He thought she ought not to use it until she had learned to do it better. Some place or other he had read that babies were fearfully homely. Still it didn't look so bad when he came into the room. Black was smudged all around the eyes which gave the child a rakish look.

"Miss Haine," said the nurse who brought him in, "this is Mr. Neale."

"Mr. Neale," she added, "meet your son." Then she went out.

"Is he all right, Miss Haine?" was Peter's first question as soon as the door closed. After all, the other woman was just supposed to answer the bell. Miss Haine might know more about it.

"He's a cherub," said Miss Haine.

"How did his eyes get blacked?" Peter wanted to know.

"Oh that's just the silver nitrate. We always put that on a baby's eyes to make sure—Look what a fine head he has."

Peter bent closer. The baby was not nearly so red as he had expected. As for the head he didn't see why it was fine. He had no notion of just what made a head fine anyway. The child kept wrinkling up its face, but it was not crying. There was nothing about his son to which Peter could take specific exception, but somehow he was disappointed. When he had said down at the New York Newspaper Club, "I've got to go up and see my son," the phrase "my son" had thrilled him. But this wasn't "my son." It was just a small baby. It seemed to him as distant as a second cousin.

"He is sweet," remarked Miss Haine.

"Yes," said Peter, but he felt that any extension of the discussion would merely promote hypocrisy on both sides. "Can I see my wife?" he asked.

"Come this way," said Miss Haine. "You can only stay a second. I'm pretty sure she's asleep."

Maria was asleep and snoring hard. Miss Haine took up one arm which was flung outside the cover and found the pulse of the sleeping girl and as she felt it she smiled reassuringly. "Yes," she said, "she's doing fine."

"And now," she added, "I'm going to bundle you off. There really isn't anything around here for a father to do. This isn't your job, you know. I'm going to let you come back in the morning, but not before ten."

Peter learned later that one of the strongest factors in Maria's resentment against having a baby was that he was implicated in the affair so slightly. He tried to tell her that she ought to blame biology and not him, but she said there was nothing in the scheme of creation which arranged that fathers should be playing cards when their sons were born. It had an air of reckless indifference about it which maddened her. Peter knew that he could not explain to her that he had not been free in spirit during the afternoon. He simply could not bear to stay out of a single pot. Hour after hour he kept coming in on middle straights and three flushes. Never before had he done anything like that. But she knew so little about poker that there was no use in telling her any of this. Indeed he realized that he had made a mistake in venturing his one answer. Maria was in nowise pacified when he said, "But I lost fifty dollars."

CHAPTER II

Peter saw Maria only once after that and then for a few minutes. Most of the time she wept. "She's getting along splendidly," said Dr. Clay. "Her nervous condition isn't good," he added as an afterthought. "Somehow or other she doesn't take much interest in the baby. You would almost think she didn't like it. She'll get over that. The maternal urge is bound to have its effect in time."

Of course Peter could not know that this urge, of which the bearded doctor spoke so confidently, might be tardy. That was something which he was to learn later for two days after the baby was born he went to Goldfield for the big fight. He had made the stipulation with the managing editor that somebody else should cover the story in case his son was not yet born. The consent had been somewhat grudging and so he had no inclination to call for another respite now that the baby had actually arrived. It would have embarrassed him to say to the managing editor, "I don't want to go away now because Maria—that's my wife—doesn't like the baby." Anyhow Dr. Clay had said she was getting along splendidly except for her nerves and the maternal urge would attend to that.

And so Peter went to Goldfield and when he came back two weeks later they told him at the hospital that Maria had gone leaving the baby behind her. They were slightly apologetic. Miss Haine had been a little careless. Twelve days after Peter started for the fight Maria had dressed and walked out. Nobody around the hospital knew anything

more than that about it. She had left a note and Dr. Clay had taken the extreme liberty of reading it. Medically speaking, he could not say that it indicated anything more than a highly neurotic condition. The woman was rational. He could not see his way clear to sending out a general alarm. After all he did not suppose that there was any legal way of making the young woman come back. She said she was going to sail for Paris and he supposed she had. Dr. Clay offered sympathy and some observations gleaned in twenty years of practice about the Latin temperament.

Peter said nothing in reply. He did not want to discuss it. He felt lost and gone but not altogether startled. Now that it had happened he realized that he should have known that Maria might do something just like that. It was an altogether silly arrangement that she should have had a baby.

"The youngster's fine," said Dr. Clay. "It must be a comfort to you to know that you've still got him. I believe he's having his bath now. Wouldn't you like to come up and see him. It's quite an exciting event I can assure you."

Peter didn't want to be excited and it didn't appeal to him as a sporting event anyhow. Would Dr. Clay allow him to lie down on his couch for a little while. Later he'd come up and talk about what to do with the baby. He supposed the hospital didn't want it very much longer anyway. After Clay had gone he cried a little. That didn't necessarily mean much. Only the Thursday before he had cried at the ringside in Goldfield when Battling Nelson knocked out Joe Gans. Then it had been partly rage because thousands around him had shouted "Knock his block off. Kill the nigger." And he had seen someone very beautiful slowly crumple up before a slab-sided, bristling, little man who had no quality of skill or grace. Nelson had just kept coming in and in. He never stepped back. Often he took a blow in the face rather than bother to stop for an instant from swinging his own short arms at the brown belly in front of him. The victory had seemed altogether mechanical. Gans had not been knocked out so much as clawed to pieces by a threshing machine. And it was Gans Peter had thought of two years ago when he first saw Maria Alvarez dance. She had that same amazing suddenness of movement. When he first saw her she was standing still in the middle of the huge stage. And then everything about her had come to life. There was never any feeling that she was thinking about what to do. No roll call was carried on in her mind before she kicked or leaped, or flung an arm above her head. The left jab of Joe Gans was like that too.

Peter went to the stage door and thought he had made up his mind to stop her and speak to her. He found that he hadn't. She came out slowly and when he stared at her she looked straight at him and almost smiled. He could not be quite sure of it because that was the very moment something inside rapidly wheeled him about and sent him all but running out of the alley. Later he was more enterprising. The dramatic critic at his request introduced him to the press agent of "Adios" and the press agent introduced him to Maria Alvarez. She had just finished her dance. Peter was standing in the wings and people were telling him not to.

"Perhaps Mlle. Alvarez will take us up to her dressing-room," said the press agent.

"It is not mine," said Maria, "I am not a star. The eight Bandana Sisters dress with me. But never mind. Here they come. It is now their turn on the stage. You will have to climb two flights of stairs, Mr. Neale. You do not mind? Yes?"

"I do," said the press agent. "But that scores for you. You're the one he wants to see."

And so Peter found himself alone in one corner of the long dressing-room of Maria Alvarez and the eight Bandana Sisters. All sorts of clothes were scattered over the room. Maria sat down on a chair and stretched out her feet. There was another chair nearby but somebody's stockings were on it. Peter stood up. Maria looked at him and smiled with no particular merriment. She was tired. Peter shifted from one foot to another through a long pause.

"Are they really sisters?" he asked.

"Just two," said Maria. "Vonnie is the sister to Boots. The rest they are all mixed. It could not be that there should be eight such bad dancers in the one family."

"I think you're the greatest dancer I ever saw."

Maria nodded. "Yes, I am the great dancer. It is smart for you to know that. The others they do not know. When Boots was sick, Mr. Casey—he is our stage manager—he wanted me to go on in her place. He said he would give me \$5 a week more. He is stupid Mr. Casey. I do not dance like that. It is not for me."

"We'll be miss, miss, missed in Mississip," she hummed and made a face. "One, two, three, four, lie down on the stomach and kick first the right leg and then the left leg and then kick both legs. That was what he wanted Maria Alvarez to do. How is it you know? It is so smart. Here throw down those stockings on the floor and take the chair. I want to hear you say more about why I am so great a dancer."

Peter lifted the stockings as if they had been little kittens and placed them on the long shelf under the electric lights.

"I don't know why," he said. "It just seems so easy when you do things. And the thing you dance to; I think that's the best tune in the show."

Maria was merry now for the first time. "Again you are smart. It is 'The Invitation to the Waltz' of Weber. 'Miss, Miss, Missed' is not so good. That is right. And some time you will tell about me in your newspaper and say that I am a great dancer?"

"I can't," said Peter. "I don't write about the theatre. I only write about sports. Baseball, you know and football and prizefights and things like that."

"Never mind, you and I know, it will be our secret. We will tell none of the others."

Up the stairs there came a tramping and shouting and all eight Bandanas rushed into the room approximately at the same time.

"I'm going," said Peter jumping up hastily.

"Don't you mind us Bandanas," shouted Vonnie across the room. "We don't take off anything for half an hour."

"Goodbye," said Peter. "Excuse me, ladies."

Maria held his hand for one and two thirds seconds. "You must come again. I want that you should tell me more about our secret."

Vonnie held the door open for Peter. "You come when we're all here," she said. "There isn't a nickle's worth of harm in the lot of us. But that Maria there is a vamp, a baby Spanish vamp. Will you remember that."

"I'll remember."

As Peter went down the stairs he was trying to see if he could hum the thing that Maria said was "The Invitation to the Waltz" by Weber. He wasn't good at it. And besides it was all mixed up and racketing around in his head with, "We'll be miss, miss, missed in Mississipp."

Peter went to the show the next night and after that the alley. He stood scrunched up against a wall for a time but he felt too conspicuous. He was afraid that somebody would come up to him suddenly and say, "What are you hanging around here for?" It didn't make much difference who said it, the door man, a stage hand, a scrub woman, anyone would have sufficient authority to terrify him. His mind leaped beyond that and he had a vision of a policeman laying a hand upon his shoulder and saying, "I arrest you on the charge of mashing." After that would come the trial and the sentence. Peter moved out of the alley. He had no notion of just what were the fixed post rights of anybody waiting at a stage door to see an actress. Walking seemed safer and he took up a beat along the side street which ran at right angles to the alley.

His pace was brisk and he succeeded pretty well in developing the air of a man bent upon getting to some important engagement five or six miles away. Of course, every time he passed the alley it was possible to sweep it with a glance over his shoulder. Even a man in a hurry has a right to notice a tributary of chorus girls, musicians and actors sweeping into his street. First came the musicians. Then one girl. Then two and presently the flood. Peter did not dare to be too detached any more. Fortunately he found the window of a cigar store just at the corner where the alley turned into the street. By pretending an interest in the special sale of genuine imported English briar pipes Peter was able to keep close watch upon everyone who came from the stage door and at the same time seem not quite a prominent clubman. But one of the pipes, possibly the calabash cut to \$2.21, must have commanded more than fictitious interest, for Peter was suddenly startled by a clutch at his left arm. He tugged away and turned at the same moment.

"Unhand me, woman," said Vonnie, but she immediately took his arm again. "I knew you'd come," she said. "It was that look you threw at me over your shoulder when you went out yesterday."

"I haven't come," said Peter. "I just happened to be going by."

"But you are glad to see me?"

"Of course I am."

"And you'll walk home with me to keep me from being unprotected on the streets of a great city at night. It's only about twelve blocks. You don't need to take a taxi."

"Honest, I can't. I wish I could. I'm awful sorry."

Vonnie began to laugh. "I wonder why it is that when they come big they haven't got any sense. 'I knew I could rule you the day we were wed,' she hummed, 'for thick in the middle is thick in the head.'"

"What did I do that was stupid? And I'm not thick in the middle."

"Well, that's a fact. I don't know your name but your figure is grand. I guess you find being so handsome you don't need any sense."

"I have so too got sense. What have I done?"

"Well, you're just so serious I can't go on kidding you. Don't you suppose I knew you were waiting for Maria? And I know a lot more than that. You keep looking at that girl the way you did yesterday afternoon and all of a sudden you'll find rice in your ears."

"All right," said Peter, "I guess I can stand that."

"Here comes the bride—watch your step," and Vonnie went up the street as Maria came around the corner.

"Hello," said Maria, "what was it you talked about to Vonnie?"

"She thinks we're going to get married."

"And what is it you think?"

"I'd like it."

"Because I am the great dancer you think I ought to be the wife. So? It is funny. But it is not so funny. We can talk about it again. Now I am so tired that I just want to hear you say one thing and that is about the dancing and me."

"I think you were just fine," said Peter.

CHAPTER III

I

Maria was right. They did talk about it again and largely because Peter surprised himself and her with enterprise. It was raining hard that night when she came out into the alley. Peter grown bold was standing not more than two feet away from the stage door at a spot where a projecting fire escape offered some shelter from the rain. A big puddle lay all the way across the alley.

"Here," said Peter, almost casually and he picked Maria up and carried her across.

"Thank God, there's no winding staircase," Vonnie shouted after them.

Still it was an entirely natural and easy thing to keep one arm around Maria when they got into the taxicab. She rested her head against his shoulder. Peter realized then that he ought to kiss her. After all he had known her three weeks. It seemed the conventional thing to do. Besides he wanted to. She said nothing until the second time.

"I like the quiet ones better, Peter, my hermit. It is nice to lean against you. With you the taxi does not jounce so much. Part of my tiredness it goes into your arm."

"Won't you marry me?" asked Peter.

"Because we have kissed? And I have put my head on your shoulder? You would make me the honest woman?"

"I want to marry you."

"First we must have some supper. Maybe it is that you are just hungry. It is not upon an empty stomach to talk about getting married."

Maria would not take the table which the headwaiter offered. "No that other. The little one in the corner."

After they had ordered Maria took up a long bread stick and began breaking it into little pieces in her hand.

"Peter," she said, "I must make you very sad. Maybe I will be a little sad. You do not think I am good?"

Peter stared at her.

"That is too bad. I am not good, not very good. You know what I mean. You have heard the actress in the play say, 'I am a good woman?' Maria is not. I do not know why I tell you but I will. First it was three years ago in Paris. He was married and I knew that. I do not even like him much but I go. It was wrong. It was not so wrong another time because that boy I like a little. Now it was Mr. Casey, our manager, I told you he was a fool. That I could not help. He is such a fool. I try to get the job and he does not say you can dance. He say to me, 'I am a nice man and you are a nice girl.' What is there for me to say except 'yes.' About the dance he does not know anything. What is the use for me to say, 'No, I am not the nice girl, I am the great dancer.' Even if he would watch me dance he would not know. And so for the week-end at Long Beach I was the nice girl. I cannot help it that people are fools. It does not make me sad, but I am sad because now you are unhappy."

But Peter was not exactly unhappy. He knew that by all the rules he should be broken-hearted or raging. He wondered why he had no impulse to shoot Casey. As a matter of fact he could think of nothing more silly. His mind kept turning back to a play he had seen once called "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." In that the heroine had confessed in the first act to the man she was going to marry. It was thrilling Peter found to have somebody confessing to him. Maria the dancer was romantic, but Maria the adventuress was a whole leap beyond that into the realm of fantasy. He stole a glance around the long room and everywhere he saw men and women talking. Some were laughing and some were earnest. "But," he thought to himself, "probably this is the only table in the room where anybody is making a confession."

And besides all the dramatic values of the situation, he was not quite unconscious of the comic ones. There sat Maria, at least five feet high and looking about ten years old, gravely lifting up one corner of life a little gingerly to spare the feelings of Peter Neale, the best known sporting writer in America. But every other impression was swept away by the sudden feeling that it was extraordinarily honest for Maria to tell him all this. It was more than that. It was like cheering when the Yale captain got up again. It was sportsmanship.

Peter reached across the table and patted her hand. "I'm not sad, Maria. I think it was awfully white of you to tell me. I'm not exactly a good man myself. Anyhow things are different with you. Those things you said are nothing. You know the way I feel is that you're an artist and it's nobody's business what you do. We don't have to talk about that any more. There's something else. You remember what we were saying in the taxicab. You've had two pieces of bread now and a glass of water. Won't you marry me?"

"Yes," said Maria, "I'm going to marry you."

II

Peter was surprised the day they went down to get the license to discover that Maria was twenty-three. He was only twenty-six himself. Maria had seemed a child. Nineteen would have been his guess.

"Maybe," she said, "you will not want me because I am so old."

"You could be a hundred," Peter answered.

They were to be married the next day but when he met her at the theatre in the evening she told him that Dolly Vance was ill and that Mr. Casey wanted her to take over four of the sick girl's numbers. "I have to come to the

theatre at ten o'clock and rehearse all the day."

"Then we'll get married at nine. I'm not going to take a chance like that. I've read about it in books. The whole house will be cheering you and then you'll ask for waivers on me. I want to get you signed up."

"Pooh, for me they will not cheer. These are the jazz dances. They are not for me. And Peter, oh, Peter, I must sing."

"Can you sing?"

"Yes, my hermit, I am almost so good a singer as a dancer. And I could play the piano if there was any one smart enough to know. You see I bring you the dowry."

A very bored Alderman said that they were man and wife, but there was some excitement when they came out of the City Hall and two newspaper photographers took their pictures. Peter was proud of the fact that both the camera men made a point of treating him as a person of a good deal of importance. "You see," he said, "I'm somebody in my business."

"The paper you work on what is the name?"

"It's called the Bulletin."

"And what is it they pay you?"

"Well, with my share of the syndicate and all that it amounts to about \$100 a week."

"One hundred dollars a week! That is funny. My pay it is \$50. I have caught a millionaire. Peter, why do they pay you \$100 a week?"

"I don't know, Maria——"

"One hundred dollars a week to write about the baseball game! Fifty dollars a week to Maria Algarez. My God, what a country! I do not like that, Peter. Still, it does not matter so much. Maybe I am glad that you are rich. You can buy me a piano and I will show you that I know how to play Chopin. You would like that."

"That'll be fine," said Peter.

"Where was it that you learned so much about this baseball that they pay you \$100 for the week?"

"I used to play myself at Harvard. At least I played one year. I pitched against Yale and shut 'em out. The next year I got fired because I couldn't learn French."

"But that is so easy, the French. I do not know what it is to shut Yale out."

"Of course it's easy for you. You lived there, you told me ever since you were five. Any foreigner ought to be able to speak French."

"But I am not. I am now the American, I know that. I am Mrs. Peter Neale."

"Oh," she said, and made a fearful grimace, "that you must never call me. It must be that I am still Maria Algarez. Mrs. Peter Neale I do not know. Maria Algarez she will not die. Oh no, Peter, you understand that?"

"It's all right with me," said Peter. "I'm just going to call you Maria any way."

"And, Peter, I forgot, you have a father and a mother and the relations for me to meet."

"Not a one. I've got an uncle in Salt Lake City. That's a long way off if you don't know. But how about you?"

"Maybe, who can tell. They are no good. I do not care. Perhaps they are dead. Peter, you are all I have in the world. That is why you must buy me the grand piano."

They went straight from the City Hall to the theatre and Peter left her. He was not to see her again until after the performance. Of course he went to the show and sat in the second row. But Maria did not see him when she came on to do the first of her new numbers. Or at any rate she made no sign of recognition. She kept her eyes intently on the conductor's baton. And then she began to sing. Even Peter had an inkling of the fact that here was a lovely voice. If he had not been married to Maria Algarez at nine o'clock that morning he would still have been caught up in the excitement of the theatre. Almost everybody stopped coughing. They honestly cheered and they kept it up. Nine times Maria sang the chorus and five times more she came out to bow. Her fourth song was the last number in the play with the exception of the parade of all the nations and nobody paid any attention to that. They just kept on applauding and shouting. Peter argued with the stage door man.

"I have to see Maria Algarez," he said. "I have to, I tell you. I'm her husband."

"Write your name down on a piece of paper, and I'll take it up and see what she says."

In three or four minutes he returned. "Miss Algarez says you're to come up. It's number twelve. Two flights up at the head of the stairs."

Peter knocked.

"Come in," said Maria. She had thrown the blue and gold costume in a corner, and slipped on a kimono.

"It was marvelous," said Peter; "nobody's ever heard anything like it in a theatre. They're still cheering and applauding for you."

"For all that applause I do not give a damn," answered Maria and snapped her fingers. "As long as you like. That is

all."

Peter kissed her. "Maria, I was afraid I'd lost you." He held her at arm's length and the kimono slipped down over one shoulder. "Cover yourself up," said Peter almost sharply. Maria pulled the wrap back and folded it closely around her. Peter had never seen that smile before.

"A husband," she said. "It is different."

CHAPTER IV

I

Maria blamed a good many things upon the institution of marriage for which the explanation probably lay elsewhere. If Peter had been a lover rather than a husband he would still have been insensitive to Chopin. In all the range of Maria's repertoire he was never able to detect more than a single tune. That itself seemed to him an achievement for the *Fantaisie Impromptu* had not yet been discovered to be actually, "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows." But as a matter of fact Peter did not really understand Maria Alvarez any better than he understood Chopin. He loved her throughout the year of their married life but he was not happy.

"It is the curse of the witch on you," she said, "or maybe it is not the witch but that America of yours. There is something in you, Peter, that will not let you be happy. You are afraid of it. Of me you are afraid, Peter."

He protested that this was not so but Maria knew better.

"Love—what you call sex—that is one of the things which has frightened you the most of any. Somebody has put black thoughts into that head. Yes, I tell you it is so. A terrible thing has been done to you. Somebody has brought you up carefully."

But in an instant she had come across the room to him and had a protecting arm about him.

"Now I have made you the more sad. You must tell me what it is."

"I can't, Maria. I don't know whether I know. But anyhow I can't."

"Perhaps it is the sound of it which you fear. You tell me. You must. Whisper it."

Peter did whisper. "You remember that night you told me—— you told me about the others."

"You mean those oh so few lovers. But that did not make you sad then. You were not angry."

"I'm not angry now. But I can't help it, Maria, that I worry."

"And for what do you worry?"

"I think that maybe those other lovers they made you happier than I can."

"So! That I should have known. You think you are not the so great lover. These men they are gone but they are still your rivals. Perhaps I remember. That is it?"

"Yes," said Peter.

He was startled when Maria laughed.

"Why do you laugh at me?"

"It is to you like the baseball game. It is what you call it? Oh yes, a competition."

Peter made no answer.

"Now listen to me, Peter. You I love the most of anybody in the world. I tell you that but it is not enough. You still worry. Something I must do to show you. This blackness I must drive away. Peter, you must have a baby. Yes, it is a son you need. Then you can worry about him."

Maria spoke upon the conviction but also upon impulse and babies are not born that way. The time of her trial beat fiercely upon her. She had to quit the show just a day after a new rôle and several new songs were promised to her. During the last three months of her pregnancy she never left the apartment. "I do not want anybody to point at me," she told Peter, "and say that is Maria Alvarez who did the Butterfly Dance in 'Adios.'"

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In the note which Dr. Clay handed to Peter, Maria had written: "I did keep my promise. It is a baby and a son. That was all I promised. More I cannot do. Peter, I must be Maria Alvarez, the dancer. I cannot be the wife and the mother. You should not be sad altogether. I think it is good that we have met. When you look at your son you will forget some of the rubbish that was in your head. That is more than that you should remember Maria Alvarez. And the boy, Peter, remember it is fair that from life he should get fun. Thank God, nobody can ever make of him the wife and mother. Miss Haine says he is like me. If that is so, Peter, you may have much trouble. But leave him just a little

bad."

The last sentence was hard to decipher. Peter could not make out whether Maria had written, "I love you," or "I loved you."

II

Peter must have gone to sleep eventually on the sofa in the reception room of Dr. Clay's hospital. It was almost dark when he woke. He had been dreaming hard. In the dream some vague figure, forgotten by the time he awoke, presented him with a small lion cub as a pet. Throughout the dream Peter worried about the lion cub. The apartment house in which he lived had a strict rule against dogs. The janitor did not actually come into the dream, but much of Peter's sleeping consciousness was concerned with planning arguments for that official. "But it isn't a dog," Peter was prepared to say, "it's a lion. Your rules don't say anything about lions. Anyhow it's only a little lion." There had been a lion cub in Battling Nelson's camp and Peter had often watched the fighter fool around with it and slap the animal when it tried to nip him. Nelson had a trick of rubbing the rough stubble of his beard against the lion's nose. Peter hated that.

Disentangling himself from his dream he decided that his nightmare had been an echo he remembered from Goldfield. It took him several minutes to get himself back from the Nevada fight to the hospital in New York. While he slept he had forgotten that Maria had run away and that his son was in a room upstairs. He was about to skirmish out in search of one of the nurses when Dr. Clay came into the room.

"Feeling any better?" asked the doctor.

"I feel all right. I'm all ready to take the baby now."

"You don't need to be in any hurry about that, Mr. Neale. Better let him stay till tomorrow. It's after six now. Suppose we go up and watch the little fellow get bathed. I asked Miss Haine to postpone that so you could see him."

Peter realized that his presence at the bath seemed to be obligatory in the mind of the doctor. He went up the stairs to the same room which he had visited the fortnight before when he rushed away from the poker game. There could be no possible question about finding the right door for the hall was filled with loud howling.

"They never like it," said Dr. Clay.

"Is there any other reason for doing it?" asked Peter, but the physician made no answer.

The baby was propped up against one end of the tub rubbing at his eyes and Miss Haine was sloshing his chest with water from a sponge.

She looked up and said, "He's just fine, Mr. Neale. I'm not really hurting him."

Peter found that a dim shadow of personality had descended upon his son in the two weeks since he had last seen him. The face was too crowded with tears and fingers to make much of an impression, but Peter, making room for the doctor, walked around behind the tub and from the shoulders of the child he received his first thrill. They were square high shoulders without the suggestion of a curve. Christy Mathewson, the rookie pitcher of the Giants, whom Peter Neale had recently hailed in his column as a coming baseball star had shoulders just like that. And it was a fine assertive chest.

"He'll be a big man some day," said Miss Haine lifting up one of the baby's feet. "Remember he's got to grow up to these."

But no sooner was his foot lifted than the child began to howl louder than ever. Peter suddenly reached toward him.

"Look out," cried Miss Haine in alarm. "You mustn't touch his head."

Peter cared nothing about the head. It was the high boxed shoulders which he wanted, for some reason, to touch. He patted the child twice. "I wouldn't cry like that," he said. But the child continued.

"He thinks I put soap in his eyes," explained Miss Haine. "Tell him I didn't."

Peter thought it would be silly to say anything like that to the baby. He patted him twice more and said, "There, there."

"You're going to have your bottle in just a minute now," cooed Miss Haine, drying the child with a vigor which it resented. She put him back into his crib and presented the bottle.

Instantly he ceased crying and drank noisily. He drank a good deal more than he could conveniently swallow and milk began to spill out at the corners of his mouth. The flash of interest which had animated Peter died away. Indeed his feeling slumped down through indifference to dislike.

"I suppose," said Miss Haine, "you're going to keep him on cow's milk from now on."

"Cow's milk?" said Peter. "That's what he's got in the bottle now, isn't it? It's all right for him, I suppose?"

"In theory," said Dr. Clay, "bottle babies don't do quite so well, but it doesn't make much difference. I imagine more than half the children in New York today are brought up on bottles."

"By the way," he continued, "I don't want to pry into your affairs, Mr. Neale, but I suppose the little fellow's got a grandmother or somebody you can turn him over to."

"No," said Peter, "he hasn't got any grandmother that I know of. I guess we'll just have to get along without one."

"I can give you the telephone number of an agency where you could get a trained nurse for him. That would insure expert care for a month or so while you're looking around trying to make some more permanent arrangement."

Peter shook his head. He had come to hate the hospital. Any starved person would remind him constantly of Maria and her letter and her running away.

"I think I've got somebody," he said. He was thinking of Kate. She had been part of his life before he met Maria. And then there couldn't be any scandal concerning Kate. She was about sixty. Before the baby was born Kate had discussed the possibility of his paying her more than she got for part time housekeeping and letting her be a nurse for the child.

"Well, whoever you get," advised Dr. Clay, "I want you to buy this book. I'll write it down for you—it's Dr. Kerley's, I've always found it the best—and have her follow the directions carefully."

Peter put the slip in his pocket. "I'll come around for the baby at ten," he said. He took one more glance at the crib, but the milk guzzling still continued. He left without saying goodbye to anybody except Miss Haine and Dr. Clay. As he went out the front door he suddenly said, "Damn!" He remembered that Kate couldn't read.

CHAPTER V

On the way back to the flat in West Sixty-sixth Street, Peter stopped at a store and asked for Dr. Kerley's book. The clerk was sorry that it was not in stock. Of course he could order it.

"I want something right away," said Peter. They rummaged around on a shelf marked miscellaneous and found, "Your Child," and "The Christian Nursery." Neither seemed from its title quite to answer the needs of Peter, but since there was nothing else he took them both. Arriving at his flat in West Sixty-sixth Street three doors away from Central Park, Peter found Kate on hand. He had seen her just for a minute on his return from Goldfield but not since he had learned his news at the hospital. He did not know whether or not she knew.

"My wife's gone away," he said. "And she won't be back."

"Yes, sir," replied Kate. Peter liked her for that. Whether she was surprised or not she made no sign.

"Now," he continued, "I've got to bring the baby back here tomorrow. It's a boy. There isn't anybody I know to turn him over to. I want you to come and live here and be his nurse. I'll pay you fifteen dollars a week. You remember you said you would come for ten when we were talking about it before. I'm going to pay you more because you'll have to do the whole job now."

"I want one night a week off, Mr. Neale," said Kate.

"That'll be all right if you make it Sunday. I guess I can learn enough to take care of him once a week. I've got a couple of books here that tell how to do it. This baby's going to be brought up right, Kate. I want you to read these books too."

"Mr. Neale, I've broke my glasses and I can't see print at all without them. I'm an old woman, Mr. Neale."

"That's all right, Kate, I'll read you some of it so we can be ready for this baby when he comes tomorrow. Don't stand up. Sit down, Kate. This is called 'Your Child.' It's written by a woman named Alice Carter Scott."

Peter opened the book and decided to skip the preface.

"I had a sister in Brooklyn once," said Kate, "that was married to a man named Scott. She's dead these ten years, God rest her soul."

"It says," began Peter, skimming over the first page and deciding that a summary would be sufficient, "that the most important task in the world and the greatest blessing is to bring up children."

"The first years of the child's life" he read, "'roughly speaking from birth to the age of six, constitute the most important period of the child's whole existence.'"

He skimmed ahead again until he found a heading, "Constructive Suggestions."

"First of all," he read, "I would say that the home cannot be a normal home unless the mother herself is a normal being—"

Peter tried to skip ahead rapidly. "She must learn to discriminate between the essentials and the non-essentials in life. She must give the best of herself to important things and she must learn to eliminate or subordinate the non-important—" Here Peter broke off and put the book down.

"This doesn't seem to be much good for us," he said. "It's all too general. Maybe we can get something more out of this one. This one's called 'The Christian Nursery,' That doesn't sound much good, but we'll see. 'Functions of the Family—' 'The Functions of the family in human life are five-fold: (1) biological; (2) educational; (3) moral; (4) social; (5) religious.'"

He put it down impatiently. "These aren't what I wanted at all. I'll have to go and get that Dr. Kerley book they told me about in the hospital. I can get it in the morning."

"Begging your pardon, Mr. Neale," said Kate, "there's no need for me to have a book about babies. I raised five children and buried four. I'm not saying, mind you, that books aren't the great things for wisdom but it's not wisdom that little children do be needing. The Blessed Virgin herself, she didn't have to read in no books. I'll be bringing him up like he was my own son, Mr. Neale, and that's better than you'll be finding in all your fine books."

Peter was disposed to argue the proposition that all a woman needs to know about motherhood can be learned by having some children, but Kate got up and walked out into the kitchen to show that the interview was over. Peter never did get around to buying Dr. Kerley even for his own education. Still he could not quite dismiss the little he had read that night. He could not remember whether it was in the Christian book or the other that he had come across the paragraph about the mother—"She must learn to discriminate between the essentials and the non-essentials in life." He wondered whether it was essential that Maria should devote herself to the gurgling little child who cried about everything but spilt milk, or that she should go on dancing to the strains of that tune by Weber. He tried to hum it and couldn't. Then he sat and thought for a long time. In reply to a question from Kate he said that he didn't want any dinner. He was going out. Would she please be at the flat at ten o'clock as he expected to have the baby back by that time.

Presently Kate went out. Peter sat by the window and looked up towards the park. He could catch a glimpse of it by leaning out. There was a moon. A wind whipped through the trees and they were swaying back and then rushing forward again whenever the gusts gave them an opening. That was a sort of dance. He turned away from the window. There was nothing in the room to remind him of Maria except the grand piano. He would get rid of that. His mind began to lose its ache. He could accept the fact that Maria had gone. He would remember her now always as he had seen her that first night standing still in the centre of the stage just before she began to dance. The sight of Maria washing a baby would have been queer. It was all right for nurses and old Irish women and sporting writers to mess around with babies and soap and rubber-tipped milk bottles. Somehow or other he was glad he had never seen the greatest dancer in all the world with a mouth full of safety pins.

CHAPTER VI

Miss Haine seemed somewhat surprised when Peter arrived at the hospital alone the next morning. "You're not going to carry him back yourself?" she said.

"Why not?"

"Have you ever held a baby?"

Peter thought back. "Not such a little one," he admitted.

"Well then, watch me," she said. "See, take him like this. If you don't he's sure to cry."

"But he's crying now," protested Peter.

"That's for some other reason. It isn't because I'm holding him wrong. All little babies cry a good deal at first. It's good for them. Any time a small baby doesn't cry a certain number of hours a day there's something wrong. You see he isn't big enough to walk, or crawl, or even roll around much and crying is the way he gets his exercise. He's getting air into his little lungs now."

"There isn't anything to be done about it?" Peter wanted to know.

"Well, of course, you must look first of all to see if there is any real reason for his crying. His skin is very sensitive. There might be a pin sticking in him. It might be that his clothes need to be changed." Miss Haine paused. "Yes, he wants to be changed now."

Peter made a step toward the door, "Oh, you'll have to learn this," said Miss Haine. "Watch me."

At the moment she seemed skilful. For the first time Peter appreciated the fact that she really was trained. But he did not know until after months of subsequent experience just what a marvel he was permitted to observe. In the course of a year or so he made progress. His improvement was tangible enough to be demonstrated in figures. Neale was given to statistics. He was the first sporting writer to keep separate averages for batters against right and lefthanded pitching. It was Peter Neale who proved years later that there were definite exceptions to the accepted theory that lefthanded batters do badly against southpaws. He was able to show that through one entire campaign Ty Cobb batted 11.692 points better against lefthanders than he did against righthanders. In much the same spirit Peter used a stop watch on himself while he was engaged in the task of changing the child. In twelve months time he was pleased to observe that his record was gradually cut down from nineteen minutes to five and a half. Later he wished it had been his privilege to time Miss Haine at this first demonstration. He was sportsman enough to admit that in all probability even his best performance after months of practice was markedly inferior to hers. Indeed he would not have been a bit surprised to learn that she had established a world's record before his very eyes. Even as a novice in the matter he knew that he had seen a marvel.

After all, in spite of Peter's ignorance of babies he did have a reportorial eye. It took him no more than a few seconds to observe that Miss Haine's phrase, "He wants to be changed," was not a particularly nice use of English. There seemed to be nothing in the world which the child wanted less. He screamed as Peter, at that time, had never heard him scream, and kicked prodigiously. Many months later when Peter had begun to perfect himself in the technique of the task he felt that perhaps he would not do at all badly in any competition limited to participants who

were also parents. He was never able to challenge in any way the complete mastery of Miss Haine because she was endowed with a complete indifference. She did not allow the screaming to interfere with her efficiency in any way. The kicking never worried or angered her. She acted as if it were a natural hazard.

"There's a nice dry child for you," she said at the end of an interval which Peter subsequently estimated to have been three minutes and twenty seconds. He was also a silent child until Peter picked him up.

"Put your right hand a little lower and raise your left," advised Miss Haine. "Remember he isn't strong enough yet to hold up his head all by himself."

Peter obeyed at the moment, but he grew to have a certain contempt for all established canons of good form in regard to holding a baby. Indeed he eventually wrote an article for one of the magazines in which he maintained: "There are one hundred and fifty-two distinctly different ways of holding a baby—and all are right! At least all will do." He based this contention on the fact that the body of a small baby is soft and pliable and that a person with a strong pair of hands can get a grip pretty much any place he chooses. Still, for the moment he obeyed instructions implicitly and went down the stairs gingerly and out to the taxicab.

"That's a fine husky kid you've got there," said the driver. "Is it yours?"

"Yes," said Peter somewhat ashamed and annoyed by the fact that a suggestion of pride crept into his voice quite against his will. "It's my son."

"He certainly knows how to yell," said the driver. "I've got five but he beats 'em all."

Curiously enough the child ceased crying the instant the taxi started. The motion of the journey and possibly the sight of the trees and the river and the ships seemed to have a certain interest for it. The mouth opened into something that might have been a grin.

"That's Grant's Tomb," said Peter before he realized that whatever interest in the proceedings the child actually had it could hardly be pinned down to the particular. Climbing the two flights of stairs which led to his apartment, Peter knocked at the door briskly. Somehow or other the baby had begun to slip through his fingers and he found it impossible to reach the pocket in his vest where he kept his keys. There was no answer. Peter knocked again and still nobody came. Heaving the baby up over his shoulder he found the key after trying three wrong pockets and went into the flat. There was no one about. Kate had not arrived. Peter was alone with his son.

Panic descended upon him. He remembered, "His skin is very sensitive. A pin may be sticking into him," and he wondered if in the event of such an emergency he could possibly locate the trouble. He was still more doubtful of his ability to do anything else which might be necessary. Even in the taxicab, Peter had not felt wholly alone. After all the driver had said that he was the father of five. This was reassuring to Peter. He had a mind which hopped ahead. He had been quite alive to the arrival of a contingency upon which he would find it necessary to tap upon the window and say, "Never mind the car for a minute. What should I do now?"

Fortunately, the conduct of the baby was more admirable than anything Peter had yet known. He put it in the middle of the bed where it promptly went to sleep. Peter sat in a chair close by and watched. Suddenly something happened which startled him. Without waking the child rolled over and buried its head in the pillow face downward. Peter knew that it would not smother. He had slept exactly that way himself for twenty-five years.

There was no clock in the house and Peter had no notion of how long he waited. Presently the child woke and began to cry petulantly. A search for pins was resented and the wailing took on its characteristic vigor.

"Don't do that," said Peter. He picked the child up, carried it to the window and back again without good results. Then he said, "Listen!" Peter cleared his throat. "Rockabye, baby, on the tree top," he began but to no avail. He wasn't very sure of the tune. There was only one song of which he was confident. "Oh, Harvard was old Harvard when Yale was but a pup," struck up Peter. "And Harvard will be Harvard still when Yale is all gone up, And if any Eli son of a—."

Instinctively Peter began to hum the rest. It did not seem to him just the sort of song he should sing to his baby. And yet it proved exactly right. The child went off to sleep again and remained that way while Peter disentangled it. A few minutes later Kate came in. "I was thinking, Mr. Neale," she said, "that there was no clothes for the child." She stepped across to the bed. "Oh, the little angel. Now the deep sleep does be on him. I found some old things and brought them. I hope he was no trouble to you."

"No," said Peter, mopping his forehead. "He wasn't so much trouble. Have you got everything you need? I'm going to leave you some money for milk and food and things. Can you stay with him right along now till your day off?"

"I can that."

"Well, let's see. This is Tuesday. I'm going out for awhile. I won't be back tonight. Maybe I won't be back tomorrow. Anyhow I'll be back before Sunday. Take good care of him."

Peter had to steady himself going down the stairs to the street. He was shaky and wringing with perspiration. He felt as if he had pitched a nine inning game with the score nothing to nothing all the way. He just had to get out of the house. The ache which had died down the night before was back again. "I guess I've got to get drunk," thought Peter.

CHAPTER VII

When Peter reached the corner he found that it was only half-past twelve. It was much too early to get drunk. Daylight drinking had always seemed to him disgusting. As a matter of fact, he was contemplating the spree merely as a means to an end. In order to forget Maria he must think of someone else and it would suit his purpose that the other person should be someone rowdy and degraded. He would rub himself with mud to ease the numbness of his spirit. He knew that he could never do it without drinking. First many gates must be unlocked. Maria had been right when she said that Peter was afraid of sex. When he was quite a small boy somebody had told him about flowers and it meant nothing to him. It had seemed merely a fairy story rather more dull than usual. Much later a red-haired boy who lived five houses away had talked to Peter and frightened and disgusted him. After that he had run away when other boys tried to tell him anything about these mysteries. Of course his squeamishness had been marked and he became the butt of every youngster with any talent for smut. Finding that flight was useless Peter adopted a new system and fought fiercely with anyone who taunted him. He was bigger and stronger than most of the other boys and he soon piled up an imposing list of victims to his prowess. He fought so well that his ignorance remained almost unimpaired. Once when he was in the act of belaboring a companion who had tried to outline for him the plot of a book called "Only A Boy," a woman passing by had interrupted the fight. She wanted to know if Peter was not ashamed of himself. Defensively he answered that the other boy had been "talking dirty." Immediately the passerby deluged Peter with admiration. She took down his name and address and later he received by mail a Bible, leather bound, and on the flyleaf was the inscription "To a young Sir Galahad." Peter never took any particular pride in this gift.

He knew in his heart that his purity rested solidly on fear. He burned with curiosity. At times he actually invited lewd confidences though making every pretence of anger when they were imparted to him. Respite came to him for a year or two before he went to college because athletics became his god. He excelled all competitors in school and was generally rated the best right-handed pitcher in the metropolitan district. Baseball filled all his thoughts waking and sleeping, and in the autumn it was football, although in this branch of sport he was by no means as proficient. Indeed when he went to Harvard at the age of seventeen he was dropped from the varsity squad in the first cut and later from the freshmen.

At this particular time, when he was much more foot-loose than usual, the annual medical lecture to the Freshmen was delivered. It was known in unofficial circles as Smut One and attendance was compulsory. Very gravely and severely the old doctor unfolded his tale of horrors. The spirit was not unlike that of a traditional hell-fire sermon. Peter heard the man half through and then fainted, toppling over from his seat across an aisle. He was carried downstairs into the fresh air and did not come back. But he had heard enough to be convinced that this sex business was even worse than it had seemed in the crude and rowdy flashes which had come to him from his companions. And yet the fact that it was horrible by no means served to keep his thoughts clear of the subject. The doctor had talked entirely of the dangers and disgraces of immorality. Peter could not escape the only partially conscious surmise that unspeakable delights and wonders must lie within this circle of leaping flames. This impression was confirmed when he happened in the college library to come across a poem by Carew called "The Rapture." Sex seemed to him now by far the most romantic and adventurous thing in life. The fact that there were monsters and dragons to be dared made it all the more a piece with the unforgotten tales of childhood concerning giant killers and knights-errant.

Peter was no longer satisfied to be Galahad. He wanted to be Launcelot. And still he was afraid. He found out that Columbus Avenue in Boston was a street largely given over to women and night after night he used to slink about dark corners hoping and dreading that somebody would speak to him. Whenever a "Hello dearie" came to him out of the darkness Peter trembled. "No," he would say, "I'm sorry. I've got a very important engagement. I've got to go right along. I must go right along. Sure, I'll be here at this same time tomorrow night."

Often he would carry on some such dialogue a dozen times in an evening and then one night a woman, more stalwart and audacious than any he had yet encountered, seized him by the arm. "Sonny," she said, "I'm not going to let you waste my time. You're not going any place except with me. Now march along."

Peter marched. That was why he told Maria Alvarez that he was not quite a good man himself.

For a time disillusion supplanted turmoil in the mind of Peter. He found that the romanticists were just as fraudulent as the moralists. Don Juan seemed to him as great a fake as Galahad. Besides in the spring the call for baseball candidates came along and Peter surprised the college world by being the only Freshman to win a place on the varsity nine. He pitched the second game against Yale and won by a score of 2 to 0. Life meant something after all. Bending a third strike across the knees of a man with a Y on his chest gave a dignity to existence which it had never before possessed. Peter was done with hot thoughts and cold ones. Unfortunately he was also done with thoughts about examinations. French was his most abject failure, but he did badly enough in everything else to be told that his college days were over.

Still he was bereft of romance for no more than a month. He caught on with the sporting department of the Bulletin early in August and made an almost instantaneous hit. Here again he found satisfaction in the gait and color of life. Women were not rigorously excluded from the scheme of things, but they were not important. He saw them in the dance halls where he went after hours and talked to them and drank with them, but they served merely as minor characters. The talk which animated this existence for Peter was all of the shop. A reporter from San Francisco, named Rusk, suddenly discovered to his amazement and delight that here was a man eager to hear his tales of newspaper work along the waterfront in the days when the coast towns were still unregenerate. Everybody else on the Bulletin was in the habit of groaning loudly whenever Rusk began, "In the old days on the waterfront—," but Peter listened with the most intense sort of interest to Rusk's entire stock of anecdotes. By and by Rusk had to make them up. He gave himself a boyhood as a jockey and also enlisted fictionally in the Spanish American war. Peter believed everything and liked everything. Four months later Rusk left the Bulletin in order to try his hand at free lancing for the magazines. His failure in that field surprised him. He had come to confuse Peter Neale and the general public.

Peter began his spree by going to the Newspaper Club. He found no one in the big room except two old men playing chess. One of them did weather and the other fish on the New York Press. They were not communicative and neither seemed disposed to be drawn into conversation. And so for a time Peter watched the game. He found it impossible to work up any enthusiasm about the issue and departed to practice pool on a table at the other end of the room. Caring nothing about performance, Peter was surprised to discover that the most difficult shots all came off. Nothing was too hard. Even the most fantastically complicated combinations plopped the required ball into a pocket.

Far from being pleased at this Peter grew angry. He felt that Fate was ironically evening up things for him by burdening him with luck and prowess in something which made no difference and withholding its favor in all the important aspects of life. Testing out his theory he picked up a straggler, a man he knew but slightly, who happened to wander into the club at that moment.

"I'll roll you Indian dice," challenged Peter. "A dollar a throw."

Good luck continued to plague him although he knew that its attentions were not honorable! At the end of three quarters of an hour Peter was \$85 ahead.

"That's enough," he said with irritation.

"You're not going to quit now that you've got me in the hole," protested his opponent. "Aren't you going to give me a chance to get back?"

"You wouldn't have any chance. If we keep up I'm sure to win hundreds of dollars from you. Nobody can beat me just now. Look here if you don't believe me I'll give you a chance. I'll bet you a hundred dollars to ten on one roll."

"What's the matter with you, Neale?" asked the loser. "Are you soused?"

"Not yet," said Peter. "You're not taking any advantage of me. I tell you I know. I can't lose. Go ahead and roll."

"All right, if you want to throw money away it's not my fault."

He took the leather cup and rolled a pair of sixes. Peter slammed the dice down and four aces and a five danced out.

"No more," said Peter. "It's no use. That's \$95 you owe me."

"Would you mind if I held you up on that till next week? I'm sort of busted just now."

"No hurry, anytime'll do."

"Ninety-five, that's right, isn't it? Lend me \$5 that'll make it an even hundred. Easier to remember."

Peter gave him the five. He knew that even in his gambling triumphs there would be some catch. Wandering over to the bar alone he had two Martinis and then a Bronx but nothing seemed to happen. Looking at his watch he found that it was still only a little after three and he went up town to Fourteenth Street to a burlesque house. The show was called "Dave Shean's Joy Girls." When Peter came in Shean as a German comedian with a false stomach and a red wig had just volunteered to take the place of the bullfighter played by the straight man.

"Do you think you can kill the bull?" asked the straight man.

"I don't know dot I kills him," said Shean, "but I can throw him."

It annoyed Peter that everybody else in the theatre laughed so loudly.

"Yesterday," continued the real toreador, "I killed four bulls in the arena."

"I had him for breakfast."

"What are you talking about? What did you have for breakfast?"

"Farina."

Peter thought he would go but he waited in the hope that it might get better. Presently Shean and the tall man got into an argument. The serious one of the pair contended that Otto Schmaltz, the character played by Shean, did not have a whole shirt on his back.

"I bet you! I bet you!" shouted Schmaltz dancing about and patting the other man on the cheek. They came close to the footlights and placed huge piles of stage money side by side.

"Now," said the big man, "the bet is you haven't got a whole shirt on your back."

"Ches," replied Schmaltz.

"Why, you poor pusillanimous, transcendental, ossified little shrimp, you," said the big man. "Of course you haven't got a whole shirt on your back. Half of it is on the front."

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" he continued sneeringly and kicked the little man resoundingly while the crowd screamed.

Later Schmaltz bet with somebody else taking the other side of the contention, but again he lost because when it came time for the tag line he grew confused and shouted. "Why, you poor pussalinitment, tramps-on-a-dimple, oysterfied little shrimp, you, half of de back is on the front." And again the fortune of Schmaltz was swept away and again he was kicked.

Possibly the three cocktails had begun to have some effect after all or it may have been something else, but at any rate Peter was no longer merely bored by all these happenings. His sensation was just as unpleasant, but it was acute. Somehow or other the story of Schmaltz and the shirt had made him sad.

"Schmaltz is on me," he thought. "Schmaltz is everybody. Getting fooled and getting kicked." His musing became more vague. "Half of the back is on the front," seemed to take form as a tragic complaint against life. He and Schmaltz they couldn't have it whole because "half of the back is on the front."

More disturbing moralizing was yet to come from the book of "Dave Shean's Joy Girls." The next entertainers were the Mulligan Brothers, female impersonators. One played the part of Clara and the other was Margie.

"The sailors on that ship was awful," began Clara. "The sailors on that ship was just awful. The poor girl was sinking there in the water and they wouldn't let her into the lifeboat. Every time she came up, Margie, one of the sailors hit her over the head with an oar."

Margie began to laugh stridently.

"What are you laughing for, Margie? Did you hear what I was telling you? I said every time the poor girl came up a sailor hit her over the head with an oar."

"Wasn't she the fool to come up," said Margie.

Peter knew that was not a joke. Here was his case against life summed up in a sentence. Idiots about him were laughing. Couldn't they see the bitterness of it. "Wasn't she the fool to come up!" That was his folly. He was going on taking the buffeting of the oars and for no reason. And yet he knew perfectly well that he would continue to come up no matter what blows fell about his head and shoulders. There was no use making any resolve to quit it all. Peter had no facility for suicide. He did not dare and he tried to justify himself in this unwillingness.

"After all," he thought, "it would be a pretty rotten trick to play on Kate. I promised her she could have Sunday off."

One piece of positive action he could and did take. He did not wait to gather any further pessimistic contributions to cosmic philosophy from "Dave Shean's Joy Girls," but walked out in the middle of Shean's drunken act. The comedian was pretending that the edge of the stage was the brass rail along a bar. Now he was swaying far over the orchestra pit and seemed about to fall into it. A woman in front of Peter screamed. Shean slowly straightened himself up and shook a reproving finger at the laughing audience. "My wife's bes' lil' woman in worl'," he said and did a hiccough. Still he seemed sober enough when Peter sitting on the aisle in the second row got up and started out of the theatre.

"Don't you like our show?" he called after him.

Peter flushed and made no answer.

"I guess I'm too natural," said Shean. "He can't stand it. You know how it is. He's a married man himself."

"Hey, Percy," he shouted after the retreating figure of Peter in a high falsetto, "you'll find a saloon right around the corner. Tell the bartender to let you have one on Otto Schmaltz."

Peter conscientiously walked past the saloon mentioned by the impertinent Shean and went into the next one three blocks farther on. He began to drink doggedly and consequently with slight effect. He was like a sleepless person. No blur came over the acuteness of his consciousness. He might just as well have tried counting sheep jumping over a fence. "Wasn't she the fool to come up!" recurred in his ears as if it had been a clock ticking late at night in a big silent house. Straight whiskey tasted abominably and returned no reward for his efforts. In the back room somebody was singing "Mother Machree" and cheating on the high notes. An idea for a newspaper paragraph came to Peter. Somebody had been conducting an agitation in the Bulletin against the use of "The Star Spangled Banner" as a national anthem on the ground that the air was originally that of a drinking song. "We ought to point out," thought Peter, "that it takes a few drinks to make anybody think he can get up to 'the rockets' red glare.'"

He wished his mind would stop pelting him with ideas. Thinking ought not to keep up when he hated it so. Leaving the bar, Peter took his drink over into the corner and sat down at a table. On the wall to his left hung a large colored picture labelled "Through the Keyhole." Peter looked at it and then moved his chair around so that he couldn't see it. He realized that he must get much drunker.

CHAPTER VIII

It was after ten when Peter came into Billy Gallivan's, the restaurant of the singing waiters. By now he could not see distinctly every sheep which jumped over the fence but he was still counting them. "I am drunk," he said to himself. "I am so drunk that nothing matters." But he knew that it was not so. Unfortunately the formula of Coué had not yet been given to the world and Peter lacked the prevision to say, "Drink by drink I am getting drunker and drunker and drunker."

And the singing waiters failed to inspire him with that reckless disregard for present, past and future which he desired. One of them, a fat man who had blonde hair and sang bass, eventually took Peter's order. He set the glass on the table and then moved away no more than a step to begin his song. "When I'm a-a-lone I'm lonely," he

thundered in Peter's ear, "when I'm a-a-lone I'm bloo." Probably he was not as lonely as Peter. It made it worse because the song was so silly. "Every other girl and brother," the verse went on later, "has some pal just like a mother."

By this time the waiters were gathering from all over the long low room. Six of them stood shoulder to shoulder in front of Peter's table and sang together. "When I'm a-a-lone I'm lonely, when I'm a-a-lone I'm bloo." One of them went up high and quavered. Others went elsewhere. There was a voice for every level. It was part singing. And they swayed back and forth from one foot to another. The room swayed with them but it would not keep time. The rhythm of the room was much longer. Peter could feel it pound as if he had been a mile runner and the finish lay a hundred yards ahead of him. He still knew that he was a fool to come up.

After a long time the song stopped. The patrons of the place began to throw money out to the singers. With painstaking recklessness Peter fumbled in his pockets and found a silver dollar. It almost filled his hand as if it had been a baseball. He shook his head vehemently. What did he care if the count was two and three, he was not going to lay it over. The curve was the trick. The outside corner was the nery spot to shoot for. Drawing back his arm he flung the dollar and it crashed against a table and bounded away. For a second the coin spun around and then it waddled in a long arc straight home to Peter's chair. He put his foot on it and picked it up. No, he was too sober not to know that a dollar was excessive.

These men were not very good waiters—any of them—but that did not make them artists. They were not very good singers either. Peter remembered that he had read in his little leather Bible, "You cannot serve God and mammon." That was the trouble. Art and utility should never meet. A fine tenor ought not to serve drinks and even indifferent singing seemed to spoil a man as a waiter. This theme had been in his mind before. A great dancer could not be a mother. Yes, that was the point where this speculation had begun. At last he found a quarter and threw that and he left a ten cent tip on the table.

"Hello, big boy," said a woman as he was going out. She was as blonde and as fat as the lonely waiter and much redder. Peter made no reply but went out and up the street to the Eldorado. Eldorado! That was a land of which the Spaniards had dreamed, a land of gold. They never found it. Perhaps that was just as well. Somebody in a tub had said, "Eldorado!" No, he didn't—that was "Eureka!"

At the Eldorado the waiters didn't sing at all. Special people did that. But mostly it was just dancing. The floor was filled with couples. A long flight of steps led down to the tables. At the foot of the steps a girl sat alone. She was a young girl and pretty but hard and brazen enough. And she didn't call him, "Dearie." She merely said, "Buy me a drink."

Peter sat down.

"My name's Elaine," she said. "But you don't have to call me that. I think it's sort of a cold name, don't you? I'm not cold. People that like me call me 'Red,' on account of my hair. Now you tell me your name."

"John Whittier," said Peter, reverting to the slumming name he had used in his Freshman year at Harvard. It was the name of the proctor in his entry.

"Maybe John Greenleaf Whittier," said Elaine.

"Perhaps you're a poet. Yes, I can see you're a poet."

Peter was annoyed. "John Whittier's not my real name," he said. "My name's Peter Neale."

That aroused no flash of recognition. Peter was surprised that this girl of the Eldorado should know John Greenleaf Whittier and never have heard of Peter Neale.

"I don't think it's very nice of you," she said, "not to give me your real name. I gave you mine. Are you ashamed of me?"

"No," replied Peter, "I'm ashamed of myself."

"What are you doing?"

"Trying to get drunk."

"We'll get drunk together. I'll help you."

Drinking with somebody did seem to help. At any rate after two rounds Peter achieved for the first time during the evening that detached feeling which he had been seeking. All the dancers now were dim and distant. The music was something which tinkled from down a long corridor. Even the obligation to drink seemed lighter. Peter merely sat and stared at Elaine. Gray-eyed, firm and flaming, it was a face which blotted out all other images. He found himself thinking only of this woman in front of him. And she was real. She was close. He could touch her.

"Who are you looking at?" said the girl.

"Elaine."

"I told you that people that liked me called me Red. Why don't you call me that? Why don't you like me?"

"I like you a lot."

Elaine made a face at him. In her no barriers seemed to have been set up against the potency of drinking. Already she was in the babbling stage.

"I'm not like the rest of the girls around here. You don't need to be ashamed of me. I've had a good education. I can prove it to you. Ask me about the square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle."

"What about it?"

"It's equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides. You see, if it wasn't for hard luck I wouldn't be in a place like this. I'm a lady. I know Latin too. *Amo*, that's love. *Amo*, I love. *Amas*, you love."

"Don't," said Peter crossly. The spell was broken. The woman was making him think. Now he could hear the drums again. This was the meanest trick of many which the fate of the day had played him. With all the evil women of a great city to choose from it had been Peter's misfortune to happen upon an educated harlot. He had drugged himself steadfastly to be rowdy and here was a lady who talked about Latin and right angles.

Elaine sensed a mistake in technique. "Come away from here, Peter," she said. "Come on. You're just a tired little baby. You don't want to talk any more. You're my little baby."

Peter got up and had to catch the table to keep from falling over. "My name's Otto Schmaltz," he said and did a silly imitation of the accent of the comedian in "The Joy Girls." But the possibility of a revision of the material came to him. "My baby's bes' lil' baby in the world."

He would have gone away at once, but a man came down the stairs at that moment and approached the table. "Red," he said, "if you ever stand me up again I'll bust your face."

"Honest, Jim," said the girl, "I waited half an hour. I thought you weren't coming."

"Let that lady alone," said Peter. "She's with me."

He didn't like Elaine any more, but he knew that the code demanded that he should show resentment of the intrusion.

"Keep your face out of this," said the newcomer. "What damned business is it of yours?"

There was a ready-made answer for that in the code.

"You come outside and I'll make it my business," said Peter.

"Don't waste your time on the big souse, Jim," said Elaine clutching at the arm of the man who had threatened her. But the fact that the girl absolved Peter from all the cares of guardianship did not remove his responsibilities according to the code. "Come on outside," he repeated. He went slowly up the stairs but when he reached the sidewalk and turned around there was no Jim. Peter waited. He wanted very much to hit somebody and Jim seemed wholly appropriate. After a few seconds the man came out. He walked up close to Peter but he held his hands behind his back. According to the code nothing could be done until each had extended an arm.

"Come on," said Peter impatiently, "put up your hands and I'll punch your head off."

Jim suddenly drew his right arm from behind his back and clipped him sharply over the head with a bottle. Peter stared at him wonderingly for almost a second. Surprise seemed to halt the message to his brain. Slowly he crumpled up on the sidewalk. The blow was not painful, but the swinging arc of all things visible was now longer than ever before. The lights, the lamp-posts and the buildings slowly turned end over end in a complete circle. Peter put one hand to his head. It was wet and sticky. For a second or so he considered that and wondered. Finally he realized that it was blood. Lifting himself up on his hands and knees he saw Jim and Elaine scrambling into a taxicab.

"I'll bet she doesn't talk about right angles to him," thought Peter. For a moment he considered pursuit, but before he could make up his mind the taxicab had started. It swept past him no more than ten feet away. He could see the red head of the woman in the window. One week later he decided that he should have cupped his hands and shouted, "You hypotenuse hussy!" That night he could think of nothing. The fragments of glass lay about him. Peter examined them and found it had been a champagne bottle. After a bit he called a taxicab for himself and said, "Go to some hospital that's near." He had begun to feel a little faint.

A doctor in the reception room dug the glass out of Peter's scalp bit by bit and hurt him dreadfully. Every stab of pain cut through the fumes and left him clear-headed. Nothing was forgotten any more. He was able to compare the relative poignancy of two sorts of pain and decided that he did not care much how long the doctor kept it up. At last the job was finished and Peter's head bandaged.

"You were drunk, weren't you?" said the doctor.

"Yes," said Peter, "I was."

There was no other comment. Nobody would call Peter Sir Galahad on account of this fight and yet it was honorable enough he thought, even if the issues were a little mixed. Nor was it entirely unsatisfactory. At least he had been able to taunt Fate into an overt act. He knew a poem by a man who wrote, "My head is bloody but unbowed." Peter had often used that line in prizefight stories. Still he was a little sick now and perfectly sober. He looked at his watch. In an hour or so it would be dawn. There didn't seem to be anything to do but go home.

Opening the door of his apartment, Peter tripped over something in the dark and fell with a bang. Kate woke and called out in obvious terror, "Who's there?"

"It's only me," said Peter, "Mr. Neale. I decided not to stay out after all. I'm sorry I woke you up. I fell over the baby carriage."

CHAPTER IX

Somebody at the office must have heard about the flight of Maria Alarez, for when Peter returned from Goldfield he had found at his flat a telegram which said, "Lay off a couple of weeks. Longer if you like—Miles, managing editor." That was an extraordinary thing because the material for Peter's column—"Looking Them Over with Peter Neale"—was only up one week ahead. A two weeks' vacation would mean not only that there would be no Peter Neale in the Bulletin, but that in thirty-one other papers throughout the country the feature would be missing. Peter wondered how Miles could suggest a thing like that so calmly. Maria's running away ought not to wrench a whole chain of newspapers in that fashion. In daydreams Peter had often pictured himself dying from flood, or earthquake or a stray bullet in some great riot. When the rescuers picked him up and bent over to hear what he might say his lips framed the words, "Send a story to the Bulletin!"

The Bulletin couldn't be bothered about people's dying or running away. The Bulletin was bigger than that. The newspaper yarn of Rusk's which had impressed Peter the most was about a man named O'Brule in San Francisco. O'Brule was secretly engaged to a girl in Alameda and then a week or so before they were to be married she had eloped with a man who said he was a Polish Count. According to Rusk by some strange coincidence O'Brule received the assignment to cover the story. He didn't beg off. He sat down to write it and he finished up his story with: "And when the news of Miss Lee's elopement drifted into the office of the Chronicle a reporter on the city staff sighed and said, 'Scooped again.'"

Miles must be a fool not to know that even after Peter Neale had been smashed that part of him which was the Bulletin would go on. A picture suddenly came to Peter. That was the way he did his thinking. "I can go on wriggling," he said to himself, "until the first edition."

Peter felt that it was up to him to go down to the office and show them that. He would have to show Miles. Miles was new to him. The managing editor traffic through the office of the Bulletin was prodigious. After all Peter had been away for two weeks and it was only natural that there should be a new man in charge. Peter wasn't a veteran, but he had seen five managing editors in his time and probably a couple of hundred copy readers. "Looking Them Over" was different. That was something vital and rooted in the Bulletin. It wasn't so much that Peter Neale was a part of the Bulletin as that the Bulletin was a part of Peter Neale. "This other thing," thought Peter, "is just my private life."

He felt pretty rocky when he got up. During the night the bandages had turned bloody. It made him shaky to look at himself. Something of the rhythm of the buildings as they swung in the long arc and turned over was still in the pulse of Peter. All right, but he had seen Gans get up when his legs would barely hold him. Not only get up but walk deliberately across the ring to meet the charge of Battling Nelson.

Neale went down town. There was no one else in the elevator when he went up to the ninth floor to the office of the Bulletin, but Sykes, the head office boy, was in the hall outside the city room. He looked up and said, "Hello, Mr. Neale."

So far it was all right. Nelson had knocked out Gans and Maria had run away since Peter and Sykes had last seen each other. Sykes had been able to take all that in his stride. Peter wondered if Miles would be as smart. There was a man at the desk, a fat placid man, in the office of the managing editor. Peter knocked at the door and went in before the man looked up. "My name's Peter Neale," he said. "You're Mr. Miles, aren't you? I got your telegram. It was nice of you, but I don't want any time off. There's a whole batch of stuff due for the syndicate tomorrow."

Miles nodded. He tilted his chair back three times without saying anything. It was like a pitcher's wind-up. Peter found Miles always spoke just after the third tilt. "Have a cigarette," he said. He also provided a match. Then letting the chair rest on the floor he sat looking at Peter. There wasn't any surprise or inquiry in his face. Peter felt acutely conscious of his bloody bandages. He sat waiting to hear, "Have an accident?" or something like that, but Miles seemed to take it as a matter of course that Peter was all cut up. Apparently the managing editor accepted it as something inevitable in an out-of-town assignment. Peter dreaded the question so long that he would have felt easier if Miles had asked him about the bandages. He was prepared to say something about a taxicab. After all it wasn't fair that Miles should assume that he had been drunk just because he had. Presently the tilting began again. One, two, three, Peter counted to himself. "I want you to do baseball in addition to your column," said Miles. "Monday isn't too soon to start in, is it?"

"Monday's all right," said Peter.

"All right," said Miles. "You need a match," he added. "Your cigarette's gone out."

Neither of them said anything then for a minute. Miles continued to look at him and ignore the bandages.

"All right on Monday," said Peter and went across the hall to his own office. Putting the catch on, he closed the door. Miles hadn't talked about his private life, but Peter felt that he must know about it. Probably he was thinking about it every time he quit tilting. That was the trouble.

Out there in the City Room they were talking about it too. They must be. Nothing happened to anybody on the Bulletin that didn't get talked about in the City Room. No district in the town was covered so perfectly as the reporters covered the lives of each other. When Woolstone, the Sunday editor, started living with that little girl, Miss Gray, the one who wrote the piece about the Haymarket, it was common gossip within a week. Woolstone hadn't told anybody. Indeed he hadn't said a word except that the Haymarket story was the finest piece of English prose since De Quincey. But somehow after that everybody knew that Woolstone was living with Miss Gray.

Peter put a sheet of paper into his typewriter and rapidly wrote at the top of the upper right-hand corner Neale—Sports—Syndicate. Then he turned half of the sheet through the machine and wrote "Looking Them Over With Peter Neale—(Copyright)." There he stuck.

The sheet of paper had not been blemished but after a while Peter took it out and wrote the same thing on

another. After that he sharpened a pencil. He wanted to get a drink of water but that was out in the City Room. It was foolish of him not to have brought cigarettes. Miles had cigarettes, but Peter didn't want to face that scrutiny any more. "Gans," he wrote, "was not outboxed but he was outfought." That wouldn't do. There had been a line almost like that in his fight story. Of course he might do some sort of prediction story about how long Battling Nelson would hold the title. A man who took all that punishment couldn't last so very long. But suddenly Peter realized that he didn't give a damn about Gans or about Nelson. The Bulletin didn't make so much difference either. Maria was more than all this. He'd ask Miles to send him to Africa or China or some place. Sedition seeped in. Baseball wasn't exciting enough to make him forget. He tried to make his mind do him a picture of Matty bending back and then shooting over his fast one. Instead he saw Maria Alvarez standing in the middle of the big stage.

That wouldn't do. Peter gripped the edge of his desk. If his mind was only something that would stand up to him and fight like a man. He could heave it back all right if only he could get a hand on it. Instead he pushed against the desk. Very slowly the picture began to fade. Maria was taller and broader. Now it was Matty. Dim but unmistakably Matty. But the figure stood in the centre of the big stage. He must get him out of there. If he was to hold the thing it would have to move and take on life. Suddenly Peter realized the trick. The picture ought not to be Matty throwing his fast one. The fadeaway! That was the thing which marked Matty in his mind above all others. He closed his eyes in order to help. The figure bent back. The arms came up over the head. The left leg kicked. No, it was not Maria kicking. This was a huge clumsy leg which moved slowly, ever so slowly, grinding power for the swing of back and shoulders which was to come. Then there was the lunge forward. Matty had thrown the ball straight at his head. He conquered the impulse to duck. This was the slow ball. He could see the seams. Now it was slower and growing bigger and bigger all the time. It would walk past him shoulder high. Peter swung at it and the ball wasn't there. A sudden decision had come upon it. Down it swooped and out. It had passed him. Peter opened his eyes. He didn't want to go to China or Africa after all. Honus Wagner and the Pirates would be at the Polo Grounds on Monday.

Peter got up and started for his drink of water. There were only three men in the City Room. Charlie Hall was sitting at his desk right beside the ice cooler. Perhaps Charlie had had a lot of fun out of that story of Maria Alvarez running away. Women didn't run away from Charlie. Peter remembered the time Charlie was marooned in the Press Club. He stuck in the poker game for two days not daring to leave the building. The elevator man had told him of the woman who kept coming in every half an hour or so and asking for Mr. Hall. According to the elevator man she was very much excited. Charlie said it sounded a lot like Ethel. He wouldn't be surprised if she wanted to shoot him. She had often threatened to do that. Twice during those two days Peter had volunteered to go down and scout around. Both times he had seen a woman pacing the sidewalk just across the street from the Press Club. It looked like the same woman. Charlie said probably it was. Ethel was very determined. Finally they had to get a policeman to come and tell Ethel to go away. Nobody ever seemed so glamorous to Peter as Charlie during those two days. Peter wondered if any woman would ever want to shoot him.

There was no way of getting to the ice cooler without passing Charlie. Peter did it slowly. Charlie looked up. "Have any fun at the fight?" he asked.

"No, it was too hot. Anyhow I wanted to see Gans win."

"It was a great story you wrote."

"I'm glad you liked it."

"Too bad about the nigger—he was the smartest of the lot, wasn't he?"

"Yes, and don't forget he could hit too. Nelson wouldn't have had a chance with him five years ago."

Peter was turning to go back to his office when Charlie Hall thrust out a hand and slapped him on the shoulder. "I hear you've had some hard luck," he said. "I'm sorry."

Peter couldn't answer for a second. "I guess nobody ever is happy so very much," Charlie continued, sensing that Peter was stumped for the moment. "Now you take me. I suppose you'd say I was happily married. I've been married fifteen years and I've got five children. Well, sometimes when I sit down at home I wonder, 'What's the use of all this anyway?' There ought to be a law that reporters can't get married. It's bad for them and it's bad for the paper."

"I guess you're right," said Peter.

"The thing to do is not to take women seriously. They'll bust hell out of you if you do."

Peter brightened perceptibly. "Do you remember that time you got stuck up in the Press Club and the girl was waiting downstairs to shoot you?" he inquired with a certain eagerness.

"Oh yes, sure, Gracie."

"No, that wasn't the name. It was Ethel."

"Ethel?—I remember now. I had it mixed up with a business in Chicago. Ethel! Oh yes, indeed. She was a wild one. She was just about the most dangerous woman south of Fifty-ninth Street. That was a couple of years ago. I can't stand so much excitement now."

"Go on," said Peter, "I suppose you'll be telling me you've reformed."

"That wouldn't be so far off the truth. Anyhow where do you get off. Who beaned you?"

Another burden of reticence was snatched away. At last Peter had a chance to tell somebody about the bandages.

"I was with a woman up at the Eldorado. You know the Eldorado. And a big fellow comes over and tries to butt in. I bawled him out and we went up on the sidewalk. I made a couple of passes at him and he hauled off and clipped me with a bottle—a champagne bottle. I guess I was pretty drunk."

Charlie Hall nodded his head. "You're all right. I'm glad. Some of the boys around here have been telling me that you were all busted up about that girl you married. I'm glad it's not so. I knew you had too much sense for that. There isn't a one of them in the whole world that's worth getting busted up over. Don't take 'em seriously. That's what I say. I ought to know. I've been married fifteen years. Well, almost fifteen years. It'll be fifteen years in October."

"I'm all right, Charlie. You tell that to the rest. I'm back on the job, you know."

"That's good. It wouldn't seem like the Bulletin without you."

Charlie turned to the story in front of him and put one second of energy into pounding the space bar before coming back to conversation.

"Where is this Eldorado?" he asked.

"Fiftieth Street and Seventh Avenue."

"Does it stay open all night?"

"Well, it's open all night but after one there's a man on the door and he won't let you in unless he knows you."

"Are they strict about it?"

"Pretty strict, lately," said Peter, "but that's all right, Charlie. Any time you want to go up late you let me know. I'll be glad to show you round. I'm always free nights. Any night at all—That is any night except Sunday."

CHAPTER X

THE baby carriage was kept in the kitchen thereafter and Peter did not see it again until Sunday, his first Sunday at home. Kate left the flat very early. Peter could not very well object to that because she said she was going to mass. He wished that she might be converted to one of the eleven o'clock denominations, but he supposed at her age there was small hope of that. She would be gone, she told him, until nine or ten o'clock in the evening. Her niece, the one who lived in Jamaica, had a new baby five weeks old. Kate was going there right after church. Peter thought that if he had Kate's job he would prefer to spend his day off at an old folks' home or some other spot exclusively mature.

Still he could understand the psychology of it. Out in Jamaica, Kate could sit around and when the baby cried she need not move hand or foot. She could watch other people bustle around and fulfill its needs. And then every now and then she might give advice and see it carried out. He himself had spent many a day off in the office of the Bulletin sitting on the desk of somebody who was working and interrupting him.

Before Kate left she gave Peter a complete list of directions for the baby's day and also a problem for him to ponder over. "What will I be calling the boy?" she wanted to know. "I find it hard to be talking to him and him with no name."

"I'll think it over," Peter told her. After she left he did think it over. He went into the baby's room and looked at him as he lay there to see if the child suggested any name in particular. Being asleep he seemed a little more impersonal than usual. Of course, Peter Neale was a pretty good name, but there didn't seem to be any point in calling him that unless in some way or other he seemed to be Peter. He did sleep with his head buried face down in the pillow but that was an insufficient bond. Perhaps there were millions of people in the world who slept that way. Probably there were no statistics on the subject.

Maybe one Peter Neale was enough. It did mean something. After all it was Peter Neale who had written in the Bulletin: "If Horace Fogel goes through with his plan of making a first baseman out of Christy Mathewson he will be committing the baseball crime of the century. Mathewson, or Matty as his team mates call him, is still green, but he has in him the makings of one of the greatest pitchers the world has ever known. He has the speed and control and more than that he has a head on his shoulders. Horace Fogel hasn't."

And they didn't switch Matty to first base after all and now everybody was beginning to realize that he was a great pitcher. But Peter Neale knew it first of all. More than that it was Peter Neale who had begun his round by round story of the Gans-Nelson fight, only two weeks ago, with the memorable line, "The Dane comes up like thunder." He had invented the name of "Hooks" for George Wiltse and had written that "Frank Bowerman runs the bases like somebody pulling Grover Cleveland in a rickshaw." And Peter was still progressing. He would go on, years hence, to make the most of McGraw's practice of starting games with Rube Schauer and finishing them with Ferdie Schupp by contriving the lead, "It never Schauers but it Schupps." Perhaps he had prevision enough to realize that it was he, Peter Neale, who would eventually ascribe to Jack Dempsey the motto, "Say it with cauliflowers" and write after a Crimson disaster on the Thames, "Harvard's most perplexing race problems appear to be crewish and Jewish."

He looked at the sleeping child and wondered if there were any leads like that in the little head. By and by, of course, the baby would grow up and in some newspaper there would be articles under his name. Peter would like to see the articles before he was willing to have them signed "By Peter Neale." Every now and then somebody wandered into his office at the Bulletin and asked him to use his good influences with the managing editor. Peter always said, "Will you let me see something you've written." Here in front of him was a candidate not only for a job but for his job. And the applicant had nothing to show.

It was a hot bright Sunday and Kate had recommended that the baby go out. The carriage was deplorable. Peter had not bothered to look at it before, but now he examined it and found it wholly lacking in distinction. It could not be that all the things which were wrong with it had resulted from his falling over it a few mornings back. That had hurt him much more than the carriage. The paint was splotchy and all the wheels squeaked. Kate must have seized the first available vehicle in the neighborhood. What with that carriage and his heavily bandaged head he felt that the caravan which he was about to conduct would be disreputable. The numerous chin straps which held the bandages in place made it difficult for Peter to shave. In order to avoid that difficulty Peter hadn't shaved. He only hoped that nobody in the Park would stop the procession and ask him to accept a quarter. Peter practised an expression of scorn in front of a mirror in order to be ready for some such contingency. Nature had endowed him with a loose scalp. He could wiggle both ears, together or separately. So far this had never been of much use although he found that it helped him enormously to qualify as a nursery entertainer. But there was another manœuvre which he used habitually and successfully to indicate utter disagreement and contempt. He could elevate his right eyebrow without disturbing the other. This never failed to strike terror to all observers. Peter had that so well in hand that he needed no mirror practice to perfect it. He worked on curling his lip, a device which was new to him.

Combined with an elevated eyebrow an effect was produced ample to carry off the handicaps of both carriage and bandages.

Nevertheless, he felt a little conspicuous when he started for the Park. And pushing a carriage was dull work. There was no future to it, no competitive value, no opportunity for advancement. One could not very well come to the point of being able to say, "I can wheel a carriage a little bit better than anybody else in New York." The thing was without standards. Of all outdoor sports this was the most dreary and democratic. But in spite of the ease of manipulation he was under the impression that a carriage required constant attention. Quite by accident he discovered that it would space nicely between shoves if he happened to let go of the handlebar. This led to the creation of a rather amusing game. Peter called it putting the sixteen pound carriage.

Not far from the Sixty-fifth Street entrance of the Park he found a large hill and for a moment it was clear of pedestrians. Standing at the foot of this hill Peter gave the carriage a violent shove and let go. Up the hill it sped until its momentum was exhausted and then it rolled back again. The game was to try and make it reach the top. Peter never succeeded in that although he came within four feet eight inches of accomplishing the feat which he had set for himself. He was handicapped by the fact that he did not quite dare to put all his back and shoulders into the preliminary shove. Indeed on his best heave, the one which took the missile within four feet eight inches of the top, the carriage careened precariously. More than that it almost hit a stout woman who was coming down the hill. She stopped and spoke to Peter. "Haven't you got any better sense than to do a thing like that," she said. "That carriage almost upset. I've a good mind to follow you home and tell the father of that baby some of the things you're doing with his child. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, a grown man carrying on like that. And on Sunday too."

Peter didn't want her to follow him home and so he merely said, "Yes, mam, I won't do it any more."

And for that day he kept his word. However, the baby did not seem to mind much. It continued to sleep. Peter pushed the carriage aimlessly about for a little while, never letting go of the handlebar. He felt like an Atlantic City Negro with a wheel chair hired for the day by a tired business man. There was nobody to whom he could talk. The baby had slept so long by now that Peter began to worry that something might be wrong with him. Bending over the carriage he ascertained that the child was still breathing. He wished it would wake up. Of course he might not actually be company if aroused but he seemed even less animated when asleep.

Perhaps Christy would be a good name for him. Christopher Mathewson Neale had a fine resounding swing to it. Still maybe Matty wouldn't turn out to be a great pitcher after all. Peter was tremendously confident about him, but it might be best to wait until time had tested him. After a World's Series or something like that one could be absolutely certain. No good taking chances until then. It was still within the bounds of possibility that Matty might be a bloomer and it would hardly be fair to name the child after somebody in the Three I League.

Finding a tree and a bench Peter sat down to continue his speculations. How about a newspaper name? Greeley Neale wouldn't be so bad. Yes, it would. Everybody would be sure to make it Greasy Neale. A prizefight name offered possibilities. Nelson Neale, for instance, had alliteration. Peter had given the lightweight a name—the Durable Dane was his invention—and it seemed no more than a fair exchange to take his in return. Still he had never been convinced that Nelson was a really first class man. He had neither speed nor a punch. It was just stamina which carried him along. The youngster ought not to go through life head down. Besides a name like that would serve to remind Peter of his return from Goldfield and the flight of Maria.

Just then a sound came from the carriage. It was a gurgle. Peter pushed back the hood. The baby looked at him fixedly and Peter fancied that there was a certain trace of emotion in the small face. Surprise seemed to be indicated. And it was not altogether agreeable surprise for as Peter returned the stare the baby's right eyebrow went up and the left one didn't.

"God!" said Peter, "he is Peter Neale."

But there must be more ceremony than that. Peter looked around to see that he and the baby were alone. Then he spoke to him distinctly although emotionally. He realized now that his intuition had been sound when he had said way back weeks ago at the Newspaper Club. "My son has just been born." He had never had any doubt about his physical paternity but that did not seem important. It was spiritual kinship which counted and an eyebrow like that was a thing of the spirit.

"You're my son all right," said Peter, "and you're going to have my name. Peter Neale, that's your name."

He thought it would complicate things to go into the question of whether he should be Peter Neale, Jr. or Peter Neale, 2nd. The Peter Neale was the important part of it. "I guess maybe you can do a lot more with that name than I have, but I've made it a good newspaper name. You can make it a better one maybe. We'll wait and see." He reached

out and took the small hand of Peter Neale and shook it. The prayer which went with it was silent. "O God, give him some of the breaks and I will." That completed the christening. It was all that young Peter ever got.

The red-headed boy up the block who had contributed disturbing ideas in other fields also threw a bombshell into Peter's boyhood theology. "Can God do anything?" was his catch question. "Of course He can," replied Peter. "Well, I'll just bet you a million billion dollars He can't make a trolley car go in two directions at the same time." Peter didn't see how He could. He puzzled over the problem for months and at last he decided that maybe God could work it by making the trolley car like an elastic so that it could be stretched up town and down town at the same time. It was not an entirely satisfactory solution of the problem. If a passenger stood in the middle of the car he wouldn't get any place at all.

But for the moment Peter was not much concerned with the potential relationship between the Deity and young Peter. He could bide his time and think up an answer for the day when the child should ask him, "Who's God?" The immediate problem was what place he should fill on the Bulletin. Eventually, of course, he would conduct the column called, "Looking Them Over With Peter Neale." Already there were thirty-one papers in the syndicate and some day Peter could step down and the column would still be "Looking Them Over With Peter Neale."

It would be pleasant not to die in the office but to have ten years or so with no worries as to whether Jim Jeffries could have beaten John L. Sullivan in his prime. And he didn't want to go on forever writing on the question of whether more nerve was required to hole a ten foot putt in a championship match or bring down a halfback on the five yard line. In those last ten years he would have all the fun of reading a Peter Neale column without having to write it. The job had come to him by the merest chance. But young Peter could be trained from the beginning for the work. "I'll start his education right now," Peter resolved and then he looked at the baby and decided that there didn't seem to be anything specific which could be done immediately. Still an early start was possible. Long division ought to be easy and interesting for a child who knew that it was something used in computing batting averages. Of course young Peter would receive an excellent general education. There wasn't any reason why a sporting writer shouldn't be a person of well rounded culture. Sometimes Peter regretted that his Harvard career had lasted only a year. Probably his sporting poems might have been better if he had been able to go on and take that course in versification. Fine arts and history would not be a waste of time.

There was never any telling when some stray scrap of information could be pressed into service for a sporting story. For instance Peter had been struck by that quotation from Walter Pater about the Mona Lisa which he had happened upon in a Sunday newspaper story. Two years later he had been able to use it about Ed Dunkhurst, the human freight car, by paraphrasing the line to read, "Here is the head upon which all the jabs of the world have come and the eyelids are a little weary."

The quotation had given distinction to the story. Sporting writing ought to be just as distinguished as a man could make it. The days of the lowbrow commentator were disappearing. Young Peter might very well carry on and expand the tradition which he had begun. To be sure, there wasn't any hurry about giving him the job. Twenty-five years more for himself would be about right. By that time young Peter would be just twenty-five years and three weeks old. A year or so of general work on the city staff of the Bulletin might be good for him. Indeed anything on the newspaper would do for a start. That was, anything real. Book critics and people like that weren't really newspaper men. On his fiftieth birthday, perhaps, Peter would go to the managing editor and say, "I'm through and there's just one thing I want from the Bulletin. I think it's only fair that you should let me name my successor."

And the managing editor would say, "Why, of course, Neale, who is it to be?"

"His name is Peter Neale."

Naturally, the managing editor would express some regrets. He would pay a warm tribute to the worth and career of Peter Neale, at the end of which Peter would remark, "I'm glad you feel that way about it, sir." After that formality the substitution would be accepted. The line of Neale would remain unbroken.

All this gazing into the future cheered up Peter so much that he started out very gaily that afternoon to compose a column and mind the baby at the same time. Unfortunately the five o'clock feeding time came around just as he was getting into the swing of an article on the advantages of being lefthanded for the purposes of baseball. Somebody had told him that the Bible had something to say on the subject. Peter found it in the twentieth chapter of Judges where he read: "The inhabitants of Gibeah.... Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; everyone could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss."

That was just meat for Peter.

"The average southpaw of today," he began, "may have even more speed than the inhabitants of old Gibeah but his control isn't so good." Before he could develop the theme further young Peter began to cry. When searched nothing seemed wrong with him but then Peter remembered about the bottle. He was already half an hour late. The milk was mixed and ready in individual containers in the icebox but Kate had told him to be sure and have it warm. Peter had never warmed anything in his life. After some thought he decided that he could put water into a pot and heat it and then dip the bottle in. He waited until the water was boiling. But the next problem was more difficult. What did Kate mean by warm? How hot could the child stand it? His first three estimates were wrong. Young Peter spit out the milk and yelled. It was annoying for the mixture was hardly steaming.

Cooling it seemed ever so much more difficult than heating. Peter stood the bottle on the window ledge and waved it over his head and blew on it without much appreciable effect upon the temperature. More than half an hour was wasted before the child consented to accept the milk. When Peter went back to his column about lefthanders the spirit and swing of the thing had disappeared. He tried to write a poem to Rube Waddell called, "The Great Gibeian" and couldn't find any rhymes. The notion limped home.

Kate's ten o'clock turned out to be past midnight. Shortly before her return the baby went to sleep.

"How did you find your niece's child?" asked Peter.

"Oh, she's fine," said Kate. "She's a girl. A fine little girl, but she's not a patch on himself."

"He's got a name now," said Peter. "We won't have to be saying 'him,' and 'it' and 'the baby' any more. His name's Peter Neale."

CHAPTER XI

The name Peter did not stick to the baby long. Old Peter noticed that Kate never used it. Her first move was to modify it into Petey, then Pete and suddenly it became an unmistakable Pat. "What have you got against the name Peter?" he asked her.

"It's not for me to be criticising a saint in Heaven," answered Kate piously.

"I won't tell on you. Why didn't you like him, He was a good man, wasn't he?"

"A good man, is it?—begging your pardon and that of the blessed saints in Heaven—didn't he deny the name of our blessed Lord and Him seized by the dirty Jews?"

Peter had forgotten about it but he found the striking story in the Gospel according to St. Mark.

"'And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.' But he denied, saying—'I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest.'"

Of course, it was not admirable conduct, but Peter could understand and sympathize with the motives of his namesake. He himself, he felt, would have done much the same thing. Cowardice was not the only factor which prompted the denial. The incident was more complicated than that. Maybe Peter didn't want to make a scene. If he had said yes he was a Christian everybody in the palace of the High Priest would have felt self-conscious and uncomfortable. It might have been necessary for some one to change the subject. Saying "No" made things easier for everybody. Courage may be admirable but tact is not altogether contemptible. Peter Neale usually agreed with people when he felt that they wanted him to.

Still, he hoped that his son would move through the world with a freer and more courageous mood and the next time Kate called the baby Pat, Peter did not object much. He merely said:

"I don't think that name's much of an improvement, Kate."

"And why not?"

"Well, what did this St. Patrick of yours ever do?"

"The blessed St. Patrick that drove the snakes out of Ireland!"

"Yes, but he left the Irish."

Nevertheless for all practical purposes little Peter became Pat from that time on. Kate got most things which she wanted. Peter lived in constant fear of her suddenly quitting her job. He dreaded the task of invading the agencies in search of a new nurse and there did not seem to be any other feasible arrangement.

About three months after he assumed the duties of Sunday father he did contemplate dimly a move which might well have revolutionized the existence of himself and Pat and Kate as well. He met Margaret quite by chance. Pat had colic in the Park. Of course, Peter didn't know it was colic. He only knew that the child screamed in a manner more violent than any he had yet known. His inability to handle the situation was so obvious that Margaret who was sitting with her four-year-old charge on a bench nearby came over and showed him how to roll the baby. After Pat had been rolled sufficiently he recovered but Margaret and Peter did not part company immediately.

"You're a funny one to be sending out with a baby," said Margaret.

"I'm not sent out with him. I go out with him. I'm his father."

Peter realized afterwards that his admission, indeed his boast, of not belonging to the employed classes was largely responsible for the blight which lay under the surface of his relationship to Margaret and finally led to tragedy. There were many meetings following the afternoon of the colic. For a month or so the pretense was kept up that these were merely accidental, but finally one Sunday Peter and Pat and Margaret and Bobby, the boy she was in charge of, were driven under an archway by a thunderstorm. There was so much thunder that Margaret grew very frightened. Peter could think of nothing better to do than put an arm around her. He realized an obligation. Hadn't she rolled Pat out of colic? By and by there was lightning and Peter kissed her. After that they met by acknowledged premeditation every Sunday—close to the entrance of the tunnel.

Peter found it almost as difficult to talk to Margaret as to Pat, but she was better company. The long Sundays went faster when he could sit holding hands in some moderately obscure corner of the park. Margaret was the sort of person who didn't seem to expect much in the way of conversation. All she required was an occasional answer to some simple hypothetical question. These were generally somewhat similar in character. Did he think (she never reached the stage of calling him Peter) that a rich man could marry a poor girl and be happy? Did he realize that a girl could be a child's nurse and a lady at the same time? Wasn't it a fact that widowers led a desperately lonely and unhappy life? Peter happened to have adopted the easy expedient of disposing of Maria by means of a fever.

Margaret was unmistakably a fool, but Peter thought her rather an appealing one. She seemed pretty and he knew that she was expert in handling children. The things required by Bobby and Pat never gave her more than the briefest trouble. And then as Peter was becoming more and more liberal about unintelligence the fatal Sunday arrived. They had lingered a little longer in the Park than usual. Bobby in obedience to the usual command, "Now run away and play, Bobby, and don't get your clothes dirty," had done so. Suddenly he came running back across the meadow as fast as his legs would carry him straight to Margaret.

"I want to make a river," he said.

"Shush! Bobby," answered Margaret in a low voice.

"But I want to make a river," repeated Bobby, even more insistently.

Margaret, her face flaming scarlet, got up and seized the child roughly by the wrist. As she dragged him away he screamed. Peter heard her say, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself!" Presently from out of the bushes in addition to frantic screaming there came the unmistakable sound of a child being spanked.

When Margaret returned to the bench, if indeed she did, Peter had gone. He saw her once weeks afterwards at a distance, but they never talked again. This time it was Peter who did the blushing for the more he thought about the whole business the more degraded he found himself. He had come within at least an appreciable distance of selling his soul for a colic cure. A disgusting snip of a person had moved between him and those bitter but glamorous memories of Maria Algarez. Maybe Maria did ruin all his hope of happiness and yet he knew that but for Maria he would never have made up enough ground in his pursuit of life to learn the great truth that propriety is one of the vices.

CHAPTER XII

Pat grew but it was slow work. Kate would speak of an ounce as if it were some silver trophy which the child had won. Like Samuel Butler her admiration was unbounded for the intelligence which manifested itself in the process of developing bone and muscle and tissue. Peter was not inclined to give the child any credit for this. If you poured water on a lawn, grass sprang up. All the credit belonged to the gardener and Pat became bigger and bigger through no obvious efforts of his own but merely because Peter and Kate plied him with milk and sometimes carrots. Raising grass was easier. The gardener didn't have to deal with a moving target and he could administer water quite irrespective of the wishes of the grass.

Of course, there were moments when Pat displayed intelligence but it was of the most rudimentary sort. When he was about six months old Peter found that if he put a finger in front of him Pat would try to bite it. Sometimes he laughed but only at his own jokes. At seven months he began to crawl. This was moderately interesting but it doubled Peter's Sunday responsibilities and even affected his literary style. Short paragraphs appeared more frequently than ever before in the Looking Them Over column. Longer flights were subject to interruption as Peter had to put Pat away from places such as the steam radiator or the gas logs. It was no longer even possible to leave safety razor blades about.

Eventually somebody told Peter to buy a stockade and he did so. The arrangement was a collapsible fence which could be set up in the middle of the floor to imprison the child and curtail its wanderings. The only trouble lay in the fact that it was much too collapsible. In a month or so Pat was able to pull himself to his feet by holding on to the rail and after a few violent tugs the whole contraption would come down on top of him.

And yet when Kate came to Peter and said that her niece, the one in Jamaica, was looking for a part time job and would take care of Pat on Sundays for \$3 a week, Peter refused the offer. He never knew quite why. Somehow or other his Sunday fatherhood had become part of a routine. Perhaps he would have felt foot-loose without it. He merely told Kate that \$3 was too much. And one night when Pat was suddenly assailed by croup Peter almost worried himself sick. It was a short illness, but terrific while it lasted. The child seemed to be strangling. The cough which racked it was deep and in its agony the child took on maturity. Against death it fought back. Peter was moved not only because this was his son but because here was a fellow human being grappling with the common enemy. He waited in the hall outside while Dr. Clay was making his examination. There he had more room to walk up and down.

Presently the doctor came out and, taking Peter's arm, led him to the front of the flat. "The child's very ill," he said, "I'm going to send for a trained nurse."

Pat cried his best, but every now and then this would be broken by the fearful cough. It was like the baying of an animal. A spasm from the back room interrupted Dr. Clay. "It almost sounds as if there was another person in that room," he said. "I'm going back."

Peter knew who that thing or person was. He went with Clay and lifted Pat out of his crib and held him in his arms. This gave him a curious feeling that he was doing something; as if he were trying to throw his body between Pat and someone else. In a dim way he felt that he and Pat and the other one, all three, were running down a football field. He must keep close to Pat and block off the tackler.

"Part of my tiredness it goes into your arm." Maria had said that. And now Peter wanted to give something of his own strength to Pat against the fury of the attack. It did not seem fantastic. There was a current in the contact. The man had lied when he said Peter and Maria were one. That couldn't be done. Men and women were grown people,

individuals, all finished, but this was only a little person. He was part of Peter. Father and son were one. He was holding Pat so tightly that nobody could take him away. His prayer was all the more fervent from the fact that he did not believe in God. He had to create God. "Don't let him die. Don't let him die." God began to take form in his mind. God was Maria. She was gone and not gone. To her he did not need to make a prayer. "Maria" was enough.

The doorbell rang and Dr. Clay answered it. He brought Miss Haine back. "I guess you know this baby," he said. "We've got to make him well." The nurse spoke to Peter and set about fixing a croup kettle beside the crib. The fumes filled the room. It was a pleasant smell. "Better lay him down in his crib, now," said the Doctor, touching Peter on the shoulder, "so he can get the benefit of this. I think he's a little better already."

Peter knew that he was. Pat was no longer gasping and in a few minutes he was asleep. For a time Peter sat beside the bed. The child's breathing was regular and his cheek was cool to the touch. "Why, he's fine now," Miss Haine told him. "You go to bed. In the morning you won't even know that he's been sick."

There was no trace of the shadow upon Pat next day. Peter was the haggard one. Something had gone out of him during the night as he held Pat in his arms. Father and child were doing as well as could be expected.

CHAPTER XIII

At the age of eleven months and eight days Pat walked for the first time. Peter thought he might have been considerate enough to have chosen a Sunday. His first tooth came on a Sunday, but that wasn't any fun. Besides, it couldn't be tied exactly to some particular day and minute the way that the walking could. Nor was there any gaiety about it. However, Peter did not quite miss the walking for he came in time to see the last couple of hundred yards.

It was a rainy Saturday and Peter happened home early. Kate met him in the hall with a finger at her lips. "He's walking."

She seemed to feel that if anybody said anything about it the child would probably grow self-conscious and collapse. There appeared to be a certain sagacity in that. It was not an experiment but an adventure. One step led to another. At terrific speed Pat went round and round the room. He might have been Bobby Walthour trying to steal a lap in a six day race. Kate and Peter watched him breathlessly from behind the curtains of the living-room.

"How long has this been going on?" Peter wanted to know.

"It's these ten minutes."

Peter pulled out his gold stop watch and created thereby a psychic crisis. Perhaps Pat felt that his amateur standing was in jeopardy. At any rate he tripped on the edge of a rug, almost turned a somersault, blacked his eye and cried for half an hour.

He did not even attempt to walk again for a week. After that it became habitual. Up to this time Peter had never said much to anybody about his son. He did not talk to the men at the office about the child. There wouldn't be any sense in interrupting Charlie Hall in the middle of a story about city politics with, "My son's got two teeth." They were all busy men and it was not conceivable that they would care how much Pat Neale weighed.

Walking was a little different. Maybe it wasn't exactly a first page story but still Peter wanted to tell somebody about it. For the first time he was disposed to show off Pat—in person. Of course eleven months and eight days wasn't a record. Peter would have to look into that and find out the best accepted performance. He remembered being told that his own brother had walked at eight months but he had no means of knowing whether or not that was authentic.

The desire to confide in somebody eventually took Peter around to a stage door, though not the one at the end of the alley. From a Sunday graphic section he had noticed that Vonnie Bandana was playing in a musical show called "Harvest Moon." Vonnie Bandana wasn't really her name. The caption said Vonnie Ryan and Peter was sure it was the same girl. Evidently the Eight Bandana Sisters had gone the way of Brook Farm and Halcyon Hall and many another experiment in co-operation. Vonnie knew him all right.

"You're the man that married Maria Alvarez," she said.

"Yes, but she's gone away."

"I'm sorry."

"That's all right. It was a long time ago. Almost a year now. She was a good dancer, wasn't she?"

"Maria, oh, yes, she could dance. I wondered what became of her."

"I don't know that. I haven't heard from her at all. I think she's abroad."

"Have you seen our show?"

"No, I just happened to notice your picture in the Bulletin last Sunday."

"Did you? Wasn't that smart of you? I've got a part in this. Lines and everything. I sing a song. You know I don't sing it much. Just one verse and the chorus and then I dance it. The dance is all right."

Peter and Vonnie had been slowly walking away from the theatre towards Broadway while they carried on this discussion and when they reached the avenue Vonnie stopped.

"Are you going my way? I go up to a Hundred and Sixty-eighth street. Just a little this side of Albany."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I was wondering if maybe you wouldn't come out and have supper with me. I just happened to be going by the theatre and I stopped around and thought I might run into you."

"Listen," said Vonnie. "I'll have supper with you, but don't pull any more of that 'I just happened to be going by the theatre.' That's awful. You ought to say you've been planning to come and see me for a week and came all the way in from New Rochelle just special. You don't know anything about women, do you?"

"I guess I don't," said Peter very soberly.

"Oh, I am sorry," Vonnie laid her hand on his arm. "I didn't mean anything by that. Forget it. You're all right even if I don't remember your name. Did you ever tell it to me?"

"My name's Peter Neale."

"You're not the Peter Neale that writes in the Bulletin, are you?"

"Yes, I do a sporting column. That looking 'em over stuff."

"I've been looking for you. Do you know I almost wrote you a letter. Where do you get that stuff about Sandow Mertes being a more valuable man than George Browne?"

"Browne can't hit lefthanders."

"That's the bunk. You and the rest of the sporting writers keep pulling that stuff about him and of course he can't. Suppose there was somebody standing in the wings every night just before I came on, yelling at me, 'Vonnice, you can't dance,' do you suppose I could go on and do that song for a cent? Of course I couldn't. You and the rest of you, you're just ruining this fellow. The best looking young outfielder I've seen in ten years. Why he could run up a hill faster than Mertes could roll down one."

"You don't know what you're talking about," said Peter. It was the boldest speech he had ever made to a woman and he did it without turning a hair. Vonnie was wrong. George Browne couldn't hit lefthanders. Before he took her home Vonnie had arranged to go with him to the Polo Grounds the next day and to come and see the baby on Sunday.

"Here," she said as he was turning away from the door of her apartment, "you've got a kiss coming to you. When you live up as far as One Hundred and Sixty-eighth Street you've got to do at least that much for any fellow that takes you home."

"And say, listen," said Vonnie, just before she closed the door, "next month I'm going to move to Two Hundred and Forty-second Street."

CHAPTER XIV

Vonnice came to the flat the next Sunday. The moment might have embarrassed Peter if it had been anybody else.

But Vonnie had such an imperious and lofty way of rising above all things traditionally embarrassing to Peter and snooting down at them that she carried him with her. At least part way.

"Why haven't you got the young Giant in his ball park over there," said Vonnie pointing to the Stockade.

"I'm changing him."

"No game," said Vonnie, "wet grounds."

"Get out of that. Never had a baby in my life," she continued, briskly rapping her knuckles on the woodwork above her head, "but I can't be worse at that job than you are."

She pushed Peter away, but did not begin on the business in hand immediately. "He's a good kid. A fine husky kid. I know now why you asked me here. You figured if I wanted one for myself you'd let me know where to apply."

"Never mind the compliments," said Peter. "Change his diapers."

Vonnice had brought the new freedom into his life.

"No doubt about his being yours," she went on. "Everything up to the chin is you—of course I'm just guessing—but Maria left him those eyes and that nose. Maybe she left him more than that. He's marked for the show business. You might as well make up your mind to that."

"He's going to be a newspaper man," cut in Peter sharply.

"Oh, I see. Got it all fixed. If he begins to bust out singing or playing the piano or something you won't let him. That's it, isn't it?"

"I'm going to shape him in that direction."

"Just shape him, hey? Boy, didn't you ever bust bang into the artistic temperament? I played a season once with William Faversham. Shape him? You can't beat him out of it with a club. I don't know yet what way he's going to jump but I want to put down a little bet this kid of yours is going to be some kind of an artist."

"Don't keep saying that. I tell you he's coming on the Bulletin. His name's Peter Neale."

"You could name him Rosenberg and that wouldn't make him a pawnbroker."

"But this is in his blood just like in mine. He can't help himself. He's just got to be a newspaper man."

"All right we won't fight about it. You say he's going to be a newspaper man and I tell you he's going to be an artist. Maybe he won't be anything but a moving picture actor."

Peter saw Vonnie frequently throughout the summer. She went to the ball games with him almost every afternoon except matinée days. The dispute about George Browne and Sandow Mertes persisted. There could be no question but that Browne had the speed. Even when he hit straight to an infielder it took a fast throw to nail him at first. But Peter didn't like him because his cap almost always fell off whenever he beat out a slow roller. Somebody would have to carry it down to first for him and while Browne was waiting he had a trick of bending his head back and shaking his long hair out of his eyes.

"He looks like a Goddamn violinist," said Peter.

"Yes," replied Vonnie, "and your friend Mertes looks like a piccolo player. Do you know the story about the piccolo player?"

"Not in the press box," interrupted Peter fearfully. He felt obliged to interrupt Vonnie a good deal. She was much given to tantalizing him by beginning in a loud clear voice, "It seems there was a travelling salesman came to a hotel," or "This fellow, you see, started to take his girl out for a ride."

"I don't want to hear it," Peter would say half in jest and half hoping to be effectual.

"But it's a nice story."

"It isn't a nice story or it wouldn't begin that way" was the agreed formula for Peter's reply, whereupon Vonnie would disturb his gravity and dignity by digging him in the ribs with her elbow. Another favorite device of hers was sedulously to brush an imaginary spot on Peter's coat lapel and when he looked down bring up her hand and flip him under the nose. Peter never seemed to remember not to look down. Perhaps he liked to have his nose flipped.

"It isn't necessary," he would object, "for everybody around here to know you're a chorus girl."

"Chorus girl, nothing. I got the song hit of the piece. 'Any little thing for you dear, any little thing for you,'" Vonnie indicated the tempo by scruffing her feet against the concrete floor of the press box.

"Cut it out. Pay attention to the game."

Sometimes the admonition was unnecessary. The day George Browne took a real cut at the ball and banged it over the ropes in right field Vonnie hopped into a chair and shouted, "The blessed lamb! Oh, you Georgie boy! Watch that kid go. Look at him, Peter, he runs just like my Michael."

Michael was Vonnie's white dog, said to be a Highland terrier. When Peter took Vonnie home to One Hundred and Sixty-eighth Street it had become the custom for him to wait down in the street while she got Michael and took him a turn around the block before saying good night to Peter. Vonnie had a good deal to say about Michael from time to time, which was calculated to embarrass Peter. "You got to get me a book for Michael," she told Peter.

"What sort of a book?"

"Well, I guess it's called 'What a Young Dog Ought to Know.' He don't know any of the facts about life. I can take that dog past a million lamp-posts and ten minutes after I get him back in the flat I've got to lick him. Maybe you could give him a little plain talk, Peter. Coming from a man, you know, it'd carry more weight with him."

After Peter had known Vonnie for two months she did move to Two Hundred and Forty-second Street. Peter took her out to supper a week later and made the long journey up town. She was more subdued than usual as they stood at the door of the apartment house. He put both hands on her shoulders and leaned down to kiss her good night.

"Don't you like me, Peter?" she said.

"Of course I do. You know that."

"I don't want you to go away, now. I don't want you to go away tonight."

"I've got to."

"Why have you got to?"

"I think I ought to go."

"Oh, if it's just morals, forget it. There's nothing to be afraid of. You're not in love with me and I'm not in love with you. I just like you. And I'm lonely. They won't let me keep Michael in this place, but I guess I can sneak you in if you don't bark as we go up the stairs."

"Maybe this'll spoil everything," said Peter. "It's been so nice and easy and pleasant going around with you, Vonnie. If I get in love with you something will happen to me sure. I can't stand anything like that again. I do like you a lot. That's the trouble."

"Oh, Hell! nothing like that's going to happen. I'm a tough bird. I'll make you a promise, Peter. The minute I see you're falling in love with me any I'll tell you that story about the tattooed man and the girl from Oshkosh and shock it right out of you. Don't make any noise, Peter. I've found the janitor's a light sleeper. And don't be so awful solemn. Try and think up something worse that could have happened to you."

Still when Vonnie kissed him again after they had tiptoed up two flights and into her flat, Peter noticed that this time she did not laugh.

CHAPTER XV

I

Peter worried a good deal over Vonnie's predictions as to Pat's future. The doubt which she had cast upon the feasibility of his scheme heightened after the victrola was introduced into the flat. The man on the floor below happened to be moving and meeting Peter in the hall one night he struck up a bargain to sell his phonograph and all the records. After the bargain was made and the machine duly delivered, Peter looked over the repertoire and found it queer stuff according to his notions. "Werther—Ah! non mi ridestar!" sung by Mattia Battistini; "Siegfried's Funeral March;" "The Funeral March of a Marionette." It seemed morbid to Peter. "Minuet in G, No. 2" played by Ysaye; "Lucia—il dolce suono (mad scene)." "Merry old bird," thought Peter. "Invitation to the Waltz—Weber." That was a tune he knew, but it could hardly be classed as cheerful.

Peter went out and purchased a few of the latest song hits—"The Sextette from Floradora," "Under the Shade of the Sheltering Palm," and to his delight he found "Any Little Thing for You, Dear." Unfortunately the phonograph company had chosen another voice instead of Vonnie's for the record. Nevertheless, Peter bought it and some more.

Pat was now a year and a half old, but he manifested the most violent interest in the phonograph. That pleased Peter but he did not like it quite so well when Kate reported to him, "'Tis a queer child, Mr. Neale. It's them red records he does be playing all the time. He wants the one about somebody's funeral all the time. Would you believe it he cries when I put on a nice tune for him."

The report was not exaggerated. Pat liked the song from Werther, but the Siegfried record was his favorite, with Gounod a close second. Indeed his passion to have his own particular favorites played and no others seemed to be the compelling influence which brought him to language. Almost his first articulate words were "Boom-Boom" which Peter eventually and regretfully identified as an attempt to designate the Siegfried Funeral March. When more words were developed The Funeral March of a Marionette became "the other Boom-Boom."

Before Pat was quite two he could mess about in the cabinet of the victrola and pick out a dozen records in response to Peter's request.

"Go get the red Bat," Peter would say and Pat would gravely pull out a handful of records and return with Battistini's Werther. For that matter he knew Floradora well enough to pick it out of the pile but he never held it out to Peter with an imperious, "I want" as he did whenever he got his hands on "Siegfried" or "The Funeral March of a Marionette." It was still more thrilling, a little later, when he abandoned his descriptive "Boom-Boom" for "Siegfried's Funeral March" and began to call it, "Go to Bed Tired." Peter never knew just how Pat could identify the records by looking at them. He supposed that some of the titles were longer than others and that the child was able to bear in mind the picture created by some certain series of signs.

But a still more shocking discovery came when Peter learned that his tiny son could identify by sound as well as sight. Peter, for instance, was never quite certain whether the record being played was the Mad Scene from Lucia or the Floradora Sextette. At any rate not until it had gone along about to "On bended knee—on bended knee." But there was no fooling Pat. He never needed more than a few notes before he was able to exclaim with a well justified assurance that the piece in question was "Chi-Chi" or "Floor" as the case might be. The Weber waltz was never played much and Pat had no name for it, but he evidently knew it well enough for no sooner was it started than he would get up and swing slowly from side to side. Peter finally got a hammer and broke that record. He would have liked to pass the victrola on to somebody else but Kate would have protested as well as Pat. Music had solved for her the problem of what to do with Pat on rainy days. Outside of a little cranking these once difficult experiences had now become practically painless.

On Pat's second birthday Peter was startled to receive at the office of the Bulletin a package directed in the handwriting of Maria Algarez. Peter had travelled a little of the way toward forgetting Maria Algarez. Time had done something, but Vonnie had done more. It was almost seven months now since Peter first went to Two Hundred and Forty-second Street. In the package he found a letter and a phonograph record. On the disc he read "Chanson de Solveig—Maria Algarez." The letter said—"Dear Peter—I send to your son a present for his second birthday. I hope he will like it. Is his name Peter, too? So it should be. He will be a fine boy I think, big and strong like his father. And make it so that he shall grow up not to have the fear of anything and not the shame of anything. Here for two years I have studied the English hard. You see I write it much better. Now I have not danced for two years. First it was because of the baby. It was not his fault. Maybe I have left the hospital too soon. I did not want to stay longer and to die. All the time I sing. The voice it is magnificent. Perhaps it is next season I am to sing in the Opera Comique. For the phonograph company I have made the one record and they say it will be more. I do not know. It is not necessary ever for me to see your son, or for him to see me but some time you will play for him this record. That he should hear

me I want. You need not say who it is. That does not matter. In you, Peter, there is no song. For little Peter that should be different. Perhaps you will say no. I do not think so. I want that he should hear my song—Maria."

There was no address. Peter played Solveig's song that Sunday. It stirred him strangely. This was almost a tune. When the notes went high he could not only see Maria in the room, he could almost feel her. He was so intent with this presence that he did not watch Pat. The child was lying on the floor. He said nothing until the last note had almost died away. "I want the red Bat," he said.

II

Vonnie never came to the flat except on Sundays. It wouldn't do to have Kate know anything about her. Several weeks after the arrival of Maria's letter she happened in just as Peter was playing the Solveig song for Pat. The child never put this particular record into his list of imperatives, but he was reconciled to it. Perhaps interested. And Peter felt a sort of compulsion of duty to play it every once and so often. He had been surprised in the beginning that no miracle of recognition had occurred in Pat's mind. To Pat she was merely a lady singing. Yet Peter could not be sure what currents might move beneath the surface. Anyhow it was enough for him that Maria had asked that he play the record. And to him there was a certain instinct to play the record for his own sake. Now that the memory was not so painful he rather wanted to keep it alive. The thing was far enough away by now to be romantic. Peter took a definite pride in the fact that once his heart had been broken. That didn't happen to everybody.

His feeling about Vonnie was different. She was ever so much more fun than Maria, but she wasn't romantic. He felt that he knew her better. Certainly he was more assured and easy with her than he had ever been with Maria, but she could not move him to that curious exalted unhappiness which he had once known. People about to become monks or missionaries must feel something of what he felt for Maria. Still, that wasn't it exactly. Maria was that moment before you hit the water in a chute the chutes. Living with her was like watching a baseball game with the bases always full and two strikes on the batter. Even marriage was no windbreak. There was never a moment in that year when he had not felt the tang of a gale full upon him. Having an affair with Vonnie was highly respectable in comparison. This passion was even hospitable to little jokes. Life had become comfortable.

He did not know whether or not Vonnie realized that she and Maria were different. They no longer talked ever of Maria Alvarez. Even when she came in upon the Solveig song Peter would have said nothing about it.

"It's Maria, isn't it?" asked Vonnie.

"Yes."

"Where did you get it?"

"She sent it to me."

"Has she come back?"

"No, it just said Paris."

"Maybe she thinks she don't need to come back. She can bean you just as good with a phonograph record."

Peter said nothing, but let the song die out and then took the disc from the machine.

"Here," said Vonnie, "let me see it."

Peter handed it over. Vonnie looked at it for a moment, then she moved across the room.

"Pete," she said, "what would you do if I dropped this thing out the window." She made a move as if to put the suggestion into execution.

"Don't do that," cried Peter.

"Don't do that," mimicked Vonnie. "You're still a damn fool, hey?"

"It's not mine. It was sent to Pat."

"Oh, yes, blame it on the kid. I don't suppose he's a nut about her, too. Are you, Pat?"

Pat seemed to have no comprehension of the issue and made no answer.

"Look here, Pete," said Vonnie, "nobody can say I've ever been jealous. You can be daffy about anybody you like. That's none of my business, but I can't stand it to have you such a fool that you'll let this damn woman slap you in the face and then come back for more. If you didn't know she was no good in the first place you ought to know it now."

"I don't want you to say that."

"Well, what is she good for?"

"She's the greatest dancer in the world."

"Don't make me laugh."

"You know she is. You heard them cheering her that night."

"Hell to that. Everything was set for her. Somebody gets sick and on she waltzes. Any audience'll fall for that. If Carmencita should fall down and break her leg I could do the same thing. 'Miss Vonnie Ryan with one hour's rehearsing will take the place of Carmencita.' It's a cinch."

"All right. You've got your opinion and I've got mine. Don't let's talk about it."

"I'm going to talk about it. This gets settled right now. I don't have to be first with you, Pete, or anybody else, but I'm not going to run second to a dish-faced mutt. I've got some pride in the people that cut me out. Either I smash that phonograph record or you and I smash."

"Give me that."

Vonnie handed it over.

"All right," she said. "I'm sorry. It was silly for me to bawl you out. You haven't done anything to me. God knows I can't stand here and say you seduced me. I had to get a half-nelson on you to pull you into the flat that night. Maybe that's what makes me so sore. I put a lot of work in on you, Pete."

"Please don't go way, Vonnie. It's silly for us to scrap over a phonograph record."

"Everything's silly. I got to go way. I'm going to get just as far away as I can. I'm going to get in some road company going to the Coast and then by God, I hope we get stranded. You poor mutt, I'm in love with you."

"Oh, please, Vonnie, don't cry. I know I'm no good. I just can't help it about that phonograph record."

"Well, you don't suppose I'd bawl this way if I could help it. Now don't be patting me on the back. I don't love you enough to let you, 'There! there!' me."

She moved resolutely to the door and by the time she reached it the line had come to her.

"I ought've known," said Vonnie, "no good could come out of taking up with a fellow that thinks Mertes is a better outfielder than George Browne."

CHAPTER XVI

I

Vonnie made good her threat and two weeks after the quarrel Peter received a picture postcard of a giant redwood. The message said, "Well Peter here I am in San Francisco—Vonnie." It was the first written communication he had ever received from her and so he did not know whether or not the brevity was habitual or was intended to convey a rebuke. It seemed safe to assume the latter as Vonnie sent no address.

Peter found himself turning to Pat for companionship. Perhaps he did not exactly turn, but was rather tugged about without will of his own. The needs of Pat were increasingly greater and Peter was caught up into them now that he had nothing in particular to do with his evenings. Instead of taking Vonnie out to an early dinner before the show he helped to put Pat to bed. It didn't seem quite virile to Peter, but it was easier than hanging around Jack's or Joel's or the Eldorado. Of course, Pat was supposed to be in bed long before the night life of New York had really begun, but bit by bit he edged his time ahead until it was often eleven or after before he fell off to sleep. The child fought against sleep as if it were a count of ten. Never within Peter's memory did Pat express a willingness to go to sleep, much less a desire. It was always necessary to conduct him forcibly over the line where consciousness ceased.

Peter was swept under the tyranny of this obligation a couple of nights after Vonnie went away. Unable to think up anything to do, he came back to the flat a little after ten. He saw a light burning down the hall in Pat's room and occasional entreaties and commands drifted out. Pat wanted a drink of water and the toy alligator and the electric engine and six freight cars. Looking at his watch Peter found that it was half past ten. He walked into the child's room and exclaimed sternly, "What's all this racket about?"

"He wants the funny section read to him," explained Kate, "and it's been lost some place. I can't find it anywhere."

"That's perfect rubbish," said Peter.

"I've looked all over for it, Mr. Neale."

"That wasn't what I meant was rubbish, Kate. I'm glad you lost it. I want you to keep on losing it. I meant it's rubbish for him to be staying up this late and asking for things."

"Yes sir."

"Now we'll both say good night to him, Kate, and let him go to sleep."

Pat began to cry not only loudly but with a certain note of sincerity which caught Peter's ear. "What's the matter with him now?"

"He made me promise I'd tell him a story if I couldn't find the funny paper," said Kate.

"It's too late now and anyway if he made you do it, Kate, it isn't a promise. It don't count."

"Yes, Mr. Neale. But it's so set he is he'll be calling me back all the night long for me to tell him the story. It's nothing he does be forgetting."

"All right, Kate, we'll settle that very easily. You go out and I'll stay and he can cry his head off."

"Where'll I go, Mr. Neale?"

"I don't care, Kate. Go any place you like. It isn't eleven o'clock yet. Where do you usually go?"

"To my sister's in Jamaica, but it's no time to be routing them out at this hour."

"Well, let me see. I tell you, Kate, there's a moving picture theatre down there at Fifty-ninth Street that keeps going till after one. Here's some money. You go there and see the picture and I'll stay and show this young man he can't get everything he cries for."

"I want to see the picture," said Pat, sitting up in bed.

"Now don't be silly. You get back there on your pillow," said Peter, "or I'll just knock you down."

Kate rummaged around for her bonnet and finally went out. During all this time Pat kept up a suppressed sobbing. As soon as the door slammed behind Kate he was sufficiently rested again to begin crying full force.

"Well, what is it now?" said Peter as fiercely as he could.

Pat's utterance was muffled with tears. "I want a story."

"You heard Kate go out. If you've got any sense you know she can't tell you a story."

"You tell me a story."

"I'm too busy. Go to sleep."

"Why are you busy?"

"Because I am. Now go to sleep."

"I don't want to go to sleep. I want you to tell me a story."

Pat commenced to cry again. He had sensed an opening.

Peter dropped his guard. "Just one story?" he asked.

Upon the instant Pat ceased crying and sat up. "Tell me about the old beggarman and Saint Pat."

"I don't know it," said Peter. In fact he felt almost as if he had been suddenly called upon to make a speech at a public banquet. Of course, he had heard of Cinderella and Red Riding Hood and Aladdin and the wonderful lamp, but he could not quite remember what any of them did. Suddenly he remembered another source book.

"Once," he began, "there was a man named Goliath and he was the biggest man in the world. He could beat any man in the world. And one day there was a little man named David—"

"I'm bigger than David," interrupted Pat.

"I guess you are. He was a little bit of a man, but he wasn't afraid of Goliath. He said, 'Ole Goliath, you talk too much. You make me sick.' And he picked up a rock and hit Goliath and knocked him down."

"Why did he knock Goliath down?" Pat wanted to know.

"I guess he knocked Goliath down because it was Goliath's bedtime and Goliath wouldn't go to bed."

Pat remained alert in spite of the moralizing. He gave no hint of recognition that the end of a story had been reached. Anyhow, the creative impulse had seized upon Peter particularly since it might be so unblushingly combined with propaganda.

"Well," he continued, "pretty soon George Browne came out of his house and he was the second biggest man in the world and he wouldn't go to bed and so David picked up another great big rock and knocked him down. And then your friend the Red Bat came out of his house and he was the next biggest man in the world and he wouldn't go to bed and so David picked up another rock and knocked him down."

"No, he didn't," broke in Pat.

"I'm telling this story. David hit the Red Bat with a rock and knocked him down because he wouldn't go to bed."

"No, he didn't."

"Oh, all right then, if you know so much about it, he didn't. What did he do?"

"He knocked David down."

Peter realized that his narrative was overburdened with propaganda and he was artist enough to throw over some of his moralizing ballast.

"Well, this was the way it happened, Pat. David picked up a big rock and threw it at the Red Bat, but the Red Bat was too smart for him. The Red Bat caught the rock and threw it back at David and knocked him down. That was it, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Pat.

When Kate returned a little after one Peter reported, "I didn't have any bother with him. He just went right off to sleep."

David and Goliath became set as a bedtime story and lasted through the next six months almost without change. Indeed Pat resented changes. "Once," Peter would begin, "there was a man named Goliath and he was the biggest man in the world and he could lick any man in the world."

"Not lick," Pat would interrupt. "Beat."

"Oh, yes, he could beat any man in the world." Peter found himself coming home for Pat's bedtime with increasing frequency. Once or twice he tried to break away, but upon such occasions Kate reported that the child had cried for him and had kept awake until after midnight asking for the story of David and Goliath.

"You tell it to him," said Peter. "I think I can teach it to you. He wants it just this way." And he repeated the accepted version.

Kate shook her head. "I'm too old a woman to be learning so many words, Mr. Neale," she said. "And it's not a story I think Father Ryan would like me to be telling. That's not the way the story do be going in our Bible."

"Gosh," thought Peter to himself. "She thinks it was Martin Luther made those changes."

Notwithstanding Goliath, Peter made a gallant attempt to break away from his newly found responsibilities. He felt that he ought to. He felt that in the restaurants and poolrooms there lay the sort of sporting gossip he ought to pick up for his column. Of course, not all New York kept Pat's hours in those days but there was something almost auto-hypnotic in getting the child to sleep. In addition to the bedtime story, Peter found it necessary to feign great weariness in order to suggest a similar feeling in Pat. He would yawn prodigiously immediately after the Red Bat had knocked down David and pretend to doze off on the foot of Pat's bed. Presently, he would hear the boy's regular breathing and would tiptoe out of the room. But Peter acted his rôle much too well. After so much shamming he generally was actually tired himself and indisposed to wander down to Jack's or any of the other places where he might find fighters or their managers.

Indeed, he made the discovery that the material to be extracted from these people was not inexhaustible. Like David and Goliath they had a tendency to run into formula. "And I yell at him, don't box him; fight him. Keep rushing him. Don't let him set. And when he comes to his corner at the end of the third round I bawl in his ear, 'You kike so and so, begging your pardon, Mr. Neale, if you don't get that lousy wop I'm done with you.' And would you believe me it did him a lot of good. It put guts in him. In the fourth we nail him with a right and we win. Now we're going after the champ and if we ever get him into a ring we'll lick him."

A year or so before Neale could have taken stuff like that and worked it over into a column on "The Psychology of a Prizefight Manager." But now all the inspiration was gone. He had heard precisely the same tale in much the same language too many times. He was almost tempted to cry out, "Not lick him, beat him."

Nor was there much more available color in the fighters themselves. They were a silent crowd, most of them, particularly if they happened to have a manager along.

Once, Peter found Dave Keyes, the Brooklyn lightweight, sitting all alone in Jack's. He was going great guns that year and Peter thought of him as the logical successor to the champion. They had met a couple of times at fight clubs, but Keyes did not seem to remember Peter. He was sober but not bright. Still, Peter felt that he might draw him out during the course of the evening. In time Keyes began to talk freely enough. He was even confidential but fighting seemed to be the last thing in the world he cared to discuss.

"You see there's two dames fall for me. And the tough break is the both of them lives on the same block. See. Well, let me tell you how I works it. First I give Helen, that's the blonde one, a ring and then right bang on top of that I has the call switched over to Gracie's flat—."

"Life," thought the harassed Peter Neale, "is just one bedtime story after another."

In the Spring a long swing around the baseball training camps took Peter away for almost two months and another month and a half went in a fruitless journey to Juarez to wait for a fight which never happened. It was June when Peter returned and to his horror he found that the child had picked up theology in his absence. A storm helped the discovery. The roll of the thunder was still a long way off when Peter called it to Pat's attention. "We're going to have a thunderstorm," he said.

"No, we're not," answered the child. "Thunder storms only come when you're bad."

"What's that?" asked Peter.

"A thunderstorm's God showing his ankle," explained Pat.

This did not seem a dogma altogether iron clad and yet it worried Peter.

"Thunder's got nothing to do with you're being bad," he told Pat. "If that was it we'd have thunder all the time. Thunder's nothing to be afraid of. It's just somebody up the sky saying 'Booh' at you for fun."

"God lives up in the sky."

"How do you know that? Did you see him?"

"Yes," said Pat stoutly.

That made the question difficult to argue.

"All right," continued Peter. "Call him God if you want to. Anyhow, when it's thunder he's just saying 'Booh' at you and if you get scared you haven't got any sense. Remember that's what thunder is. Just somebody named God saying 'Booh.'"

"No, it isn't."

"Well, you tell me then."

"When it's thunder," said Pat, pointing up the street in the direction of Central Park, "it's a big giant in the trees."

The child paused. "A blind giant," he added.

Peter stared at him and wondered whether the phrase and figure were his own or whether he had picked them up from Kate. Later Peter took occasion to ask her and she denied it. "God's ankle," she admitted but only after revision. "You know, Mr. Neale, it's the way he has of getting things twisted in his little head. You understand now it was 'God's anger' I was a telling him."

"Oh, I knew that all right, Kate. I knew he made up the ankle part of it. But you're sure you didn't tell him anything about thunder and a giant in the trees—a blind giant."

"No, sir."

Peter got to thinking things over and began to remember what Vonnie had said concerning the future of Pat. He was worried. This idolatry of the Red Bat who sang on the phonograph he didn't like. After this it would have to be somebody else who knocked David down. Sandow Mertes maybe. Then there was this blind giant in the trees. He didn't mind Pat's growing up to be a poet. That would fit into the column nicely enough, but not wild poetry. The thing had to be kept in bounds or there wasn't any way to syndicate it. Still the next column of "Looking Them Over" which Peter wrote contained a little poem somewhat outside his usual manner. It was called, "The Big Blind Giant."

Three days later the syndicate manager on the Bulletin called up Peter. "We've got six telegrams already about that poem of yours," he said. "The one about the big blind giant running around and hitting his head against the trees."

"What's the matter with it?" asked Peter aggressively.

"Nothing at all, Peter, they all say it's great. All but that sporting editor of the Des Moines Register—you know him, Caleb Powers?"

"No, I don't know him. What's he say?"

"He just gives the name of the poem and then he says in his telegram, 'Don't tell me the answer, I want to guess.'"

"Five out of six is plenty," said Peter. "And say, Bill, where do you suppose I got the idea from?"

"Where?"

"From my kid—Peter Neale, 2nd. He isn't four yet, but you see I've got him working for the Bulletin already."

CHAPTER XVII

Pat furnished copy for Peter again within a month. Kate came in from the Park all breathless with an account of a fight between the child and his friend and playmate Bobby, last name not given.

"It was about an engine," explained Kate. "Bobby give it to Pat and then he wanted to take it away again. Before we could get to them Pat hit Bobby in the mouth so hard it made his mouth bleed. And that Bobby, him almost six years old. And a head taller than Pat. He bled something terrible, Mr. Neale. First I thought it was just Bobby's blood on Pat's hand, but it kept on and when I looked closer there was all the skin off of the knuckles of Pat. It must have been the teeth of that Bobby when Pat hit him. I'll be putting iodine on it this very minute if you'll watch till I get back, Mr. Neale."

"Put down that engine and come here, Pat," said Peter.

"I can't hear you."

"Yes, you can. I said put down that engine. Nobody's going to take it away from you. Not just now, anyway. It's not yours but I suppose you've won it. Come here, I want to see your hand."

Very reluctantly Pat placed the engine on the sofa and advanced slowly.

"It's all red," he said.

Peter took off the handkerchief. "Nonsense," he said, "you haven't more than scratched it."

He was about to dismiss the matter from his mind and start for the office when he noticed something he'd overlooked. "Kate, Kate," cried Peter in great excitement, "this hand that Pat cut hitting that boy is his left hand."

"Yes, 'tis his left hand he'd be using all the time when I'm not noticing him," said Kate, returning with the iodine. "That's where the strength is. It'll be hard to teach him out of it."

"I don't want him taught out of it, Kate. Don't you ever try to stop him. It's bad to try to change children around. Anyway I don't want him changed. This is fine for him. When he grows up and plays baseball he'll be two steps

nearer first base and besides the swing will throw him into his stride. Maybe you don't know what I'm talking about, Kate, but remember I want him to stay a left-hander."

Peter went down to the office and wrote, "There seems to be no shadow of doubt from which hope can spring—I am the father of a southpaw." He nursed the theme and the incident along for almost a column, and there were other by-products of comfort. In the City Room Peter ran into Deane Taylor, the venerable music critic of the Bulletin.

"Mr. Taylor," he asked, "did you ever see a left-handed violin player?"

"No, Peter," said the old man, "there's no such thing. Of course there might be left-handed piano players, but certainly all the fiddlers and all the conductors are right-handed. Come to think of it, I don't know any left-handed musicians at all. But if you're writing something about that you better ask somebody else. I might be wrong. You see I've never gone into music from that angle."

"No," replied Peter, "this is just something I'm interested in personally. Your impression's good enough for me. You don't have to prove it. Thank you very much."

Peter went away greatly pleased. "There's one of Vonnie's guesses gone wrong anyhow," he said.

From his observations of professional baseball, Peter had worked out the theory that lefthanders were more difficult to handle than anybody else. There was Rube Waddell for instance. Peter had seen him call the outfielders in for the ninth inning and retire the side with only an infield behind him. And everybody knew about the way Rube used to disappear every now and then during the middle of a season and go fishing. Only the day before he had had a Rube Waddell story in his column. It was about Rube and the animal crackers. The man who told Peter said the story came straight from Connie Mack and that there was no doubt about its being true. Ollie Shreck, Rube's regular catcher, wouldn't sign a contract one season. When they asked him the trouble he said, "They always put me in to room with Rube on the road. Maybe they think I understand him after catching him so much. Well, Mr. Mack, I won't sign no contract unless you put in a clause that Rube can't eat animal crackers in our bed."

Pat lived up to most of Peter's theories about southpaws. Before the child had quite turned four Peter discovered that Kate had no control over him. She had given him a little theology but no discipline. The facts came out through her complaint that Pat wouldn't eat any of the things which he was supposed to eat. A doctor called in to attend a passing cold had remained to suggest a diet. He was horrified to learn that Kate had allowed the child to eat meat two or three times a day, with the exception of Friday, just as she did.

"Your child is just about one ton behind in spinach," said Dr. Whiting to Peter. "He's got to catch up, but there won't be any particular trouble about that. He's pretty sure to like spinach. All children do. And I want him to have more milk."

Peter found upon inquiry that Pat had never known spinach. "I don't like it," explained Kate.

"Well, he's got to have a lot of it," said Peter. "I want you to start right in today."

The report next morning was unsatisfactory. "How did the spinach go?" asked Peter. "He wouldn't eat any of it," answered Kate. "He said he didn't like it."

"How could he tell he didn't like it if he didn't eat any," objected Peter sharply.

"I don't know. But he said he didn't like it. He threw the plate on the floor."

"How about the milk?"

"He wouldn't drink any."

"Didn't you tell him that he had to?"

"I did that, Mr. Neale. I told him God wouldn't love him if he didn't eat his nice spinach and that, begging your pardon, sir, you'd cry."

"Today," said Peter with a certain magnificence, "I'll stay home and eat lunch with him myself. And for lunch we'll have just spinach and milk."

"Well, well," said Peter, with great gusto as lunch was served, "isn't this fine—milk and spinach. Kate, how did you know just what we wanted?"

"I don't want any lunch," said Pat.

"No spinach?"

Pat did not deign a reply.

"What do you want?"

"I want crackerjack and ice cream."

"Spinach is what you're going to get."

Pat began to cry, but Peter found that it was only a sign of rage and not of weakness. The child's refusal remained steadfast. Finally, Peter spanked him for the first time in his life. It was not a success. Pat cried a lot more but he ate no spinach. Press of other work kept Peter from pursuing the problem for three days, during which time the child reverted to his old diet. In a second personally conducted test, Peter Neale managed to induce Pat both to drink milk and eat spinach, but it was not exactly a triumph. The result was gained by strategy, which was ingenious but also abject. Moreover, it was almost wholly accidental. Driven desperate by an unyielding stubbornness, Peter at length lost his temper and shouted at the child. "All right then, don't eat any spinach. I won't let you eat any spinach."

Pat scowled and, reaching all the way across the table, helped himself to a large spoonful. "I'm eating spinach," he said, "I'm eating it right now."

The only thing of which Peter had a right to boast was that he did not allow any false pride to stand between him and the object which he sought. He was quick to seize his opportunity. Pat's seeming free will was harnessed to serve the predetermined purposes of an ego less powerful but more unscrupulous.

"Maybe you are eating a little spinach," said Peter, "but I guess you won't dare take any milk when I tell you not to."

Pat fell into the trap. "Look at me now, Peter, I'm drinking it all up."

Once he learned the method Peter became a strict disciplinarian. Almost invariably Pat disobeyed with alacrity when he heard the stalwart and ringing command, "Now, Pat, I don't want you to go to bed and I don't want you to go this very minute." Of course the thing became a little complicated. Even after much practice Peter used to get somewhat mixed up over such instructions as, "No, the nightgown I don't want you to wear is the one over there."

The eating problem was subjected to still further complexities. Peter was shrewd enough to realize that the scheme of indirect discourse might become strained beyond all usefulness if employed too much. Pat conformed and yet it became evident at length that he saw through the trickery. On his fifth birthday, for instance, at his party he made no rush for the ice cream which was placed before him but looked up plaintively and said, "Peter, why don't you tell me not to eat my ice cream."

Accordingly, other games were invented. The milk race proved generally useful but rules had to be devised to prevent Pat from going too fast. Eventually the contest was introduced by Peter as "a slow milk race." In order to prevent Pat from choking to death he would cry every now and then "Measure!" At that signal both would lower their glasses and set one against the other on the table. Pat took over the announcing of these results. He used only one decision—"I'm ahead"—and this bore no accurate relation to the actual quantity of milk in the two glasses.

As a matter of fact, the milk race never was a very sporting proposition. Pat always won and as the practice continued he began to demand new guarantees of success. "You mustn't start till I'm through, Peter," he would say. "I want to win." Peter also hit upon the device of serving Pat with nothing but "special milk." His own came out of the same bottle but had no title. Nobody but Pat was supposed under any circumstances to be allowed to touch "special milk." The story, circulated by Peter, was that the cow wouldn't like it.

Another incentive to appetite was playing burglar. This game was also one of Peter's inventions, but Pat eventually became the aggressor. "You must be asleep," he would say, "and I must be a burglar and come along and steal some of your spinach. Shut your eyes."

Even years afterward Peter could never look at spinach without blinking.

Kate was not very apt at any of the eating games and the result was that Peter found himself more bound to the flat than ever. Now he seldom got down to the office except during the hours between lunch and dinner. The feeding and more particularly, the urging of Pat came to be almost a regular duty. Peter was never quite sure whether he liked or hated these activities. Although they were confining and arduous he got an undeniable satisfaction out of them. He was succeeding with something a good deal more personal than a syndicate. He was succeeding where Kate, the mother of five or six, had failed.

"Maybe women are all right for children when they get a little older," was the way Peter expressed it to himself, "but they haven't imagination enough to handle a little one like Pat. That's a man's job."

CHAPTER XVIII

Pat was six years old when he saw his first ball game up at the old hill top park of the New York Yankees who were then the Highlanders. The Red Sox were the visiting team.

"That's Sea Lion Harry Hall," said Peter, pointing to a man in a gray uniform who was throwing the ball. Pat tried to follow the direction in which Peter pointed.

"I don't see no sea lion," he complained.

"Right over there," replied Peter, "the pitcher. Don't you see the man that's throwing the ball. That's his name, Sea Lion Harry Hall."

Pat was enormously disappointed. He had thought that maybe it was some sort of circus which they were going to see in this great open park. The sea lion had sounded like a promise of elephants to come. He tried to beat back his grief, but presently tears rolled out of his eyes. The best he could do was to make no sound. Eventually Peter noticed the damp tracks across his face.

"What are you crying about?" he asked in surprise.

"You said it was a sea lion," sobbed Pat, "and it isn't any sea lion."

"Oh, that's it. Don't you understand: his name's Sea Lion. Just as they call you Pat."

"Why do they call him a Sea Lion?"

"Well," said Peter, "to tell the truth I don't know exactly. It's just one of those things. I've been writing about Sea Lion Harry Hall a couple of years and now I never stopped to think up any reason for it. It was smart of you to ask me, Pat. That's right. Don't you go taking in things people tell you without asking why. That's the first thing a newspaperman ought to learn. You just wait here a minute and I'll go and find out why they call him Sea Lion Harry Hall."

Peter went over to the wire screen which ran in front of the press box and called to a short little man who was sitting on his heels and balancing himself with his bat which he had dug into the ground. The player straightened up and came over. Peter conversed earnestly with him for a moment. Then he came back. "Now," he said, "I know all about it. Kid Elberfeld—that was Kid Elberfeld I was talking to—he says they call him Sea Lion Harry Hall because he roars so—just like a sea lion."

For the next half hour Pat abandoned all thought of the game. Peter rattled off words and the meaning of them. There were hits and errors and flies and grounders. Once everybody in the park shouted and stood up and Peter said it was a home run, but Pat gave very little heed to this. He paid no more attention to the rooting than if it had been Peter talking to him. It was another sound for which he was waiting. He couldn't be burdened with learning about hits and errors or even the thing called a home run. What he wanted was to hear Sea Lion Harry Hall roar like a sea lion. For hours Pat heard nothing. The man just did his exercises and threw the ball. Then something happened which made him mad. He threw the ball and after it was thrown he walked straight up to a man in blue who had on a false face. And he talked at him. Very loud and hoarse he said, "Jesus, Tim, call 'em right."

"There goes the Sea Lion," said Peter who had been busy with something else and had caught no more than the rumble. "Didn't that sound just like a sea lion?"

Pat scorned to cry. He did not even bother to say "No." By now he knew that the baseball park was the land of disappointment. It was a place where things were cried up with words which were not so. Peter had said he would roar like a sea lion. And he didn't. He was just a man who said "Jesustim" pretty loud.

Pat heard a seal lion once. "Jesustim" didn't sound anything like a sea lion.

Interesting inquiry might have centred around "Too hot to handle" if Peter had used it earlier in the day, but by the time it came Pat knew that it was just a grown up way of talking big. When Peter said, "That's Birdie Cree," Pat did not look or even ask any questions. He knew there was not a birdie.

Only one romantic concept came to Pat from the game.

"That's Tris Speaker, that kid in centre field," said Peter.

Of course, Pat knew that he really wouldn't be a kid. It didn't surprise him to find that Tris was a man but he was quite a lot different from pretty nearly all the other grown-ups that Pat had ever seen. They didn't run like Tris. Probably they couldn't. The other men in this baseball park ran, but Tris was the fastest. But it wasn't just looking at him that Pat liked. He said the name over to himself several times. "Tris Speaker, Tris Speaker." There was fun in the sound of it. Not quite enough for a whole afternoon, to be sure. This was a park without sandpiles or a merry-go-round. And there were no policemen to make everybody keep off the grass. Pat wished they would.

"I want to go home," he said at last.

"Tired already?" asked Peter. "Well, there's only half an inning more. It wasn't much of a game, was it? Too one-sided. But we're not going home right off. I've got to go straight to the office and I'm going to take you with me."

In another ten minutes the game was over. "You didn't like it, did you?" asked Peter. The formula nettled Pat.

"Yes, I did," he said.

After a long trip in the subway they came to the big building where Peter worked. Pat had never been there before. At the end of a long corridor was a small office and Peter opened the door and went in. "I've got to write the paper," he said. "You keep quiet till I'm done. Here's the funny section for you."

Upon examination Pat found that it was last Sunday's pictures. He had already seen the one about how the kids put dynamite in the Captain's high hat. Still he followed the adventure again. When Kate read it to him on Sunday it had made him a little sad. It seemed to him that it must have hurt the Captain when Maude, the mule, kicked him in the head. Now he found a new significance in the last picture. Maude and the Captain were floating in the air high above the roof. Coming out of the Captain's mouth were marks like this, "!—!!!" And yet it must be pleasant to go floating away in the sky like that. Pat looked out of the window and he could see the river and the great bridge. He would like to have a high hat and some dynamite and a mule. Then he could float through the window like Davey and the Goblin. That would be better than sitting there in the little office so quietly while Peter pounded the keys of his typewriter. Peter kept taking sheets of paper out of it and tearing them up.

"Whatch you doing?" Pat asked when he could keep silent no longer.

"Hush," said Peter very sternly, "you mustn't ask questions now. I'm doing a story for the Bulletin. That's very important, I must do it right away."

"Why?"

"Well, pretty soon they're going to put the paper to bed." Pat knew that must be some sort of joke. Papers didn't go to bed. They didn't have any pajamas or nightgowns.

Somebody knocked at the door and before Peter could say anything Charlie Hall came in. "Is that your kid?" he asked.

"Yes," said Peter, "He's my son. Say hello to Charlie Hall, Pat."

"Well, what's your name?" said Hall just as if he was very much interested.

"My name's Pat."

"Tell him your big name," prompted Peter. "Go ahead."

"Peter Neale, second."

"I suppose you'll be down here doing baseball yourself pretty soon now that you're getting to be such a big boy," said Hall.

Pat picked up the funny paper again and pretended to become engrossed in it. Charlie Hall was diverted back to the first of the Peter Neales.

"I guess he's a little older than my youngest," he said. "Let me see, Joe—no, that's not the one I mean—Bill must be about four or five now. Just around there."

"Pat's older than that. He was six a couple of days ago."

"Getting pretty near time to begin figuring what to do with him."

"I know that already," said Peter, "he's going to be a newspaper man. He's going to be 'by Peter Neale'."

"I'd drown mine, all six of 'em, before I'd let 'em go into the newspaper business."

"What's the matter with it?"

"It don't get you any place. Now if I was in business I'd be just getting ready to be a president of the company or something. And as it is I'm just an old man around the shop. Forty-two my last birthday. In a couple of years more I'll be on the copy desk."

"That's mostly bunk, Charlie. But even if it was so, haven't you had a lot of fun?"

"What do you mean, fun?"

"Going out where things are happening and writing pieces and seeing them in the paper the next day. Just writing a baseball story seems sort of exciting to me."

"Hell," said Charlie, "they're all faked, those baseball games. I wouldn't go across the street to see one."

He paused, but went on again before Peter could protest.

"It's a funny thing, but the longer you stay in newspaper work the more it gets to seem as if everything's faked. After a while you find out that all the murders are just alike. Somebody sleeps with somebody and somebody else don't like it and then you have what we call a 'mystery' and we get all steamed up about it. Railroad accidents—the engineer disregarded the signal—fires—somebody dropped a cigarette in a pile of waste. My God, Pete, there's only about ten things can happen any place in the world and then they must go on repeating themselves over and over."

Peter rushed in pellmell. "But don't you see, Charlie. It's the writing about them makes them different. A piano player might as well say, 'I haven't got anything but the same notes.'"

"Well," said Charlie, "I'd drown all five of them if they wanted to be piano players. Maybe there is some fun in writing. I don't know anything about that. But if a man wants to write why put it down some place where it's going to be swept up by the street cleaner the next day. At eleven o'clock tomorrow morning all that stuff you were writing before I came in will be dead and rotten. It'll have to make room for the home edition and on top of that'll come another. And so on all day long. Writing for a newspaper's like spitting in Niagara Falls. Anybody that can write ought to get on a magazine and do something that'll last anyway from breakfast to dinner time."

"It's no good for me," said Peter. "I've written for magazines a little—just sport stuff, you know. You do something and maybe you like it, but that's the last you hear about it for a month. By the time it comes out you've forgotten all about it and maybe by that time it isn't true anyway. It's like writing for posterity."

"All right," said Charlie, "go on with your story. If you make it a good one maybe there'll be somebody around the office'll remember it clear into next week."

Left alone, Peter proceeded at a furious rate. Even Pat was frightened out of interrupting by the beat and pace of the noise which came from the typewriter. If there had been a steam whistle it would have sounded a good deal like a locomotive. Soon Peter called a copy boy and gave him the pages. It had grown almost dark now, but he did not switch on the electric light immediately. From the next room came the clicking sound of telegraph keys.

"Do you hear that," said Peter. "That's magic. Some place there's a war, or a king's just died, or maybe he's only sick and those clicks are telling us about it."

"Did he eat too much ice cream and cake?" asked Pat.

"I don't know. I can't tell till somebody writes it down. You have to make *a b c's* out of it before anybody except just the man in the room understands about it."

"Come here," said Peter, suddenly getting up from his chair, "you sit down there, Pat."

"I don't want to," said Pat.

"All right, I won't let you sit in my chair."

Pat got up and took the seat.

"Now," said Peter earnestly, "I don't want you to grow up to be a newspaper man, and I don't want you to come into this office after I'm gone."

He put his arm around Pat's shoulder and drew him close. Then he took the boy's hand, the left one, and moved it forward near the typewriter.

"This is the desk," said Peter, "that I don't want you to use."

Book II

CHAPTER I

Peter was coming back to America. He had been through the war and then the peace and he was very tired. The tension of it all was still upon him. Even though he lay back in his steamer chair and looked over the rail at a wide and peaceful ocean the jangle within him continued. For him there was no friendship in the sea. Probably there never would be any more. He had come to hate it that afternoon on the *Espagne* when they ran from the submarine. That was almost four years ago, but Peter had not forgotten. He had been playing poker in the card-room when the little gun on the forward deck went "bang!" The man across the table had his whole stack of chips in his hand. He was just about to say, "I'll raise you, Neale." And then he said nothing. He just sat there holding the chips and grinning. Some of them trickled out of his hands and a yellow one fell on the floor. The man stooped down and rummaged for it under his chair. Yellow chips represented five dollars. Peter couldn't stand the comedy of it. His capacity for irony was limited.

"Don't do that," he said sharply. "Maybe it's going to sink us. Come on. We can look for the chips afterwards."

Still the man didn't come. His right hand was trembling but he held on to the cards.

"Oh," said Peter, "you win if that's what you're waiting for. For God's sake, come on."

Peter didn't have the courage to be the first man out of the smoking-room. He walked slowly enough to let two players pass him. Going to his room he found a life preserver and put it on clumsily. Outside in the hall a very white-faced steward was saying over and over again, "There is no danger. There is no danger." Coming out on deck a passenger almost ran into Peter. He was dashing up and down the deck shouting, "Don't get excited." Peter saw his poker friend standing beside the rail and took his place alongside him.

"There she is," said the man, pointing to a thing about a mile away which looked like a stray beanpole thrust into the ocean. "It's the periscope," he explained. The gun on the *Espagne* went "bang!" once more.

"If we don't get her, she'll get us, won't she?" asked Peter.

The man nodded. The beanpole disappeared. "She'll come up some other place," he told Peter.

They both stared at the ocean, looking for the sprouting of the weed. Peter kept silent for at least two minutes. He held on to the rail because his right leg was shaking. The man must not know that he was afraid.

"What did you have?" asked Peter. "What did you have?" he repeated.

"How's that?"

"A minute ago when I dropped. What did you have?"

"A king high flush."

Peter was just about to confess his full house, but thought better of it. "I guess the submarine didn't hurt me any," he said. "Mine was only aces and eights."

His companion turned and looked at him. He was a little white, too. There was a growing horror in his face. Peter wondered and then realized the reason for the curious look. Somehow it cheered him enormously to find terror in another. The man had shamed him by sticking to the card room and looking for the yellow chip. Now Peter could pay him back. Even the huskiness was gone from his voice. "Yes," he said slowly, "aces and eights. That was queer, wasn't it? The dead man's hand."

The beanpole never did come up again and now in the year 1919 there would be none in this pleasant glassy ocean and yet Peter couldn't look at it very long without seeing black stakes rise up against him. In the twenty minutes of watching which followed the remark about aces and eights Peter planted firmly and deeply in himself another abiding fear. He wondered idly now whether the man who stood with him, the name was Bentwick, would ever enjoy ocean travel again.

Peter found that it was not physically possible to be afraid of everything which he encountered in the war. Everybody had his pet fear. Peter specialized on submarines, which was convenient since, after arriving in France, he saw nothing more of warfare on the water. He never liked shells, particularly the big ones, airplanes or machine guns and yet he could stand them well enough to do his work. Before going he had assumed that he would be unable

to endure the strain of getting under fire. Indeed he told Miles, "You mustn't expect a lot of stuff from me about how things look in a front line trench."

Miles had said, "All right. Give us the news and we won't kick."

The news had been enough to take Peter into hell and keep him there. Miles had been smart. Dying for his country might very likely have been an insufficient ideal for Peter, but there never was any place he refused to go to get a story for the Bulletin. He never knew why. There wasn't any person on the Bulletin whom Peter idolized. The owner lived in Arizona and Peter had never seen him. The paper itself was a person. That was what Miles had seemed to say that afternoon in the office when he asked Peter to go over as a war correspondent. "I think you ought to go for the paper," he said. First, of course, he teetered back and forth on his chair three times. "Sport don't look so important now," he began. "This thing is much bigger than baseball. It's going to get bigger. The syndicate's selling you to one hundred and ten papers now but that doesn't make any difference, Neale. There's no good waiting for the bottom to drop out of a thing. We've got to beat 'em to it."

"I don't know anything about war," suggested Peter.

"We don't want war stuff. I wouldn't give a damn for the regular war correspondent stuff. You can humanize all that. You've got a light touch. Some of this is going to be funny. Most of the papers are overlooking that. And mark my words, by and by we're going to get in it."

"Maybe it won't be so funny then," said Peter.

Miles paid no attention. "Don't you see the big start you'll have if you're already over there when America comes in. You'll have the hang of the thing. You'll know a lot more about it than most of the generals. You'll be on the spot to jump right into it."

Miles did not foresee that by the time America came into the war there wouldn't be much jump left in Peter. Blood and, more than that, a desperate boredom fell upon the light touch. Almost all of Peter's romantic enthusiasm was spent in his first two years on the fighting line of the English and the French. The American war correspondents used to tell with wonder and amusement of the afternoon upon which Peter started off to join the American army with the other correspondents. They just filled the compartment, but a minute before the train left the Gare du Nord, a Y. M. C. A. man who had reserved his seat bustled in. He picked out Peter and slapped him on the back. "I'm very sorry, old scout," he said, "but you've got my seat."

Peter got up. "You can have the seat, you son of a——," he answered, "but don't you 'old scout' me."

Whatever romantic feeling might have been left in Peter about America and the war broke on the military bearing of John J. Pershing. Peter was with him the day he inspected the newly arrived First Division. Aides and war correspondents without number trailed at his heels. They followed him into a stable which had been transformed into a company kitchen. Just inside the door stood a youngster only a year or so older than Pat. He was peeling potatoes but when the General entered he dropped his work and stood at attention. Pershing went on to the far end of the stable and, as he passed by, the boy who had never seen the commander-in-chief of all the American expeditionary forces, stole just a fleeting look over his shoulder. Pershing saw him and strode back, followed by all the war correspondents and his aides.

"What's the matter with you?" he shouted at the boy. "You don't know the first thing about being a soldier." Turning to a lieutenant he said, "Take this man out and make him stand at attention for two hours." Not even the dead men upon the wire ever moved Peter to the same violent revulsion against the war. Nor did he have a chance to write it out of himself. His cable dispatch which began, "They will never call him Papa Pershing," did not get by the censors.

Censorship was among the horrors of war which Peter never thought of as he stood in the office of Miles. He was a little hesitant about accepting the assignment and the managing editor misunderstood him somewhat.

"You'll find your war stuff will sell in time just as well as sports," he said.

"I've got enough money, almost enough," Peter told him. "I don't know what to do about Pat, that's my son. He's here in school. He's fourteen. There isn't a soul to look after him."

"Yes," said Miles, "that makes it hard. I tell you what I'll do. Will you let him come and live with me and Mrs. Miles? Next year he can go to boarding-school. This thing can't last forever. You'll be back in a little while."

"Well," said Peter, "that's nice of you but I don't know how it'll work out."

"What are you planning for the boy?"

"Why, I've always figured that as soon as he got old enough I'd try to get him on the paper. I want him to be a newspaper man."

Miles broke in so eagerly that he even neglected to do his three preliminary tilts. "That's fine. Don't you see how that all fits in? You go to France for us and I'll promise you a job for the boy on the Bulletin. You won't have to just think about it. The thing's done. He's nominated for the Bulletin right now. And you can start him off the minute you think he's old enough. Don't fret about that. I'll give him an ear full of shop. Is it a bargain?"

"All right," said Peter, "I'll go over for the paper for a little while."

The little while lasted almost five years.

CHAPTER II

It was a June night in the fourth year of the war when Peter saw Maria Algarez. He was walking up the Avenue de l'Opera when a woman cut across in front of him, turning into a side street. The street was crowded with soldiers and women, sauntering and peering, but this woman was walking fast. She almost bumped into Peter. They were under a shaded light which fell on her face as she looked up. Peter looked at her without much curiosity. He did not want to invite friendliness. Hospitality had been hurled at him all the way down the avenue. He knew instantly that it was Maria. When she left him she had seemed a child. After seventeen years there was the same youthful quality in her face. The only change was, it was much more tired. And there was paint.

"Hello," said Peter.

Maria smiled at him without obvious recognition, but made no answer.

"I'm Peter Neale."

Maria's smile grew broader. "I thought I have made a conquest," she said, "and it is a husband."

She held out her hand. Peter took it, but his eager surprise at seeing her was chilled by a sudden thought.

"You're not—," he said, but he could not phrase it. He tried again. "You're not walking here alone?"

Maria's smile became a laugh. "And what then?" she asked.

"Good God!" said Peter in horror. And then almost to himself, "And it might have been any other soldier on the avenue."

"There, there," said Maria, checking her laughter and patting him on the arm. "It is not right for me to laugh at you. I should not forget to remember that you are the worrier. You think that maybe it is my living to walk in L'avenue de L'Opera and to look for the good-looking soldier. It should please that it is you I have selected, Peter. But no, there, it is not so. Come with me. My car it is around the corner. Do not let us stand here where maybe you will be compromised. We will drive to my studio. There we can talk."

Peter followed Maria around the corner where a limousine was waiting and got in.

"How do you manage to have a car in war time?" he asked.

"It is because I am the important person. Yes, that is true. You have not heard of me, Peter? Really? That is so extraordinary. You do not know that I am the singer?"

"Well," said Peter, "of course I heard that phonograph record you sent for Pat but that was fifteen years ago. I never heard from you again. Sometimes I went to the shops and asked if they had records of Maria Algarez but none of them had ever heard of you."

"Pooh," said Maria, "in America you do not know anything. But here in Paris do you never hear anybody speak of Maria Algarez?"

Peter shook his head. "I've been with the American army almost all the time. What would I know if I had heard? What do they say about you?"

"Maybe it is better that I should say it myself," answered Maria. "The others might not make it enough. When I send the phonograph record so long ago I say in my letter to you 'the voice is magnificent.' That is true. It is much more than that. Peter, sometimes it makes me sad that I cannot sit off a little way and hear the voice. The phonograph, it is not the same thing. That is the pity of it, I alone of everybody in Europe cannot truly hear Maria Algarez sing. It has been the great voice in the world. It is still the great voice."

"Oh," said Peter, "and that is what anybody would have told me if I asked."

Maria shook her head. "People, they are not so smart. You remember when I was a dancer they did not know about me all that you and I, we knew. It is the same now. They do not know. A little, yes, but not all."

"But they realize it enough to give you a job, don't they?"

"The job, pooh! Yes, the job. First I sing in Comique. I sing in Russia and Spain and for the seven, eight years I am the leading soprano of the Paris opera house. Where is it that you hide yourself that all this you do not know?"

"In mud in Flanders, I guess."

"Yes, it is not your fault. The war, it is so loud in all the world there is no other noise. That is why I go away. I have the contract to sing in Argentine."

The limousine drew up in front of an apartment and Maria took Peter up to a studio on the top floor. They went into a big room with one great window of glass covering an entire wall. Through it Peter could see the defense of Paris aviators moving across the skyline like high riding fireflies.

"It's a nice place for air raids," suggested Peter.

"The Boche—the German—he comes sometime but I am not afraid. You know, Peter, now I know that there is the God. It is something. I cannot tell you just what. But he is smart. When the others did not know about the voice it was that I remembered. He would know. If there was nobody else he would be smart enough. He is not silly. Nothing can happen to Maria Algarez."

"Gosh," said Peter, abashed and puzzled by this outburst, "I hope he feels the same way about me. Most of the last three years I've been needing him more than you do."

Maria's rapt expression faded. "I am the pig. All the time I talk about myself. And you, you, Peter, what is it you do? You are the officer, that I know, but captain, colonel, general that I do not know."

"I see I've got a kick coming, too. Where have you been hiding? I'm not an officer. I'm a war correspondent. If you can say it I guess I can. Any way I will. I'm the best war correspondent in the world," Peter grinned. "That's not such a joke either. Maybe I am. Didn't you ever hear of my book—'Lafayette, Nous Voila?' All the rest of it's English. It means 'Lafayette, We're Here.' I forgot you'd know that. They've sold seventy-five thousand copies. Didn't you ever hear of it?"

"No, I have not heard. I think you are still the newspaper man."

"Well, a war correspondent's a sort of a newspaper man, only more so. I'm still on the Bulletin. That was my paper years ago when—when we knew each other."

Maria was almost startled. "The boy," she said suddenly. "Your boy, how is he? He is well? He is big? What is it that you call him?"

"Yes," said Peter, "bigger than I know, I guess. I haven't seen him for almost three years. His name is Peter Neale, Jr."

"But you hear from him? He writes? What is it he says?"

"Well, as a matter of fact I just got a letter from him today. There isn't anything much in it. I don't know whether you'd be interested. It's just about stuff he's doing in school."

"Yes, I want to know what it is he learns. Here, let me see?"

Peter fumbled in his pocket and found Pat's letter.

"Maybe I'd better read it you. Handwriting is one of the things they haven't taught him. I don't believe you could make out his writing."

He picked up the letter and began, "'Dear Peter—'

"'Peter,' it is so he calls you?"

"Yes 'father' sounds terribly formal to me and I don't want to be 'pop' or 'dad' or anything like that. 'Peter' seems closer. Before this war Pat and I were pretty chummy."

Maria settled back and Peter went on with the letter.

"'Perhaps, I didn't tell you about my joining the fraternity here last month. It's called Alpha Kappa Phi. The letters stand for Greek words which are secret and mean friends and brothers or maybe it's brothers and friends. And of course the initiation is secret, but I guess it won't be any harm if I tell you about it. I had to report at the fraternity house in the afternoon and they took me down in the cellar and put me in a coffin. It wasn't really a coffin, but a big packing case but we tell the fellows that come in that it's a coffin and that scares the life out of some of them. I wasn't scared any, but it got pretty tiresome lying around all afternoon. In the evening they took me out and told me they were going to put the initials of the fraternity on my chest. They pretended to be heating up an iron. There was a long speech which went with this and it is quite beautiful. While they were pretending to heat up the irons they burned something, meat I guess, and it made an awful smell. They did make me a little nervous but when they got around to cutting the initials in my chest it was just an electric battery they had and they ran the current over my chest. It hurt a little, but I knew they weren't really cutting initials and so I didn't mind. After that they took a chemical called lunar caustic and traced out Alpha Kappa Phi on my chest. It didn't do anything just then, but the next day it turned all black. Every time I took a shower in the gym all the younger kids stared at me. One asked me what I got on my chest and I said maybe I fell down in some mud. After I was branded they took me up some stairs and down some more. I was still blindfolded, you know. They said to me, "You must jump the last fifteen steps." Well, I jumped and it was just one step and it nearly ruined me. Then there were some more things like having to stand on your head and sing the first verse of the school song. They helped you a little by holding up your feet. And you had to get down on the floor and scramble like an egg. Then there was something very impressive. They took the bandage off and I was standing just in front of a skull. A man all in white read out about the secrets of the society. It was quite beautiful but I can't remember enough to tell you. Just when he came where it said what would happen to any neophyte who divulged aught on the sacred scroll of Alpha Kappa Phi, a great big tongue of flame shot out of the mouth of the skull. They do it by pinching the end of a piece of gas pipe and putting it in the mouth of the skull and when you turn on the gas the thing shoots out. That was about all except all of us being stood up against a wall and hitting us in the tail with tennis balls. Of course there was supper finally and I shook hands with all the brothers and they said most of them get scared a lot more than I did. We've put in a couple of lots since I got in and I certainly got square with them for what they did to me. I suppose you read in the paper about my kicking a goal from the thirty-three yard line and winning the game from the Columbia freshmen."

There was a good deal more about the game, almost a complete play by play account, but Peter, peeking over the edge of the letter saw that Maria was yawning. He just put in a "With love—Pat," and stopped in the middle of a paragraph.

"He is nice. I think he is like you," she said. "How old is he, Peter?"

"Just about seventeen."

"Like you he will be the writer for the Bulletin? Is it so that you want it?"

"Yes, I've set my heart on that."

"It is good. He knows about the baseball that you know and all your sport. Is he big too like you, Peter?"

"I guess he must be by now. He sent me a picture. It's an enlargement of a snapshot. Just a head like one of these motion picture closeups."

Maria held out her hand casually. "Let me see."

She took the picture under a lamp and looked closely. For a full minute or more Maria held the picture and stared at it. She said nothing, but Peter was conscious in some way that the casual mood had gone. He could tell that she was enormously moved. He did not even dare break in upon her silence. Still looking at the picture Maria whispered, "He is my son. It is my nose. It is my nose exactly."

"Yes," said Peter, in a matter of fact way, "there is quite a resemblance."

Maria waved her left hand impatiently. "No, no, it is not a resemblance. The rest does not look alike. It is the nose. That is not a resemblance. It is the same. It is my nose. Here you see," she slapped the bridge of her nose violently, "so it would be if the bone it had been broken. You see in the picture of my son it is the break. The same. The hook in the nose. But it is not broken. Never it has not been?"

"Why, no," said Peter, "his nose has always been like that."

"Yes, yes, it is from me he has it. Yes, and from the God. Do you not know why it is the break in the nose?"

"Well, he's got to have some kind of a nose I suppose."

"But this kind, Peter, it is for just one thing. It marks him like those foolish letters on his chest in the letter. You cannot read the marking. I can read it for you. It says singer, singer, singer. It must be. The singing nose it is always so. Sometimes it is not so much. But this is my nose. It says more than singer. It says great singer."

"Well," said Peter somewhat impatient at the fervency of Maria, "he says in his letter that he sang the first verse of the school song standing on his head. That must have been hard."

"Yes," replied Maria fiercely, "he is standing on his head. He writes to you only foolishness. It is about skulls and jumping steps. And about the sport. And there was more. I know you did not read it all. You have made him to stand on his head. They have made him. He lives only for foolishness. The mark is there but first there must be work. Years of work. He is not a child to jump over steps. He must come with me to the Argentine."

"Whoa," cried Peter. "We can't let a nose run away with us. Just stop and think a minute. It's impossible for Pat to go to Argentine with you. In a year or so he may be old enough to go into the army. It would look as if he was running away."

Peter's attempt at a conciliatory speech was conspicuously a failure.

"The army! The war!" said Maria between clenched teeth. "That is the most silly of all. Better he should stay with the good brothers and jump down the steps. My God! Peter, you won't, you can't let him go to the war. If there was in him not one note of music you would not let him. He is a boy. He is something alive. And don't you understand? I think it is in him the fire. They won't kill him. This I will not let."

"All right, but if the war goes on and he comes of age what can anybody do about it?"

"I have much money, Peter. It can be all spent to save him if there is the need."

"Money, I've got money too. Lots of it. That's all foolishness. It won't work."

"Is it that you want him to go?"

"Damn you," said Peter, almost sobbing in his anger, "you mustn't say things like that. He's my son too. He was my son when you ran away and left him. I've seen war. I've got lately so I see it all from one angle. Any time our lines go forward I think of them fighting for just one thing, fighting to keep Pat out of it. You get all excited and worked up about a nose in a photograph. A picture of a boy you don't even know. I've wheeled him in the park. I saw him walk the first time. I'm not looking to save him because he's some kind of a genius. I want him to live because he's Pat."

"I said wrong, Peter. I am sorry. Both of us we must wait. It will be all right. I know God won't be silly."

Presently Maria said, "I do not know him. That is what you have said. Tell me about him—about Pat."

Peter did. It was mostly things about when Pat was a small boy. He remembered God's ankle and told Maria, and about the blind giant. She was enormously interested to hear of how Pat had picked out phonograph records. "And mine," she said eagerly, "did he like that?"

Peter lied a little. "It was the one he asked for first all the time," he answered. It surprised Peter that he remembered so much about Pat. All sorts of little things which he hadn't thought of for years welled up in his mind. Some of them were things that he had hardly noticed at the time.

"And of course you never heard about Judge Krink," he said. "He was a man Pat invented when he was about five years old. He used to tell me that he wrote letters to Judge Krink and Judge Krink wrote letters to him. 'What did he say?' I'd ask him. 'Nothing,' said Pat. I remember Judge Krink had dirty fingernails. He never went to bed. I don't know just where he lived, but it was some place in a garden. He sat there and dug dirt. All the things that Pat couldn't do, Judge Krink did. Maybe I got asking him about Judge Krink too much because one day he said, 'I don't have Judge Krink any more. He's got table manners.'"

"You see," broke in Maria, "it is not the truth when you said I do not even know him—my son. I have seen him many times. I have played with him."

"Where?" asked Peter, puzzled.

"At the house of the Judge Krink."

Later they talked about themselves. Peter told Maria about Vonnie. Somehow he could not bear to have her think that he had been altogether desolated by her flight seventeen years ago or that he had spent his life entirely in persuading Pat to eat spinach. Certainly Maria was not displeased by the story. She smiled cheerfully when told of the devastation wrought by her phonograph record but she said, "Oh, Peter, you should not have let her go. I did not teach you enough or you would have broken the record of the song." Maria met confession with confession and rather overtopped Peter.

"How about this God you were telling me about. Do you think he liked that?" he inquired.

"Oh," said Maria, "it is not such little things about which he bothers."

"Didn't you ever love me?" Peter protested.

"Not after the baby," said Maria. "It was not your fault but in my heart I blamed you. It seemed to me the thing mean and silly. To be hurt so much, that cannot be good. Now I am not so sure. If he is to sing it cannot be too much. Nothing. Not even that."

She moved to the piano and ran over an air which sounded familiar to Peter. "You remember?" she said.

On a chance he guessed. "That's what you danced to in 'Adios'."

"That is smart. You remember. It is the Invitation to the Waltz. All these years you have remembered."

"When do you go back to the war?" she asked suddenly.

"Tomorrow," said Peter.

"It is seventeen years and you go away tomorrow." She came across the room and bending across the back of the chair in which Peter sat she kissed him on the eyes. "There is something more I want you to remember," she said.

Peter was swept as he had been years ago by a gust of emotion. He started to get up but his legs were a little unsteady. Maria moved across the room to the piano.

"Maybe," she said, "you will remember me for the seventeen years more if I sing 'Depuis Le Jour.'"

CHAPTER III

Maria went to the Argentine a month later but Peter heard from her every now and then. Her letters were mostly brief, acknowledging the letters from Pat which Peter forwarded to her. Occasionally he would supply a footnote to something which Pat had written if it touched upon things which were known only to himself and the boy and could not be understood by an outsider without explanation. Or it might be that some sporting reference, simple enough in itself, seemed to require clarification for the sake of Maria. For instance when Pat wrote, "He tried a forward pass but I managed to grab it on the two yard line and ran all the way for a touchdown," Peter added the note, "A football field is a hundred yards long. Pat's feat was most unusual."

But sports did not figure quite so large in the letters as they had done before. Rather often the boy wrote about books. In one letter he outlined the entire plot of "Mr. Polly" for Peter. In another somewhat to Peter's astonishment he wrote "Heard Galli again last Saturday. She does not excite me so much as she used to." Maria returned this letter with her acknowledgment and Peter found that this time she was supplying a footnote. "Galli," she wrote, "is Galli Curci, an opera singer with the voice and nothing else."

When the letter came in which Pat announced that he had entered the officer's training school at Harvard, Peter cabled to Maria. She replied almost immediately, "Have broken my contract, coming back to Paris." Before she arrived the armistice was signed. Peter went to see her almost immediately. He wanted to explain to her why her schemes about Pat were wholly impossible and he felt that now with the war issue removed it would be easier to discuss the matter calmly and rationally. He plunged into the question immediately.

"Now let's both make a solemn promise, Maria, to tell nothing but the truth without letting emotion or anything like that come in."

"But then," objected Maria, "it would not be the truth."

"Oh, you know what I mean. When I showed you Pat's picture that night you got very much excited. You said he had a nose just like yours and that it meant he was all cut out to be a singer. A great singer you said. Well, we're not excited now. Be honest with me. You can't really tell anything about whether he could be a singer or not just by looking at his nose in a picture. That was a little far-fetched, wasn't it? I mean it wasn't plain, cold, common-sense."

"What you ask me is a little hard, Peter. This common-sense you talk to me about, for that I care nothing. It is no good. It is not so that I see things. I was excited when I see the picture. That is true but it makes no difference. To have the much sense it is necessary for me to get excited. It is so I see things. If you mean can I write it down on the piece of paper like the contract, Pat he will be the singer, the great singer, I must say no. That I cannot promise. But contracts too I do not like."

"Yes," said Peter, "I've observed that."

"But I feel it, Peter. That is so much more. Can you not understand? You have sometimes maybe look into the crystal. It is so when I look at the picture. Here is my nose again in the world. It is for something."

"Maybe," suggested Peter, "it's a nose for news."

Maria paid no attention. "Do you not see? If it is the failure that does not matter. Just so long as it is the possibility it is necessary that we try."

"You don't begin to understand how far apart we are, Maria. I'll tell you frankly where I stand. Even if I knew Pat could be the greatest singer in the world I'd rather have him a newspaperman. That's my angle."

"You are not serious."

"But I am. Newspaper work's real. It's got roots into life. It is life. It makes people in the world a little different. Singing is just something you go and hear in the evening."

"For you it is enough that he should go to the baseball and the football and perhaps the next war and write the book 'Lafayette Voulez Vous.'"

Peter flushed. "I think there's more sense to it," he said. "And it's pretty probable that Pat'll think something like I do. We were together and you weren't there. And we went around together and talked about Matty and Ty Cobb and Tris Speaker."

Maria looked a little puzzled.

"You wouldn't know," said Peter a little bitterly, "they're none of them singers."

"I didn't mean to be rotten," he added hastily. "I'm just trying to tell you the truth."

Maria smiled. "It is all right. You tell me, Peter, the truth—— your truth."

"Well, you see, Maria, he is like me. The nose may be you, but the rest is me. It's just got to be. In the beginning he wasn't anything but just sort of red clay or he was like a phonograph record before you cut the tune on it. He's been brought up around baseball games and newspaper offices. He knows, and everybody knows, that he's coming on the Bulletin and will take my place. In fact the job's been promised him. I'm not trying to lay down the law. It's just the way things are. I don't see what I could do about it even if I wanted to. He's all made by now. What's the use of my saying, 'Yes, let him go over and learn to be a singer.' It just hasn't been put in him."

Peter paused.

"I'm sorry, Maria. The trouble is he's a boy. If he'd been a girl I'd have jumped at the chance to have you make a singer of him. Newspaper work's no good for women."

"And singing, it is not good for men?" asked Maria.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I don't honestly think it is."

"Peter, I understand better now what this is you feel, but it is not all the truth you say. When I go away he is red clay, that is what you say. It is not so simple. I have looked at him then and to me he was just what you have said. But it is more. Inside the clay all the time there is something. The little bug, I do not know what it is you call it."

"Do you mean germ?"

"Yes, I think so. That you cannot touch and I cannot. So we do not need to talk and to get angry. It is for him to say. Is it not so?"

"Well, within reason—yes."

"So! You go back to America and you make him the newspaper man. That is fair. When he is twenty-one you will come here. And he will come. You will say 'yes'."

"That's almost four years off."

"The day I know; it is the twentieth in August. The year it will be 1922."

Peter hesitated.

"But it is fair, Peter. You should like it. Do you not see it is what you call it 'sporting'?"

"You're on," said Peter.

"There, now we will not quarrel any more. Some things I want to know. You will tell me. You have heard him singing? Sometimes he sings a little?"

"I suppose so. I never noticed particularly. Yes, I remember when he was a kid he used to sing something that went, 'Tell me, pretty maiden'—— I can't remember the rest of it. He's got a loud voice, I say that for him. When he was playing out in front of the house with other kids I could always hear him a way above all the others. I guess he's got lungs all right."

"Those he has got from you. If he is the singer, you see, it will not be all my fault."

Maria was leaving for Spain within a few days and Peter said he expected to get back to America pretty soon.

"Here we shall meet on the twentieth in August, in nineteen twenty-two," said Maria. "Good-bye, Peter. I want you

to bring my son at eight o'clock."

CHAPTER IV

A few months later while the peace conference was still raging fiercely, Peter was puzzled by a cablegram which he received from America. "Congratulations on your story," it read, "we want more just like it. Convey my respects to President Wilson and tell him I am solidly behind him,— Twice."

Peter couldn't remember anybody named Twice which made it still more difficult for him to understand why he was being congratulated. He wondered just how urgent was the message to Wilson. Of course it sounded a little bit like somebody on the paper, but the manner was not that of Miles even if he assumed that the signature had been in some way or other so curiously distorted. Cheeves, the Paris correspondent of the Bulletin, solved his perplexity.

"You're kidding me," he said. "It isn't possible that you never heard of Twice. Why, it's Rufus Twice of course, but he always signs just his last name. You know how it is on state documents, 'Lansing,' 'Bryan' or whoever the current boy on the job happens to be."

"It doesn't help any that his first name's Rufus. Who's Rufus Twice, anyhow?"

"Well, since yesterday afternoon he happens to be your boss. He's the new managing editor of the Bulletin, only they don't call him that. He's got a title. They call him Supervising Editor."

"He didn't lose any time cabling, did he?"

"No, everybody around here got one."

"Were they all congratulations?"

"All that I've seen, but most of them are much briefer than yours."

"How about this message I'm to give Wilson, is that really necessary?"

"Oh, I guess not. But the president ought to feel flattered that Rufus Twice is behind him and not about three feet out in front pulling him along. On the level, don't you remember Rufus Twice on the Bulletin?"

"No, I don't. I've been away for years and years now. I don't remember anybody."

"Big black-haired fellow. Snappy dresser. Always made a point of coming in late and just barely catching the first edition."

"That fits any one of twenty people around the shop."

"Maybe they were all Rufus Twice. My God! there've been times when he seemed like *ad nauseam*. You'll remember him if I remind you of the story about Twice and the district attorney."

"Go on. Remind me. What district attorney?"

"Hell! I can't be bothered remembering the names of district attorneys. He don't figure anyway. We'll just call him Smith. It was about that Haldeman murder case. I suppose you've forgotten that too, but Haldeman was a fellow said he had something on the police and the day before he was to spill it they found him murdered up in his apartment. This was about twelve o'clock at night and all the reporters come down to the station. Rufus Twice is there and this district attorney fellow he shows up too. After getting all the facts they go out for sandwiches and one of the reporters says, 'Mr. Smith, haven't you some statement to make to the papers about this murder.' The district attorney just looks at him and sits there trying to make up his mind. And while he's thinking Rufus Twice hops in. 'I think Mr. Smith would like to say something about as follows,' he begins. It goes on for about a thousand words and when he's all done he turns to Smith and says, 'That's about right, isn't it?' And Smith says, 'Yes.' And after that all through the case Twice gives out the statements the same way except that he doesn't bother to say, 'That's about right' any more."

"Is that a true story?"

"I don't know. That's the way Twice always tells it."

As Peter was going out, Cheeves called him back.

"Say, I suppose now that the cruel peace conference is almost over you'll be going back. I don't want to give you a wrong steer about Twice. Maybe you got the impression from what I said that he's just a big bluff. That's only about ten per cent right. He is a big bluff but in addition to that he's got the stuff. You could make about ten of Miles out of him. When you pack up your stuff to go back don't forget to take along a grain of salt."

There must have been something of prophetic vision in the remarks of Cheeves for Peter received his message of recall the next day. The cable said, "Baseball beginning to look more important peace conference stop much quicker stop we want you back right away stop advise you take Espagne—Twice."

Peter looked at his watch. He had just twenty-two hours to dig up such roots as he had sprouted during his four years in France. He made the boat by the closest possible margin. Of course he would rather that it had been any

vessel afloat except the Espagne haunted by the ghost of what was probably by now a dead submarine. Still catching the boat was a sort of assignment. And it was the quickest way home. Pat would be waiting on the pier in New York. Peter had cabled ahead to him.

CHAPTER V

It was a Pat prodigiously grown who met Peter as he came down the gangplank. Not much had altered in the look of him but just the added inches and heft gave him a curiously disturbing air of maturity. Peter would have liked to put his arms around him but he didn't dare. The handshake was not adequate and there was nothing he could say to express what he wanted to. It seemed better not to try.

"Hello, Pat," he said.

"Hello, Father," said the boy.

"Don't," exclaimed Peter almost as if in pain. "I've got a name. I don't want to be father. I never have been father. Four years oughtn't to do that."

"I'm sorry, Peter," Pat said it almost shyly.

The baggage was passed promptly, but as Peter was about to leave the pier a man came up to him.

"You're Peter Neale, aren't you?" he asked.

Peter nodded.

"I'm a reporter from the Bulletin. My name's Weed. Mr. Twice sent me down. He told me to tell you to come right up to the office."

"What's the rush?" asked Peter.

"I don't know. He didn't say."

"I think maybe we'd better go," broke in Pat. "He gave me the same message for you yesterday. I forgot about it."

"What has he got to do with you?" Peter inquired, after Weed had gone.

"Don't you see, when Mr. Twice became editor he inherited me along with the paper. Mr. Miles never did anything much the last couple years about managing me. He just turned over the allowance you gave me every week. Mr. Twice has taken complete charge. He's got my whole life mapped out."

"What's it going to be?"

"He's got it all fixed up for me to go to Harvard one more year and then start on the Bulletin."

"How do you like that?"

"I like it fine. But that doesn't make any difference. It's all fixed up that way anyhow. Twice has made up his mind about it."

"I'm obliged to him, but why can't he let me alone the first day. They didn't do things like this on the Bulletin in the old days. Here it is four years and I want to sit down some place and talk with you."

They waited in the outer office less than half an hour before a young woman ushered them into Twice's room. Peter had seen him before. The description which Cheeves gave was not so very good after all. His hair wasn't very black.

"Glad to see you back, Neale," said Twice, "and you, Pat. Won't you just sit down. I'll be with you in a second."

"Miss Nathan," he called across the room to his secretary, "I want you to take a cablegram to Speyer in Berlin. 'Fine story today. We think Ebert is doing constructive service to humanity. Tell him I said so.' And oh, Miss Nathan, let me know the minute that call from Washington comes through. But don't disturb me for anything else. I'm going to be busy now for some time. Don't forget to make that note about finding out when Blake's contract is up. I want to know about that the first thing in the morning. And tell Mr. O'Neill not to go home until he sees me. You can hold the rest of those letters over till I get back from dinner tonight. You know where to get me. Just a minute. Take a note for Booth. The Milwaukee offer is far too low. Tell 'em I've been thinking it over and that the price for the series is now three hundred instead of two.' That's the cheapest crowd I ever had to deal with. Don't put that in the letter. 'Price for the series now three hundred instead of two.' That's the end of it."

He turned to Peter. "It's that diary of the sub-commander. I'm letting a few selected papers in on it. Miss Nathan —" In the moment of lull the secretary had gone.

"Well, Neale, I certainly am glad to have you back here again. We've got to begin to hammer sports. They're coming back terrifically. I put all the foreign politics in the paper because that's what I think the people ought to read. Baseball's the thing that actually gets 'em. If Babe Ruth and Lloyd George both died tomorrow Ruth would just blanket him. And let me tell you, Neale, George is one of the great men of our day. I have a very warm personal

feeling for him. I don't suppose you remember Delehanty."

Peter was just about to answer that he had seen him several times but he wasn't nearly quick enough.

"Ruth reminds me more of him than any other player I've seen in the game," continued Twice. "Killed, jumping off a railroad bridge on June third, 1902. I've always made it a business not to be wrong. Remember that, Pat. It's just as easy to have the right date as the wrong one. It's just a knack. Anybody can do it. Come in some time and I'll explain the trick for you."

Peter broke in resolutely. "There was a man came down to the dock who said you wanted to see me. His name was Weed."

"Yes, Weed, good man. I dug him up myself. He came off a little paper in Reading. Of course he hasn't quite got the touch yet. The city's a little too big for him, but I think he's going to be a first rate newsman. Right now he tries too hard. He thinks he's got to dazzle people. The result is he's just a little esoteric. A little too esoteric. I must remember to tell him he's too esoteric."

"What is it you want to do with me?" asked Peter, returning to the attack.

"Yes," said Rufus Twice, "that's why I asked you to come here. I've been talking it over with Booth, the syndicate man, and a week from Monday'll be a good time for you to begin the sport column again. It takes a little time to get momentum up again but inside of a year I think we'll have a bigger list for you than when you went away. What did you have then?"

"A hundred and twelve," replied Peter.

"A hundred and twelve," repeated Twice. "Yes, that's just about right. Well, in a year we'll give you two hundred. I've got another name for your column. I don't like 'Looking Them Over With Peter Neale.' It's a little amorphous. How do you like 'Hit and Run?'"

"I'm not sure I like that at all," said Peter.

"That's just because it sounds strange to you. You'll get used to it in no time. Now, we want you to get your first column ready in a couple of days. We want to have a good margin of time there. I don't want to do any more than suggest, but I believe you want to say in your first column that fundamentally there is a kinship between war and sport. Take a football quarterback and you have the perfect prototype of the general in charge of operations. The line plunge gives you exactly the same problem the allies had in Flanders. If you have sufficient preparation the point of attack will be learned before you're ready. The quick thrust must be a surprise. Then you have the forward pass. What's that?"

"Why, I don't know," said Peter.

"An air raid," said Pat.

"Exactly. Work it out, Neale and you'll find it has almost innumerable possibilities. Of course you understand this is just a suggestion."

Miss Nathan ran in through the door. "Senator Borah's on the wire now," she cried.

"All right," said Twice, "I'll be there in a minute. While you were away, Neale, Miles told me I was supposed to take a look after Pat. That was an agreement he made with you, he told me. I've got that all fixed. He goes back to Harvard next week. His work in the officers' training camp will count him for a year. That means he'll be a sophomore and can play football. I think he might even make the team. Then the next year he comes to us. Four years of college is too much. A degree's just nonsense. I never got one and I wouldn't take an LL.D. I hope the arrangement's satisfactory to you. Will you please excuse me now? I've got to talk up disarmament in Washington. You and Pat come down and have lunch with me tomorrow. Ring me up at the house around noon. It's a private number but Miss Nathan will give it to you. Glad to have you back, Neale."

He was gone.

"Say, Pat," said Peter, "how did you know a forward pass was like an air raid?"

"Well, you see I've heard him do that a couple of times before. How do you like him?"

Peter did not obey his first impulse in answering. He suddenly realized that Rufus Twice was in a position to offer him the most useful sort of support in launching Pat safely and permanently into the newspaper business.

"I tell you, Pat," he said. "I wouldn't be surprised if he's got a lot more sense than you'd think."

CHAPTER VI

"Let's go and dine at some terribly quiet place," suggested Peter as he and Pat came down in the elevator from the office of Rufus Twice. They went to the Harvard Club and sat in a corner of the dining-room where not even a waiter noticed them for the first half hour. Peter was distressed because he found it enormously difficult to talk to Pat. The years he had been away stood like a wall between them. It seemed to be an effort for the boy even to call him "Peter"

as he had done for so many years. He was attentive and respectful. There didn't begin to be enough intimacy for banter.

In reply to questions Pat said that he had spent almost no time on football or baseball during his last year because the work at the officers' training camp had been much too difficult. He didn't know whether he ever could pitch again. In the last football game at school he had hurt his left shoulder and it was still a little stiff. It wouldn't keep him from football he thought, but when he tried to swing the arm up over his head he got a twinge in the bad shoulder. Anyway he had come to like football a good deal better than baseball. Twice had told him he ought to have a bully chance to make the team at Harvard but he wasn't sure. Perhaps he wouldn't have quite enough speed for a big college team.

"I said something like that to Mr. Twice," Pat added, "and he jumped all over me. He asked me if I'd ever heard of Freud and if I knew what an inferiority complex was, and I said I had, but he explained it all to me anyway."

"What is an inferiority complex?" asked Peter.

"Oh, you know—that business of thinking there's something wrong with you about something."

Pat rubbed the lower part of his neck. "Down here in the subconscious mind. A sort of a fear or shame or something like that gets stuck down there and you have rheumatism or you yell at people."

"What do you mean yell at people? Why do you yell at them?"

"I don't know exactly, sir. I guess it's to show 'em that you aren't inferior."

"Say, Pat, please don't call me 'sir' any more."

"I'm sorry."

"I guess there is something in that inferiority thing after all. I've seen it lots of times, but I never knew the name for it. Lots of pitchers come up from the sticks with all the stuff in the world and can't do anything because they're afraid it's going to be too tough for them. Say, Pat, you've got to pitch again some time. You know on account of this war I've never seen you pitch."

"Oh, yes. Don't you remember the year before you went away. We used to go over in the Park and you'd catch for me."

"That doesn't count. I mean in a game. How were you anyway?"

"Well, I guess I wasn't much good. Not with men on bases. If anything went wrong I always had a terrible time to keep from hurrying. I had to just stick the ball right over."

"Why?"

"Well, I always got to worrying that I was going to lose control. In my head I could keep a jump ahead of everything that was happening. I was always seeing fellows walking down to first. I didn't mind them hitting me so much. It was having 'em all walking around just as slow as they liked that got my goat. Sometimes I used to have nightmares about it."

"That's funny, maybe you can't pitch," said Peter. "It doesn't make any difference. You've had enough baseball already to help you a lot when you begin to write about it."

Pat made no reply.

"Don't you think so?" asked Peter a little sharply.

"Oh, yes, sir."

Peter made no comment. He realized that the sharpness of his tone had checked his advance into the confidence of Pat. That business about the nightmares was better. People didn't tell things like that to strangers. He tried to re-establish the mood.

"Speaking of nightmares," said Peter. "There's one I have a lot. Mine is about people running, running along the deck of a ship. I guess it's something left over from that time we had the fight with the submarine on the Espagne. But there isn't any submarine in the dream. It's just the people running that frightens me."

Pat merely listened. Peter paused a moment. "That's curious, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," answered Pat.

A waiter came up now and took the order. After he went away they were silent. From the big lounging-room came the sound of a man more or less aimlessly fooling with the piano. After a while Peter broke the silence. He would have liked to know something about Pat's thoughts on this career which was being planned for him, and his attitude on the war and religion and women. "Are you in love with anybody and who is she and tell me about her?" Peter would have liked to ask a question like that, but he did not dare.

"What have you been doing with yourself?" was what he did ask.

"Mostly just hanging around to find out what Mr. Twice was deciding to do with me?" Pat answered.

Then there was more silence. The man in the next room was playing louder. "I wish, he'd either play that 'Invitation to the Waltz' or cut it out," said Pat.

So that was it. The "Invitation to the Waltz." It suggested to Peter that he bid boldly and offer close confidence in the hope that it would be met in kind.

"I wish he wouldn't play the 'Invitation to the Waltz' at all," he said. "That tune always tears me to bits."

He waited but Pat said nothing.

"I've never talked to you before about your mother. The first time I saw her she danced to that tune ... the 'Invitation to the Waltz.' She's a singer now but she was a dancer then. I don't suppose you even know her name."

"Yes," said Pat, "her name is Maria Alvarez and she's singing now at the opera in Buenos Aires."

"How did you know that? I didn't even know myself that she was in Buenos Aires right now."

"I had a letter from her last week," explained Pat.

"She writes to you?" asked Peter in a good deal of surprise. "You mean she always has written to you?"

"Oh no, I never heard from her at all till during the war. It must have been a couple of years ago. Of course even when I was a kid I'd heard a little about her. You remember old Kate. Well, a long time ago she told me that my mother was an actress and a very bad woman and that I mustn't say anything about her to you. I don't believe I ever did, did I?"

"Kate had no right to say that. Your mother isn't a bad woman. She's a great artist."

"Well, I guess I never worried much about it anyway. Maybe I was a little sad about it at first, but I've forgotten. And then all of sudden I got this letter from Maria Alvarez. She said she'd seen you in Paris and that you showed her my picture and she wanted to write to me. She told me all about her singing. After that I got a lot of letters from her. She'd say she'd just been singing in 'Butterfly' and then she'd tell me what it was all about. You know that funny broken way she has of writing things."

"Yes," said Peter, "I know."

"Well, it was a lot of fun. You see I'd never heard any of these operas but after I found out about Maria Alvarez singing in them I used to go. If she wrote that she'd been singing 'Butterfly' I'd go to the Met and get a standup seat and then I'd write to her and tell her about Farrar and all the people I'd heard. She'd write back and tell me all the things that were the matter with Farrar and the way she did it differently and a lot better."

"She never showed any of those letters to me," said Peter.

"Didn't she?" asked Pat casually as if it made no difference. "Oh yes, I remember she wrote to me once that if I told you about going to the opera it might worry you and not to say anything about it. I don't know why. She used to send me clippings from the newspapers with the things critics said about her. They were all just crazy about her."

Peter in his bitterness was about to say, "Of course, she picked out the good ones," but Pat was in full swing and he decided not to throw him off his stride.

"You know I couldn't read this stuff at first. It was in French and Spanish, but there was an old fellow that taught at school and he was terribly excited too when I told him that Maria Alvarez was sending me these clippings. He'd heard her sing, you know. He used to translate the clippings for me and he told me a lot about Maria Alvarez."

"And now," said Peter, "I suppose you can read them yourself."

"Well, I can do the French all right but I'm not much on the Spanish. You see the old Frenchman, the fellow that taught at school, he was awful decent to me. He used to give me extra classes outside of school. You see we had a secret between us. It was like belonging to that kid fraternity we used to have in high school—Alpha Kappa Phi. That means something that nobody else knew. I can't remember what."

"Brothers and friends," prompted Peter.

"How did you know that?"

"You told me about it in one of the letters you wrote to me. But what was the secret you had with the old Frenchman?"

"Why, about Maria. He told me not to let any of the fellows know that Maria Alvarez was my mother. He said that it was a beautiful romance but that here in America people wouldn't understand on account of American morality being so strict and that they might look down on me."

Peter was indignant. "Beautiful romance! Where did he get that idea? Maria Alvarez and I were married just like anybody. Didn't she tell you that?"

"No," said Pat in obvious disappointment, "she didn't."

"I guess she forgot about it," suggested Peter.

"It doesn't make any difference to me, but if I run into old Mons. Fournier I won't dare tell him. It would spoil the whole thing for him. He'll think I was just boasting. Gosh he got a lot of fun out of it."

"Fournier, there's a Jacques Fournier that plays first base for the White Sox."

"No, this man's named Antoine. He's the old French teacher I was telling you about. Maybe they're related. He never said anything about it."

"In these letters about the opera and singing and all that," asked Peter, "did Maria Alvarez ever suggest that you ought to try and be a singer?"

Pat broke into unrestrained merriment. "Good God! no," he said and added quickly, "I beg your pardon, Father, I

didn't mean to curse but it would be so funny if Maria'd said anything like that about me."

Peter was nettled. "If you're going to call me 'father' why don't you call her 'mother'?"

"I'm sorry; I know you don't like to be called 'father'. I won't do it again."

"All right, but you haven't answered my question. Don't you ever think of calling her 'mother'?"

"Maria Alvarez? No, it would sound so funny. I've never seen her. She doesn't seem like my mother or anybody's mother. She's around singing before people and all that. And look at her picture."

He took one out of his pocket and handed it across the table. For the first time since the conversation had turned upon Maria Peter smiled. He recognized the picture. He too had had one just like it a good many years ago. It was taken two or three months before he married Maria Alvarez. However, Peter let it pass without comment.

"What does Maria say about what you're going to do?" he wanted to know. "She hasn't raised any objections to your going into the newspaper business?"

"No, she never mentioned that or anything definite. She's just kept hammering away at one thing. She keeps saying Pat don't do anything unless it's something you want to do very much. And she says if a man or a woman has something like that he wants to do he musn't let anything in the world stand in his way. He must go after it."

"Have you been living up to that? Have you been doing everything you wanted?"

"Well, no," said Pat, "not since Rufus Twice took me over."

Peter brightened. Maria had a fight on her hands. Rufus Twice was right behind him even as he had been behind President Wilson. But the next moment he was again sunk in gloom. They were done with dinner and Pat asked with unmistakable eagerness, "Couldn't we go some place and hear some music?"

Peter throttled down his chagrin but before he could answer Pat added, "Do you suppose there's any chance of our getting in to the Follies?"

CHAPTER VII

The plans of Rufus Twice did not work out quite according to specifications. Pat went to Harvard, but he failed to make the football team although he remained on the squad as a rather remotely removed substitute quarterback. He was not even taken to the Princeton game, but he wrote to Peter that he would be on the sidelines in uniform for the game with Yale at New Haven. It was arranged that he should meet Peter immediately afterwards at the Western Union office. Pat's letters from Harvard were sparse and infrequent.

"Football is the toughest course I have," he wrote, "and the dullest. Learning the signals here is worse than dates. You can't even guess at them. You have to know. Last week Bob Fisher gave us a blackboard talk in the locker-room and made a comparison between war and football. It sounded just like Mr. Twice. Maybe Mr. Twice put him up to it. It's beginning to seem to me as if that man ran everything in this world. The only thing I've enjoyed much is going round to Copeland's. He's an assistant professor in English. I take a course with him about Dr. Johnson and his Circle. I don't care anything about Dr. Johnson. He seems to have been the Rufus Twice of his day. But I do like hearing Copeland. The fellows that know him well call him 'Copey,' but I haven't nerve enough to do that. He has receptions in his room at night. There's a regular thing he tells you, 'Nobody comes much before ten or stays after eleven'. He talks about books and makes them exciting. I'm kind of steamed up about an English woman writer called May Sinclair. I've been reading 'Mary Olivier.' It isn't much like any writing I've ever seen before. She just sort of sails along over a story and whenever she sees anything that seems important to her she swoops down and collars it. All the stuff that doesn't matter is left out. There isn't much here that matters, but you can't leave it out because if you do the dean tells you about it. Do you remember that suggestion you made to me that night we took dinner at the Harvard Club. You remember you asked me if I ever thought any about singing myself. I got rather interested and thought some about going out for the Glee Club, but I knew Mr. Twice would raise the dickens if I didn't play football. Sometimes we sing up here in the room. Just swipes you know. I'm getting so I can work out chords on the piano. I don't know anything about my voice because it's always a bunch of us that sings together. I do know though that I can sing a lot louder than the rest. I think if you're smart you'll put a bet on us against Yale. Those lickings we got earlier in the season don't mean anything. We're just beginning to come along now. I don't know why I say 'we.' I mean 'they.' I haven't got anything to do with it. Somehow though I do get swept along into the whole business. Mr. Copeland was telling us the other night that we all take football a lot too seriously. He says nothing will crumble and fall down even if we don't beat Yale next Saturday. I know there's sense to that, but somehow I can't help caring about it. Keep your eyes on Charlie Bullitt when you come up to the game. When I watch him work I realize how far off I am from being a regular college quarterback. He's got a bean on him. I'll see you right after the game at the telegraph office. I suppose you're going to do the story for the Bulletin. See that Harvard doesn't get any the worst of it."

Peter did watch Bullitt, but more than that he watched the huddled crowd of Harvard players on the sidelines. He couldn't help feeling that in some way or other Pat would finally get into the game. His old habit of making pictures beforehand was with him. There was Pat throwing off his blanket and running out to report to the officials. Peter wondered if he would know him from his lofty seat at the top of the Stadium. He felt sure that he would. Still every time a Harvard substitute went in Peter shouted down the line to find out if at last this was Pat. The picture he had

fashioned for himself couldn't be wrong. Pat would run down the field through the blue team yard after yard over the goal line. If it only could happen to Pat. Once let him hear the roar of the whole Harvard cheering section racketing behind him and there could never be any more talk about his being a singer or anything like that. It wouldn't be exciting enough.

Just to sit there and watch made Peter feel that he was a part of one of the most thrilling manifestations of life. When the British went over and captured Messines Ridge Peter had watched the show from the top of Kemmel Hill. He and the other correspondents knew the exact second when the mines were to explode. They all knew that this might be the decisive push of the war. And as he waited for the great crash which would show that the attack was on Peter trembled. But the excitement didn't begin to toss him about as it did now when Harvard was playing Yale. Yes, it was true as Pat had said that there wasn't any sense to it, but there it was. It was a symbol of something much greater. Peter didn't know quite what. Maybe there was some significance for him in the fact that the Yale line was so much bigger and heavier. Harvard would have to win with speed and skill.

Maria had always said that there was no song in him. He knew that she felt he didn't appreciate beauty. But what could she ever show Pat that would pound a pulse like this. How could anybody dream of making a singer out of Pat when he might be a quarterback and after his own playing was done go on living the thing over as he watched the games year after year. And perhaps when Pat came to write he could put in it this thing that was sport, and beauty, and life and fighting and everything else worth while in life. Perhaps he could do the things that he spoke of in the letter about that English novelist, the woman that sort of soared over things and then swooped down on them. All this that was happening belonged to him and Pat. Maria and the boy had nothing like this in common. She just couldn't have an ear for football.

By and by Peter forgot all about her. He didn't even remember very much that Pat was waiting in the sidelines. The affair grew too desperate to admit of any personal considerations. The one present and compelling tragedy of Peter's life dwarfing all others was that Yale was winning. He had stationed beside him a young undergraduate from New Haven who was supposed to give him the substitutions in the Yale lineup and identify the Eli who carried the ball or made the tackle. This young man had gone a little more insane than Peter. He paid no attention to any questions, but pounded his fist on the great pile of copy paper which lay in front of Peter and shouted: "Touchdown! Touchdown! Touchdown!"

"Don't do that," said Peter. He didn't like the sentiment and he hated to have his notes knocked around. The Yale youngster didn't hear him. "Touchdown!" he screamed again and almost jarred Peter's typewriter over the edge of the Stadium.

A fumble lost three yards and halted the Yale attack. There came a punt and the Harvard quarterback raced down the field. Pat had said, "Watch Charlie Bullitt." They threw him on the fourteen yard line.

"Who made that tackle?" asked Peter.

"Hold 'em, Yale! Hold 'em, Yale!" chanted the undergraduate reporter.

Suddenly Peter jumped up scattering his notes all over the press box. His typewriter fell to the concrete with a clatter. "Harvard!" he said, and then much louder, "Harvard! Harvard!" And as he shouted the ball went over the line. It was only by chance that he happened to hit the Yale reporter on the back the first time, but he was so swept along by the wildness of the moment that he continued to slap him violently until the youngster moved away. A little later there was a field goal and presently the game was over and Harvard had won by a score of 10 to 3.

Peter didn't leave the press box immediately. He was much too shaky to attempt the journey down the long steps to the field. The Harvard stands had poured out on to the gridiron and the students were throwing their hats over the goal posts. The Yale undergraduates remained and across the field came booming, "For God! For Country! And for Yale!" Peter knew that he would have to cool off emotionally before he could write his story. That would have to tell who carried the ball and when and how far. He couldn't just write, "Harvard! Harvard! Harvard!" and let it go at that. He must make most of his story on that run of Bullitt's. The thing was almost perfect in its newspaper possibilities. It couldn't be better. The tackle which stopped the quarterback on the fourteen-yard line had knocked him out. Peter wished he knew what Dr. Nichols had said when he ran out to the player. Then he remembered somebody had told him once that the doctor had a formula which he invariably used when a player was knocked out. "What day of the week is it? Who are you playing? What's the score?" That was the test which must be passed by an injured man before he could remain in the game.

Suddenly an idea came to Peter. That was just the touch he needed. His story was made. He almost jogged all the way to the telegraph office. His first two starts were false ones. Then he achieved a sentence which suited him and pounded away steadily. No doubts assailed him. He was never forced to stop and hunt for any word. The thing just wrote itself. "There's a little trouble," said the chief operator, "but I can let you have a wire in about half an hour."

"I've got half of it done already," replied Peter. "Make it snappy." They were holding him up and he stopped to look over what he had written.

"Cambridge, Mass., November, 19—By Peter Neale—The Harvard worm turned into a snake dance. Tied by Penn State, beaten by Centre and by Princeton, the plucky Crimson eleven made complete atonement this afternoon when it won from Yale by a score of 10 to 3.

"Joy came in the evening. Harvard did all its scoring in the dusk of the final period. The Crimson backs showed that they were not afraid to go home in the dark.

"Charles K. Bullitt, quarterback, who weighs 156 pounds, earned most of the glory. In the past this slight young man has been valued chiefly for his head work. He is rather a delicate piece of thinking machinery and it has been the custom to guard him a little from the bumps of the game. His rôle has been like that of a chief of staff.

"The customary procedure is for Bullitt to peer calmly over the opposing lines and then make a suggestion to one

of the bigger backs as to where it might be advisable for him to go. In general his acquaintance with the ball has been only a passing one. He is expected merely to fair catch punts and not to run them back. Indeed for the last two years Bullitt has fairly thought his way into a place on the Harvard team.

"But today the scholar in football suddenly became the man of action. He proved that he could function from the neck down. Standing at midfield, late in the third period, Bullitt received a punt from Aldrich. He switched his tactics. Instead of playing safe he began to run. Leaving his philosophic cloister, he plunged headlong into life. And it was life of the roughest sort, for Yale men were all about him. Fortunately for the little anchorite of the football field he had achieved a theory during his sheltered meditations and it worked. Whenever a Yale tackler approached him he thrust out one foot. And then, just to fool the foe, he took it away again.

"The zest of living gripped him and he went on and on over the chalk marks. It seemed to him that the rigors of existence had been overstated. Drunk with achievement he set no limit on his journey. But the Yale tacklers did.

"In the end the world was too much with him. Disillusion came in the form of two tacklers in blue who hurled themselves upon him. Their hands touched him and held tight. Down went Bullitt. The big stadium turned three complete revolutions before his eyes. Pinwheels danced. From a distance of approximately one million miles he heard thousands of people crying 'Harvard! Harvard! Harvard!' Curiously enough they were all whispering. And then he lost consciousness. After several quarts of water had been poured over Bullitt he came to. Dr. Nichols the physician of the Harvard team was standing over him. The doctor waited while Bullitt blinked a couple of times and then he propounded his stock questions which he always uses after a player has been knocked out. The test of rationality was, 'What day is it? Whom are you playing? And what's the score?' Dr. Nichols was gravity itself but Bullitt grinned and answered, 'It's Saturday, November nineteenth. We're playing Yale and the score is three to nothing against us but Harvard's going to get a touchdown damn soon.'

"Dr. Nichols gave it as his professional opinion that Bullitt was rational. Four minutes later as the Crimson swept over the line for a touchdown, he knew it."

Just as he finished rereading his story the wire chief came in and announced that he had the Bulletin looped up. Before Peter could hand him the copy Pat walked into the office. Peter felt just as he had done at the pier. He wanted to throw his arms around Pat. "It was wonderful, wasn't it?" he cried. "That's the greatest game I ever saw in my life."

"Yes," said Pat, "I guess it was a good game. Have you finished your story?"

"Just the lead. Do you want to see it?"

"All right."

"The wire's waiting for me. Hand it over a sheet at a time as soon as you get done."

Peter turned to his typewriter, but he couldn't go on. He kept watching Pat. He waited to hear him say something. Pat read on to the end without comment. Then he looked up. "Where did you get that story about Charlie Bullitt and Doc Nichols?"

"I didn't get it. I knew that they said something to each other and I thought that would be about it."

"The part about Nichols is all right. Those are the questions he always asks, but Charlie Bullitt wouldn't have said anything like that. Don't you know how serious they take football. They'd put a man off the squad for making jokes like that. He winked, did he? They shook him up a long ways beyond winking. I don't believe he said it at all. Who told you anyway?"

"I've said nobody told me. It's just one of those things that might have happened."

"Don't stand there holding on to that copy," Peter added in exasperation. "The wire's waiting."

"But you're not going to send it, are you? It's not true. It doesn't even sound true."

"I'm writing this story," said Peter. "Hand it in."

"All right."

Pat carried it to the operator in the next room. Peter began to write again but all the zest and excitement of it was gone. He had to fumble around and look at his notes. Nothing went right. It was almost three quarters of an hour before he got to the last page. Pat sat across the table from him saying nothing.

"All done," said Peter at last. "Where shall we go?"

"I don't care."

"Maybe there's a party for the team that you've got to go to."

"I don't have to go. I'm not going."

"What's the matter with you, Pat. You'd think Yale had licked us. Are you sore because you didn't get into the game?"

"No, I knew I wouldn't get in. Pretty near the whole squad would have to be struck by lightning before I got in. That wasn't it. I found out this afternoon that Copeland was right. The thing doesn't matter. It's silly to get so worked up about it."

"What made you think that?"

"You remember that man that dropped the punt in the first quarter, that fumble that gave the Elis the chance for

their field goal."

"Yes, I remember. He had it square in his hands and muffed it."

"Well, that was Bill French. I know him better than anybody else on the squad. He's a corker. They hauled him out right after that muff and as he came off one of the coaches said something to him. I don't know what, but he flopped down on the seat right beside me and began blubbing like a kid. He was trying not to, you understand, but just bawling away."

"Oh, he'll forget about all that by tomorrow."

"No, he won't and nobody else will. They won't let him forget. He'll be 'the man that dropped the punt.' If we hadn't won he'd be around thinking of committing suicide. It's just rotten. There oughtn't to be things like that."

"Well, you can't have any kind of a real struggle without somebody suffering."

"Then let 'em suffer for something worth while. The thing's all dolled up in the newspaper stories. You come along with that yarn about Bullitt saying, 'We're going to get a touchdown damn soon' and all that stuff about his getting knocked out."

"Well, he did get knocked out, didn't he?"

"You bet your life he did but it wasn't all nice and pretty. Pinwheels and whispering cheers in his ears and all that. You weren't close enough to see what happened when Jim came out with the sponge."

"What did happen?"

"He put his lunch, but that isn't pretty enough to get in your story."

"That's not going to disable him for life."

"I didn't say it would. He was just a sick pup and he would have liked to go off some place and lie down. But you can't. I'd die for dear old Harvard and all that. He had to get up and go on with it. If you don't you're a quitter and you haven't got any guts. I tell you I think it's damn rot. It's phoney like your story."

"Maybe you'll have a chance to write a better one some day," said Peter. He had hard work to steady himself. He didn't believe Bullitt had been hurt any worse than he was at that moment. Pat didn't answer.

"Wasn't there anything that gave you any kick all afternoon?" asked Peter after a pause.

"Sure, just one thing. It was the Yale stands singing 'Die Wacht Am Rhein.' I know they've got terribly silly words, but there is something that has got guts. I think that's just about ten times as exciting as all the football games ever played. There was our crowd tooting away, 'Hit the line for Harvard, for Harvard wins today' and that big song with all those marching feet in it throbbing over across the field."

"German feet," objected Peter.

"Well, but they are feet and you can't take the beat and the sweep out of it. Maybe we did win the game but they did sing the heads off us."

"Another moral victory for Yale," suggested Peter.

CHAPTER VIII

When Peter came into his office one afternoon a couple of weeks after the Yale game he found Pat sitting at his desk waiting for him.

"I'm through," said Pat.

"What's the matter?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, they're through with me. They've fired me."

Pat looked across the desk expectantly awaiting a question. Peter didn't ask it. "I'm sorry," was all he said.

"You know about it. I suppose you must have the letter from the dean by now. It took me three days getting back from Cambridge."

"I don't know anything about it. You can tell me if you want to."

"Well, I got fired the worst way. It wasn't just flunking courses. I didn't even mean to do it. Not ahead of time anyway. It just sort of happened."

Peter waited and then suddenly he remembered his interview with Miles years ago, the day he came to the office in bandages and was never offered a chance to tell about it. A question would be kinder.

"What happened, Pat?" he asked.

"The proctor reported me. I had a girl in my room. No, that's slicking it up and making it sound romantic and pretty. What I mean is I had a woman in my room. You know ... a woman."

"I know," said Peter.

"You remember I was low in my mind after the football game. It let me down. I don't care what I wrote you before the game. I really did think it was going to be fine. I thought I'd get stirred by it and after it was all over the only things I remembered were Bill French sitting on the side-lines crying and Charlie Bullitt out on the field putting his lunch. You don't mind if I tell it this way—the long way."

"Take your time."

"Well, I know it sounds silly, but it seemed to me that I just had to go out and find something that was thrilling and beautiful too. I saw this girl—this woman—walking across Harvard Square. It was night and raining and blowing. The wind was almost carrying her along. You know it made her seem so alive."

He paused again. Peter could not resist an impulse to break into the story. "She said to you, 'Come along' or a something like that," he suggested.

"No, I spoke to her. I said, 'Why get wet?' It was dark and we sneaked up the stairs in Weld to my room. And then it wasn't beautiful at all." Pat buried his head in his hands.

This time Peter did put his arm around his shoulders. "That's right," said Peter, "it wasn't beautiful. You couldn't know that. Nobody ever does. I didn't."

Pat looked up and in the second he had snapped back to normal. The shame had gone somewhere; into Peter's protecting arm perhaps. He managed a smile.

"Peter," he said, "there's something more I'm sorry about. I'm sorry for what I said about that football story. It was a good football story. A peach of a story—all but that part about Charlie Bullitt and Dr. Nichols."

Peter grinned back at him. "That's my weakness. I can't help being a little yellow sometime."

A sudden elation swept over Peter. Here at last was a secret shared just by him and Pat. Of course, the Dean of Harvard College and the proctor and the woman who walked in the rain knew about it, but they didn't count.

"The proctor saw her when she was going out," Pat added just to finish up the story. There they left it and went on to talk of other things but presently Miss Nathan came in.

"Mr. Neale," she said, "Mr. Twice wants to see you in his office."

Peter got up. "No," she said, "it's Mr. Pat Neale he wants to see. He's been asking for him for a couple of days now. I told him that he was here this afternoon."

"What's Twice want to see you for, I wonder?"

"I know," said Pat. "I've just thought of it. He must have got the Dean's letter. Don't you remember it was Mr. Twice arranged about my going to Harvard before you got back? I suppose they think he's still my guardian."

"Do you want me to come in with you?"

"Never mind. Now that I've got it off my chest once I guess I can do it again."

Pat was gone for almost three quarters of an hour. Peter walked up and down nervously. He wondered what was happening. From across the transoms of Twice's office he could hear just the rumbling of the editor's voice. Pat didn't seem to be saying anything. At last he came back.

"What did he say to you? He seemed to be raising Cain."

"No, he didn't say anything much. At least not much about the Dean's letter. He had that all right. He got talking to me about Krafft-Ebing."

"Oh, was that all?"

"No, there was more than that. I report down here for work on Monday."

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"The trouble with him," said Rufus Twice, "is that he doesn't seem to understand that you've got to have a certain routine in a newspaper office. Deering tells me that he hardly ever gets in at one o'clock. Along about two he calls up on the phone and wants to get his assignment that way. And last night Warren says that he called up after ten and said, 'It's raining like hell. You don't really want me to go out and cover that story, do you?' Warren told him, 'Oh no, Mr. Neale. I didn't know it was raining. Of course, if this keeps up we won't get out any paper at all.'"

Peter couldn't laugh because Twice was telling him of the reportorial shortcomings of Pat. He spoke to Pat about it when he got home to the apartment. The old flat in Sixty-sixth Street was again theirs.

"But I get such lousy assignments," said Pat. "I think Deering's down on me. I suppose I've given him cause all right, but he's taking it out on me. He sends me where there isn't any chance of getting anything. If I do write something it never gets in the paper anyway. I did tell him it was raining. What was the use of my getting wet for nothing? They wanted me to go up to a meeting of the trustees of the Museum of Natural History. Now what could I get out of that?"

"Didn't you go up?" said Peter aghast. "He was just being sarcastic when he told you there wouldn't be any paper if the rain kept up."

"Oh, I know that. The Bulletin comes out every day all right. That's the trouble with it, but I took him up literally on what he said. I don't think the joke was on me. It was on him."

"You shouldn't do things like that."

"Suppose I had gone. There wouldn't have been any story anyway."

"You've got to quit supposing. Let the city editor do that. The worst-looking assignment may turn out to be something if you go after it."

"Yes, once in every twenty years those directors of the Museum of Natural History get into an awful row about whether to put the ichthyosaurus on the second floor or in the basement and if anything like that happened they'd turn over the whole front page to me."

Peter shook his head gloomily. "You've got the wrong spirit. Even if your assignments are no good keep your eyes and your ears open when you go round the city and something will turn up. That's the way to show them. Bring in something you pick up yourself. Every day of the year there must be whole pagefuls of stuff just as good and better than the stuff we get in the paper. Only we don't find out about it. Keep scouting for stuff like that. When you say newspaper work's stupid you're practically saying that life's stupid."

"Maybe it is," said Pat, "but I'm not so sure about that as I am about newspapers."

"It's the same thing."

"I don't think so. Here's the sort of thing that makes life amusing and isn't worth anything for a newspaper. I was riding in one of those B.R.T. subway trains the other day and there were two women sitting next me on one of those cross seats. One was fat and middle-aged and the other was younger. I didn't notice her so much. It was the fat one who was doing the talking. She was very much excited and she was explaining something to the younger woman. 'Why, I said to him,' she told her—'I said to him, 'Why, Mr. Babcock, I don't want to be sacrilegious but that girl she's so sweet and so pretty I don't even believe our Lord himself could be mean to her.' That made me satisfied with the whole day, but imagine coming in and trying to put it over on Warren or Deering for a story."

"A story's got to begin some place and end some place," objected Peter.

"The kind I get don't begin any place and so I don't have to wait around for them to end."

Peter went to Rufus Twice and told him that Pat didn't seem to be making any progress in general work.

"You ought to be more patient, Neale," answered Twice. "What's all this hurry about Pat? He won't be twenty-one yet for a couple of years."

"It's nearer than that. It's just thirteen months and three days." Peter could have told him the hours and the minutes too which lay between Pat and his eight o'clock appointment in Paris.

"That doesn't make him exactly aged. He's learning or he ought to be learning all the time. Even if he didn't get a line in the paper all year he wouldn't be wasting his time. Just being here helps him to pick up my way of doing things. Of course, when I say 'my' I mean the paper's."

"All that's perfectly true, Mr. Twice, but I have a very special reason for wanting him to get ahead right now. I want him to be interested. I want him to feel that he's important."

"There isn't any job around here that isn't important. You ought to know that, Neale. None of us count as individuals. We're all part of the Bulletin. Nobody can say that one cog's more important than another. Did you ever see a Liberty motor assembled?"

"Yes," said Peter with as much haste and emphasis as he could muster, but it was probably the convenient ringing of the phone which saved him.

"If Mr. Boone has anything to say in reply to the story we printed this morning he's welcome to come to my office and see me. That is if he's got facts. I want you to know that I resent his making his complaint through an advertising agency. I don't care if I am impolite. I intend to be. Don't bother to threaten me about your advertising. You can't take it out. I'll beat you to that. It's thrown out. Good-bye."

Twice swung his chair around and faced Peter. "I've just cost the paper \$65,000 a year in advertising," he said cheerfully. "The Dubell Agency was trying to bawl me out about that Sun Flower Oil story we had on the front page this morning. Did you see it?"

"Well, I saw the headlines," said Peter untruthfully.

"I want you to read it. Weed did it. I told you I was going to make something out of that young man. Let's see, what were we talking about?"

Peter almost said, "The Liberty Motor," but stopped himself in time. "We were talking about Pat."

"Oh yes, I remember. I suppose, Neale, you and I could say without egotism that we're important cogs here on the Bulletin. I suppose sometimes it seems to us that we're vital cogs, but if you should die tomorrow the Bulletin would come out just the same. I'd give you a good obit but work would go on. Nobody is indispensable. Pat's got to get it through his head that he's just part of an army."

"I think he has," said Peter, "but the trouble is he feels that he's got a permanent assignment on kitchen police."

"But consider this, Neale. I didn't seduce Pat away from college and on to the Bulletin. I did promise him a job and he's got it. He can't expect to hang around here for a year or so and jump right in and write lead stories. What is it you want me to do anyway?"

"Well, I thought maybe it would be a good thing to shift him over on sports. He knows baseball and football and I'd like to have him come out with me and do notes of the games and things like that. That would be down his alley. That would interest him and I think he could do it."

"I don't think it's the best way. I think you're forgetting that general news is the backbone of a paper. All the rest is tacked on. You're wrong but I tell you what I'll do. I'm going to yield to your judgment. Go in and tell Clark that I want Pat to report to him from now on. Go and send Pat in. I want to have a talk with him."

Peter ran into Pat late that night in the Newspaper Club.

"Did Twice get hold of you?" he asked.

"He certainly did," said Pat. "He's decided to take me off general work and put me on sports. His idea is to send me around with you to football games and baseball and have me write notes. You know 'Diamond Chips' or 'Hot Off The Gridiron.'"

"Did he say anything else to you?"

"Yes, he asked me if I'd ever seen a Liberty Motor assembled and I said, 'No,' and he told me about it. Oh yes, and he said, 'When a reporter goes out on a story there are four things he ought to remember—When! Where! What! and Why!'"

"What's the matter with that?" Peter felt that Pat ought to show a little more delight and gratitude at being fairly launched on his career as a sporting writer.

"Well, I tried it out on that assignment I had to cover—the directors of the Museum of Natural History. It worked out like this—When—last night. Where—the palatial apartment of Mr. Harold Denny at 605 Park avenue. What—the annual report of the directors of the Museum of Natural History. Why—God knows."

Pat was busily engaged with three other men in a game called horse racing. Each contestant had two pool balls and all were lined up at one end of the table with a piece of board behind them. The starter's job rotated among the players. He sent the balls spinning up the table and the one which landed nearest to the rail on the rebound won the purse. Peter wanted to talk to Pat, but he seemed anxious to get away.

"There's a newspaper man over in the corner that I'd like to have you meet," said Peter.

"Who is it?"

"His name's Heywood Broun. He's on the World."

"Which one do you mean? The one with the shave?"

"No, the other one."

"I'm too busy," said Pat. "I can't be bothered. We're just going to run the Suburban Handicap, That costs fifty cents for each horse."

As the balls were shoved away Pat raced down the table with them shouting, "Come on Ulysses. Come on James Joyce." He ran over to Peter with a handful of coins. "Ulysses won," he said, "and James Joyce was second."

"What do you call them that for?"

"They're named after a book I've been reading."

Peter was about to head up town, but Pat urged him to stay. "Stick around awhile," he said, "as soon as Nick Carter shows up the quartette's going to have a concert."

"What quartette?"

"Oh just me and three other fellows. We're pretty good. At least I am. We get in a few swipes almost every night."

"Are you still going to the opera so much?" asked Peter anxiously.

"No, I haven't had any time. There isn't any opera now anyway but it's almost a year since I've been."

"Have you heard from Maria lately?"

"The last letter I got was almost six months ago. She didn't say anything much except she said that before long she was going to see me in Paris. I don't know how. You haven't heard Mr. Twice say anything about giving me an assignment over there, the annual meeting of the house committee of the Louvre or anything like that?"

"He hasn't said anything to me about it."

Peter didn't wait for the singing nor was he particularly worried about it. He was cheered by the fact that Pat had spoken so casually of the opera and of Maria. When he got home to the flat he noticed a big book in blue paper covers on the table. It was "Ulysses" by James Joyce.

"Why, that's the book Pat named the pool balls after." He picked it up and began at the beginning and then skipped ahead frantically. An hour or so later Pat came in. Peter pointed to the book and looked at him reproachfully.

"What does it mean, Pat?" he asked. Stumbling over it at random he read:

"In a giggling peal young goldbronze voices blended. Douce with Kennedy your other eye. They threw young heads back, bronze gigglegold, to let freefly their laughter, screaming, your other, signals to each other, high piercing notes."

"I don't know," said Pat. "I haven't got that far yet. But what difference does it make what it means? That isn't the point. There's music in it."

As Peter was going to bed he cursed silently to himself. "Damn this music. They're even trying to play it on typewriters now."

CHAPTER IX

On sports Pat worked better and more cheerfully. It was Pat who devised the note at one of the Princeton football games, "The Tiger eleven has three fine backs and the greatest of these is Gharrity." And he came through splendidly when he was assigned to cover Marshal Foch's activities at another game and report in detail what the Frenchman did. Peter found the story posted on the board in the Bulletin office. In fact Twice had allowed Pat to have his signature in the paper. Right after Peter's own story it came—"By Peter Neale, Jr."

This was the third reading for Peter but he could not resist the pleasure of standing in front of the board in the City Room and looking over it again slowly:

"Ferdinand Foch, field marshal, was outranked this afternoon by Malcolm Aldrich, captain. The Field Marshal was received enthusiastically by the 80,000 spectators but he found he could not hold the attention of the throng once the whistle had blown. He became then just a spectator at one of the greatest football games ever played between Yale and Princeton. Come to think of it he was rather less a part of the proceedings than the young men in the cheering section behind him. Foch did not have a blue feather, or a girl, or a bet on the game. The greatest military leader in the world was assigned today to the humble job of being just a neutral. He must have known that momentous things were happening when 40,000 roared defiance and another 40,000 roared back. Undoubtedly he was stirred when huge sections of the Bowl turned into fluttering banks of orange and black, or of blue, but probably there was much of it which he could not understand. It would be hard, for instance, to explain to a man who had been at Verdun the justice of penalizing anybody for holding, nor did the rival teams pay any respect to the slogan 'They shall not pass!' They did it all the time.

"The young American officer detailed to help the distinguished visitor did his best. 'You see, Marshal,' he would explain, 'it's this way. Yale has *la balle* on Princeton's 35-yard line and it's *premier bas* with *dix* yards to go.' Just at that point Aldrich or O'Hearn would tear through the Tigers for a run and the American officer grew so excited that he would lose the thread of his explanations. Foch never did catch up."

"It's just the way I would have written it myself," thought Peter.

Pat was grinning when he found him. "How did you like my parody?" he asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't you see yourself in that story about Foch. That business about 'They shall not pass' ought've tipped you off. I thought that was a regular Peter Neale touch."

"Oh," said Peter, "you were just fooling."

"But here's the best of it," added Pat. He held out a letter from Rufus Twice which read:

"Dear Pat, I want to congratulate you on the story you wrote about Foch at the football game. It was excellent. All the facts were there and you handled them with a fresh and original touch of your own. When I saw the Marshal at luncheon today he said he was very much amused by our story—Twice."

"Well," said Peter a little bitterly, "if that was just an imitation keep it up."

Pat did keep it up although he grew a little restive during the winter. "If they're going to be many more of these indoor track meets," he complained, "I want to be put back on the Museum of Natural History. Clark there in the sporting department is just crazy about facts. You have to squeeze them all into the first paragraph. Even if anything exciting ever did happen there wouldn't be any chance to tell about it. You'd have to start out just the same and say how many people there were in the hall and what the temperature was and whether it was raining or snowing outside."

Still he had conformed with sufficient fidelity to remain in the graces of the powers on the Bulletin and when Summer came around Pat was assigned to go with Peter to Atlantic City and watch Jack Dempsey train. Pat's part was to write a half column of notes called 'Sidelights On The Big Show.' After the first day or so Pat lost interest in the actual boxing at Dempsey's camp.

"Where do you see anything in that?" he asked Peter as they sat at the ringside in the enclosure near the training camp of the champion. Dempsey was whaling away with both hands at Larry Williams, an unfortunate blonde heavyweight who seemed to be under a contract or some other compulsion to go two rounds every day.

"Watch him," exclaimed Pat as Williams clinched desperately and tucked his head over Dempsey's shoulder. "He looks like an old cow leaning over a fence."

"That's a good line," said Peter, "don't waste it on me. Use it in the Bulletin."

But Pat wandered off and loafed around the training quarters. When he came back to the hotel late that afternoon he had something else.

"This is all right, isn't it?" he asked. Peter looked over the copy which Pat had written.

"Dempsey is taking a great deal of electricity into his system," he read, "in preparation for his fight with Carpentier. This portion of his training is being handled by S. J. Foster, D.C.M.T., chiropractor, mechano-therapist and electrical therapist. In other words Doc Foster is the man who rubs Dempsey after his workouts. But the rubbing is only a small part of it. Doc Foster insists on that. His chief pride and reliance is the polysine generator. 'Why, that machine,' said Doc Foster, this afternoon, 'has got some currents in it that would break your arm in a minute. Yes, sir, they'd break your arm quicker than that.' And as he boasted he looked rather longingly at the fattest arm of the fattest newspaper correspondent. Of course, there are more soothing currents as well in the polysine generator. 'They just reach down after the deep muscles,' the old Doc explained, 'and grab 'em.' He neglected to add just what the electricity does with the deep muscles after it has grabbed them. Presumably it does not break them, but just frolics around with the muscles and then casts them aside like withered violets."

"Sure," said Peter, "that's fine. You don't have to bother with Larry Williams at all. I'll put all the stuff about him into the lead."

Next morning Peter awoke with a splitting headache. Toward noon it got much worse. He called Pat in from the next room. "I'm up against it," he told him. "I'm sick as a dog. Of course I could telegraph to the office and get them to send somebody down but I don't want to do that. This is your chance. You'll have to do the lead story. You say you can imitate me or parody me or whatever you call it. Now's the time to go to it. And say nobody has to know that I'm not doing it. Just sign your story 'by Peter Neale.'"

"I'll do my best," said Pat. Peter dozed off late that afternoon and the doze became a deep slumber. He did not wake until morning when there came a violent rapping on his door. In the hall was a messenger with a telegram. Peter opened it and read:

"What happened? We didn't get the story. Never mind telephoning explanations because I'm coming down over the week-end. I'll be at the hotel at one—Twice."

Pat was nowhere around the hotel and nobody seemed to know where he had gone. Peter was still mystified when Rufus Twice arrived. He thought at first of trying to conceal the fact that Pat had acted as his substitute and then decided not to. "It isn't fair to expect me to do as much as that," he thought. However he found that any such deception would have been useless.

"What happened to you?" was Twice's first question.

"I was sick. I had a blinding headache and I told Pat to do the story. Didn't he send anything?"

"Yes, but it might as well have been nothing. All we had to go by was the A. P. Dempsey cut loose yesterday and knocked Larry Williams down three times. The last time they had to carry him out of the ring. And our story was something about a man named Daredevil Oliver that's doing a high dive at an amusement park down here. It was signed Peter Neale but I knew it couldn't be you."

Twice picked some copy out of his pocket and flourished it in the air. "Lights. Gray mist. East wind," he read. "Good God! Peter, nobody can say I don't appreciate Walt Whitman or Amy Lowell, but I tell you Dempsey knocked Larry Williams down three times. The last time he was out clean as a whistle."

"You mean to say there wasn't any Peter Neale story in the paper?" asked Peter terrified.

"Yes, you get off all right. You don't suffer any. I did it myself. I rewrote the A. P. and signed your name. But it was just the merest chance that I happened to drop in at the office. You should have called me up and let me send a man down."

"But I didn't know he'd blow up like that. The other story he did from here seemed all right."

"Yes, but it wasn't news. I think Pat can write but somebody's got to stand over him and tell him what news is. The one he sent might have been all right for an editorial page feature though it was a little esoteric. What do you suppose 'gigglegold' means or is that something the operator did?"

"I don't know what it means but it's a word James Joyce uses in 'Ulysses.'"

"I'd forgotten," said Twice. "Of course. I was trying to place it. Great book, 'Ulysses,' never should have been suppressed. But you couldn't use any of it on the sporting page."

"Was it all like that?"

"Pretty much. It was about this Daredevil Oliver doing a high dive of a hundred and five feet into four feet of water. And there were only nine people there to watch him and how ironic it would have been if he'd broken his neck. And then some more about Eugene O'Neill and the tragic drama in America. Jack Dempsey or Larry Williams or the fight never got mentioned at all."

Pat came in without knocking. He was flushed and angry. "Mr. Twice," he said, "that story in the Bulletin signed 'Peter Neale' wasn't the story I sent. I wouldn't have written anything like that."

"I know it," said Twice, "that's why I wrote it."

"Didn't you go down to see the workout?" asked Peter.

"Of course I did. I didn't stay all through it. I waited until Jack Dempsey knocked that old cow Larry Williams down

for the third time and then I got bored and went out."

"But that was the story," cried Peter. "Can't you see that."

"Why Dempsey could knock out Larry Williams a hundred times in an afternoon," objected Pat.

"That isn't the point," Twice broke in. "News isn't things that might happen. News is things that do happen. When a reporter goes out on a story there are four things for him to remember."

"I know," said Pat. "When! Where! What! and Why!"

"Yes, and there are two ways of doing a story. One of them is the way I want it to be done. The other doesn't count. I don't want you to argue with me. I tell you that your story should have been about Larry Williams getting knocked out. Some day you'll learn why. Pat, I'm not going to fire you. You've got stuff. Deering's had a crack at you and so has your father. Now I'm going to see what I can do. You're to go back to New York this afternoon. Report at my office on Monday. Hereafter you'll get your assignments from me and turn your copy over to me. I've never been licked yet and I'm not going to be licked now. I'm going to make a newspaperman of you or my name's not Rufus Twice."

After Twice had gone Peter asked, "Pat, what made you want to throw me down?"

"You don't think I made all this trouble for you on purpose?"

"Well, why did you go and write a story about Daredevil Oliver and leave Dempsey out of it?"

"It seemed so much more important to me. You'd have thought so too if you'd seen him. He just leaned back off the platform so slowly. He could have stopped himself any second. And then all of a sudden he couldn't. And he started to fall."

"But the story was signed with my name. Didn't you think of that?"

"Of course I did."

"Didn't you remember that I'd get blamed for it."

Pat was pale with earnestness and almost crying. "I didn't think anybody'd be blamed. I wanted to do something for you."

"Do you mean to say," asked Peter in surprise, "that you thought it was as good a story as I'd write."

"I thought it was a better story. It was a better story than you ever wrote."

Peter was silent with astonishment. Where, he wondered, did his son Peter Neale, second, ever unearth such amazing and audacious confidence. Suddenly it came to him that he was not the only parent. He remembered Maria. Obviously there was no use in arguing with Pat any further. Indeed he was almost a little frightened at so bold a blaze of spirit.

"Well," he said at length, "what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to report to Mr. Twice on Monday," answered Pat.

Peter sent down and got a "Bulletin" in order to find out just what it was that Peter Neale had written. He read only the first line, "Can Jack Dempsey sock? Ask Larry Williams."

CHAPTER X

Not until after the big fight did Peter get back to the Bulletin office. He found a subdued and cheerless Pat. "How are things going?" he asked.

"I'm learning a trade," said Pat.

Rufus Twice was more optimistic. "He's getting along fine," he reported. "I flatter myself that he's picked up more of the newspaper angle on things in the last two weeks than he got in a whole year before this. You see I call him into the office every afternoon and go over the paper with him and show him why we've used each story and the reason for handling it the way we do. He's been a good soldier. I'll tell you what I'll do. You take your vacation next week and I'll let him go with you. You ought to have a month but I don't believe the syndicate can spare you. Three weeks is the best I can do."

Peter and Pat planned to go out in the country some place, but they kept putting it off and two weeks were gone before they decided on Westport, Conn., and bought the tickets. On the morning set for the journey Pat came into Peter's room with the paper.

"Don't let's go," he said.

"All right but why not."

"Maria Algarez is here. They've got her picture in the Bulletin. It isn't a very good one. She got in from Argentine

yesterday afternoon."

"Maria Alvarez here in New York? Where?"

"It doesn't say."

A messenger arrived with a letter a few hours later. Peter opened it and read:

"You must not hide from me. I have called up the Bulletin and they say you are not there. When I ask for the number of your house they tell me it is the rule that they must not tell. Is it, Peter, that so many ladies call you up? The next time I am more smart. I say that your father is very sick and that I am the nurse and must know where you are. But I should have known. It is twenty years and the flat it is the same. You are like that Peter. You do not change. I thought not to see you and Pat until next year in Paris but from Buenos Aires I decided suddenly I will go to New York. Here I am. My hotel it is the Ritz. You and Pat you will come tonight at eight and have supper with me—Maria."

"I didn't want to go to Westport much anyway," said Pat.

He was more nervous than Peter when they came to the door of Maria's suite. She kissed Peter but Pat only held out his hand. Maria laughed. "He does not know me. I know him. He is like the picture."

Pat was almost silent during supper. He spoke up only once. Maria was ordering. "We will have some vegetable," she said. "What is the name? I do not know the English. *Les épinards*."

"That's spinach," said Peter and added slyly. "Pat doesn't like spinach. He won't want that."

"Yes, I do," said Pat promptly.

Peter smiled but he had the joke all to himself. Pat had forgotten.

After dinner they talked sparsely with Peter doing most of the work. Suddenly Maria said, "It is necessary that somebody he ask me."

Peter was puzzled, but Pat understood. "I've waited for five years to hear you sing. Won't you?"

"It is nice, but it is the twenty years I have waited. First you must sing."

"I can't."

"Maybe. It must be that sometimes you have sung."

"Oh, just with other people. Swipes you know."

"I do not know what it is but you sing and the swipes I will do."

"Just anything. That's all I can sing—anything."

Maria moved over to the piano. "The accompaniment it is not necessary but it I can do if what you sing it is not too hard."

"It's just something you sing around with a crowd."

"Come nearer."

Pat moved over beside the piano.

"Allons!"

Maria looked up at him and whispered, "You can. I know."

There was no banter in it. Pat began a little husky at first but then louder and clearer.

"Down by the stream where I first met Rebecca
Down by the stream where the sun loves to shine.
Sweet were the garlands I wound for Rebecca.
Bright eyes gave answer, she said she'd be mine.
One, two, three, four,
Sometimes I wish there were more.
Ein, zwei, drei, vier,
I love the one that's near.
Ut ne sam si,
So says the heathen Chinee.
Fair girls bereft
There will get left,
One, two, and three."

Maria looked up and smiled. Peter waited in an agony. He remembered that he had not heard Pat sing since he was a small child. He waited for somebody to speak. He did not know whether or not it was good. Somebody would have to tell him if this was the singing voice for which Maria had hoped.

She continued to look at Pat and smile and he smiled back now more boldly.

Peter couldn't stand it any longer. "Tell me ... Maria. Can he sing?"

Getting up from the piano she put a hand on Pat's shoulder.

"It is the fine voice that I know. I think it will be the greatest voice in all the world."

Peter took out his handkerchief and mopped his forehead. Maria turned to him. "The time it is not up. I have come too soon. There is still the year. But you must not. We cannot wait."

"Ask him. Tell him," said Peter hoarsely.

"Pat," she said, "if you will come with me to Paris you can be the great singer. It will not be tomorrow. It will be two years. Maybe three years. You must work. You must do what I say."

"When?" asked Pat trembling.

"In the week."

Peter said nothing, but he looked at Pat. The boy continued to stare at Maria.

"Pat," he said.

His son turned to him.

"I want to, Peter. I want to."

Peter mopped his forehead again.

"He wants to, Maria," he said. "I give up my year." Peter paused. "I give up all my years," he added in a low voice.

"But you must not give up the years," said Maria. "We will go to Paris, all three. It will be more and more. You must watch and listen. He is your son Peter."

But Peter shook his head. "No," he answered, "it wouldn't mean anything to me. I wouldn't know. I don't care anything about tunes."

Maria ran her hands over the keys playing softly "The Invitation to the Waltz." She watched Peter but he gave no sign of recognition. He was fumbling in his pocket for something. At last he found it and pulled out a letter.

"You see it wouldn't be possible for me to go anyway," he said. "This morning I got this letter from Rufus Twice. He's the Supervising Editor of the Bulletin. He writes and says, 'I'm sorry about your vacation, but it is imperative that you give up the last week of it. The syndicate's doing great work on your Hit And Run column. Booth has just come back from the West and he's sold you to eighteen more papers. When you got back from the war I promised you two hundred. This addition brings it up to two hundred and ten. You see I've made good for you. But Booth says they want the stuff right off. Another week might mean our losing some of them.'"

Peter folded up the letter and put it in his pocket. "There's no chance anyway. It's the tightest race they've had in the American League for years and pretty soon the World Series'll be on and right after that football starts. With all that going on there ought to be something in the paper by Peter Neale."

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BOY GREW OLDER ***

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