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THE DWELLING-PLACE OF LIGHT

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CHAPTER I

In this modern industrial civilization of which we are sometimes wont to boast, a certain glacier-like process may be observed. The bewildered, the helpless—and there are many—are torn from the parent rock, crushed, rolled smooth, and left stranded in strange places. Thus was Edward Bumpus severed and rolled from the ancestral ledge, from the firm granite of seemingly stable and lasting things, into shifting shale; surrounded by fragments of cliffs from distant lands he had never seen. Thus, at five and fifty, he found himself gate-keeper of the leviathan Chippering Mill in the city of Hampton.

That the polyglot, smoky settlement sprawling on both sides of an historic river should be a part of his native New England seemed at times to be a hideous dream; nor could he comprehend what had happened to him, and to the world of order and standards and religious sanctions into which he had

been born. His had been a life of relinquishments. For a long time he had clung to the institution he had been taught to believe was the rock of ages, the Congregational Church, finally to abandon it; even that assuming a form fantastic and unreal, as embodied in the edifice three blocks distant from Fillmore Street which he had attended for a brief time, some ten years before, after his arrival in Hampton. The building, indeed, was symbolic of a decadent and bewildered Puritanism in its pathetic attempt to keep abreast with the age, to compromise with anarchy, merely achieving a nondescript medley of rounded, knob-like towers covered with mulberry-stained shingles. And the minister was sensational and dramatic. He looked like an actor, he aroused in Edward Bumpus an inherent prejudice that condemned the stage. Half a block from this tabernacle stood a Roman Catholic Church, prosperous, brazen, serene, flaunting an eternal permanence amidst the chaos which had succeeded permanence!

There were, to be sure, other Protestant churches where Edward Bumpus and his wife might have gone. One in particular, which he passed on his way to the mill, with its terraced steeple and classic facade, preserved all the outward semblance of the old Order that once had seemed so enduring and secure. He hesitated to join the decorous and dwindling congregation,—the remains of a social stratum from which he had been pried loose; and—more irony—this street, called Warren, of arching elms and white-gabled houses, was now the abiding place of those prosperous Irish who had moved thither from the tenements and ruled the city.

On just such a street in the once thriving New England village of Dolton had Edward been born. In Dolton Bumpus was once a name of names, rooted there since the seventeenth century, and if you had cared to listen he would have told you, in a dialect precise but colloquial, the history of a family that by right of priority and service should have been destined to inherit the land, but whose descendants were preserved to see it delivered to the alien. The God of Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards had been tried in the balance and found wanting. Edward could never understand this; or why the Universe, so long static and immutable, had suddenly begun to move. He had always been prudent, but in spite of youthful "advantages," of an education, so called, from a sectarian college on a hill, he had never been taught that, while prudence may prosper in a static world, it is a futile virtue in a dynamic one. Experience even had been powerless to impress this upon him. For more than twenty years after leaving college he had clung to a clerkship in a Dolton mercantile establishment before he felt justified in marrying Hannah, the daughter of Elmer Wench, when the mercantile establishment amalgamated with a rival—and Edward's services were no longer required. During the succession of precarious places with decreasing salaries he had subsequently held a terrified sense of economic pressure had gradually crept over him, presently growing strong enough, after two girls had arrived, to compel the abridgment of the family ....It would be painful to record in detail the cracking-off process, the slipping into shale, the rolling, the ending up in Hampton, where Edward had now for some dozen years been keeper of one of the gates in the frowning brick wall bordering the canal,—a position obtained for him by a compassionate but not too prudent childhood friend who had risen in life and knew the agent of the Chippering Mill, Mr. Claude Ditmar. Thus had virtue failed to hold its own.

One might have thought in all these years he had sat within the gates staring at the brick row of the company's boarding houses on the opposite bank of the canal that reflection might have brought a certain degree of enlightenment. It was not so. The fog of Edward's bewilderment never cleared, and the unformed question was ever clamouring for an answer—how had it happened? Job's cry. How had it happened to an honest and virtuous man, the days of whose forebears had been long in the land which the Lord their God had given them? Inherently American, though lacking the saving quality of push that had been the making of men like Ditmar, he never ceased to regard with resentment and distrust the hordes of foreigners trooping between the pillars, though he refrained from expressing these sentiments in public; a bent, broad shouldered, silent man of that unmistakable physiognomy which, in the seventeenth century, almost wholly deserted the old England for the new. The ancestral features were there, the lips—covered by a grizzled moustache moulded for the precise formation that emphasizes such syllables as el, the hooked nose and sallow cheeks, the grizzled brows and grey eyes drawn down at the corners. But for all its ancestral strength of feature, it was a face from which will had been extracted, and lacked the fire and fanaticism, the indomitable hardness it should have proclaimed, and which have been so characteristically embodied in Mr. St. Gaudens's statue of the Puritan. His clothes were slightly shabby, but always neat.

Little as one might have guessed it, however, what may be called a certain transmuted enthusiasm was alive in him. He had a hobby almost amounting to an obsession, not uncommon amongst Americans who have slipped downward in the social scale. It was the Bumpus Family in America. He collected documents about his ancestors and relations, he wrote letters with a fine, painful penmanship on a ruled block he bought at Hartshorne's drug store to distant Bumpuses in Kansas and Illinois and Michigan, common descendants of Ebenezer, the original immigrant, of Dolton. Many of these western kinsmen answered: not so the magisterial Bumpus who lived in Boston on the water side of Beacon, whom likewise he had ventured to address,—to the indignation and disgust of his elder daughter, Janet.

"Why are you so proud of Ebenezer?" she demanded once, scornfully.

"Why? Aren't we descended from him?"

"How many generations?"

"Seven," said Edward, promptly, emphasizing the last syllable.

Janet was quick at figures. She made a mental calculation.

"Well, you've got one hundred and twenty-seven other ancestors of Ebenezer's time, haven't you?"

Edward was a little surprised. He had never thought of this, but his ardour for Ebenezer remained undampened. Genealogy—his own—had become his religion, and instead of going to church he spent his Sunday mornings poring over papers of various degrees of discolouration, making careful notes on the ruled block.

This consciousness of his descent from good American stock that had somehow been deprived of its heritage, while a grievance to him, was also a comfort. It had a compensating side, in spite of the lack of sympathy of his daughters and his wife. Hannah Bumpus took the situation more grimly: she was a logical projection in a new environment of the religious fatalism of ancestors whose God was a God of vengeance. She did not concern herself as to what all this vengeance was about; life was a trap into which all mortals walked sooner or later, and her particular trap had a treadmill,—a round of household duties she kept whirling with an energy that might have made their fortunes if she had been the head of the family. It is bad to be a fatalist unless one has an incontrovertible belief in one's destiny,—which Hannah had not. But she kept the little flat with its worn furniture,—which had known so many journeys—as clean as a merchant ship of old Salem, and when it was scoured and dusted to her satisfaction she would sally forth to Bonnaccossi's grocery and provision store on the corner to do her bargaining in competition with the Italian housewives of the neighborhood. She was wont, indeed, to pause outside for a moment, her quick eye encompassing the coloured prints of red and yellow jellies cast in rounded moulds, decked with slices of orange, the gaudy boxes of cereals and buckwheat flour, the "Brookfield" eggs in packages. Significant, this modern package system, of an era of flats with little storage space. She took in at a glance the blue lettered placard announcing the current price of butterine, and walked around to the other side of the store, on Holmes Street, where the beef and bacon hung, where the sidewalk stands were filled, in the autumn, with cranberries, apples, cabbages, and spinach.

With little outer complaint she had adapted herself to the constantly lowering levels to which her husband had dropped, and if she hoped that in Fillmore Street they had reached bottom, she did not say so. Her unbetrayed regret was for the loss of what she would have called "respectability"; and the giving up, long ago, in the little city which had been their home, of the servant girl had been the first wrench. Until they came to Hampton they had always lived in houses, and her adaptation to a flat had been hard—a flat without a parlour. Hannah Bumpus regarded a parlour as necessary to a respectable family as a wedding ring to a virtuous woman. Janet and Lise would be growing up, there would be young men, and no place to see them save the sidewalks. The fear that haunted her came true, and she never was reconciled. The two girls went to the public schools, and afterwards, inevitably, to work, and it seemed to be a part of her punishment for the sins of her forefathers that she had no more control over them than if they had been boarders; while she looked on helplessly, they did what they pleased; Janet, whom she never understood, was almost as much a source of apprehension as Lise, who became part and parcel of all Hannah deemed reprehensible in this new America which she refused to recognize and acknowledge as her own country.

To send them through the public schools had been a struggle. Hannah used to lie awake nights wondering what would happen if Edward became sick. It worried her that they never saved any money: try as she would to cut the expenses down, there was a limit of decency; New England thrift, hitherto justly celebrated, was put to shame by that which the foreigners displayed, and which would have delighted the souls of gentlemen of the Manchester school. Every once in a while there rose up before her fabulous instances of this thrift, of Italians and Jews who, ignorant emigrants, had entered the mills only a few years before they, the Bumpuses, had come to Hampton, and were now independent property owners. Still rankling in Hannah's memory was a day when Lise had returned from school, dark and mutinous, with a tale of such a family. One of the younger children was a classmate.

"They live on Jordan Street in a house, and Laura has roller skates. I don't see why I can't."

This was one of the occasions on which Hannah had given vent to her indignation. Lise was fourteen. Her open rebellion was less annoying than Janet's silent reproach, but at least she had something to

take hold of.

"Well, Lise," she said, shifting the saucepan to another part of the stove, "I guess if your father and I had put both you girls in the mills and crowded into one room and cooked in a corner, and lived on onions and macaroni, and put four boarders each in the other rooms, I guess we could have had a house, too. We can start in right now, if you're willing."

But Lise had only looked darker.

"I don't see why father can't make money—other men do."

"Isn't he working as hard as he can to send you to school, and give you a chance?"

"I don't want that kind of a chance. There's Sadie Howard at school—she don't have to work. She liked me before she found out where I lived..."

There was an element of selfishness in Hannah's mania for keeping busy, for doing all their housework and cooking herself. She could not bear to have her daughters interfere; perhaps she did not want to give herself time to think. Her affection for Edward, such as it was, her loyalty to him, was the logical result of a conviction ingrained in early youth that marriage was an indissoluble bond; a point of views once having a religious sanction, no less powerful now that—all unconsciously—it had deteriorated into a superstition. Hannah, being a fatalist, was not religious. The beliefs of other days, when she had donned her best dress and gone to church on Sundays, had simply lapsed and left—habits. No new beliefs had taken their place....

Even after Janet and Lise had gone to work the household never seemed to gain that margin of safety for which Hannah yearned. Always, when they were on the verge of putting something by, some untoward need or accident seemed to arise on purpose to swallow it up: Edward, for instance, had been forced to buy a new overcoat, the linoleum on the dining-room floor must be renewed, and Lise had had a spell of sickness, losing her position in a flower shop. Afterwards, when she became a saleslady in the Bagatelle, that flamboyant department store in Faber Street, she earned four dollars and a half a week. Two of these were supposed to go into the common fund, but there were clothes to buy; Lise loved finery, and Hannah had not every week the heart to insist. Even when, on an occasional Saturday night the girl somewhat consciously and defiantly flung down the money on the dining-room table she pretended not to notice it. But Janet, who was earning six dollars as a stenographer in the office of the Chippering Mill, regularly gave half of hers.

The girls could have made more money as operatives, but strangely enough in the Bumpus family social hopes were not yet extinct.

Sharply, rudely, the cold stillness of the winter mornings was broken by agitating waves of sound, penetrating the souls of sleepers. Janet would stir, her mind still lingering on some dream, soon to fade into the inexpressible, in which she had been near to the fulfilment of a heart's desire. Each morning, as the clamour grew louder, there was an interval of bewilderment, of revulsion, until the realization came of mill bells swinging in high cupolas above the river,—one rousing another. She could even distinguish the bells: the deep-toned, penetrating one belonged to the Patuxent Mill, over on the west side, while the Arundel had a high, ominous reverberation like a fire bell. When at last the clangings had ceased she would lie listening to the overtones throbbing in the air, high and low, high and low; lie shrinking, awaiting the second summons that never failed to terrify, the siren of the Chippering Mill,—to her the cry of an insistent, hungry monster demanding its daily food, the symbol of a stern, ugly, and unrelenting necessity.

Beside her in the bed she could feel the soft body of her younger sister cuddling up to her in fright. In such rare moments as this her heart melted towards Lise, and she would fling a protecting arm about her. A sense of Lise's need of protection invaded her, a sharp conviction, like a pang, that Lise was destined to wander: Janet was never so conscious of the feeling as in this dark hour, though it came to her at other times, when they were not quarreling. Quarreling seemed to be the normal reaction between them.

It was Janet, presently, who would get up, shivering, close the window, and light the gas, revealing the room which the two girls shared together. Against the middle of one wall was the bed, opposite this a travel-dented walnut bureau with a marble top, with an oval mirror into which were stuck numerous magazine portraits of the masculine and feminine talent adorning the American stage, a preponderance of the music hall variety. There were pictures of other artists whom the recondite would have recognized as "movie" stars, amazing yet veridic stories of whose wealth Lise read in the daily press: all possessed limousines—an infallible proof, to Lise, of the measure of artistic greatness. Between one of these movie millionaires and an ex-legitimate lady who now found vaudeville profitable was wedged the

likeness of a popular idol whose connection with the footlights would doubtless be contingent upon a triumphant acquittal at the hands of a jury of her countrymen, and whose trial for murder, in Chicago, was chronicled daily in thousands of newspapers and followed by Lise with breathless interest and sympathy. She was wont to stare at this lady while dressing and exclaim:—"Say, I hope they put it all over that district attorney!"

To such sentiments, though deeply felt by her sister, Janet remained cold, though she was, as will be seen, capable of enthusiasms. Lise was a truer daughter of her time and country in that she had the national contempt for law, was imbued with the American hero-worship of criminals that caused the bombardment of Cora Wellman's jail with candy, fruit and flowers and impassioned letters. Janet recalled there had been others before Mrs. Wellman, caught within the meshes of the law, who had incited in her sister a similar partisanship.

It was Lise who had given the note of ornamentation to the bedroom. Against the cheap faded lilac and gold wall-paper were tacked photo-engravings that had taken the younger sister's fancy: a young man and woman, clad in scanty bathing suits, seated side by side in a careening sail boat,—the work of a popular illustrator whose manly and womanly "types" had become national ideals.

There were other drawings, if not all by the same hand, at least by the same school; one, sketched in bold strokes, of a dinner party in a stately neo-classic dining-room, the table laden with flowers and silver, the bare-throated women with jewels. A more critical eye than Lise's, gazing upon this portrayal of the Valhalla of success, might have detected in the young men, immaculate in evening dress, a certain effort to feel at home, to converse naturally, which their square jaws and square shoulders belied. This was no doubt the fault of the artist's models, who had failed to live up to the part. At any rate, the sight of these young gods of leisure, the contemplation of the stolid butler and plush footmen in the background never failed to make Lise's heart beat faster.

On the marble of the bureau amidst a litter of toilet articles, and bought by Lise for a quarter at the Bagatelle bargain counter, was an oval photograph frame from which the silver wash had begun to rub off, and the band of purple velvet inside the metal had whitened. The frame always contained the current object of Lise's affections, though the exhibits—as Janet said—were subject to change without notice. The Adonis who now reigned had black hair cut in the prevailing Hampton fashion, very long in front and hanging down over his eyes like a Scottish terrier's; very long behind, too, but ending suddenly, shaved in a careful curve at the neck and around the ears. It had almost the appearance of a Japanese wig. The manly beauty of Mr. Max Wylie was of the lantern-jawed order, and in his photograph he conveyed the astonished and pained air of one who has been suddenly seized by an invisible officer of the law from behind. This effect, one presently perceived, was due to the high, stiff collar, the "Torture Brand," Janet called it, when she and her sister were engaged in one of their frequent controversies about life in general: the obvious retort to this remark, which Lise never failed to make, was that Janet could boast of no beaux at all.

It is only fair to add that the photograph scarcely did Mr. Wylie justice. In real life he did not wear the collar, he was free and easy in his manners, sure of his powers of conquest. As Lise observed, he had made a home-run with her at Slattery's Riverside Park. "Sadie Hartmann was sure sore when I tangoed off with him," she would observe reminiscently….

It was Lise's habit to slight her morning toilet, to linger until the last minute in bed, which she left in reluctant haste to stand before the bureau frantically combing out kinks of the brown hair falling over her shoulders before jamming it down across her forehead in the latest mode. Thus occupied, she revealed a certain petulant beauty. Like the majority of shop-girls, she was small, but her figure was good, her skin white; her discontented mouth gave her the touch of piquancy apt to play havoc with the work of the world. In winter breakfast was eaten by the light of a rococo metal lamp set in the centre of the table. This was to save gas. There was usually a rump steak and potatoes, bread and "creamery" butterine, and the inevitable New England doughnuts. At six thirty the whistles screeched again,—a warning note, the signal for Edward's departure; and presently, after a brief respite, the heavy bells once more began their clamour, not to die down until ten minutes of seven, when the last of the stragglers had hurried through the mill gates.

The Bumpus flat included the second floor of a small wooden house whose owner had once been evilly inspired to paint it a livid clay-yellow—as though insisting that ugliness were an essential attribute of domesticity. A bay ran up the two stories, and at the left were two narrow doorways, one for each flat. On the right the house was separated from its neighbour by a narrow interval, giving but a precarious light to the two middle rooms, the diningroom and kitchen. The very unattractiveness of such a home, however, had certain compensations for Janet, after the effort of early rising had been surmounted, felt a real relief in leaving it; a relief, too, in leaving Fillmore Street, every feature of which was indelibly fixed in her mind, opposite was the blind brick face of a warehouse, and next to

that the converted dwelling house that held the shop of A. Bauer, with the familiar replica of a green ten-cent trading stamp painted above it and the somewhat ironical announcement—when boar frost whitened the pavement—that ice-cold soda was to be had within, as well as cigars and tobacco, fruit and candy. Then came a tenement, under which two enterprising Greeks by the name of Pappas—spelled Papas lower down—conducted a business called "The Gentleman," a tailoring, pressing, and dyeing establishment. Janet could see the brilliantined black heads of the two proprietors bending over their boards, and sometimes they would be lifted to smile at her as she passed. The Pappas Brothers were evidently as happy in this drab environment as they had ever been on the sunny mountain slopes of Hellas, and Janet sometimes wondered at this, for she had gathered from her education in the Charming public school that Greece was beautiful.

She was one of the unfortunate who love beauty, who are condemned to dwell in exile, unacquainted with what they love. Desire was incandescent within her breast. Desire for what? It would have been some relief to know. She could not, like Lise, find joy and forgetfulness at dance halls, at the "movies," at Slattery's Riverside Park in summer, in "joy rides" with the Max Wylies of Hampton. And beside, the Max Wylies were afraid of her. If at times she wished for wealth, it was because wealth held the magic of emancipation from surroundings against which her soul revolted. Vividly idealized but unconfided was the memory of a seaside village, the scene of one of the brief sojourns of her childhood, where the air was fragrant with the breath of salt marshes, where she recalled, through the vines of a porch, a shining glimpse of the sea at the end of a little street.…

Next to Pappas Brothers was the grey wooden building of Mule Spinners' Hall, that elite organization of skilled labour, and underneath it the store of Johnny Tiernan, its windows piled up with stoves and stovepipes, sheet iron and cooking utensils. Mr. Tiernan, like the Greeks, was happy, too: unlike the Greeks, he never appeared to be busy, and yet he throve. He was very proud of the business in which he had invested his savings, but he seemed to have other affairs lying blithely on his mind, affairs of moment to the community, as the frequent presence of the huge policemen, aldermen, and other important looking persons bore witness. He hailed by name Italians, Greeks, Belgians, Syrians, and "French"; he hailed Janet, too, with respectful cheerfulness, taking off his hat. He possessed the rare, warm vitality that is irresistible. A native of Hampton, still in his thirties, his sharp little nose and twinkling blue eyes proclaimed the wisdom that is born and not made; his stiff hair had a twist like the bristles in the cleaning rod of a gun.

He gave Janet the odd impression that he understood her. And she did not understand herself!

By the time she reached the Common the winter sun, as though red from exertion, had begun to dispel the smoke and heavy morning mists. She disliked winter, the lumpy brown turf mildewed by the frost, but one day she was moved by a quality, hitherto unsuspected, in the delicate tracery against the sky made by the slender branches of the great elms and maples. She halted on the pavement, her eyes raised, heedless of passers-by, feeling within her a throb of the longing that could be so oddly and unexpectedly aroused.

Her way lay along Faber Street, the main artery of Hampton, a wide strip of asphalt threaded with car tracks, lined on both sides with incongruous edifices indicative of a rapid, undiscriminating, and artless prosperity. There were long stretches of "ten foot" buildings, so called on account of the single story, their height deceptively enhanced by the superimposition of huge and gaudy signs, one on top of another, announcing the merits of "Stewart's Amberine Ale," of "Cooley's Oats, the Digestible Breakfast Food," of graphophones and "spring heeled" shoes, tobacco, and naphtha soaps. "No, We don't give Trading Stamps, Our Products are Worth all You Pay." These "ten foot" stores were the repositories of pianos, automobiles, hardware, and millinery, and interspersed amongst them were buildings of various heights; The Bagatelle, where Lise worked, the Wilmot Hotel, office buildings, and an occasional relic of old Hampton, like that housing the Banner. Here, during those months when the sun made the asphalt soft, on a scaffolding spanning the window of the store, might be seen a perspiring young man in his shirt sleeves chalking up baseball scores for the benefit of a crowd below. Then came the funereal, liver-coloured, long-windowed Hinckley Block (1872), and on the corner a modern, glorified drugstore thrusting forth plate glass bays—two on Faber Street and three on Stanley—filled with cameras and candy, hot water bags, throat sprays, catarrh and kidney cures, calendars, fountain pens, stationery, and handy alcohol lamps. Flanking the sidewalks, symbolizing and completing the heterogeneous and bewildering effect of the street were long rows of heavy hemlock trunks, unpainted and stripped of bark, with crosstrees bearing webs of wires. Trolley cars rattled along, banging their gongs, trucks rumbled across the tracks, automobiles uttered frenzied screeches behind startled pedestrians. Janet was always galvanized into alertness here, Faber Street being no place to dream. By night an endless procession moved up one sidewalk and down another, staring hypnotically at the flash-in and flash-out electric, signs that kept the breakfast foods and ales, the safety razors, soaps, and soups incessantly in the minds of a fickle public.

Two blocks from Faber Street was the North Canal, with a granite-paved roadway between it and the monotonous row of company boarding houses. Even in bright weather Janet felt a sense of oppression here; on dark, misty mornings the stern, huge battlements of the mills lining the farther bank were menacing indeed, bristling with projections, towers, and chimneys, flanked by heavy walls. Had her experience included Europe, her imagination might have seized the medieval parallel,—the arched bridges flung at intervals across the water, lacking only chains to raise them in case of siege. The place was always ominously suggestive of impending strife. Janet's soul was a sensitive instrument, but she suffered from an inability to find parallels, and thus to translate her impressions intellectually. Her feeling about the mills was that they were at once fortress and prison, and she a slave driven thither day after day by an all-compelling power; as much a slave as those who trooped in through the gates in the winter dawn, and wore down, four times a day, the oak treads of the circular tower stairs.

The sound of the looms was like heavy rain hissing on the waters of the canal.

The administrative offices of a giant mill such as the Chippering in Hampton are labyrinthine. Janet did not enter by the great gates her father kept, but walked through an open courtyard into a vestibule where, day and night, a watchman stood; she climbed iron-shod stairs, passed the doorway leading to the paymaster's suite, to catch a glimpse, behind the grill, of numerous young men settling down at those mysterious and complicated machines that kept so unerring a record, in dollars and cents, of the human labour of the operatives. There were other suites for the superintendents, for the purchasing agent; and at the end of the corridor, on the south side of the mill, she entered the outer of the two rooms reserved for Mr. Claude Ditmar, the Agent and general-in-chief himself of this vast establishment. In this outer office, behind the rail that ran the length of it, Janet worked; from the window where her typewriter stood was a sheer drop of eighty feet or so to the river, which ran here swiftly through a wide canon whose sides were formed by miles and miles of mills, built on buttressed stone walls to retain the banks. The prison-like buildings on the farther shore were also of colossal size, casting their shadows far out into the waters; while in the distance, up and down the stream, could be seen the delicate web of the Stanley and Warren Street bridges, with trolley cars like toys gliding over them, with insect pedestrians creeping along the footpaths.

Mr. Ditmar's immediate staff consisted of Mr. Price, an elderly bachelor of tried efficiency whose peculiar genius lay in computation, of a young Mr. Caldwell who, during the four years since he had left Harvard, had been learning the textile industry, of Miss Ottway, and Janet. Miss Ottway was the agent's private stenographer, a strongly built, capable woman with immense reserves seemingly inexhaustible. She had a deep, masculine voice, not unmusical, the hint of a masculine moustache, a masculine manner of taking to any job that came to hand. Nerves were things unknown to her: she was granite, Janet tempered steel. Janet was the second stenographer, and performed, besides, any odd tasks that might be assigned.

There were, in the various offices of the superintendents, the paymaster and purchasing agent, other young women stenographers whose companionship Janet, had she been differently organized, might have found congenial, but something in her refused to dissolve to their proffered friendship. She had but one friend,—if Eda Rawle, who worked in a bank, and whom she had met at a lunch counter by accident, may be called so. As has been admirably said in another language, one kisses, the other offers a cheek: Janet offered the cheek. All unconsciously she sought a relationship rarely to be found in banks and business offices; would yield herself to none other. The young women stenographers in the Chippering Mill, respectable, industrious girls, were attracted by a certain indefinable quality, but finding they made no progress in their advances, presently desisted they were somewhat afraid of her; as one of them remarked, "You always knew she was there." Miss Lottie Meyers, who worked in the office of Mr. Orcutt, the superintendent across the hall, experienced a brief infatuation that turned to hate. She chewed gum incessantly, Janet found her cheap perfume insupportable; Miss Meyers, for her part, declared that Janet was "queer" and "stuck up," thought herself better than the rest of them. Lottie Meyers was the leader of a group of four or five which gathered in the hallway at the end of the noon hour to enter animatedly into a discussion of waists, hats, and lingerie, to ogle and exchange persiflages with the young men of the paymaster's corps, to giggle, to relate, sotto voce, certain stories that ended invariably in hysterical laughter. Janet detested these conversations. And the sex question, subtly suggested if not openly dealt with, to her was a mystery over which she did not dare to ponder, terrible, yet too sacred to be degraded. Her feelings, concealed under an exterior of self-possession, deceptive to the casual observer, sometimes became molten, and she was frightened by a passion that made her tremble—a passion by no means always consciously identified with men, embodying all the fierce unexpressed and unsatisfied desires of her life.

These emotions, often suggested by some hint of beauty, as of the sun glinting on the river on a bright blue day, had a sudden way of possessing her, and the longing they induced was pain. Longing for what? For some unimagined existence where beauty dwelt, and light, where the ecstasy induced by these was neither moiled nor degraded; where shame, as now, might not assail her. Why should she

feel her body hot with shame, her cheeks afire? At such moments she would turn to the typewriter, her fingers striking the keys with amazing rapidity, with extraordinary accuracy and force,—force vaguely disturbing to Mr. Claude Ditmar as he entered the office one morning and involuntarily paused to watch her. She was unaware of his gaze, but her colour was like a crimson signal that flashed to him and was gone. Why had he never noticed her before? All these months, for more than a year, perhaps,—she had been in his office, and he had not so much as looked at her twice. The unguessed answer was that he had never surprised her in a vivid moment. He had a flair for women, though he had never encountered any possessing the higher values, and it was characteristic of the plane of his mental processes that this one should remind him now of a dark, lithe panther, tensely strung, capable of fierceness. The pain of having her scratch him would be delectable.

When he measured her it was to discover that she was not so little, and the shoulder-curve of her uplifted arms, as her fingers played over the keys, seemed to belie that apparent slimness. And had he not been unacquainted with the subtleties of the French mind and language, he might have classed her as a fausse maigre. Her head was small, her hair like a dark, blurred shadow clinging round it. He wanted to examine her hair, to see whether it would not betray, at closer range, an imperceptible wave,—but not daring to linger he went into his office, closed the door, and sat down with a sensation akin to weakness, somewhat appalled by his discovery, considerably amazed at his previous stupidity. He had thought of Janet—when she had entered his mind at all—as unobtrusive, demure; now he recognized this demureness as repression. Her qualities needed illumination, and he, Claude Ditmar, had seen them struck with fire. He wondered whether any other man had been as fortunate.

Later in the morning, quite casually, he made inquiries of Miss Ottway, who liked Janet and was willing to do her a good turn.

"Why, she's a clever girl, Mr. Ditmar, a good stenographer, and conscientious in her work. She's very quick, too.

"Yes, I've noticed that," Ditmar replied, who was quite willing to have it thought that his inquiry was concerned with Janet's aptitude for business.

"She keeps to herself and minds her own affairs. You can see she comes of good stock." Miss Ottway herself was proud of her New England blood. "Her father, you know, is the gatekeeper down there. He's been unfortunate."

"You don't say—I didn't connect her with him. Fine looking old man. A friend of mine who recommended him told me he'd seen better days …."

CHAPTER II

In spite of the surprising discovery in his office of a young woman of such a disquieting, galvanic quality, it must not be supposed that Mr. Claude Ditmar intended to infringe upon a fixed principle. He had principles. For him, as for the patriarchs and householders of Israel, the seventh commandment was only relative, yet hitherto he had held rigidly to that relativity, laying down the sound doctrine that women and business would not mix: or, as he put it to his intimates, no sensible man would fool with a girl in his office. Hence it may be implied that Mr. Ditmar's experiences with the opposite sex had been on a property basis. He was one of those busy and successful persons who had never appreciated or acquired the art of quasi-platonic amenities, whose idea of a good time was limited to discreet excursions with cronies, likewise busy and successful persons who, by reason of having married early and unwisely, are strangers to the delights of that higher social intercourse chronicled in novels and the public prints. If one may conveniently overlook the joys of a companionship of the soul, it is quite as possible to have a taste in women as in champagne or cigars. Mr. Ditmar preferred blondes, and he liked them rather stout, a predilection that had led him into matrimony with a lady of this description: a somewhat sticky, candy-eating lady with a mania for card parties, who undoubtedly would have dyed her hair if she had lived. He was not inconsolable, but he had had enough of marriage to learn that it demands a somewhat exorbitant price for joys otherwise more reasonably to be obtained.

He was left a widower with two children, a girl of thirteen and a boy of twelve, both somewhat large for their ages. Amy attended the only private institution for the instruction of her sex of which Hampton could boast; George continued at a public school. The late Mrs. Ditmar for some years before her demise had begun to give evidence of certain restless aspirations to which American ladies of her type

and situation seem peculiarly liable, and with a view to their ultimate realization she had inaugurated a Jericho-like campaign. Death had released Ditmar from its increasing pressure. For his wife had possessed that admirable substitute for character, persistence, had been expert in the use of importunity, often an efficient weapon in the hands of the female economically dependent. The daughter of a defunct cashier of the Hampton National Bank, when she had married Ditmar, then one of the superintendents of the Chippering and already a marked man, she had deemed herself fortunate among women, looking forward to a life of ease and idleness and candy in great abundance,—a dream temporarily shattered by the unforeseen discomfort of bringing two children into the world, with an interval of scarcely a year between them. Her parents from an excess of native modesty having failed to enlighten her on this subject, her feelings were those of outraged astonishment, and she was quite determined not to repeat the experience a third time. Knowledge thus belatedly acquired, for a while she abandoned herself to the satisfaction afforded by the ability to take a commanding position in Hampton society, gradually to become aware of the need of a more commodious residence. In a certain kind of intuition she was rich. Her husband had meanwhile become Agent of the Chippering Mill, and she strongly suspected that his prudent reticence on the state of his finances was the best indication of an increasing prosperity. He had indeed made money, been given many opportunities for profitable investments; but the argument for social pre-eminence did not appeal to him: tears and reproaches, recriminations, when frequently applied, succeeded better; like many married men, what he most desired was to be let alone; but in some unaccountable way she had come to suspect that his preference for blondes was of a more liberal nature than at first, in her innocence, she had realized. She was jealous, too, of his cronies, in spite of the fact that these gentlemen, when they met her, treated her with an elaborate politeness; and she accused him with entire justice of being more intimate with them than with her, with whom he was united in holy bonds. The inevitable result of these tactics was the modern mansion in the upper part of Warren Street, known as the "residential" district. Built on a wide lot, with a garage on one side to the rear, with a cement driveway divided into squares, and a wall of democratic height separating its lawn from the sidewalk, the house may for the present be better imagined than described.

A pious chronicler of a more orthodox age would doubtless have deemed it a judgment that Cora Ditmar survived but two years to enjoy the glories of the Warren Street house. For a while her husband indulged in a foolish optimism, only to learn that the habit of matrimonial blackmail, once acquired, is not easily shed. Scarcely had he settled down to the belief that by the gratification of her supreme desire he had achieved comparative peace, than he began to suspect her native self-confidence of cherishing visions of a career contemplating nothing less than the eventual abandonment of Hampton itself as a field too limited for her social talents and his business ability and bank account—at which she was pleased to hint. Hampton suited Ditmar, his passion was the Chippering Mill; and he was in process of steeling himself to resist, whatever the costs, this preposterous plan when he was mercifully released by death. Her intention of sending the children away to acquire a culture and finish Hampton did not afford,—George to Silliston Academy, Amy to a fashionable boarding school,—he had not opposed, yet he did not take the idea with sufficient seriousness to carry it out. The children remained at home, more or less—increasingly less—in the charge of an elderly woman who acted as housekeeper.

Ditmar had miraculously regained his freedom. And now, when he made trips to New York and Boston, combining business with pleasure, there were no questions asked, no troublesome fictions to be composed. More frequently he was in Boston, where he belonged to a large and comfortable club, not too exacting in regard to membership, and here he met his cronies and sometimes planned excursions with them, automobile trips in summer to the White Mountains or choice little resorts to spend Sundays and holidays, generally taking with them a case of champagne and several bags of golf sticks. He was fond of shooting, and belonged to a duck club on the Cape, where poker and bridge were not tabooed. To his intimates he was known as "Dit." Nor is it surprising that his attitude toward women had become in general one of resentment; matrimony he now regarded as unmitigated folly. At five and forty he was a vital, dominating, dust-coloured man six feet and half an inch in height, weighing a hundred and ninety pounds, and thus a trifle fleshy. When relaxed, and in congenial company, he looked rather boyish, an aspect characteristic of many American business men of to-day.

His head was large, he wore his hair short, his features also proclaimed him as belonging to a modern American type in that they were not clear-cut, but rather indefinable; a bristling, short-cropped moustache gave him a certain efficient, military look which, when introduced to strangers as "Colonel," was apt to deceive them into thinking him an army officer. The title he had once received as a member of the staff of the governor of the state, and was a tribute to a gregariousness and political influence rather than to a genius for the art of war. Ex officio, as the agent of the Chippering Mill and a man of substance to boot, he was "in" politics, hail fellow well met with and an individual to be taken into account by politicians from the governor and member of congress down. He was efficient, of course; he had efficient hands and shrewd, efficient eyes, and the military impression was deepened by his manner of dealing with people, his conversation being yea, yea and nay, nay,—save with his cronies and

those of the other sex from whom he had something to gain. His clothes always looked new, of pronounced patterns and light colours set aside for him by an obsequious tailor in Boston.

If a human being in such an enviable position as that of agent of the Chippering Mill can be regarded as property, it might be said that Mr. Claude Ditmar belonged to the Chipperings of Boston, a family still owning a controlling interest in the company. His loyalty to them and to the mill he so ably conducted was the great loyalty of his life. For Ditmar, a Chippering could do no wrong. It had been the keen eye of Mr. Stephen Chippering that first had marked him, questioned him, recognized his ability, and from the moment of that encounter his advance had been rapid. When old Stephen had been called to his fathers, Ditmar's allegiance was automatically, as it were, transferred to the two sons, George and Worthington, already members of the board of directors. Sometimes Ditmar called on them at their homes, which stood overlooking the waters of the Charles River Basin. The attitude toward him of the Chipperings and their wives was one of an interesting adjustment of feudalism to democracy. They were fond of him, grateful to him, treating him with a frank camaraderie that had in it not the slightest touch of condescension, but Ditmar would have been the first to recognize that there were limits to the intimacy. They did not, for instance—no doubt out of consideration—invite him to their dinner parties or take him to their club, which was not the same as that to which he himself belonged. He felt no animus. Nor would he, surprising though it may seem, have changed places with the Chipperings. At an early age, and quite unconsciously, he had accepted property as the ruling power of the universe, and when family was added thereto the combination was nothing less than divine.

There were times, especially during the long winters, when life became almost unbearable for Janet, and she was seized by a desire to run away from Fillmore Street, from the mills, from Hampton itself. Only she did not know where to go, or how to get away. She was convinced of the existence in the world of delightful spots where might be found congenial people with whom it would be a joy to talk. Fillmore Street, certainly, did not contain any such. The office was not so bad. It is true that in the mornings, as she entered West Street, the sight of the dark facade of the fortress-like structure, emblematic of the captivity in which she passed her days, rarely failed to arouse in her sensations of oppression and revolt; but here, at least, she discovered an outlet for her energies; she was often too busy to reflect, and at odd moments she could find a certain solace and companionship in the river, so intent, so purposeful, so beautiful, so undisturbed by the inconcinnity, the clatter and confusion of Hampton as it flowed serenely under the bridges and between the mills toward the sea. Toward the sea!

It was when, at night, she went back to Fillmore Street—when she thought of the monotony, yes, and the sordidness of home, when she let herself in at the door and climbed the dark and narrow stairway, that her feet grew leaden. In spite of the fact that Hannah was a good housekeeper and prided herself on cleanliness, the tiny flat reeked with the smell of cooking, and Janet, from the upper hall, had a glimpse of a thin, angular woman with a scrawny neck, with scant grey hair tightly drawn into a knot, in a gingham apron covering an old dress bending over the kitchen stove. And occasionally, despite a resentment that fate should have dealt thus inconsiderately with the family, Janet felt pity welling within her. After supper, when Lise had departed with her best young man, Hannah would occasionally, though grudgingly, permit Janet to help her with the dishes.

"You work all day, you have a right to rest."

"But I don't want to rest," Janet would declare, and rub the dishes the harder. With the spirit underlying this protest, Hannah sympathized. Mother and daughter were alike in that both were inarticulate, but Janet had a secret contempt for Hannah's uncomplaining stoicism. She loved her mother, in a way, especially at certain times,—though she often wondered why she was unable to realize more fully the filial affection of tradition; but in moments of softening, such as these, she was filled with rage at the thought of any woman endowed with energy permitting herself to be overtaken and overwhelmed by such a fate as Hannah's: divorce, desertion, anything, she thought, would have been better—anything but to be cheated out of life. Feeling the fires of rebellion burning hotly within her,—rebellion against environment and driving necessity she would glance at her mother and ask herself whether it were possible that Hannah had ever known longings, had ever been wrung by inexpressible desires,—desires in which the undiscovered spiritual was so alarmingly compounded with the undiscovered physical. She would have died rather than speak to Hannah of these unfulfilled experiences, and the mere thought of confiding them to any person appalled her. Even if there existed some wonderful, understanding being to whom she might be able thus to empty her soul, the thought of the ecstasy of that kenosis was too troubling to be dwelt upon.

She had tried reading, with unfortunate results,—perhaps because no Virgil had as yet appeared to guide her through the mysteries of that realm. Her schooling had failed to instil into her a discriminating taste for literature; and when, on occasions, she had entered the Public Library opposite the Common it had been to stare hopelessly at rows of books whose authors and titles offered no clue

to their contents. Her few choices had not been happy, they had failed to interest and thrill…

Of the Bumpus family Lise alone found refuge, distraction, and excitement in the vulgar modern world by which they were surrounded, and of whose heedlessness and remorselessness they were the victims. Lise went out into it, became a part of it, returning only to sleep and eat,—a tendency Hannah found unaccountable, and against which even her stoicism was not wholly proof. Scarce an evening went by without an expression of uneasiness from Hannah.

"She didn't happen to mention where she was going, did she, Janet?" Hannah would query, when she had finished her work and put on her spectacles to read the Banner.

"To the movies, I suppose," Janet would reply. Although well aware that her sister indulged in other distractions, she thought it useless to add to Hannah's disquietude. And if she had little patience with Lise, she had less with the helpless attitude of her parents.

"Well," Hannah would add, "I never can get used to her going out nights the way she does, and with young men and women I don't know anything about. I wasn't brought up that way. But as long as she's got to work for a living I guess there's no help for it."

And she would glance at Edward. It was obviously due to his inability adequately to cope with modern conditions that his daughters were forced to toil, but this was the nearest she ever came to reproaching him. If he heard, he acquiesced humbly, and in silence: more often than not he was oblivious, buried in the mazes of the Bumpus family history, his papers spread out on the red cloth of the dining-room table, under the lamp. Sometimes in his simplicity and with the enthusiasm that demands listeners he would read aloud to them a letter, recently received from a distant kinsman, an Alpheus Bumpus, let us say, who had migrated to California in search of wealth and fame, and who had found neither. In spite of age and misfortunes, the liberal attitude of these western members of the family was always a matter of perplexity to Edward.

"He tells me they're going to give women the ballot,—doesn't appear to be much concerned about his own womenfolks going to the polls."

"Why shouldn't they, if they want to?" Janet would exclaim, though she had given little thought to the question.

Edward would mildly ignore this challenge.

"He has a house on what they call Russian Hill, and he can watch the vessels as they come in from Japan," he would continue in his precise voice, emphasizing admirably the last syllables of the words "Russian," "vessels," and "Japan." "Wouldn't you like to see the letter?"

To do Hannah justice, although she was quite incapable of sharing his passion, she frequently feigned an interest, took the letter, presently handing it on to Janet who, in deciphering Alpheus's trembling calligraphy, pondered over his manifold woes. Alpheus's son, who had had a good position in a sporting goods establishment on Market Street, was sick and in danger of losing it, the son's wife expecting an addition to the family, the house on Russian Hill mortgaged. Alpheus, a veteran of the Civil War, had been for many years preparing his reminiscences, but the newspapers nowadays seemed to care nothing for matters of solid worth, and so far had refused to publish them.… Janet, as she read, reflected that these letters invariably had to relate tales of failures, of disappointed hopes; she wondered at her father's perennial interest in failures,—provided they were those of his family; and the next evening, as he wrote painfully on his ruled paper, she knew that he in turn was pouring out his soul to Alpheus, recounting, with an emotion by no means unpleasurable, to this sympathetic but remote relative the story of his own failure!

If the city of Hampton was emblematic of our modern world in which haphazardness has replaced order, Fillmore Street may be likened to a back eddy of the muddy and troubled waters, in which all sorts of flotsam and jetsam had collected. Or, to find perhaps an even more striking illustration of the process that made Hampton in general and Fillmore Street in particular, one had only to take the trolley to Glendale, the Italian settlement on the road leading to the old New England village of Shrewsbury. Janet sometimes walked there, alone or with her friend Eda Rawle. Disintegration itself—in a paradoxically pathetic attempt at reconstruction—had built Glendale. Human hands, Italian hands. Nor, surprising though it may seem, were these descendants of the people of the Renaissance in the least offended by their handiwork. When the southern European migration had begun and real estate became valuable, one by one the more decorous edifices of the old American order had been torn down and carried piecemeal by sons of Italy to the bare hills of Glendale, there to enter into new combinations representing, to an eye craving harmony, the last word of a chaos, of a mental indigestion, of a colour scheme crying aloud to heaven for retribution. Standing alone and bare amidst

its truck gardens, hideous, extreme, though typical of the entire settlement, composed of fragments ripped from once-appropriate settings, is a house with a tiny body painted strawberry-red, with scroll-work shutters a tender green; surmounting the structure and almost equalling it in size is a sky-blue cupola, once the white crown of the Sutter mansion, the pride of old Hampton. The walls of this dwelling were wrested from the sides of Mackey's Tavern, while the shutters for many years adorned the parsonage of the old First Church. Similarly, in Hampton and in Fillmore Street, lived in enforced neighbourliness human fragments once having their places in crystallized communities where existence had been regarded as solved. Here there was but one order,—if such it may be called,—one relationship, direct, or indirect, one necessity claiming them all—the mills.

Like the boards forming the walls of the shacks at Glendale, these human planks torn from an earlier social structure were likewise warped, which is to say they were dominated by obsessions. Edward's was the Bumpus family; and Chris Auermann, who lived in the flat below, was convinced that the history of mankind is a deplorable record of havoc caused by women. Perhaps he was right, but the conviction was none the less an obsession. He came from a little village near Wittenburg that has scarcely changed since Luther's time. Like most residents of Hampton who did not work in the mills, he ministered to those who did, or to those who sold merchandise to the workers, cutting their hair in his barber shop on Faber Street.

The Bumpuses, save Lise, clinging to a native individualism and pride, preferred isolation to companionship with the other pieces of driftwood by which they were surrounded, and with which the summer season compelled a certain enforced contact. When the heat in the little dining-room grew unbearable, they were driven to take refuge on the front steps shared in common with the household of the barber. It is true that the barber's wife was a mild hausfrau who had little to say, and that their lodgers, two young Germans who worked in the mills, spent most of their evenings at a bowling club; but Auermann himself, exhaling a strong odour of bay rum, would arrive promptly at quarter past eight, take off his coat, and thus, as it were stripped for action, would turn upon the defenceless Edward.

"Vill you mention one great man—yoost one—who is not greater if the vimmen leave him alone?" he would demand. "Is it Anthony, the conqueror of Egypt and the East? I vill show you Cleopatra. Und Burns, and Napoleon, the greatest man what ever lived—vimmen again. I tell you there is no Elba, no St. Helena if it is not for the vimmen. Und vat vill you say of Goethe?"

Poor Edward could think of nothing to say of Goethe.

"He is great, I grant you," Chris would admit, "but vat is he if the vimmen leave him alone? Divine yoost that." And he would proceed to cite endless examples of generals and statesmen whose wives or mistresses had been their bane. Futile Edward's attempts to shift the conversation to the subject of his own obsession; the German was by far the more aggressive, he would have none of it. Perhaps if Edward had been willing to concede that the Bumpuses had been brought to their present lowly estate by the sinister agency of the fair sex Chris might conditionally have accepted the theme. Hannah, contemptuously waving a tattered palm leaf fan, was silent; but on one occasion Janet took away the barber's breath by suddenly observing:—"You never seem to think of the women whose lives are ruined by men, Mr. Auermann."

It was unheard-of, this invasion of a man's argument by a woman, and by a young woman at that. He glared at her through his spectacles, took them off, wiped them, replaced them, and glared at her again. He did not like Janet; she was capable of what may be called a speaking silence, and he had never been wholly unaware of her disapproval and ridicule. Perhaps he recognized in her, instinctively, the potential qualities of that emerging modern woman who to him was anathema.

"It is somethings I don't think about," he said.

He was a wizened little man with faience-blue eyes, and sat habitually hunched up with his hands folded across his shins.

"Nam fuit ante Helenam"—as Darwin quotes. Toward all the masculine residents of Fillmore Street, save one, the barber's attitude was one of unconcealed scorn for an inability to recognize female perfidy. With Johnny Tiernan alone he refused to enter the lists. When the popular proprietor of the tin shop came sauntering along the sidewalk with nose uptilted, waving genial greetings to the various groups on the steps, Chris Auermann's expression would suddenly change to one of fatuous playfulness.

"What's this I hear about giving the girls the vote, Chris?" Johnny would innocently inquire, winking at Janet, invariably running his hand through the wiry red hair that resumed its corkscrew twist as soon as he released it. And Chris would as invariably reply:—"You have the dandruffs—yes? You come to my shop, I give you somethings...."

Sometimes the barber, in search of a more aggressive adversary than Edward, would pay visits, when as likely as not another neighbour with profound convictions and a craving for proselytes would swoop down on the defenceless Bumpuses: Joe Shivers, for instance, who lived in one of the tenements above the cleaning and dyeing establishment kept by the Pappas Bros., and known as "The Gentleman." In the daytime Mr. Shivers was a model of acquiescence in a system he would have designated as one of industrial feudalism, his duty being to examine the rolls of cloth as they came from the looms of the Arundel Mill, in case of imperfections handing them over to the women menders: at night, to borrow a vivid expression from Lise, he was "batty in the belfry" on the subject of socialism. Unlike the barber, whom he could not abide, for him the cleavage of the world was between labour and capital instead of man and woman; his philosophy was stern and naturalistic; the universe—the origin of which he did not discuss—just an accidental assemblage of capricious forces over which human intelligence was one day to triumph. Squatting on the lowest step, his face upturned, by the light of the arc sputtering above the street he looked like a yellow frog, his eager eyes directed toward Janet, whom he suspected of intelligence.

"If there was a God, a nice, kind, all-powerful God, would he permit what happened in one of the loom-rooms last week? A Polak girl gets her hair caught in the belt pfff!" He had a marvellously realistic gift when it came to horrors: Janet felt her hair coming out by the roots. Although she never went to church, she did not like to think that no God existed. Of this Mr. Shivers was very positive. Edward, too, listened uneasily, hemmed and hawed, making ineffectual attempts to combat Mr. Shivers's socialism with a deeply-rooted native individualism that Shivers declared as defunct as Christianity.

"If it is possible for the workingman to rise under a capitalistic system, why do you not rise, then? Why do I not rise? I'm as good as Ditmar, I'm better educated, but we're all slaves. What right has a man to make you and me work for him just because he has capital?"

"Why, the right of capital," Edward would reply.

Mr. Shivers, with the manner of one dealing with an incurable romanticism and sentimentality, would lift his hands in despair. And in spite of the fact that Janet detested him, he sometimes exercised over her a paradoxical fascination, suggesting as he did unexplored intellectual realms. She despised her father for not being able to crush the little man. Edward would make pathetic attempts to capture the role Shivers had appropriated, to be the practical party himself, to convict Shivers of idealism. Socialism scandalized him, outraged, even more than atheism, something within him he held sacred, and he was greatly annoyed because he was unable adequately to express this feeling.

"You can't change human nature, Mr. Shivers," Edward would insist in his precise but ineffectual manner. "We all want property, you would accept a fortune if it was offered to you, and so should I. Americans will never become socialists."

"But look at me, wasn't I born in Meriden, Connecticut? Ain't that Yankee enough for you?" Thus Mr. Shivers sought blandly to confound him.

A Yankee Shades of the Pilgrim fathers, of seven, generations of Bumpuses! A Yankee who used his hands in that way, a Yankee with a nose like that, a Yankee with a bald swathe down the middle of his crown and bunches of black, moth-eaten hair on either side! But Edward, too polite to descend to personalities, was silent....

In brief, this very politeness of Edward's, which his ancestors would have scorned, this consideration and lack of self-assertion made him the favourite prey of the many "characters" in Fillmore Street whose sanity had been disturbed by pressure from above, in whose systems had lodged the germs of those exotic social doctrines floating so freely in the air of our modern industrial communities .... Chester Glenn remains for a passing mention. A Yankee of Yankees, this, born on a New Hampshire farm, and to the ordinary traveller on the Wigmore branch of the railroad just a good-natured, round-faced, tobacco-chewing brakeman who would take a seat beside ladies of his acquaintance aid make himself agreeable until it was time to rise and bawl out, in the approved manner of his profession, the name of the next station. Fillmore Street knew that the flat visored cap which his corporation compelled him to wear covered a brain into which had penetrated the maggot of the Single Tax. When he encountered Mr. Shivers or Auermann the talk became coruscating..

Eda Rawle, Janet's solitary friend of these days, must also be mentioned, though the friendship was merely an episode in Janet's life. Their first meeting was at Grady's quick-lunch counter in Faber Street, which they both frequented at one time, and the fact that each had ordered a ham sandwich, a cup of coffee, and a confection—new to Grady's—known as a Napoleon had led to conversation.

Eda, of course, was the aggressor; she was irresistibly drawn, she would not be repulsed. A

stenographer in the Wessex National Bank, she boarded with a Welsh family in Spruce Street; matter-of-fact, plodding, commonplace, resembling—as Janet thought—a horse, possessing, indeed many of the noble qualities of that animal, she might have been thought the last person in the world to discern and appreciate in Janet the hidden elements of a mysterious fire. In appearance Miss Rawle was of a type not infrequent in Anglo-Saxon lands, strikingly blonde, with high malar bones, white eyelashes, and eyes of a metallic blue, cheeks of an amazing elasticity that worked rather painfully as she talked or smiled, drawing back inadequate lips, revealing long, white teeth and vivid gums. It was the craving in her for romance Janet assuaged; Eda's was the love content to pour out, that demands little. She was capable of immolation. Janet was by no means ungrateful for the warmth of such affection, though in moments conscious of a certain perplexity and sadness because she was able to give such a meagre return for the wealth of its offering.

In other moments, when the world seemed all disorder and chaos,—as Mr. Shivers described it,—or when she felt within her, like demons, those inexpressible longings and desires, leaping and straining, pulling her, almost irresistibly, she knew not whither, Eda shone forth like a light in the darkness, like the beacon of a refuge and a shelter. Eda had faith in her, even when Janet had lost faith in herself: she went to Eda in the same spirit that Marguerite went to church; though she, Janet, more resembled Faust, being—save in these hours of lowered vitality—of the forth-faring kind …. Unable to confess the need that drove her, she arrived in Eda's little bedroom to be taken into Eda's arms. Janet was immeasurably the stronger of the two, but Eda possessed the masculine trait of protectiveness, the universe never bothered her, she was one of those persons—called fortunate—to whom the orthodox Christian virtues come as naturally as sun or air. Passion, when sanctified by matrimony, was her ideal, and now it was always in terms of Janet she dreamed of it, having read about it in volumes her friend would not touch, and never having experienced deeply its discomforts. Sanctified or unsanctified, Janet regarded it with terror, and whenever Eda innocently broached the subject she recoiled. Once Eda exclaimed:—"When you do fall in love, Janet, you must tell me all about it, every word!"

Janet blushed hotly, and was silent. In Eda's mind such an affair was a kind of glorified fireworks ending in a cluster of stars, in Janet's a volcanic eruption to turn the world red. Such was the difference between them.

Their dissipations together consisted of "sundaes" at a drug-store, or sometimes of movie shows at the Star or the Alhambra. Stereotyped on Eda's face during the legitimately tender passages of these dramas was an expression of rapture, a smile made peculiarly infatuate by that vertical line in her cheeks, that inadequacy of lip and preponderance of white teeth and red gums. It irritated, almost infuriated Janet, to whom it appeared as the logical reflection of what was passing on the screen; she averted her glance from both, staring into her lap, filled with shame that the relation between the sexes should be thus exposed to public gaze, parodied, sentimentalized, degraded…. There were, however, marvels to stir her, strange landscapes, cities, seas, and ships,—once a fire in the forest of a western reserve with gigantic tongues of orange flame leaping from tree to tree. The movies brought the world to Hampton, the great world into which she longed to fare, brought the world to her! Remote mountain hamlets from Japan, minarets and muezzins from the Orient, pyramids from Egypt, domes from Moscow resembling gilded beets turned upside down; grey houses of parliament by the Thames, the Tower of London, the Palaces of Potsdam, the Tai Mahal. Strange lands indeed, and stranger peoples! booted Russians in blouses, naked Equatorial savages tattooed and amazingly adorned, soldiers and sailors, presidents, princes and emperors brought into such startling proximity one could easily imagine one's self exchanging the time of day! Incredible to Janet how the audiences, how even Eda accepted with American complacency what were to her never-ending miracles; the yearning to see more, to know more, became acute, like a pain, but even as she sought to devour these scenes, to drink in every detail, with tantalizing swiftness they were whisked away. They were peepholes in the walls of her prison; and at night she often charmed herself to sleep with remembered visions of wide, empty, treeshaded terraces reserved for kings.

But Eda, however complacent her interest in the scenes themselves, was thrilled to the marrow by their effect on Janet, who was her medium. Emerging from the vestibule of the theatre, Janet seemed not to see the slushy street, her eyes shone with a silver light like that of a mountain lake in a stormy sunset. And they walked in silence until Janet would exclaim:

"Oh Eda, wouldn't you love to travel!"

Thus Eda Rawle was brought in contact with values she herself was powerless to detect, and which did not become values until they had passed through Janet. One "educative" reel they had seen had begun with scenes in a lumber camp high in the mountains of Galicia, where grow forests of the priceless pine that becomes, after years of drying and seasoning, the sounding board of the Stradivarius and the harp. Even then it must respond to a Player. Eda, though failing to apply this poetic parallel, when alone in her little room in the Welsh boarding-house often indulged in an ecstasy

of speculation as to that man, hidden in the mists of the future, whose destiny it would be to awaken her friend. Hampton did not contain him,—of this she was sure; and in her efforts to visualize him she had recourse to the movies, seeking him amongst that brilliant company of personages who stood so haughtily or walked so indifferently across the ephemeral brightness of the screen.

By virtue of these marvels of the movies: Hampton ugly and sordid Hampton!—actually began for Janet to take on a romantic tinge. Were not the strange peoples of the earth flocking to Hampton? She saw them arriving at the station, straight from Ellis Island, bewildered, ticketed like dumb animals, the women draped in the soft, exotic colours many of them were presently to exchange for the cheap and gaudy apparel of Faber Street. She sought to summon up in her mind the glimpses she had had of the wonderful lands from which they had come, to imagine their lives in that earlier environment. Sometimes she wandered, alone or with Eda, through the various quarters of the city. Each quarter had a flavour of its own, a synthetic flavour belonging neither to the old nor to the new, yet partaking of both: a difference in atmosphere to which Janet was keenly sensitive. In the German quarter, to the north, one felt a sort of ornamental bleakness—if the expression may be permitted: the tenements here were clean and not too crowded, the scroll-work on their superimposed porches, like that decorating the Turnverein and the stem Lutheran Church, was eloquent of a Teutonic inheritance: The Belgians were to the west, beyond the base-ball park and the car barns, their grey houses scattered among new streets beside the scarred and frowning face of Torrey's hill. Almost under the hill itself, which threatened to roll down on it, and facing a bottomless, muddy street, was the quaint little building giving the note of foreign thrift, of socialism and shrewdness, of joie de vivre to the settlement, the Franco-Belgian co-operative store, with its salle de reunion above and a stage for amateur theatricals. Standing in the mud outside, Janet would gaze through the tiny windows in the stucco wall at the baskets prepared for each household laid in neat rows beside the counter; at the old man with the watery blue eyes and lacing of red in his withered cheeks who spoke no English, whose duty it was to distribute the baskets to the women and children as they called.

Turning eastward again, one came to Dey Street, in the heart of Hampton, where Hibernian Hall stood alone and grim, sole testimony of the departed Hibernian glories of a district where the present Irish rulers of the city had once lived and gossiped and fought in the days when the mill bells had roused the boarding-house keepers at half past four of a winter morning. Beside the hall was a corner lot, heaped high with hills of ashes and rubbish like the vomitings of some filthy volcano; the unsightliness of which was half concealed by huge signs announcing the merits of chewing gums, tobaccos, and cereals. But why had the departure of the Irish, the coming of the Syrians made Dey Street dark, narrow, mysterious, oriental? changed the very aspect of its architecture? Was it the coffee-houses? One of these, in front of which Janet liked to linger, was set weirdly into an old New England cottage, and had, apparently, fathomless depths. In summer the whole front of it lay open to the street, and here all day long, beside the table where the charcoal squares were set to dry, could be seen saffron-coloured Armenians absorbed in a Turkish game played on a backgammon board, their gentleness and that of the loiterers looking on in strange contrast with their hawk-like profiles and burning eyes. Behind this group, in the half light of the middle interior, could be discerned an American soda-water fountain of a bygone fashion, on its marble counter oddly shaped bottles containing rose and violet syrups; there was a bottle-shaped stove, and on the walls, in gilt frames, pictures evidently dating from the period in American art that flourished when Franklin Pierce was President; and there was an array of marble topped tables extending far back into the shadows. Behind the fountain was a sort of cupboard—suggestive of the Arabian Nights, which Janet had never read—from which, occasionally, the fat proprietor emerged bearing Turkish coffee or long Turkish pipes.

When not thus occupied the proprietor carried a baby. The street swarmed with babies, and mothers nursed them on the door-steps. And in this teeming, prolific street one could scarcely move without stepping on a fat, almond eyed child, though some, indeed, were wheeled; wheeled in all sorts of queer contrivances by one another, by fathers with ragged black moustaches and eagle noses who, to the despair of mill superintendents, had decided in the morning that three days' wages would since to support their families for the week …. In the midst of the throng might be seen occasionally the stout and comfortable and not too immaculate figure of a shovel bearded Syrian priest, in a frock coat and square-topped "Derby" hat, sailing along serenely, heedless of the children who scattered out of his path.

Nearby was the quarter of the Canadian French, scarcely now to be called foreigners, though still somewhat reminiscent of the cramped little towns in the northern wilderness of water and forest. On one corner stood almost invariably a "Pharmacie Francaise"; the signs were in French, and the elders spoke the patois. These, despite the mill pallor, retained in their faces, in their eyes, a suggestion of the outdoor look of their ancestors, the coureurs des bois, but the children spoke English, and the young men, as they played baseball in the street or in the corner lots might be heard shouting out derisively the cry of the section hands so familiar in mill cities, "Doff, you beggars you, doff!"

Occasionally the two girls strayed into that wide thoroughfare not far from the canal, known by the classic name of Hawthorne, which the Italians had appropriated to themselves. This street, too, in spite of the telegraph poles flaunting crude arms in front of its windows, in spite of the trolley running down its middle, had acquired a character, a unity all its own, a warmth and picturesqueness that in the lingering light of summer evenings assumed an indefinable significance. It was not Italy, but it was something—something proclaimed in the ornate, leaning lines of the pillared balconies of the yellow tenement on the second block, in the stone-vaulted entrance of the low house next door, in fantastically coloured walls, in curtained windows out of which leaned swarthy, earringed women. Blocking the end of the street, in stern contrast, was the huge Clarendon Mill with its sinister brick pillars running up the six stories between the glass. Here likewise the sidewalks overflowed with children, large-headed, with great, lustrous eyes, mute, appealing, the eyes of cattle. Unlike American children, they never seemed to be playing. Among the groups of elders gathered for gossip were piratical Calabrians in sombre clothes, descended from Greek ancestors, once the terrors of the Adriatic Sea. The women, lingering in the doorways, hemmed in by more children, were for the most part squat and plump, but once in a while Janet's glance was caught and held by a strange, sharp beauty worthy of a cameo.

Opposite the Clarendon Mill on the corner of East Street was a provision store with stands of fruit and vegetables encroaching on the pavement. Janet's eye was attracted by a box of olives.

"Oh Eda," she cried, "do you remember, we saw them being picked—in the movies? All those old trees on the side of a hill?"

"Why, that's so," said Eda. "You never would have thought anything'd grow on those trees."

The young Italian who kept the store gave them a friendly grin.

"You lika the olives?" he asked, putting some of the shining black fruit into their hands. Eda bit one dubiously with her long, white teeth, and giggled.

"Don't they taste funny!" she exclaimed.

"Good—very good," he asserted gravely, and it was to Janet he turned, as though recognizing a discrimination not to be found in her companion. She nodded affirmatively. The strange taste of the fruit enhanced her sense of adventure, she tried to imagine herself among the gatherers in the grove; she glanced at the young man to perceive that he was tall and well formed, with remarkably expressive eyes almost the colour of the olives themselves. It surprised her that she liked him, though he was an Italian and a foreigner: a certain debonnair dignity in him appealed to her—a quality lacking in many of her own countrymen.

And she wanted to talk to him about Italy,—only she did not know how to begin,—when a customer appeared, an Italian woman who conversed with him in soft, liquid tones that moved her ….

Sometimes on these walks—especially if the day were grey and sombre—Janet's sense of romance and adventure deepened, became more poignant, charged with presage. These feelings, vague and unaccountable, she was utterly unable to confide to Eda, yet the very fear they inspired was fascinating; a fear and a hope that some day, in all this Babel of peoples, something would happen! It was as though the conflicting soul of the city and her own soul were one….

CHAPTER III

Lise was the only member of the Bumpus family who did not find uncongenial such distractions and companionships as were offered by the civilization that surrounded them. The Bagatelle she despised; that was slavery—but slavery out of which she might any day be snatched, like Leila Hawtrey, by a prince charming who had made a success in life. Success to Lise meant money. Although what some sentimental sociologists might call a victim of our civilization, Lise would not have changed it, since it produced not only Lise herself, but also those fabulous financiers with yachts and motors and town and country houses she read about in the supplements of the Sunday newspapers. It contained her purgatory, which she regarded in good conventional fashion as a mere temporary place of detention, and likewise the heaven toward which she strained, the dwelling-place of light. In short, her philosophy was that of the modern, orthodox American, tinged by a somewhat commercialized Sunday school tradition of an earlier day, and highly approved by the censors of the movies. The peculiar kind of abstinence once euphemistically known as "virtue," particularly if it were combined with beauty, never

failed of its reward. Lise, in this sense, was indeed virtuous, and her mirror told her she was beautiful. Almost anything could happen to such a lady: any day she might be carried up into heaven by that modern chariot of fire, the motor car, driven by a celestial chauffeur.

One man's meat being another's poison, Lise absorbed from the movies an element by which her sister Janet was repelled. A popular production known as "Leila of Hawtrey's" contained her creed,—Hawtrey's being a glittering metropolitan restaurant where men of the world are wont to gather and discuss the stock market, and Leila a beautiful, blonde and orphaned waitress upon whom several of the fashionable frequenters had exercised seductive powers in vain. They lay in wait for her at the side entrance, followed her, while one dissipated and desperate person, married, and said to move in the most exclusive circles, sent her an offer of a yearly income in five figures, the note being reproduced on the screen, and Leila pictured reading it in her frigid hall-bedroom. There are complications; she is in debt, and the proprietor of Hawtrey's has threatened to discharge her and in order that the magnitude of the temptation may be most effectively realized the vision appears of Leila herself, wrapped in furs, stepping out of a limousine and into an elevator lifting her to an apartment containing silk curtains, a Canet bed, a French maid, and a Pomeranian. Virtue totters, but triumphs, being reinforced by two more visions the first of these portrays Leila, prematurely old, dragging herself along pavements under the metallic Broadway lights accosting gentlemen in evening dress; and the second reveals her in the country, kneeling beside a dying mother's bed, giving her promise to remain true to the Christian teachings of her childhood.

And virtue is rewarded, lavishly, as virtue should be, in dollars and cents, in stocks and bonds, in pearls and diamonds. Popular fancy takes kindly to rough but honest westerners who have begun life in flannel shirts, who have struck gold and come to New York with a fortune but despising effeteness; such a one, tanned by the mountain sun, embarrassed in raiment supplied by a Fifth Avenue tailor, takes a table one evening at Hawtrey's and of course falls desperately in love. He means marriage from the first, and his faith in Leila is great enough to survive what appears to be an almost total eclipse of her virtue. Through the machinations of the influential villain, and lured by the false pretence that one of her girl friends is ill, she is enticed into a mysterious house of a sinister elegance, and apparently irretrievably compromised. The westerner follows, forces his way through the portals, engages the villain, and vanquishes him. Leila becomes a Bride. We behold her, at the end, mistress of one of those magnificent stone mansions with grilled vestibules and negro butlers into whose sacred precincts we are occasionally, in the movies, somewhat breathlessly ushered—a long way from Hawtrey's restaurant and a hall-bedroom. A long way, too, from the Bagatelle and Fillmore Street—but to Lise a way not impossible, nor even improbable.

This work of art, conveying the moral that virtue is an economic asset, made a great impression on Lise. Good Old Testament doctrine, set forth in the Book of Job itself. And Leila, pictured as holding out for a higher price and getting it, encouraged Lise to hold out also. Mr. Wiley, in whose company she had seen this play, and whose likeness filled the plush and silver-plated frame on her bureau, remained ironically ignorant of the fact that he had paid out his money to make definite an ambition, an ideal hitherto nebulous in the mind of the lady whom he adored. Nor did Lise enlighten him, being gifted with a certain inscrutableness. As a matter of fact it had never been her intention to accept him, but now that she was able concretely to visualize her Lochinvar of the future, Mr. Whey's lack of qualifications became the more apparent. In the first place, he had been born in Lowell and had never been west of Worcester; in the second, his salary was sixteen dollars a week: it is true she had once fancied the Scottish terrier style of hair-cut abruptly ending in the rounded line of the shaven neck, but Lochinvar had been close-cropped. Mr. Wiley, close-cropped, would have resembled a convict.

Mr. Wiley was in love, there could be no doubt about that, and if he had not always meant marriage, he meant it now, having reached a state where no folly seems preposterous. The manner of their meeting had had just the adventurous and romantic touch that Lise liked, one of her favourite amusements in the intervals between "steadies" being to walk up and down Faber Street of an evening after supper, arm in arm with two or three other young ladies, all chewing gum, wheeling into store windows and wheeling out again, pretending the utmost indifference to melting glances cast in their direction. An exciting sport, though incomprehensible to masculine intelligence. It was a principle with Lise to pay no attention to any young man who was not "presented," those venturing to approach her with the ready formula "Haven't we met before?" being instantly congealed. She was strict as to etiquette. But Mr. Wiley, it seemed, could claim acquaintance with Miss Schuler, one of the ladies to whose arm Lise's was linked, and he had the further advantage of appearing in a large and seductive touring car, painted green, with an eagle poised above the hood and its name, Wizard, in a handwriting rounded and bold, written in nickel across the radiator. He greeted Miss Schuler effusively, but his eye was on Lise from the first, and it was she he took with, him in the front seat, indifferent to the giggling behind. Ever since then Lise had had a motor at her disposal, and on Sundays they took long "joy rides" beyond the borders of the state. But it must not be imagined that Mr. Whey was the proprietor of the

vehicle; nor was he a chauffeur,—her American pride would not have permitted her to keep company with a chauffeur: he was the demonstrator for the Wizard, something of a wizard himself, as Lise had to admit when they whizzed over the tarvia of the Riverside Boulevard at fifty or sixty miles an hour with the miner cut out—a favourite diversion of Mr. Whey's, who did not feel he was going unless he was accompanied by a noise like that of a mitrailleuse in action. Lise, experiencing a ravishing terror, hung on to her hat with one hand and to Mr. Wiley with the other, her code permitting this; permitting him also, occasionally, when they found themselves in tenebrous portions of Slattery's Riverside Park, to put his arm around her waist and kiss her. So much did Lise's virtue allow, and no more, the result being that he existed in a tantalizing state of hope and excitement most detrimental to the nerves.

He never lost, however,—in public at least, or before Lise's family,—the fine careless, jaunty air of the demonstrator, of the free-lance for whom seventy miles an hour has no terrors; the automobile, apparently, like the ship, sets a stamp upon its votaries. No Elizabethan buccaneer swooping down on defenceless coasts ever exceeded in audacity Mr. Wiley's invasion of quiet Fillmore Street. He would draw up with an ear-splitting screaming of brakes in front of the clay-yellow house, and sometimes the muffler, as though unable to repress its approval of the performance, would let out a belated pop that never failed to jar the innermost being of Auermann, who had been shot at, or rather shot past, by an Italian, and knew what it was. He hated automobiles, he hated Mr. Wiley.

"Vat you do?" he would demand, glaring.

And Mr. Wiley would laugh insolently.

"You think I done it, do you, Dutchie—huh!"

He would saunter past, up the stairs, and into the Bumpus dining-room, often before the family had finished their evening meal. Lise alone made him welcome, albeit demurely; but Mr. Wiley, not having sensibilities, was proof against Hannah's coldness and Janet's hostility. With unerring instinct he singled out Edward as his victim.

"How's Mr. Bumpus this evening?" he would genially inquire.

Edward invariably assured Mr. Wiley that he was well, invariably took a drink of coffee to emphasize the fact, as though the act of lifting his cup had in it some magic to ward off the contempt of his wife and elder daughter.

"Well, I've got it pretty straight that the Arundel's going to run nights, starting next week," Lise's suitor would continue.

And to save his soul Edward could not refrain from answering, "You don't say so!" He feigned interest in the information that the Hampton Ball Team, owing to an unsatisfactory season, was to change managers next year. Mr. Wiley possessed the gift of gathering recondite bits of news, he had confidence in his topics and in his manner of dealing with them; and Edward, pretending to be entertained, went so far in his politeness as to ask Mr. Wiley if he had had supper.

"I don't care if I sample one of Mis' Bumpus's doughnuts," Mr. Wiley would reply politely, reaching out a large hand that gave evidence, in spite of Sapolio, of an intimacy with grease cups and splash pans. "I guess there's nobody in this burg can make doughnuts to beat yours, Miss Bumpus."

If she had only known which doughnut he would take; Hannah sometimes thought she might have been capable of putting arsenic in it. Her icy silence did not detract from the delights of his gestation.

Occasionally, somewhat to Edward's alarm, Hannah demanded: "Where are you taking Lise this evening?"

Mr. Wiley's wisdom led him to be vague.

"Oh, just for a little spin up the boulevard. Maybe we'll pick up Ella Schuler and one or two other young ladies."

Hannah and Janet knew very well he had no intention of doing this, and Hannah did not attempt to conceal her incredulity. As a matter of fact, Lise sometimes did insist on a "party."

"I want you should bring her back by ten o'clock. That's late enough for a girl who works to be out. It's late enough for any girl."

"Sure, Mis' Bumpus," Wiley would respond easily.

Hannah chafed because she had no power to enforce this, because Mr. Wiley and Lise understood she had no power. Lise went to put on her hat; if she skimped her toilet in the morning, she made up for it in the evening when she came home from the store, and was often late for supper. In the meantime, while Lise was in the bedroom adding these last touches, Edward would contemptibly continue the conversation, fingering the Evening Banner as it lay in his lap, while Mr. Wiley helped himself boldly to another doughnut, taking—as Janet observed—elaborate precautions to spill none of the crumbs on a brown suit, supposed to be the last creation in male attire. Behind a plate glass window in Faber Street, belonging to a firm of "custom" tailors whose stores had invaded every important city in the country, and who made clothes for "college" men, only the week before Mr. Wiley had seen this same suit artistically folded, combined with a coloured shirt, brown socks, and tie and "torture" collar—lures for the discriminating. Owing to certain expenses connected with Lise, he had been unable to acquire the shirt and the tie, but he had bought the suit in the hope and belief that she would find him irresistible therein. It pleased him, too, to be taken for a "college" man, and on beholding in the mirror his broadened shoulders and diminished waist he was quite convinced his money had not been spent in vain; that strange young ladies—to whom, despite his infatuation for the younger Miss Bumpus, he was not wholly indifferent—would mistake him for an undergraduate of Harvard,—an imposition concerning which he had no scruples. But Lise, though shaken, had not capitulated.....

When she returned to the dining-room, arrayed in her own finery, demure, triumphant, and had carried off Mr. Whey there would ensue an interval of silence broken only by the clattering together of the dishes Hannah snatched up.

"I guess he's the kind of son-in-law would suit you," she threw over her shoulder once to Edward.

"Why?" he inquired, letting down his newspaper nervously.

"Well, you seem to favour him, to make things as pleasant for him as you can."

Edward would grow warm with a sense of injustice, the inference being that he was to blame for Mr. Wiley; if he had been a different kind of father another sort of suitor would be courting Lise.

"I have to be civil," he protested. He pronounced that, word "civil" exquisitely, giving equal value to both syllables.

"Civil!" Hannah scoffed, as she left the room; and to Janet, who had followed her into the kitchen, she added: "That's the trouble with your father, he's always be'n a little too civil. Edward Bumpus is just as simple as a child, he's afraid of offending folks' feelings .... Think of being polite to that Whey!" In those two words Hannah announced eloquently her utter condemnation of the demonstrator of the Wizard. It was characteristic of her, however, when she went back for another load of dishes and perceived that Edward was only pretending to read his Banner, to attempt to ease her husband's feelings. She thought it queer because she was still fond of Edward Bumpus, after all he had "brought on her."

"It's Lise," she said, as though speaking to Janet, "she attracts 'em. Sometimes I just can't get used to it that she's my daughter. I don't know who she takes after. She's not like any of my kin, nor any of the Bumpuses."

"What can you do?" asked Edward. "You can't order him out of the house. It's better for him to come here. And you can't stop Lise from going with him—she's earning her own money...."

They had talked over the predicament before, and always came to the same impasse. In the privacy of the kitchen Hannah paused suddenly in her energetic rubbing of a plate and with supreme courage uttered a question.

"Janet, do you calculate he means anything wrong?"

"I don't know what he means," Janet replied, unwilling to give Mr. Wiley credit for anything, "but I know this, that Lise is too smart to let him take advantage of her."

Hannah ruminated. Cleverness as the modern substitute for feminine virtue did not appeal to her, but she let it pass. She was in no mood to quarrel with any quality that would ward off disgrace.

"I don't know what to make of Lise—she don't appear to have any principles...."

If the Wiley affair lasted longer than those preceding it, this was because former suitors had not commanded automobiles. When Mr. Wiley lost his automobile he lost his luck—if it may be called such. One April evening, after a stroll with Eda, Janet reached home about nine o'clock to find Lise already in their room, to remark upon the absence of Mr. Wiley's picture from the frame.

"I'm through with him," Lise declared briefly, tugging at her hair.

"Through with him?" Janet repeated.

Lise paused in her labours and looked at her sister steadily. "I handed him the mit—do you get me?"

"But why?"

"Why? I was sick of him—ain't that enough? And then he got mixed up with a Glendale trolley and smashed his radiator, and the Wizard people sacked him. I always told him he was too fly. It's lucky for him I wasn't in the car."

"It's lucky for you," said Janet. Presently she inquired curiously:
"Aren't you sorry?"

"Nix." Lise shook her head, which was now bowed, her face hidden by hair. "Didn't I tell you I was sick of him? But he sure was some spender," she added, as though in justice bound to give him his due.

Janet was shocked by the ruthlessness of it, for Lise appeared relieved, almost gay. She handed Janet a box containing five peppermint creams—all that remained of Mr. Wiley's last gift.

One morning in the late spring Janet crossed the Warren Street bridge, the upper of the two spider-like structures to be seen from her office window, spanning the river beside the great Hampton dam. The day, dedicated to the memory of heroes fallen in the Civil War, the thirtieth of May, was a legal holiday. Gradually Janet had acquired a dread of holidays as opportunities never realized, as intervals that should have been filled with unmitigated joys, and yet were invariably wasted, usually in walks with Eda Rawle. To-day, feeling an irresistible longing for freedom, for beauty, for adventure, for quest and discovery of she knew not what, she avoided Eda, and after gazing awhile at the sunlight dancing in the white mist below the falls, she walked on, southward, until she had left behind her the last straggling houses of the city and found herself on a wide, tarvia road that led, ultimately, to Boston. So read the sign.

Great maples, heavy with leaves, stood out against the soft blue of the sky, and the sunlight poured over everything, bathing the stone walls, the thatches of the farmhouses, extracting from the copses of stunted pine a pungent, reviving perfume. Sometimes she stopped to rest on the pine needles, and walked on again, aimlessly, following the road because it was the easiest way. There were spring flowers in the farmhouse yards, masses of lilacs whose purple she drank in eagerly; the air, which had just a tang of New England sharpness, was filled with tender sounds, the clucking of hens, snatches of the songs of birds, the rustling of maple leaves in the fitful breeze. A chipmunk ran down an elm and stood staring at her with beady, inquisitive eyes, motionless save for his quivering tail, and she put forth her hand, shyly, beseechingly, as though he held the secret of life she craved. But he darted away.

She looked around her unceasingly, at the sky, at the trees, at the flowers and ferns and fields, at the vireos and thrushes, the robins and tanagers gashing in and out amidst the foliage, and she was filled with a strange yearning to expand and expand until she should become a part of all nature, be absorbed into it, cease to be herself. Never before had she known just that feeling, that degree of ecstasy mingled with divine discontent .... Occasionally, intruding faintly upon the countryside peace, she was aware of a distant humming sound that grew louder and louder until there shot roaring past her an automobile filled with noisy folk, leaving behind it a suffocating cloud of dust. Even these intrusions, reminders of the city she had left, were powerless to destroy her mood, and she began to skip, like a schoolgirl, pausing once in a while to look around her fearfully, lest she was observed; and it pleased her to think that she had escaped forever, that she would never go back: she cried aloud, as she skipped, "I won't go back, I won't go back," keeping time with her feet until she was out of breath and almost intoxicated, delirious, casting herself down, her heart beating wildly, on a bank of ferns, burying her face in them. She had really stopped because a pebble had got into her shoe, and as she took it out she looked at her bare heel and remarked ruefully:—"Those twenty-five cent stockings aren't worth buying!"

Economic problems, however, were powerless to worry her to-day, when the sun shone and the wind blew and the ferns, washed by the rill running through the culvert under the road, gave forth a delicious moist odour reminding her of the flower store where her sister Lise had once been employed. But at length she arose, and after an hour or more of sauntering the farming landscape was left behind, the crumbling stone fences were replaced by a well-kept retaining wall capped by a privet hedge, through which, between stone pillars, a driveway entered and mounted the shaded slope, turning and twisting until lost to view. But afar, standing on the distant crest, through the tree trunks and foliage Janet saw one end of the mansion to which it led, and ventured timidly but eagerly in among the trees in the hope of satisfying her new-born curiosity. Try as she would, she never could get any but

disappointing and partial glimpses of a house which, because of the mystery of its setting, fired her imagination, started her to wondering why it was that some were permitted to live in the midst of such beauty while she was condemned to spend her days in Fillmore Street and the prison of the mill. She was not even allowed to look at it! The thought was like a cloud across the sun.

However, when she had regained the tarvia road and walked a little way the shadow suddenly passed, and she stood surprised. The sight of a long common with its ancient trees in the fullness of glory, dense maples, sturdy oaks, strong, graceful elms that cast flickering, lacy shadows across the road filled her with satisfaction, with a sense of peace deepened by the awareness, in the background, ranged along the common on either side, of stately, dignified buildings, each in an appropriate frame of foliage. With the essence rather than the detail of all this her consciousness became steeped; she was naturally ignorant of the great good fortune of Silliston Academy of having been spared with one or two exceptions—donations during those artistically lean years of the nineteenth century when American architecture affected the Gothic, the Mansard, and the subsequent hybrid. She knew this must be Silliston, the seat of that famous academy of which she had heard.

The older school buildings and instructors' houses, most of them white or creamy yellow, were native Colonial, with tall, graceful chimneys and classic pillars and delicate balustrades, eloquent at once of the racial inheritance of the Republic and of a bygone individuality, dignity, and pride. And the modern architect, of whose work there was an abundance, had graciously and intuitively held this earlier note and developed it. He was an American, but an American who had been trained. The result was harmony, life as it should proceed, the new growing out of the old. And no greater tribute can be paid to Janet Bumpus than that it pleased her, struck and set exquisitely vibrating within her responsive chords. For the first time in her adult life she stood in the presence of tradition, of a tradition inherently if unconsciously the innermost reality of her being a tradition that miraculously was not dead, since after all the years it had begun to put forth these vigorous shoots….

What Janet chiefly realized was the delicious, contented sense of having come, visually at least, to the home for which she had longed. But her humour was that of a child who has strayed, to find its true dwelling place in a region of beauty hitherto unexplored and unexperienced, tinged, therefore, with unreality, with mystery,—an effect enhanced by the chance stillness and emptiness of the place. She wandered up and down the Common, whose vivid green was starred with golden dandelions; and then, spying the arched and shady vista of a lane, entered it, bent on new discoveries. It led past one of the newer buildings, the library—as she read in a carved inscription over the door—plunged into shade again presently to emerge at a square farmhouse, ancient and weathered, with a great square chimney thrust out of the very middle of the ridge-pole,—a landmark left by one of the earliest of Silliston's settlers. Presiding over it, embracing and protecting it, was a splendid tree. The place was evidently in process of reconstruction and repair, the roof had been newly shingled, new frames, with old-fashioned, tiny panes had been put in the windows; a little garden was being laid out under the sheltering branches of the tree, and between the lane and the garden, half finished, was a fence of an original and pleasing design, consisting of pillars placed at intervals with upright pickets between, the pickets sawed in curves, making a line that drooped in the middle. Janet did not perceive the workman engaged in building this fence until the sound of his hammer attracted her attention. His back was bent, he was absorbed in his task.

"Are there any stores near here?" she inquired.

He straightened up. "Why yes," he replied, "come to think of it, I have seen stores, I'm sure I have."

Janet laughed; his expression, his manner of speech were so delightfully whimsical, so in keeping with the spirit of her day, and he seemed to accept her sudden appearance in the precise make-believe humour she could have wished. And yet she stood a little struck with timidity, puzzled by the contradictions he presented of youth and age, of shrewdness, experience and candour, of gentility and manual toil. He must have been about thirty-five; he was hatless, and his hair, uncombed but not unkempt, was greying at the temples; his eyes—which she noticed particularly—were keen yet kindly, the irises delicately stencilled in a remarkable blue; his speech was colloquial yet cultivated, his workman's clothes belied his bearing.

"Yes, there are stores, in the village," he went on, "but isn't it a holiday, or Sunday—perhaps—or something of the kind?"

"It's Decoration Day," she reminded him, with deepening surprise.

"So it is! And all the storekeepers have gone on picnics in their automobiles, or else they're playing golf. Nobody's working today."

"But you—aren't you working?" she inquired.

"Working?" he repeated. "I suppose some people would call it work. I—I hadn't thought of it in that way."

"You mean—you like it," Janet was inspired to say.

"Well, yes," he confessed. "I suppose I do."

Her cheeks dimpled. If her wonder had increased, her embarrassment had flown, and he seemed suddenly an old acquaintance. She had, however, profound doubts now of his being a carpenter.

"Were you thinking of going shopping?" he asked, and at the very ludicrousness of the notion she laughed again. She discovered a keen relish for this kind of humour, but it was new to her experience, and she could not cope with it.

"Only to buy some crackers, or a sandwich," she replied, and blushed.

"Oh," he said. "Down in the village, on the corner where the cars stop, is a restaurant. It's not as good as the Parker House in Boston, I believe, but they do have sandwiches, yes, and coffee. At least they call it coffee."

"Oh, thank you," she said.

"You'd better wait till you try it," he warned her.

"Oh, I don't mind, I don't want much." And she was impelled to add: "It's such a beautiful day."

"It's absurd to get hungry on such a day—absurd," he agreed.

"Yes, it is," she laughed. "I'm not really hungry, but I haven't time to get back to Hampton for dinner." Suddenly she grew hot at the thought that he might suspect her of hinting. "You see, I live in Hampton," she went on hurriedly, "I'm a stenographer there, in the Chippering Mill, and I was just out for a walk, and—I came farther than I intended." She had made it worse.

But he said, "Oh, you came from Hampton!" with an intonation of surprise, of incredulity even, that soothed and even amused while it did not deceive her. Not that the superior intelligence of which she had begun to suspect him had been put to any real test by the discovery of her home, and she was quite sure her modest suit of blue serge and her $2.99 pongee blouse proclaimed her as a working girl of the mill city. "I've been to Hampton," he declared, just as though it were four thousand miles away instead of four.

"But I've never been here before, to Silliston," she responded in the same spirit: and she added wistfully, "it must be nice to live in such a beautiful place as this!"

"Yes, it is nice," he agreed. "We have our troubles, too,—but it's nice."

She ventured a second, appraising glance. His head, which he carried a little flung back, his voice, his easy and confident bearing—all these contradicted the saw and the hammer, the flannel shirt, open at the neck, the khaki trousers still bearing the price tag. And curiosity beginning to get the better of her, she was emboldened to pay a compliment to the fence. If one had to work, it must be a pleasure to work on things pleasing to the eye—such was her inference.

"Why, I'm glad you like it," he said heartily. "I was just hoping some one would come along here and admire it. Now—what colour would you paint it?"

"Are you a painter, too?"

"After a fashion. I'm a sort of man of all work—I thought of painting it white, with the pillars green."

"I think that would be pretty," she answered, judicially, after a moment's thought. "What else can you do?"

He appeared to be pondering his accomplishments.

"Well, I can doctor trees," he said, pointing an efficient finger at the magnificent maple sheltering, like a guardian deity, the old farmhouse. "I put in those patches."

"They're cement," she exclaimed. "I never heard of putting cement in trees."

"They don't seem to mind."

"Are the holes very deep?"

"Pretty deep."

"But I should think the tree would be dead."

"Well, you see the life of a tree is right under the bark. If you can keep the outer covering intact, the tree will live."

"Why did you let the holes get so deep?"

"I've just come here. The house was like the tree the shingles all rotten, but the beams were sound. Those beams were hewn out of the forest two hundred and fifty years ago."

"Gracious!" said Janet. "And how old is the tree?"

"I should say about a hundred. I suppose it wouldn't care to admit it."

"How do you know?" she inquired.

"Oh, I'm very intimate with trees. I find out their secrets."

"It's your house!" she exclaimed, somewhat appalled by the discovery.

"Yes—yes it is," he answered, looking around at it and then in an indescribably comical manner down at his clothes. His gesture, his expression implied that her mistake was a most natural one.

"Excuse me, I thought—" she began, blushing hotly, yet wanting to laugh again.

"I don't blame you—why shouldn't you?" he interrupted her. "I haven't got used to it yet, and there is something amusing about—my owning a house. When the parlour's finished I'll have to wear a stiff collar, I suppose, in order to live up to it."

Her laughter broke forth, and she tried to imagine him in a stiff collar…. But she was more perplexed than ever. She stood balancing on one foot, poised for departure.

"I ought to be going," she said, as though she had been paying him a formal visit.

"Don't hurry," he protested cordially. "Why hurry back to Hampton?"

"I never want to go back!" she cried with a vehemence that caused him to contemplate her anew, suddenly revealing the intense, passionate quality which had so disturbed Mr. Ditmar. She stood transformed. "I hate it!" she declared. "It's so ugly, I never want to see it again."

"Yes, it is ugly," he confessed. "Since you admit it, I don't mind saying so. But it's interesting, in a way." Though his humorous moods had delighted her, she felt subtly flattered because he had grown more serious.

"It is interesting," she agreed. She was almost impelled to tell him why, in her excursions to the various quarters, she had found Hampton interesting, but a shyness born of respect for the store of knowledge she divined in him restrained her. She was curious to know what this man saw in Hampton. His opinion would be worth something. Unlike her neighbours in Fillmore Street, he was not what her sister Lise would call "nutty"; he had an air of fine sanity, of freedom, of detachment,—though the word did not occur to her; he betrayed no bitter sense of injustice, and his beliefs were uncoloured by the obsession of a single panacea. "Why do you think it's interesting?" she demanded.

"Well, I'm always expecting to hear that it's blown up. It reminds me of nitro-glycerine," he added, smiling.

She repeated the word.

"An explosive, you know—they put it in dynamite. They say a man once made it by accident, and locked up his laboratory and ran home—and never went back."

"I know what you mean!" she cried, her eyes alight with excitement. "All those foreigners! I've felt it that something would happen, some day, it frightened me, and yet I wished that something would happen. Only, I never would have thought of—nitro-glycerine."

She was unaware of the added interest in his regard. But he answered lightly enough:—"Oh, not only the foreigners. Human chemicals—you can't play with human chemicals any more than you can play with real ones—you've got to know something about chemistry."

This remark was beyond her depth.

"Who is playing with them?" she asked.

"Everybody—no one in particular. Nobody seems to know much about them, yet," he replied, and seemed disinclined to pursue the subject. A robin with a worm in its bill was hopping across the grass; he whistled softly, the bird stopped, cocking its head and regarding them. Suddenly, in conflict with her desire to remain indefinitely talking with this strange man, Janet felt an intense impulse to leave. She could bear the conversation no longer, she might burst into tears—such was the extraordinary effect he had produced on her.

"I must go,—I'm ever so much obliged to you," she said.

"Drop in again," he said, as he took her trembling hand …. When she had walked a little way she looked back over her shoulder to see him leaning idly against the post, gazing after her, and waving his hammer in friendly fashion.

For a while her feet fairly flew, and her heart beat tumultuously, keeping time with her racing thoughts. She walked about the Common, seeing nothing, paying no attention to the passers-by, who glanced at her curiously. But at length as she grew calmer the needs of a youthful and vigorous body became imperative, and realizing suddenly that she was tired and hungry, sought and found the little restaurant in the village below. She journeyed back to Hampton pondering what this man had said to her; speculating, rather breathlessly, whether he had been impelled to conversation by a natural kindness and courtesy, or whether he really had discovered something in her worthy of addressing, as he implied. Resentment burned in her breast, she became suddenly blinded by tears: she might never see him again, and if only she were "educated" she might know him, become his friend. Even in this desire she was not conventional, and in the few moments of their contact he had developed rather than transformed what she meant by "education." She thought of it not as knowledge reeking of books and schools, but as the acquirement of the freemasonry which he so evidently possessed, existence on terms of understanding, confidence, and freedom with nature; as having the world open up to one like a flower filled with colour and life. She thought of the robin, of the tree whose secrets he had learned, of a mental range including even that medley of human beings amongst whom she lived. And the fact that something of his meaning had eluded her grasp made her rebel all the more bitterly against the lack of a greater knowledge ….

Often during the weeks that followed he dwelt in her mind as she sat at her desk and stared out across the river, and several times that summer she started to walk to Silliston. But always she turned back. Perhaps she feared to break the charm of that memory….

CHAPTER IV

Our American climate is notoriously capricious. Even as Janet trudged homeward on that Memorial Day afternoon from her Cinderella-like adventure in Silliston the sun grew hot, the air lost its tonic, becoming moist and tepid, white clouds with dark edges were piled up in the western sky. The automobiles of the holiday makers swarmed ceaselessly over the tarvia. Valiantly as she strove to cling to her dream, remorseless reality was at work dragging her back, reclaiming her; excitement and physical exercise drained her vitality, her feet were sore, sadness invaded her as she came in view of the ragged outline of the city she had left so joyfully in the morning. Summer, that most depressing of seasons in an environment of drab houses and grey pavements, was at hand, listless householders and their families were already, seeking refuge on front steps she passed on her way to Fillmore Street.

It was about half past five when she arrived. Lise, her waist removed, was seated in a rocking chair at the window overlooking the littered yards and the backs of the tenements on Rutger Street. And Lise, despite the heaviness of the air, was dreaming. Of such delicate texture was the fabric of Janet's dreams that not only sordid reality, but contact with other dreams of a different nature, such as her sister's, often sufficed to dissolve them. She resented, for instance, the presence in the plush oval of Mr. Eustace Arlington; the movie star whose likeness had replaced Mr. Wiley's, and who had played the part of the western hero in "Leila of Hawtrey's." With his burning eyes and sensual face betraying the puffiness that comes from over-indulgence, he was not Janet's ideal of a hero, western or otherwise. And now Lise was holding a newspaper: not the Banner, whose provinciality she scorned, but a popular Boston sheet to be had for a cent, printed at ten in the morning and labelled "Three O'clock Edition," with huge red headlines stretched across the top of the page:—

"JURY FINDS IN MISS NEALY'S FAVOR."

As Janet entered Lise looked up and exclaimed:—"Say, that Nealy girl's won out!"

"Who is she?" Janet inquired listlessly.

"You are from the country, all right," was her sister's rejoinder. "I would have bet there wasn't a Reub in the state that wasn't wise to the Ferris breach of promise case, and here you blow in after the show's over and want to know who Nelly Nealy is. If that doesn't beat the band!"

"This woman sued a man named Ferris—is that it?"

"A man named Ferris!" Lise repeated, with the air of being appalled by her sister's ignorance. "I guess you never heard of Ferris, either—the biggest copper man in Boston. He could buy Hampton, and never feel it, and they say his house in Brighton cost half a million dollars. Nelly Nealy put her damages at one hundred and fifty thousand and stung him for seventy five. I wish I'd been in court when that jury came back! There's her picture."

To Janet, especially in the mood of reaction in which she found herself that evening, Lise's intense excitement, passionate partisanship and approval of Miss Nealy were incomprehensible, repellent. However, she took the sheet, gazing at the image of the lady who, recently an obscure stenographer, had suddenly leaped into fame and become a "headliner," the envied of thousands of working girls all over New England. Miss Nealy, in spite of the "glare of publicity" she deplored, had borne up admirably under the strain, and evidently had been able to consume three meals a day and give some thought to her costumes. Her smile under the picture hat was coquettish, if not bold. The special article, signed by a lady reporter whose sympathies were by no means concealed and whose talents were given free rein, related how the white-haired mother had wept tears of joy; how Miss Nealy herself had been awhile too overcome to speak, and then had recovered sufficiently to express her gratitude to the twelve gentlemen who had vindicated the honour of American womanhood. Mr. Ferris, she reiterated, was a brute; never as long as she lived would she be able to forget how she had loved and believed in him, and how, when at length she unwillingly became convinces of his perfidy, she had been "prostrated," unable to support her old mother. She had not, naturally, yet decided how she would invest her fortune; as for going on the stage, that had been suggested, but she had made no plans. "Scores of women sympathizers" had escorted her to a waiting automobile....

Janet, impelled by the fascination akin to disgust, read thus far, and flinging the newspaper on the floor, began to tidy herself for supper. But presently, when she heard Lise sigh, she could contain herself no longer.

"I don't see how you can read such stuff as that," she exclaimed.
"It's—it's horrible."

"Horrible?" Lise repeated.

Janet swung round from the washbasin, her hands dripping.

"Instead of getting seventy five thousand dollars she ought to be tarred and feathered. She's nothing but a blackmailer."

Lise, aroused from her visions, demanded vehemently "Ain't he a millionaire?"

"What difference does that make?" Janet retorted. "And you can't tell me she didn't know what she was up to all along—with that face."

"I'd have sued him, all right," declared Lise, defiantly.

"Then you'd be a blackmailer, too. I'd sooner scrub floors, I'd sooner starve than do such a thing—take money for my affections. In the first place, I'd have more pride, and in the second place, if I really loved a man, seventy five thousand or seventy five million dollars wouldn't help me any. Where do you get such ideas? Decent people don't have them."

Janet turned to the basin again and began rubbing her face vigorously—ceasing for an instance to make sure of the identity of a sound reaching her ears despite the splashing of water. Lise was sobbing. Janet dried her face and hands, arranged her hair, and sat down on the windowsill; the scorn and anger, which had been so intense as completely to possess her, melting into a pity and contempt not unmixed with bewilderment. Ordinarily Lise was hard, impervious to such reproaches, holding her own in the passionate quarrels that occasionally took place between them yet there were times, such as this, when her resistance broke down unexpectedly, and she lost all self control. She rocked to and fro in the chair, her shoulders bowed, her face hidden in her hands. Janet reached out and touched her.

"Don't be silly," she began, rather sharply, "just because I said it was a disgrace to have such ideas. Well, it is."

"I'm not silly," said Lise. "I'm sick of that job at the Bagatelle" —sob—"there's nothing in it—I'm going to quit—I wish to God I was dead! Standing on your feet all day till you're wore out for six dollars a week—what's there in it?"—sob—"With that guy Walters who walks the floor never lettin' up on you. He come up to me yesterday and says, `I didn't know you was near sighted, Miss Bumpus' just because there was a customer Annie Hatch was too lazy to wait on"—sob—"That's his line of dope—thinks he's sarcastic—and he's sweet on Annie. Tomorrow I'm going to tell him to go to hell. I'm through I'm sick of it, I tell you"—sob—"I'd rather be dead than slave like that for six dollars."

"Where are you going?" asked Janet.

"I don't know—I don't care. What's the difference? any place'd be better than this." For awhile she continued to cry on a ridiculously high, though subdued, whining note, her breath catching at intervals. A feeling of helplessness, of utter desolation crept over Janet; powerless to comfort herself, how could she comfort her sister? She glanced around the familiar, sordid room, at the magazine pages against the faded wall-paper, at the littered bureau and the littered bed, over which Lise's clothes were flung. It was hot and close even now, in summer it would be stifling. Suddenly a flash of sympathy revealed to her a glimpse of the truth that Lise, too, after her own nature, sought beauty and freedom! Never did she come as near comprehending Lise as in such moments as this, and when, on dark winter mornings, her sister clung to her, terrified by the siren. Lise was a child, and the thought that she, Janet, was powerless to change her was a part of the tragic tenderness. What would become of Lise? And what would become of her, Janet?... So she clung, desperately, to her sister's hand until at last Lise roused herself, her hair awry, her face puckered and wet with tears and perspiration.

"I can't stand it any more—I've just got to go away anywhere," she said, and the cry found an echo in Janet's heart....

But the next morning Lise went back to the Bagatelle, and Janet to the mill....

The fact that Lise's love affairs had not been prospering undoubtedly had something to do with the fit of depression into which she had fallen that evening. A month or so before she had acquired another beau. It was understood by Lise's friends and Lise's family, though not by the gentleman himself, that his position was only temporary or at most probationary; he had not even succeeded to the rights, title, and privileges of the late Mr. Wiley, though occupying a higher position in the social scale—being the agent of a patent lawn sprinkler with an office in Faber Street.

"Stick to him and you'll wear diamonds—that's what he tries to put across," was Lise's comment on Mr. Frear's method, and thus Janet gained the impression that her sister's feelings were not deeply involved. "If I thought he'd make good with the sprinkler I might talk business. But say, he's one of those ginks that's always tryin' to beat the bank. He's never done a day's work in his life. Last year he was passing around Foley's magazine, and before that he was with the race track that went out of business because the ministers got nutty over it. Well, he may win out," she added reflectively, "those guys sometimes do put the game on the blink. He sure is a good spender when the orders come in, with a line of talk to make you holler for mercy."

Mr. Frear's "line of talk" came wholly, astonishingly, from one side of his mouth—the left side. As a muscular feat it was a triumph. A deaf person on his right side would not have known he was speaking. The effect was secretive, extraordinarily confidential; enabling him to sell sprinklers, it ought to have helped him to make love, so distinctly personal was it, implying as it did that the individual addressed was alone of all the world worthy of consideration. Among his friends it was regarded as an accomplishment, but Lise was critical, especially since he did not look into one's eyes, but gazed off into space, as though he weren't talking at all.

She had once inquired if the right side of his face was paralyzed.

She permitted him to take her, however, to Gruber's Cafe, to the movies, and one or two select dance halls, and to Slattery's Riverside Park, where one evening she had encountered the rejected Mr. Wiley.

"Say, he was sore!" she told Janet the next morning, relating the incident with relish, "for two cents he would have knocked Charlie over the ropes. I guess he could do it, too, all right."

Janet found it curious that Lise should display such vindictiveness toward Mr. Wiley, who was more sinned against than sinning. She was moved to inquire after his welfare.

"He's got one of them red motorcycles," said Lise. "He was gay with it too—when we was waiting for the boulevard trolley he opened her up and went right between Charlie and me. I had to laugh. He's got

a job over in Haverhill you can't hold that guy under water long."

Apparently Lise had no regrets. But her premonitions concerning Mr. Frear proved to be justified. He did not "make good." One morning the little office on Faber Street where the sprinklers were displayed was closed, Hampton knew him no more, and the police alone were sincerely regretful. It seemed that of late he had been keeping all the money for the sprinklers, and spending a good deal of it on Lise. At the time she accepted the affair with stoical pessimism, as one who has learned what to expect of the world, though her moral sense was not profoundly disturbed by the reflection that she had indulged in the delights of Slattery's and Gruber's and a Sunday at "the Beach" at the expense of the Cascade Sprinkler Company of Boston. Mr. Frear inconsiderately neglected to prepare her for his departure, the news of which was conveyed to her in a singular manner, and by none other than Mr. Johnny Tiernan of the tin shop,—their conversation throwing some light, not only on Lise's sophistication, but on the admirable and intricate operation of Hampton's city government. About five o'clock Lise was coming home along Fillmore Street after an uneventful, tedious and manless holiday spent in the company of Miss Schuler and other friends when she perceived Mr. Tiernan seated on his steps, grinning and waving a tattered palm-leaf fan.

"The mercury is sure on the jump," he observed. "You'd think it was July."

And Lise agreed.

"I suppose you'll be going to Tim Slattery's place tonight," he went on. "It's the coolest spot this side of the Atlantic Ocean."

There was, apparently, nothing cryptic in this remark, yet it is worth noting that Lise instantly became suspicious.

"Why would I be going out there?" she inquired innocently, darting at him a dark, coquettish glance.

Mr. Tiernan regarded her guilelessly, but there was admiration in his soul; not because of her unquestioned feminine attractions,—he being somewhat amazingly proof against such things,—but because it was conveyed to him in some unaccountable way that her suspicions were aroused. The brain beneath that corkscrew hair was worthy of a Richelieu. Mr. Tiernan's estimate of Miss Lise Bumpus, if he could have been induced to reveal it, would have been worth listening to.

"And why wouldn't you?" he replied heartily. "Don't I see all the pretty young ladies out there, including yourself, and you dancing with the Cascade man. Why is it you'll never give me a dance?"

"Why is it you never ask me?" demanded Lise.

"What chance have I got, against him?"

"He don't own me," said Lise.

Mr. Tiernan threw back his head, and laughed.

"Well, if you're there to-night, tangoin' with him and I come up and says, `Miss Bumpus, the pleasure is mine,' I'm wondering what would happen."

"I'm not going to Slattery's to-night," she declared having that instant arrived at this conclusion.

"And where then? I'll come along, if there's a chance for me."

"Quit your kidding," Lise reproved him.

Mr. Tiernan suddenly looked very solemn:

"Kidding, is it? Me kiddin' you? Give me a chance, that's all I'm asking. Where will you be, now?"

"Is Frear wanted?" she demanded.

Mr. Tiernan's expression changed. His nose seemed to become more pointed, his eyes to twinkle more merrily than ever. He didn't take the trouble, now, to conceal his admiration.

"Sure, Miss Bumpus," he said, "if you was a man, we'd have you on the force to-morrow."

"What's he wanted for?"

"Well," said Johnny, "a little matter of sprinklin'. He's been sprinklin' his company's water without a

license."

She was silent a moment before she exclaimed:—"I ought to have been wise that he was a crook!"

"Well," said Johnny consolingly, "there's others that ought to have been wise, too. The Cascade people had no business takin' on a man that couldn't use but half of his mouth."

This seemed to Lise a reflection on her judgment. She proceeded to clear herself.

"He was nothing to me. He never gave me no rest. He used to come 'round and pester me to go out with him—"

"Sure!" interrupted Mr. Tiernan. "Don't I know how it is with the likes of him! A good time's a good time, and no harm in it. But the point is" and here he cocked his nose—"the point is, where is he? Where will he be tonight?"

All at once Lise grew vehement, almost tearful.

"I don't know—honest to God, I don't. If I did I'd tell you. Last night he said he might be out of town. He didn't say where he was going." She fumbled in her bag, drawing out an imitation lace handkerchief and pressing it to her eyes.

"There now!" exclaimed Mr. Tiernan, soothingly. "How would you know? And he deceivin' you like he did the company—"

"He didn't deceive me," cried Lise.

"Listen," said Mr. Tiernan, who had risen and laid his hand on her arm. "It's not young ladies like you that works and are self-respecting that any one would be troublin', and you the daughter of such a fine man as your father. Run along, now, I won't be detaining you, Miss Bumpus, and you'll accept my apology. I guess we'll never see him in Hampton again…."

Some twenty minutes later he sauntered down the street, saluting acquaintances, and threading his way across the Common entered a grimy brick building where a huge policeman with an insignia on his arm was seated behind a desk. Mr. Tiernan leaned on the desk, and reflectively lighted a Thomas-Jefferson-Five-Cent Cigar, Union Label, the excellencies of which were set forth on large signs above the "ten foot" buildings on Faber Street.

"She don't know nothing, Mike," he remarked. "I guess he got wise this morning."

The sergeant nodded….

CHAPTER V

To feel potential within one's self the capacity to live and yet to have no means of realizing this capacity is doubtless one of the least comfortable and agreeable of human experiences. Such, as summer came on, was Janet's case. The memory of that visit to Silliston lingered in her mind, sometimes to flare up so vividly as to make her existence seem unbearable. How wonderful, she thought, to be able to dwell in such a beautiful place, to have as friends and companions such amusing and intelligent people as the stranger with whom she had talked! Were all the inhabitants of Silliston like him? They must be, since it was a seat of learning. Lise's cry, "I've just got to go away, anywhere," found an echo in Janet's soul. Why shouldn't she go away? She was capable of taking care of herself, she was a good stenographer, her salary had been raised twice in two years,—why should she allow consideration for her family to stand in the way of what she felt would be self realization? Unconsciously she was a true modern in that the virtues known as duty and self sacrifice did not appeal to her,—she got from them neither benefit nor satisfaction, she understood instinctively that they were impeding to growth. Unlike Lise, she was able to see life as it is, she did not expect of it miracles, economic or matrimonial. Nothing would happen unless she made it happen. She was twenty-one, earning nine dollars a week, of which she now contributed five to the household,—her father, with characteristic incompetence, having taken out a larger insurance policy than he could reasonably carry. Of the remaining four dollars she spent more than one on lunches, there were dresses and underclothing, shoes and stockings to buy, in spite of darning and mending; little treats with Eda that mounted up; and occasionally the dentist—for Janet would not neglect her teeth as Lise neglected hers. She managed to save something, but it was very

little. And she was desperately unhappy when she contemplated the grey and monotonous vista of the years ahead, saw herself growing older and older, driven always by the stern necessity of accumulating a margin against possible disasters; little by little drying up, losing, by withering disuse, those rich faculties of enjoyment with which she was endowed, and which at once fascinated and frightened her. Marriage, in such an environment, offered no solution; marriage meant dependence, from which her very nature revolted: and in her existence, drab and necessitous though it were, was still a remnant of freedom that marriage would compel her to surrender....

One warm evening, oppressed by such reflections, she had started home when she remembered having left her bag in the office, and retraced her steps. As she turned the corner of West Street, she saw, beside the canal and directly in front of the bridge, a new and smart-looking automobile, painted crimson and black, of the type known as a runabout, which she recognized as belonging to Mr. Ditmar. Indeed, at that moment Mr. Ditmar himself was stepping off the end of the bridge and about to start the engine when, dropping the crank, he walked to the dashboard and apparently became absorbed in some mechanisms there. Was it the glance cast in her direction that had caused him to delay his departure? Janet was seized by a sudden and rather absurd desire to retreat, but Canal Street being empty, such an action would appear eccentric, and she came slowly forward, pretending not to see her employer, ridiculing to herself the idea that he had noticed her. Much to her annoyance, however, her embarrassment persisted, and she knew it was due to the memory of certain incidents, each in itself almost negligible, but cumulatively amounting to a suspicion that for some months he had been aware of her: many times when he had passed through the outer office she had felt his eyes upon her, had been impelled to look up from her work to surprise in them a certain glow to make her bow her head again in warm confusion. Now, as she approached him, she was pleasantly but rather guiltily conscious of the more rapid beating of the blood that precedes an adventure, yet sufficiently self-possessed to note the becoming nature of the light flannel suit axed rather rakish Panama he had pushed back from his forehead. It was not until she had almost passed him that he straightened up, lifted the Panama, tentatively, and not too far, startling her.

"Good afternoon, Miss Bumpus," he said. "I thought you had gone."

"I left my bag in the office," she replied, with the outward calmness that rarely deserted her—the calmness, indeed, that had piqued him and was leading him on to rashness.

"Oh," he said. "Simmons will get it for you." Simmons was the watchman who stood in the vestibule of the office entrance.

"Thanks. I can get it myself," she told him, and would have gone on had he not addressed her again. "I was just starting out for a spin. What do you think of the car? It's good looking, isn't it?" He stood off and surveyed it, laughing a little, and in his laugh she detected a note apologetic, at variance with the conception she had formed of his character, though not alien, indeed, to the dust-coloured vigour of the man. She scarcely recognized Ditmar as he stood there, yet he excited her, she felt from him an undercurrent of something that caused her inwardly to tremble. "See how the lines are carried through." He indicated this by a wave of his hand, but his eyes were now on her.

"It is pretty," she agreed.

In contrast to the defensive tactics which other ladies of his acquaintance had adopted, tactics of a patently coy and coquettish nature, this self-collected manner was new and spicy, challenging to powers never as yet fully exerted while beneath her manner he felt throbbing that rare and dangerous thing in women, a temperament, for which men have given their souls. This conviction of her possession of a temperament,—he could not have defined the word, emotional rather than intellectual, produced the apologetic attitude she was quick to sense. He had never been, at least during his maturity, at a loss with the other sex, and he found the experience delicious.

"You like pretty things, I'm sure of that," he hazarded. But she did not ask him how he knew, she simply assented. He raised the hood, revealing the engine. "Isn't that pretty? See how nicely everything is adjusted in that little space to do the particular work for which it is designed."

Thus appealed to, she came forward and stopped, still standing off a little way, but near enough to see, gazing at the shining copper caps on the cylinders, at the bright rods and gears.

"It looks intricate," said Mr. Ditmar, "but really it's very simple. The gasoline comes in here from the tank behind—this is called the carburetor, it has a jet to vaporize the gasoline, and the vapour is sucked into each of these cylinders in turn when the piston moves—like this." He sought to explain the action of the piston. "That compresses it, and then a tiny electric spark comes just at the right moment to explode it, and the explosion sends the piston down again, and turns the shaft. Well, all four cylinders have an explosion one right after another, and that keeps the shaft going." Whereupon the most

important personage in Hampton, the head of the great Chippering Mill proceeded, for the benefit of a humble assistant stenographer, to remove the floor boards behind the dash. "There's the shaft, come here and look at it." She obeyed, standing beside him, almost touching him, his arm, indeed, brushing her sleeve, and into his voice crept a tremor. "The shaft turns the rear wheels by means of a gear at right angles on the axle, and the rear wheels drive the car. Do you see?"

"Yes," she answered faintly, honesty compelling her to add: "a little."

He was looking, now, not at the machinery, but intently at her, and she could feel the blood flooding into her cheeks and temples. She was even compelled for an instant to return his glance, and from his eyes into hers leaped a flame that ran scorching through her body. Then she knew with conviction that the explanation of the automobile had been an excuse; she had comprehended almost nothing of it, but she had been impressed by the facility with which he described it, by his evident mastery over it. She had noticed his hands, how thick his fingers were and close together; yet how deftly he had used them, without smearing the cuffs of his silk shirt or the sleeves of his coat with the oil that glistened everywhere.

"I like machinery," he told her as he replaced the boards. "I like to take care of it myself."

"It must be interesting," she assented, aware of the inadequacy of the remark, and resenting in herself an inarticulateness seemingly imposed by inhibition connected with his nearness. Fascination and antagonism were struggling within her. Her desire to get away grew desperate.

"Thank you for showing it to me." With an effort of will she moved toward the bridge, but was impelled by a consciousness of the abruptness of her departure to look back at him once—and smile, to experience again the thrill of the current he sped after her. By lifting his hat, a little higher, a little more confidently than in the first instance, he made her leaving seem more gracious, the act somehow conveying an acknowledgment on his part that their relationship had changed.

Once across the bridge and in the mill, she fairly ran up the stairs and into the empty office, to perceive her bag lying on the desk where she had left it, and sat down for a few minutes beside the window, her heart pounding in her breast as though she had barely escaped an accident threatening her with physical annihilation. Something had happened to her at last! But what did it mean? Where would it lead? Her fear, her antagonism, of which she was still conscious, her resentment that Ditmar had thus surreptitiously chosen to approach her in a moment when they were unobserved were mingled with a throbbing exultation in that he had noticed her, that there was something in her to attract him in that way, to make his voice thicker and his smile apologetic when he spoke to her. Of that "something-in-her" she had been aware before, but never had it been so unmistakably recognized and beckoned to from without. She was at once terrified, excited—and flattered.

At length, growing calmer, she made her way out of the building. When she reached the vestibule she had a moment of sharp apprehension, of paradoxical hope, that Ditmar might still be there, awaiting her. But he had gone.…

In spite of her efforts to dismiss the matter from her mind, to persuade herself there had been no significance in the encounter, when she was seated at her typewriter the next morning she experienced a renewal of the palpitation of the evening before, and at the sound of every step in the corridor she started. Of this tendency she was profoundly ashamed. And when at last Ditmar arrived, though the blood rose to her temples, she kept her eyes fixed on the keys. He went quickly into his room: she was convinced he had not so much as glanced at her.… As the days went by, however, she was annoyed by the discovery that his continued ignoring of her presence brought more resentment than relief, she detected in it a deliberation implying between them a guilty secret: she hated secrecy, though secrecy contained a thrill. Then, one morning when she was alone in the office with young Caldwell, who was absorbed in some reports, Ditmar entered unexpectedly and looked her full in the eyes, surprising her into answering his glance before she could turn away, hating herself and hating him. Hate, she determined, was her prevailing sentiment in regard to Mr. Ditmar.

The following Monday Miss Ottway overtook her, at noon, on the stairs.

"Janet, I wanted to speak to you, to tell you I'm leaving," she said.

"Leaving!" repeated Janet, who had regarded Miss Ottway as a fixture.

"I'm going to Boston," Miss Ottway explained, in her deep, musical voice. "I've always wanted to go, I have an unmarried sister there of whom I'm very fond, and Mr. Ditmar knows that. He's got me a place with the Treasurer, Mr. Semple."

"Oh, I'm sorry you're going, though of course I'm glad for you," Janet said sincerely, for she liked and respected Miss Ottway, and was conscious in the older woman of a certain kindly interest.

"Janet, I've recommended you to Mr. Ditmar for my place."

"Oh!" cried Janet, faintly.

"It was he who asked about you, he thinks you are reliable and quick and clever, and I was very glad to say a good word for you, my dear, since I could honestly do so." Miss Ottway drew Janet's arm through hers and patted it affectionately. "Of course you'll have to expect some jealousy, there are older women in the other offices who will think they ought to have the place, but if you attend to your own affairs, as you always have done, there won't be any trouble."

"Oh, I won't take the place, I can't!" Janet cried, so passionately that Miss Ottway looked at her in surprise. "I'm awfully grateful to you," she added, flushing crimson, "I—I'm afraid I'm not equal to it."

"Nonsense," said the other with decision. "You'd be very foolish not to try it. You won't get as much as I do, at first, at any rate, but a little more money won't be unwelcome, I guess. Mr. Ditmar will speak to you this afternoon. I leave on Saturday. I'm real glad to do you a good turn, Janet, and I know you'll get along," Miss Ottway added impulsively as they parted at the corner of Faber Street. "I've always thought a good deal of you."

For awhile Janet stood still, staring after the sturdy figure of her friend, heedless of the noonday crowd that bumped her. Then she went to Grady's Quick Lunch Counter and ordered a sandwich and a glass of milk, which she consumed slowly, profoundly sunk in thought. Presently Eda Rawle arrived, and noticing her preoccupation, inquired what was the matter.

"Nothing," said Janet....

At two o'clock, when Ditmar returned to the office, he called Miss Ottway, who presently came out to summon Janet to his presence. Fresh, immaculate, yet virile in his light suit and silk shirt with red stripes, he was seated at his desk engaged in turning over some papers in a drawer. He kept her waiting a moment, and then said, with apparent casualness:—"Is that you, Miss Bumpus? Would you mind closing the door?"

Janet obeyed, and again stood before him. He looked up. A suggestion of tenseness in her pose betraying an inner attitude of alertness, of defiance, conveyed to him sharply and deliciously once more the panther-like impression he had received when first, as a woman, she had come to his notice. The renewed and heightened perception of this feral quality in her aroused a sense of danger by no means unpleasurable, though warning him that he was about to take an unprecedented step, being drawn beyond the limits of caution he had previously set for himself in divorcing business and sex. Though he was by no means self-convinced of an intention to push the adventure, preferring to leave its possibilities open, he strove in voice and manner to be business-like; and instinct, perhaps, whispered that she might take alarm.

"Sit down, Miss Bumpus," he said pleasantly, as he closed the drawer.

She seated herself on an office chair.

"Do you like your work here?" he inquired.

"No," said Janet.

"Why not?" he demanded, staring at her.

"Why should I?" she retorted.

"Well—what's the trouble with it? It isn't as hard as it would be in some other places, is it?"

"I'm not saying anything against the place."

"What, then?"

"You asked me if I liked my work. I don't."

"Then why do you do it?" he demanded.

"To live," she replied.

He smiled, but his gesture as he stroked his moustache implied a slight annoyance at her composure.

He found it difficult with this dark, self-contained young woman to sustain the role of benefactor.

"What kind of work would you like to do?" he demanded.

"I don't know. I haven't got the choice, anyway," she said.

He observed that she did her work well, to which she made no answer. She refused to help him, although Miss Ottway must have warned her. She acted as though she were conferring the favour. And yet, clearing his throat, he was impelled to say:—"Miss Ottway's leaving me, she's going into the Boston office with Mr. Semple, the treasurer of the corporation. I shall miss her, she's an able and reliable woman, and she knows my ways." He paused, fingering his paper knife. "The fact is, Miss Bumpus, she's spoken highly of you, she tells me you're quick and accurate and painstaking—I've noticed that for myself. She seems to think you could do her work, and recommends that I give you a trial. You understand, of course, that the position is in a way confidential, and that you could not expect at first, at any rate, the salary Miss Ottway has had, but I'm willing to offer you fourteen dollars a week to begin with, and afterwards, if we get along together, to give you more. What do you say?"

"I'd like to try it, Mr. Ditmar," Janet said, and added nothing, no word of gratitude or of appreciation to that consent.

"Very well then," he replied, "that's settled. Miss Ottway will explain things to you, and tell you about my peculiarities. And when she goes you can take her desk, by the window nearest my door."

Ditmar sat idle for some minutes after she had gone, staring through the open doorway into the outer office….

To Ditmar she had given no evidence of the storm his offer had created in her breast, and it was characteristic also that she waited until supper was nearly over to inform her family, making the announcement in a matter-of-fact tone, just as though it were not the unique piece of good fortune that had come to the Bumpuses since Edward had been eliminated from the mercantile establishment at Dolton. The news was received with something like consternation. For the moment Hannah was incapable of speech, and her hand trembled as she resumed the cutting of the pie: but hope surged within her despite her effort to keep it down, her determination to remain true to the fatalism from which she had paradoxically derived so much comfort. The effect on Edward, while somewhat less violent, was temporarily to take away his appetite. Hope, to flower in him, needed but little watering. Great was his faith in the Bumpus blood, and secretly he had always regarded his eldest daughter as the chosen vessel for their redemption.

"Well, I swan!" he exclaimed, staring at her in admiration and neglecting his pie, "I've always thought you had it in you to get on, Janet. I guess I've told you you've always put me in mind of Eliza Bumpus—the one that held out against the Indians till her husband came back with the neighbours. I was just reading about her again the other night."

"Yes, you've told us, Edward," said Hannah.

"She had gumption," he went on, undismayed. "And from what I can gather of her looks I calculate you favour her—she was dark and not so very tall—not so tall as you, I guess. So you're goin'" (he pronounced it very slowly) "you're goin' to be Mr. Ditmar's private stenographer! He's a smart man, Mr. Ditmar, he's a good man, too. All you've got to do is to behave right by him. He always speaks to me when he passes by the gate. I was sorry for him when his wife died—a young woman, too. And he's never married again! Well, I swan!"

"You'd better quit swanning," exclaimed Hannah. "And what's Mr. Ditmar's goodness got to do with it? He's found-out Janet has sense, she's willing and hard working, he won't" (pronounced want) "he won't be the loser by it, and he's not giving her what he gave Miss Ottway. It's just like you, thinking he's doing her a good turn."

"I'm not saying Janet isn't smart," he protested, "but I know it's hard to get work with so many folks after every job."

"Maybe it ain't so hard when you've got some get-up and go," Hannah retorted rather cruelly. It was thus characteristically and with unintentional sharpness she expressed her maternal pride by a reflection not only upon Edward, but Lise also. Janet had grown warm at the mention of Ditmar's name.

"It was Miss Ottway who recommended me," she said, glancing at her sister, who during this conversation had sat in silence. Lise's expression, normally suggestive of a discontent not unbecoming to her type, had grown almost sullen. Hannah's brisk gathering up of the dishes was suddenly arrested.

"Lise, why don't you say something to your sister? Ain't you glad she's got the place?"

"Sure, I'm glad," said Lise, and began to unscrew the top of the salt shaker. "I don't see why I couldn't get a raise, too. I work just as hard as she does."

Edward, who had never got a "raise" in his life, was smitten with compunction and sympathy.

"Give 'em time, Lise," he said consolingly. "You ain't so old as Janet."

"Time!" she cried, flaring up and suddenly losing her control. "I've got a picture of Waiters giving me a raise I know the girls that get raises from him."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," Hannah declared. "There—you've spilled the salt!"

But Lise, suddenly bursting into tears, got up and left the room. Edward picked up the Banner and pretended to read it, while Janet collected the salt and put it back into the shaker. Hannah, gathering up the rest of the dishes, disappeared into the kitchen, but presently returned, as though she had forgotten something.

"Hadn't you better go after her?" she said to Janet.

"I'm afraid it won't be any use. She's got sort of queer, lately—she thinks they're down on her."

"I'm sorry I spoke so sharp. But then—" Hannah shook her head, and her sentence remained unfinished.

Janet sought her sister, but returned after a brief interval, with the news that Lise had gone out.

One of the delights of friendship, as is well known, is the exchange of confidences of joy or sorrow, but there was, in Janet's promotion, something intensely personal to increase her natural reserve. Her feelings toward Ditmar were so mingled as to defy analysis, and several days went by before she could bring herself to inform Eda Rawle of the new business relationship in which she stood to the agent of the Chippering Mill. The sky was still bright as they walked out Warren Street after supper, Eda bewailing the trials of the day just ended: Mr. Frye, the cashier of the bank, had had one of his cantankerous fits, had found fault with her punctuation, nothing she had done had pleased him. But presently, when they had come to what the Banner called the "residential district," she was cheered by the sight of the green lawns, the flowerbeds and shrubbery, the mansions of those inhabitants of Hampton unfamiliar with boardinghouses and tenements. Before one of these she paused, retaining Janet by the arm, exclaiming wistfully:

"Wouldn't you like to live there? That belongs to your boss."

Janet, who had been dreaming as she gazed at the facade of rough stucco that once had sufficed to fill the ambitions of the late Mrs. Ditmar, recognized it as soon as Eda spoke, and dragged her friend hastily, almost roughly along the sidewalk until they had reached the end of the block. Janet was red.

"What's the matter?" demanded Eda, as soon as she had recovered from her surprise.

"Nothing," said Janet. "Only—I'm in his office."

"But what of it? You've got a right to look at his house, haven't you?"

"Why yes,—a right," Janet assented. Knowing Eda's ambitions for her were not those of a business career, she was in terror lest her friend should scent a romance, and for this reason she had never spoken of the symptoms Ditmar had betrayed. She attempted to convey to Eda the doubtful taste of staring point-blank at the house of one's employer, especially when he might be concealed behind a curtain.

"You see," she added, "Miss Ottway's recommended me for her place—she's going away."

"Janet!" cried Eda. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Well," said Janet guiltily, "it's only a trial. I don't know whether he'll keep me or not."

"Of course he'll keep you," said Eda, warmly. "If that isn't just like you, not saying a word about it. Gee, if I'd had a raise like that I just couldn't wait to tell you. But then, I'm not smart like you."

"Don't be silly," said Janet, out of humour with herself, and annoyed because she could not then appreciate Eda's generosity.

"We've just got to celebrate!" declared Eda, who had the gift, which Janet lacked, of taking her joys

vicariously; and her romantic and somewhat medieval proclivities would permit no such momentous occasion to pass without an appropriate festal symbol. "We'll have a spree on Saturday—the circus is coming then."

"It'll be my spree," insisted Janet, her heart warming. "I've got the raise…."

On Saturday, accordingly, they met at Grady's for lunch, Eda attired in her best blouse of pale blue, and when they emerged from the restaurant, despite the torrid heat, she beheld Faber Street as in holiday garb as they made their way to the cool recesses of Winterhalter's to complete the feast. That glorified drug-store with the five bays included in its manifold functions a department rivalling Delmonico's, with electric fans and marble-topped tables and white-clad waiters who took one's order and filled it at the soda fountain. It mattered little to Eda that the young man awaiting their commands had pimples and long hair and grinned affectionately as he greeted them.

"Hello, girls!" he said. "What strikes you to-day?"

"Me for a raspberry nut sundae," announced Eda, and Janet, being unable to imagine any more delectable confection, assented. The penetrating odour peculiar to drugstores, dominated by menthol and some unnamable but ancient remedy for catarrh, was powerless to interfere with their enjoyment.

The circus began at two. Rather than cling to the straps of a crowded car they chose to walk, following the familiar route of the trolley past the car barns and the base-ball park to the bare field under the seared face of Torrey's Hill, where circuses were wont to settle. A sirocco-like breeze from the southwest whirled into eddies the clouds of germ-laden dust stirred up by the automobiles, blowing their skirts against their legs, and sometimes they were forced to turn, clinging to their hats, confused and giggling, conscious of male glances. The crowd, increasing as they proceeded, was in holiday mood; young men with a newly-washed aspect, in Faber Street suits, chaffed boisterously groups of girls, who retorted with shrill cries and shrieks of laughter; amorous couples strolled, arm in arm, oblivious, as though the place were as empty as Eden; lady-killers with exaggerated square shoulders, wearing bright neckties, their predatory instincts alert, hovered about in eager search of adventure. There were men-killers, too, usually to be found in pairs, in startling costumes they had been persuaded were the latest Paris models,—imitations of French cocottes in Hampton, proof of the smallness of our modern world. Eda regarded them superciliously.

"They'd like you to think they'd never been near a loom or a bobbin!" she exclaimed.

In addition to these more conspicuous elements, the crowd contained sober operatives of the skilled sort possessed of sufficient means to bring hither their families, including the baby; there were section-hands and foremen, slashers, mule spinners, beamers, French-Canadians, Irish, Scotch, Welsh and English, Germans, with only an occasional Italian, Lithuanian, or Jew. Peanut and popcorn men, venders of tamales and Chile-con-carne hoarsely shouted their wares, while from afar could be heard the muffled booming of a band. Janet's heart beat faster. She regarded with a tinge of awe the vast expanse of tent that rose before her eyes, the wind sending ripples along the heavy canvas from circumference to tent pole. She bought the tickets; they entered the circular enclosure where the animals were kept; where the strong beams of the sun, in trying to force their way through the canvas roof, created an unnatural, jaundiced twilight, the weirdness of which was somehow enhanced by the hoarse, amazingly penetrating growls of beasts. Suddenly a lion near them raised a shaggy head, emitting a series of undulating, soul-shaking roars.

"Ah, what's eatin' you?" demanded a thick-necked youth, pretending not to be awestricken by this demonstration.

"Suppose he'd get out!" cried Eda, drawing Janet away.

"I wouldn't let him hurt you, dearie," the young man assured her.

"You!" she retorted contemptuously, but grinned in spite of herself, showing her gums.

The vague feeling of terror inspired by this tent was a part of its fascination, for it seemed pregnant with potential tragedies suggested by the juxtaposition of helpless babies and wild beasts, the babies crying or staring in blank amazement at padding tigers whose phosphorescent eyes never left these morsels beyond the bars. The two girls wandered about, their arms closely locked, but the strange atmosphere, the roars of the beasts, the ineffable, pungent odour of the circus, of sawdust mingled with the effluvia of animals, had aroused an excitement that was slow in subsiding. Some time elapsed before they were capable of taking a normal interest in the various exhibits.

"`Adjutant Bird,'" Janet read presently from a legend on one of the compartments of a cage devoted to birds, and surveying the somewhat dissolute occupant. "Why, he's just like one of those tall mashers

who stay at the Wilmot and stand on the sidewalk,—travelling men, you know."

"Say-isn't he?" Eda agreed. "Isn't he pleased with himself, and his feet crossed!"

"And see this one, Eda—he's a 'Harpy Eagle.' There's somebody we know looks just like that. Wait a minute—I'll tell you—it's the woman who sits in the cashier's cage at Grady's."

"If it sure isn't!" said Eda.

"She has the same fluffy, light hair—hairpins can't keep it down, and she looks at you in that same sort of surprised way with her head on one side when you hand in your check."

"Why, it's true to the life!" cried Eda enthusiastically. "She thinks she's got all the men cinched,—she does and she's forty if she's a day."

These comparisons brought them to a pitch of risible enjoyment amply sustained by the spectacle in the monkey cage, to which presently they turned. A chimpanzee, with a solicitation more than human, was solemnly searching a friend for fleas in the midst of a pandemonium of chattering and screeching and chasing, of rattling of bars and trapezes carried on by their companions.

"Well, young ladies," said a voice, "come to pay a call on your relations—have ye?"

Eda giggled hysterically. An elderly man was standing beside them. He was shabbily dressed, his own features were wizened, almost simian, and by his friendly and fatuous smile Janet recognized one of the harmless obsessed in which Hampton abounded.

"Relations!" Eda exclaimed.

"You and me, yes, and her," he answered, looking at Janet, though at first he had apparently entertained some doubt as to this inclusion, "we're all descended from them." His gesture triumphantly indicated the denizens of the cage.

"What are you giving us?" said Eda.

"Ain't you never read Darwin?" he demanded. "If you had, you'd know they're our ancestors, you'd know we came from them instead of Adam and Eve. That there's a fable."

"I'll never believe I came from them," cried Eda, vehement in her disgust.

But Janet laughed. "What's the difference? Some of us aren't any better than monkeys, anyway."

"That's so," said the man approvingly. "That's so." He wanted to continue the conversation, but they left him rather ruthlessly. And when, from the entrance to the performance tent, they glanced back over their shoulders, he was still gazing at his cousins behind the bars, seemingly deriving an acute pleasure from his consciousness of the connection….

CHAPTER VI

Modern business, by reason of the mingling of the sexes it involves, for the playwright and the novelist and the sociologist is full of interesting and dramatic situations, and in it may be studied, undoubtedly, one phase of the evolution tending to transform if not disintegrate certain institutions hitherto the corner-stones of society. Our stage is set. A young woman, conscious of ability, owes her promotion primarily to certain dynamic feminine qualities with which she is endowed. And though she may make an elaborate pretense of ignoring the fact, in her heart she knows and resents it, while at the same time, paradoxically, she gets a thrill from it,—a sustaining and inspiring thrill of power! On its face it is a business arrangement; secretly,—attempt to repudiate this as one may,—it is tinged with the colours of high adventure. When Janet entered into the intimate relationship with Mr. Claude Ditmar necessitated by her new duties as his private stenographer her attitude, slightly defiant, was the irreproachable one of a strict attention to duty. All unconsciously she was a true daughter of the twentieth century, and probably a feminist at heart, which is to say that her conduct was determined by no preconceived or handed-down notions of what was proper and lady-like. For feminism, in a sense, is a return to atavism, and sex antagonism and sex attraction are functions of the same thing. There were moments when she believed herself to hate Mr. Ditmar, when she treated him with an aloofness, an impersonality unsurpassed; moments when he paused in his dictation to stare at her in astonishment.

He, who flattered himself that he understood women!

She would show him!—such was her dominating determination. Her promotion assumed the guise of a challenge, of a gauntlet flung down at the feet of her sex. In a certain way, an insult, though incredibly stimulating. If he flattered himself that he had done her a favour, if he entertained the notion that he could presently take advantage of the contact with her now achieved to make unbusinesslike advances—well, he would find out. He had proclaimed his desire for an able assistant in Miss Ottway's place—he would get one, and nothing more. She watched narrowly, a l'affut, as the French say, for any signs of sentiment, and indeed this awareness of her being on guard may have had some influence on Mr. Ditmar's own attitude, likewise irreproachable.... A rather anaemic young woman, a Miss Annie James, was hired for Janet's old place.

In spite of this aloofness and alertness, for the first time in her life Janet felt the exuberance of being in touch with affairs of import. Hitherto the mill had been merely a greedy monster claiming her freedom and draining her energies in tasks routine, such as the copying of meaningless documents and rows of figures; now, supplied with stimulus and a motive, the Corporation began to take on significance, and she flung herself into the work with an ardour hitherto unknown, determined to make herself so valuable to Ditmar that the time would come when he could not do without her. She strove to memorize certain names and addresses, lest time be lost in looking them up, to familiarize herself with the ordinary run of his correspondence, to recall what letters were to be marked "personal," to anticipate matters of routine, in order that he might not have the tedium of repeating instructions; she acquired the faculty of keeping his engagements in her head; she came early to the office, remaining after hours, going through the files, becoming familiar with his system; and she learned to sort out his correspondence, sifting the important from the unimportant, to protect him, more and more, from numerous visitors who called only to waste his time. Her instinct for the detection of book-agents, no matter how brisk and businesslike they might appear, was unerring—she remembered faces and the names belonging to them: an individual once observed to be persona non grata never succeeded in passing her twice. On one occasion Ditmar came out of his office to see the back of one of these visitors disappearing into the corridor.

"Who was that?" he asked.

"His name is McCalla," she said. "I thought you didn't want to be bothered."

"But how in thunder did you get rid of him?" he demanded.

"Oh, I just wouldn't let him in," she replied demurely.

And Ditmar went away, wondering.... Thus she studied him, without permitting him to suspect it, learning his idiosyncrasies, his attitude toward all those with whom daily he came in contact, only to find herself approving. She was forced to admit that he was a judge of men, compelled to admire his adroitness in dealing with them. He could be democratic or autocratic as occasion demanded; he knew when to yield, and when to remain inflexible. One morning, for instance, there arrived from New York a dapper salesman whose jauntily tied bow, whose thin hair—carefully parted to conceal an incipient baldness—whose wary and slightly weary eyes all impressively suggested the metropolitan atmosphere of high pressure and sophistication from which he had emerged. He had a machine to sell; an amazing machine, endowed with human intelligence and more than human infallibility; for when it made a mistake it stopped. It was designed for the express purpose of eliminating from the payroll the skilled and sharp-eyed women who are known as "drawers-in," who sit all day long under a north light patiently threading the ends of the warp through the heddles of the loom harness. Janet's imagination was gradually fired as she listened to the visitor's eloquence; and the textile industry, which hitherto had seemed to her uninteresting and sordid, took on the colours of romance.

"Now I've made up my mind we'll place one with you, Mr. Ditmar," the salesman concluded. "I don't object to telling you we'd rather have one in the Chippering than in any mill in New England."

Janet was surprised, almost shocked to see Ditmar shake his head, yet she felt a certain reluctant admiration because he had not been swayed by blandishments. At such moments, when he was bent on refusing a request, he seemed physically to acquire massiveness,—and he had a dogged way of chewing his cigar.

"I don't want it, yet," he replied, "not until you improve it." And she was impressed by the fact that he seemed to know as much about the machine as the salesman himself. In spite of protests, denials, appeals, he remained firm. "When you get rid of the defects I've mentioned come back, Mr. Hicks—but don't come back until then."

And Mr. Hicks departed, discomfited....

Ditmar knew what he wanted. Of the mill he was the absolute master, familiar with every process, carrying constantly in his mind how many spindles, how many looms were at work; and if anything untoward happened, becoming aware of it by what seemed to Janet a subconscious process, sending for the superintendent of the department: for Mr. Orcutt, perhaps, whose office was across the hall—a tall, lean, spectacled man of fifty who looked like a schoolmaster.

"Orcutt, what's the matter with the opener in Cooney's room?"

"Why, the blower's out of order."

"Well, whose fault is it?"....

He knew every watchman and foreman in the mill, and many of the second hands. The old workers, men and women who had been in the Chippering employ through good and bad times for years, had a place in his affections, but toward the labour force in general his attitude was impersonal. The mill had to be run, and people to be got to run it. With him, first and last and always it was the mill, and little by little what had been for Janet a heterogeneous mass of machinery and human beings became unified and personified in Claude Ditmar. It was odd how the essence and quality of that great building had changed for her; how the very roaring of the looms, as she drew near the canal in the mornings, had ceased to be sinister and depressing, but bore now a burden like a great battle song to excite and inspire, to remind her that she had been snatched as by a miracle from the commonplace. And all this was a function of Ditmar.

Life had become portentous. And she was troubled by no qualms of logic, but gloried, womanlike, in her lack of it. She did not ask herself why she had deliberately enlarged upon Miss Ottway's duties, invaded debatable ground in part inevitably personal, flung herself with such abandon into the enterprise of his life's passion, at the same time maintaining a deceptive attitude of detachment, half deceiving herself that it was zeal for the work by which she was actuated. In her soul she knew better. She was really pouring fuel on the flames. She read him, up to a certain point—as far as was necessary; and beneath his attempts at self-control she was conscious of a dynamic desire that betrayed itself in many acts and signs,—as when he brushed against her; and occasionally when he gave evidence with his subordinates of a certain shortness of temper unusual with him she experienced a vaguely alarming but delicious thrill of power. And this, of all men, was the great Mr. Ditmar! Was she in love with him? That question did not trouble her either. She continued to experience in his presence waves of antagonism and attraction, revealing to her depths and possibilities of her nature that frightened while they fascinated. It never occurred to her to desist. That craving in her for high adventure was not to be denied.

On summer evenings it had been Ditmar's habit when in Hampton to stroll about his lawn, from time to time changing the position of the sprinkler, smoking a cigar, and reflecting pleasantly upon his existence. His house, as he gazed at it against the whitening sky, was an eminently satisfactory abode, his wife was dead, his children gave him no trouble; he felt a glow of paternal pride in his son as the boy raced up and down the sidewalk on a bicycle; George was manly, large and strong for his age, and had a domineering way with other boys that gave Ditmar secret pleasure. Of Amy, who was showing a tendency to stoutness, and who had inherited her mother's liking for candy and romances, Ditmar thought scarcely at all: he would glance at her as she lounged, reading, in a chair on the porch, but she did not come within his range of problems. He had, in short, everything to make a reasonable man content, a life nicely compounded of sustenance, pleasure, and business,—business naturally being the greatest of these. He was—though he did not know it—ethically and philosophically right in squaring his morals with his occupation, and his had been the good fortune to live in a world whose codes and conventions had been carefully adjusted to the pursuit of that particular brand of happiness he had made his own. Why, then, in the name of that happiness, of the peace and sanity and pleasurable effort it had brought him, had he allowed and even encouraged the advent of a new element that threatened to destroy the equilibrium achieved? an element refusing to be classified under the head of property, since it involved something he desired and could not buy? A woman who was not property, who resisted the attempt to be turned into property, was an anomaly in Ditmar's universe. He had not, of course, existed for more than forty years without having heard and read of and even encountered in an acquaintance or two the species of sex attraction sentimentally called love that sometimes made fools of men and played havoc with more important affairs, but in his experience it had never interfered with his sanity or his appetite or the Chippering Mill: it had never made his cigars taste bitter; it had never caused a deterioration in the appreciation of what he had achieved and held. But now he was experiencing strange symptoms of an intensity out of all proportion to that of former relations with the other sex. What was most unusual for him, he was alarmed and depressed, at moments irritable. He regretted the capricious and apparently accidental impulse that had made him pretend to tinker with his automobile that day by the canal, that had led him to the incomparable idiocy of getting rid of Miss Ottway and installing the disturber of his peace as his private stenographer.

What the devil was it in her that made him so uncomfortable? When in his office he had difficulty in keeping his mind on matters of import; he would watch her furtively as she went about the room with the lithe and noiseless movements that excited him the more because he suspected beneath her outward and restrained demeanour a fierceness he craved yet feared. He thought of her continually as a panther, a panther he had caught and could not tame; he hadn't even caught her, since she might escape at any time. He took precautions not to alarm her. When she brushed against him he trembled. Continually she baffled and puzzled him, and he never could tell of what she was thinking. She represented a whole set of new and undetermined values for which he had no precedents, and unlike every woman he had known—including his wife—she had an integrity of her own, seemingly beyond the reach of all influences economic and social. All the more exasperating, therefore, was a propinquity creating an intimacy without substance, or without the substance he craved for she had magically become for him a sort of enveloping, protecting atmosphere. In an astonishingly brief time he had fallen into the habit of talking things over with her; naturally not affairs of the first importance, but matters such as the economy of his time: when, for instance, it was most convenient for him to go to Boston; and he would find that she had telephoned, without being told, to the office there when to expect him, to his chauffeur to be on hand. He never had to tell her a thing twice, nor did she interrupt —as Miss Ottway sometimes had done—the processes of his thought. Without realizing it he fell into the habit of listening for the inflections of her voice, and though he had never lacked the power of making decisions, she somehow made these easier for him especially if, a human equation were involved.

He had, at least, the consolation—if it were one—of reflecting that his reputation was safe, that there would be no scandal, since two are necessary to make the kind of scandal he had always feared, and Miss Bumpus, apparently, had no intention of being the second party. Yet she was not virtuous, as he had hitherto defined the word. Of this he was sure. No woman who moved about as she did, who had such an effect on him, who had on occasions, though inadvertently, returned the lightning of his glances, whose rare laughter resembled grace notes, and in whose hair was that almost imperceptible kink, could be virtuous. This instinctive conviction inflamed him. For the first time in his life he began to doubt the universal conquering quality of his own charms,—and when such a thing happens to a man like Ditmar he is in danger of hell-fire. He indulged less and less in the convivial meetings and excursions that hitherto had given him relaxation and enjoyment, and if his cronies inquired as to the reasons for his neglect of them he failed to answer with his usual geniality.

"Everything going all right up at the mills, Colonel?" he was asked one day by Mr. Madden, the treasurer of a large shoe company, when they met on the marble tiles of the hall in their Boston club.

"All right. Why?"

"Well," replied Madden, conciliatingly, "you seem kind of preoccupied, that's all. I didn't know but what the fifty-four hour bill the legislature's just put through might be worrying you."

"We'll handle that situation when the time comes," said Ditmar. He accepted a gin rickey, but declined rather curtly the suggestion of a little spree over Sunday to a resort on the Cape which formerly he would have found enticing. On another occasion he encountered in the lobby of the Parker House a more intimate friend, Chester Sprole, sallow, self-made, somewhat corpulent, one of those lawyers hail fellows well met in business circles and looked upon askance by the Brahmins of their profession; more than half politician, he had been in Congress, and from time to time was retained by large business interests because of his persuasive gifts with committees of the legislature—though these had been powerless to avert the recent calamity of the women and children's fifty-four hour bill. Mr. Sprole's hair was prematurely white, and the crow's-feet at the corners of his eyes were not the result of legal worries.

"Hullo, Dit," he said jovially.

"Hullo, Ches," said Ditmar.

"Now you're the very chap I wanted to see. Where have you been keeping yourself lately? Come out to the farm to-night,—same of the boys'll be there." Mr. Sprole, like many a self-made man, was proud of his farm, though he did not lead a wholly bucolic existence.

"I can't, Ches," answered Ditmar. "I've got to go back to Hampton."

This statement Mr. Sprole unwisely accepted as a fiction. He took hold of Ditmar's arm.

"A lady—eh—what?"

"I've got to go back to Hampton," repeated Ditmar, with a suggestion of truculence that took his

friend aback. Not for worlds would Mr. Sprole have offended the agent of the Chippering Mill.

"I was only joking, Claude," he hastened to explain. Ditmar, somewhat mollified but still dejected, sought the dining-room when the lawyer had gone.

"All alone to-night, Colonel?" asked the coloured head waiter, obsequiously.

Ditmar demanded a table in the corner, and consumed a solitary meal.

Very naturally Janet was aware of the change in Ditmar, and knew the cause of it. Her feelings were complicated. He, the most important man in Hampton, the self-sufficient, the powerful, the hitherto distant and unattainable head of the vast organization known as the Chippering Mill, of which she was an insignificant unit, at times became for her just a man—a man for whom she had achieved a delicious contempt. And the knowledge that she, if she chose, could sway and dominate him by the mere exercise of that strange feminine force within her was intoxicating and terrifying. She read this in a thousand signs; in his glances; in his movements revealing a desire to touch her; in little things he said, apparently insignificant, yet fraught with meaning; in a constant recurrence of the apologetic attitude—so alien to the Ditmar formerly conceived—of which he had given evidence that day by the canal: and from this attitude emanated, paradoxically, a virile and galvanic current profoundly disturbing. Sometimes when he bent over her she experienced a commingled ecstasy and fear that he would seize her in his arms. Yet the tension was not constant, rising and falling with his moods and struggles, all of which she read—unguessed by him—as easily as a printed page by the gift that dispenses with laborious processes of the intellect. On the other hand, a resentment boiled within her his masculine mind failed to fathom. Stevenson said of John Knox that many women had come to learn from him, but he had never condescended to become a learner in return—a remark more or less applicable to Ditmar. She was, perforce, thrilled that he was virile and wanted her, but because he wanted her clandestinely her pride revolted, divining his fear of scandal and hating him for it like a thoroughbred. To do her justice, marriage never occurred to her. She was not so commonplace.

There were times, however, when the tension between them would relax, when some incident occurred to focus Ditmar's interest on the enterprise that had absorbed and unified his life, the Chippering Mill. One day in September, for instance, after an absence in New York, he returned to the office late in the afternoon, and she was quick to sense his elation, to recognize in him the restored presence of the quality of elan, of command, of singleness of purpose that had characterized him before she had become his stenographer. At first, as he read his mail, he seemed scarcely conscious of her presence. She stood by the window, awaiting his pleasure, watching the white mist as it rolled over the floor of the river, catching glimpses in vivid, saffron blurs of the lights of the Arundel Mill on the farther shore. Autumn was at hand. Suddenly she heard Ditmar speaking.

"Would you mind staying a little while longer this evening, Miss Bumpus?"

"Not at all," she replied, turning.

On his face was a smile, almost boyish.

"The fact is, I think I've got hold of the biggest single order that ever came into any mill in New England," he declared.

"Oh, I'm glad," she said quickly.

"The cotton cards—?" he demanded.

She knew he referred to the schedules, based on the current prices of cotton, made out in the agent's office and sent in duplicate to the selling house, in Boston. She got them from the shelf; and as he went over them she heard him repeating the names of various goods now become familiar, pongees, poplins, percales and voiles, garbardines and galateas, lawns, organdies, crepes, and Madras shirtings, while he wrote down figures on a sheet of paper. So complete was his absorption in this task that Janet, although she had resented the insinuating pressure of his former attitude toward her, felt a paradoxical sensation of jealousy. Presently, without looking up, he told her to call up the Boston office and ask for Mr. Fraile, the cotton buyer; and she learned from the talk over the telephone though it was mostly about "futures"—that Ditmar had lingered for a conference in Boston on his way back from New York. Afterwards, having dictated two telegrams which she wrote out on her machine, he leaned back in his chair; and though the business for the day was ended, showed a desire to detain her. His mood became communicative.

"I've been on the trail of that order for a month," he declared. "Of course it isn't my business to get orders, but to manage this mill, and that's enough for one man, God knows. But I heard the Bradlaughs were in the market for these goods, and I told the selling house to lie low, that I'd go after it. I knew I

could get away with it, if anybody could. I went to the Bradlaughs and sat down on 'em, I lived with 'em, ate with 'em, brought 'em home at night. I didn't let 'em alone a minute until they handed it over. I wasn't going to give any other mill in New England or any of those southern concerns a chance to walk off with it—not on your life! Why, we have the facilities. There isn't another mill in the country can turn it out in the time they ask, and even we will have to go some to do it. But we'll do it, by George, unless I'm struck by lightning."

He leaned forward, hitting the desk with his fist, and Janet, standing beside him, smiled. She had the tempting gift of silence. Forgetting her twinge of jealousy, she was drawn toward him now, and in this mood of boyish exuberance, of self-confidence and pride in his powers and success she liked him better than ever before. She had, for the first time, the curious feeling of being years older than he, yet this did not detract from a new-born admiration.

"I made this mill, and I'm proud of it," he went on. "When old Stephen Chippering put me in charge he was losing money, he'd had three agents in four years. The old man knew I had it in me, and I knew it, if I do say it myself. All this union labour talk about shorter hours makes me sick—why, there was a time when I worked ten and twelve hours a day, and I'm man enough to do it yet, if I have to. When the last agent—that was Cort—was sacked I went to Boston on my own hook and tackled the old gentleman—that's the only way to get anywhere. I couldn't bear to see the mill going to scrap, and I told him a thing or two,—I had the facts and the figures. Stephen Chippering was a big man, but he had a streak of obstinacy in him, he was conservative, you bet. I had to get it across to him there was a lot of dead wood in this plant, I had to wake him up to the fact that the twentieth century was here. He had to be shown—he was from Boston, you know—" Ditmar laughed—"but he was all wool and a yard wide, and he liked me and trusted me.

"That was in nineteen hundred. I can remember the interview as well as if it had happened last night—we sat up until two o'clock in the morning in that library of his with the marble busts and the leather-bound books and the double windows looking out over the Charles, where the wind was blowing a gale. And at last he said, `All right, Claude, go ahead. I'll put you in as agent, and stand behind you.' And by thunder, he did stand behind me. He was quiet, the finest looking old man I ever saw in my life, straight as a ramrod, with a little white goatee and a red, weathered face full of creases, and a skin that looked as if it had been pricked all over with needles—the old Boston sort. They don't seem to turn 'em out any more. Why, I have a picture of him here."

He opened a drawer in his desk and drew out a photograph. Janet gazed at it sympathetically.

"It doesn't give you any notion of those eyes of his," Ditmar said, reminiscently. "They looked right through a man's skull, no matter how thick it was. If anything went wrong, I never wasted any time in telling him about it, and I guess it was one reason he liked me. Some of the people up here didn't understand him, kow-towed to him, they were scared of him, and if he thought they had something up their sleeves he looked as if he were going to eat 'em alive. Regular fighting eyes, the kind that get inside of a man and turn the light on. And he sat so still—made you ashamed of yourself. Well, he was a born fighter, went from Harvard into the Rebellion and was left for dead at Seven Oaks, where one of the company found him and saved him. He set that may up for life, and never talked about it, either. See what he wrote on the bottom—'To my friend, Claude Ditmar, Stephen Chippering.' And believe me, when he once called a man a friend he never took it back. I know one thing, I'll never get another friend like him."

With a gesture that gave her a new insight into Ditmar, reverently he took the picture from her hand and placed it back in the drawer. She was stirred, almost to tears, and moved away from him a little, as though to lessen by distance the sudden attraction he had begun to exert: yet she lingered, half leaning, half sitting on the corner of the big desk, her head bent toward him, her eyes filled with light. She was wondering whether he could ever love a woman as he loved this man of whom he had spoken, whether he could be as true to a woman. His own attitude seemed never to have been more impersonal, but she had ceased to resent it; something within her whispered that she was the conductor, the inspirer..

"I wish Stephen Chippering could have lived to see this order," he exclaimed, "to see the Chippering Mill to-day! I guess he'd be proud of it, I guess he wouldn't regret having put me in as agent."

Janet did not reply. She could not. She sat regarding him intently, and when he raised his eyes and caught her luminous glance, his expression changed, she knew Stephen Chippering had passed from his mind.

"I hope you like it here," he said. His voice had become vibrant, ingratiating, he had changed from the master to the suppliant—and yet she was not displeased. Power had suddenly flowed back into her, and with it an exhilarating self-command.

"I do like it," she answered.

"But you said, when I asked you to be my stenographer, that you didn't care for your work."

"Oh, this is different."

"How?"

"I'm interested, the mill means something to me now you see, I'm not just copying things I don't know anything about."

"I'm glad you're interested," he said, in the same odd, awkward tone. "I've never had any one in the office who did my work as well. Now Miss Ottway was a good stenographer, she was capable, and a fine woman, but she never got the idea, the spirit of the mill in her as you've got it, and she wasn't able to save me trouble, as you do. It's remarkable how you've come to understand, and in such a short time."

Janet coloured. She did not look at him, but had risen and begun to straighten out the papers beside her.

"There are lots of other things I'd like to understand," she said.

"What?" he demanded.

"Well—about the mill. I never thought much about it before, I always hated it," she cried, dropping the papers and suddenly facing him. "It was just drudgery. But now I want to learn everything, all I can, I'd like to see the machinery."

"I'll take you through myself—to-morrow," he declared.

His evident agitation made her pause. They were alone, the outer office deserted, and the Ditmar she saw now, whom she had summoned up with ridiculous ease by virtue of that mysterious power within her, was no longer the agent of the Chippering Mill, a boy filled with enthusiasm by a business achievement, but a man, the incarnation and expression of masculine desire desire for her. She knew she could compel him, if she chose, to throw caution to the winds.

"Oh no!" she exclaimed. She was afraid of him, she shrank from such a conspicuous sign of his favour.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because I don't want you to," she said, and realized, as soon as she had spoken, that her words might imply the existence of a something between them never before hinted at by her. "I'll get Mr. Caldwell to take me through." She moved toward the door, and turned; though still on fire within, her manner had become demure, repressed. "Did you wish anything more this evening?" she inquired.

"That's all," he said, and she saw that he was gripping the arms of his chair….

CHAPTER VII

Autumn was at hand. All day it had rained, but now, as night fell and Janet went homeward, the white mist from the river was creeping stealthily over the city, disguising the familiar and sordid landmarks. These had become beautiful, mysterious, somehow appealing. The electric arcs, splotches in the veil, revealed on the Common phantom trees; and in the distance, against the blurred lights from the Warren Street stores skirting the park could be seen phantom vehicles, phantom people moving to and fro. Thus, it seemed to Janet, invaded by a pearly mist was her own soul, in which she walked in wonder,—a mist shot through and through with soft, exhilarating lights half disclosing yet transforming and etherealizing certain landmark's there on which, formerly, she had not cared to gaze. She was thinking of Ditmar as she had left him gripping his chair, as he had dismissed her for the day, curtly, almost savagely. She had wounded and repelled him, and lingering in her was that exquisite touch of fear—a fear now not so much inspired by Ditmar as by the semi-acknowledged recognition of certain tendencies and capacities within herself. Yet she rejoiced in them, she was glad she had hurt Ditmar, she would hurt him again. Still palpitating, she reached the house in Fillmore Street, halting a moment with her hand on the door, knowing her face was flushed, anxious lest her mother or Lise might notice

something unusual in her manner. But, when she had slowly mounted the stairs and lighted the gas in the bedroom the sight of her sister's clothes cast over the chairs was proof that Lise had already donned her evening finery and departed. The room was filled with the stale smell of clothes, which Janet detested. She flung open the windows. She took off her hat and swiftly tidied herself, yet the relief she felt at Lise's absence was modified by a sudden, vehement protest against sordidness. Why should she not live by herself amidst clean and tidy surroundings? She had begun to earn enough, and somehow a vista had been opened up—a vista whose end she could not see, alluring, enticing.... In the dining-room, by the cleared table, her father was reading the Banner; her mother appeared in the kitchen door.

"What in the world happened to you, Janet?" she exclaimed.

"Nothing," said Janet. "Mr. Ditmar asked me to stay—that was all. He'd been away."

"I was worried, I was going to make your father go down to the mill. I've saved you some supper."

"I don't want much," Janet told her, "I'm not hungry."

"I guess you have to work too hard in that new place," said Hannah, as she brought in the filled plate from the oven.

"Well, it seems to agree with her, mother," declared Edward, who could always be counted on to say the wrong thing with the best of intentions. "I never saw her looking as well—why, I swan, she's getting real pretty!"

Hannah darted at him a glance, but restrained herself, and Janet reddened as she tried to eat the beans placed before her. The pork had browned and hardened at the edges, the gravy had spread, a crust covered the potatoes. When her father resumed his reading of the Banner and her mother went back into the kitchen she began to speculate rather resentfully and yet excitedly why it was that this adventure with a man, with Ditmar, made her look better, feel better,—more alive. She was too honest to disguise from herself that it was an adventure, a high one, fraught with all sorts of possibilities, dangers, and delights. Her promotion had been merely incidental. Both her mother and father, did they know the true circumstances,—that Mr. Ditmar desired her, was perhaps in love with her—would be disturbed. Undoubtedly they would have believed that she could "take care" of herself. She knew that matters could not go on as they were, that she would either have to leave Mr. Ditmar or—and here she baulked at being logical. She had no intention of leaving him: to remain, according to the notions of her parents, would be wrong. Why was it that doing wrong agreed with her, energized her, made her more alert, cleverer, keying up her faculties? turned life from a dull affair into a momentous one? To abandon Ditmar would be to slump back into the humdrum, into something from which she had magically been emancipated, symbolized by the home in which she sat; by the red-checked tablecloth, the ugly metal lamp, the cherry chairs with the frayed seats, the horsehair sofa from which the stuffing protruded, the tawdry pillow with its colours, once gay, that Lise had bought at a bargain at the Bagatelle.... The wooden clock with the round face and quaint landscape below—the family's most cherished heirloom—though long familiar, was not so bad; but the two yellowed engravings on the wall offended her. They had been wedding presents to Edward's father. One represented a stupid German peasant woman holding a baby, and standing in front of a thatched cottage; its companion was a sylvan scene in which certain wooden rustics were supposed to be enjoying themselves. Between the two, and dotted with flyspecks, hung an insurance calendar on which was a huge head of a lady, florid, fluffy-haired, flirtatious. Lise thought her beautiful.

The room was ugly. She had long known that, but tonight the realization came to her that what she chiefly resented in it was the note it proclaimed—the note of a mute acquiescence, without protest or struggle, in what life might send. It reflected accurately the attitude of her parents, particularly of her father. With an odd sense of detachment, of critical remoteness and contempt she glanced at him as he sat stupidly absorbed in his newspaper, his face puckered, his lips pursed, and Ditmar rose before her—Ditmar, the embodiment of an indomitableness that refused to be beaten and crushed. She thought of the story he had told her, how by self-assertion and persistence he had become agent of the Chippering Mill, how he had convinced Mr. Stephen Chippering of his ability. She could not think of the mill as belonging to the Chipperings and the other stockholders, but to Ditmar, who had shaped it into an expression of himself, since it was his ideal. And now it seemed that he had made it hers also. She regretted having repulsed him, pushed her plate away from her, and rose.

"You haven't eaten anything," said Hannah, who had come into the room.
"Where are you going?"

"Out—to Eda's," Janet answered....

"It's late," Hannah objected. But Janet departed. Instead of going to Eda's she walked alone, seeking the quieter streets that her thoughts might flow undisturbed. At ten o'clock, when she returned, the light was out in the diningroom, her sister had not come in, and she began slowly to undress, pausing every now and then to sit on the bed and dream; once she surprised herself gazing into the glass with a rapt expression that was almost a smile. What was it about her that had attracted Ditmar? No other man had ever noticed it. She had never thought herself good looking, and now—it was astonishing!—she seemed to have changed, and she saw with pride that her arms and neck were shapely, that her dark hair fell down in a cascade over her white shoulders to her waist. She caressed it; it was fine. When she looked again, a radiancy seemed to envelop her. She braided her hair slowly, in two long plaits, looking shyly in the mirror and always seeing that radiancy....

Suddenly it occurred to her with a shock that she was doing exactly what she had despised Lise for doing, and leaving the mirror she hurried her toilet, put out the light, and got into bed. For a long time, however, she remained wakeful, turning first on one side and then on the other, trying to banish from her mind the episode that had excited her. But always it came back again. She saw Ditmar before her, virile, vital, electric with desire. At last she fell asleep.

Gradually she was awakened by something penetrating her consciousness, something insistent, pervasive, unescapable, which in drowsiness she could not define. The gas was burning, Lise had come in, and was moving peculiarly about the room. Janet watched her. She stood in front of the bureau, just as Janet herself had done, her hands at her throat. At last she let them fall, her head turning slowly, as though drawn, by some irresistible, hypnotic power, and their eyes met. Lise's were filmed, like those of a dog whose head is being stroked, expressing a luxuriant dreaminess uncomprehending, passionate.

"Say, did I wake you?" she asked. "I did my best not to make any noise—honest to God."

"It wasn't the noise that woke me up," said Janet.

"It couldn't have been."

"You've been drinking!" said Janet, slowly.

Lise giggled.

"What's it to you, angel face!" she inquired. "Quiet down, now, and go bye-bye."

Janet sprang from the bed, seized her by the shoulders, and shook her.
She was limp. She began to whimper.

"Cut it out—leave me go. It ain't nothing to you what I do—I just had a highball."

Janet released her and drew back.

"I just had a highball—honest to God!"

"Don't say that again!" whispered Janet, fiercely.

"Oh, very well. For God's sake, go to bed and leave me alone—I can take care of myself, I guess—I ain't nutty enough to hit the booze. But I ain't like you—I've got to have a little fun to keep alive."

"A little fun!" Janet exclaimed. The phrase struck her sharply. A little fun to keep alive!

With that same peculiar, cautious movement she had observed, Lise approached a chair, and sank into it,—jerking her head in the direction of the room where Hannah and Edward slept.

"D'you want to wake 'em up? Is that your game?" she asked, and began to fumble at her belt. Overcoming with an effort a disgust amounting to nausea, Janet approached her sister again, little by little undressing her, and finally getting her into bed, when she immediately fell into a profound slumber. Janet, too, got into bed, but sleep was impossible: the odour lurked like a foul spirit in the darkness, mingling with the stagnant, damp air that came in at the open window, fairly saturating her with horror: it seemed the very essence of degradation. But as she lay on the edge of the bed, shrinking from contamination, in the throes of excitement inspired by an unnamed fear, she grew hot, she could feel and almost hear the pounding of her heart. She rose, felt around in the clammy darkness for her wrapper and slippers, gained the door, crept through the dark hall to the dining-room, where she stealthily lit the lamp; darkness had become a terror. A cockroach scurried across the linoleum. The room was warm and close, it reeked with the smell of stale food, but at least she found relief from that other odour. She sank down on the sofa.

Her sister was drunk. That in itself was terrible enough, yet it was not the drunkenness alone that

had sickened Janet, but the suggestion of something else. Where had Lise been? In whose company had she become drunk? Of late, in contrast to a former communicativeness, Lise had been singularly secretive as to her companions, and the manner in which her evenings were spent; and she, Janet, had grown too self-absorbed to be curious. Lise, with her shopgirl's cynical knowledge of life and its pitfalls and the high valuation at which she held her charms, had seemed secure from danger; but Janet recalled her discouragement, her threat to leave the Bagatelle. Since then there had been something furtive about her. Now, because that odour of alcohol Lise exhaled had destroyed in Janet the sense of exhilaration, of life on a higher plane she had begun to feel, and filled her with degradation, she hated Lise, felt for her sister no strain of pity. A proof, had she recognized it, that immorality is not a matter of laws and decrees, but of individual emotions. A few hours before she had seen nothing wrong in her relationship with Ditmar: now she beheld him selfish, ruthless, pursuing her for one end, his own gratification. As a man, he had become an enemy. Ditmar was like all other men who exploited her sex without compunction, but the thought that she was like Lise, asleep in a drunken stupor, that their cases differed only in degree, was insupportable.

At last she fell asleep from sheer weariness, to dream she was with Ditmar at some place in the country under spreading trees, Silliston, perhaps—Silliston Common, cleverly disguised: nor was she quite sure, always, that the man was Ditmar; he had a way of changing, of resembling the man she had met in Silliston whom she had mistaken for a carpenter. He was pleading with her, in his voice was the peculiar vibrancy that thrilled her, that summoned some answering thing out of the depths of her, and she felt herself yielding with a strange ecstasy in which were mingled joy and terror. The terror was conquering the joy, and suddenly he stood transformed before her eyes, caricatured, become a shrieking monster from whom she sought in agony to escape.... In this paralysis of fear she awoke, staring with wide eyes at the flickering flame of the lamp, to a world filled with excruciating sound—the siren of the Chippering Mill! She lay trembling with the horror of the dream-spell upon her, still more than half convinced that the siren was Ditmar's voice, his true expression. He was waiting to devour her. Would the sound never end?...

Then, remembering where she was, alarmed lest her mother might come in and find her there, she left the sofa, turned out the sputtering lamp, and ran into the bedroom. Rain was splashing on the bricks of the passage-way outside, the shadows of the night still lurked in the corners; by the grey light she gazed at Lise, who breathed loudly and stirred uneasily, her mouth open, her lips parched. Janet touched her.

"Lise—get up!" she said. "It's time to get up." She shook her.

"Leave me alone—can't you?"

"It's time to get up. The whistle has sounded."

Lise heavily opened her eyes. They were bloodshot.

"I don't want to get up. I won't get up."

"But you must," insisted Janet, tightening her hold. "You've got to—you've got to eat breakfast and go to work."

"I don't want any breakfast, I ain't going to work any more."

A gust of wind blew inward the cheap lace curtains, and the physical effect of it emphasized the chill that struck Janet's heart. She got up and closed the window, lit the gas, and returning to the bed, shook Lise again.

"Listen," she said, "if you don't get up I'll tell mother what happened last night."

"Say, you wouldn't—!" exclaimed Lise, angrily.

"Get up!" Janet commanded, and watched her rather anxiously, uncertain as to the after effects of drunkenness. But Lise got up. She sat on the edge of the bed and yawned, putting her hand to her forehead.

"I've sure got a head on me," she remarked.

Janet was silent, angrier than ever, shocked that tragedy, degradation, could be accepted thus circumstantially. Lise proceeded to put up her hair. She seemed to be mistress of herself; only tired, gaping frequently. Once she remarked:—"I don't see the good of getting nutty over a highball."

Seeing that Janet was not to be led into controversy, she grew morose.

Breakfast in Fillmore Street, never a lively meal, was more dismal than usual that morning, eaten to the accompaniment of slopping water from the roofs on the pavement of the passage. The indisposition of Lise passed unobserved by both Hannah and Edward; and at twenty minutes to eight the two girls, with rubbers and umbrellas, left the house together, though it was Janet's custom to depart earlier, since she had farther to go. Lise, suspicious, maintained an obstinate silence, keeping close to the curb. They reached the corner by the provision shop with the pink and orange chromos of jellies in the window.

"Lise, has anything happened to you?" demanded Janet suddenly. "I want you to tell me."

"Anything happened—what do you mean? Anything happened?"

"You know very well what I mean."

"Well, suppose something has happened?" Lise's reply was pert, defiant. "What's it to you? If anything's happened, it's happened to me—hasn't it?"

Janet approached her.

"What are you trying to do?" said Lise. "Push me into the gutter?"

"I guess you're there already," said Janet.

Lise was roused to a sudden pitch of fury. She turned on Janet and thrust her back.

"Well, if I am who's going to blame me?" she cried. "If you had to work all day in that hole, standing on your feet, picked on by yaps for six a week, I guess you wouldn't talk virtuous, either. It's easy for you to shoot off your mouth, you've got a soft snap with Ditmar."

Janet was outraged. She could not restrain her anger.

"How dare you say that?" she demanded.

Lise was cowed.

"Well, you drove me to it—you make me mad enough to say anything. Just because I went to Gruber's with Neva Lorrie and a couple of gentlemen—they were gentlemen all right, as much gentlemen as Ditmar—you come at me and tell me I'm all to the bad." She began to sob. "I'm as straight as you are. How was I to know the highball was stiff? Maybe I was tired—anyhow, it put me on the queer, and everything in the joint began to tango 'round me—and Neva came home with me."

Janet felt a surge of relief, in which were mingled anxiety and resentment: relief because she was convinced that Lise was telling the truth, anxiety because she feared for Lise's future, resentment because Ditmar had been mentioned. Still, what she had feared most had not come to pass. Lise left her abruptly, darting down a street that led to a back entrance of the Bagatelle, and Janet pursued her way. Where, she wondered, would it all end? Lise had escaped so far, but drunkenness was an ominous sign. And "gentlemen"? What kind of gentlemen had taken her sister to Gruber's? Would Ditmar do that sort of thing if he had a chance?

The pavement in front of the company boarding-houses by the canal was plastered with sodden leaves whipped from the maples by the driving rain in the night. The sky above the mills was sepia. White lights were burning in the loom rooms. When she reached the vestibule Simmons, the watchman, informed her that Mr. Ditmar had already been there, and left for Boston.

Janet did not like to acknowledge to herself her disappointment on learning that Ditmar had gone to Boston. She knew he had had no such intention the night before; an accumulated mail and many matters demanding decisions were awaiting him; and his sudden departure seemed an act directed personally against her, in the nature of a retaliation, since she had offended and repulsed him. Through Lise's degrading act she had arrived at the conclusion that all adventure and consequent suffering had to do with Man—a conviction peculiarly maddening to such temperaments as Janet's. Therefore she interpreted her suffering in terms of Ditmar, she had looked forward to tormenting him again, and by departing he had deliberately balked and cheated her. The rain fell ceaselessly out of black skies, night seemed ever ready to descend on the river, a darkness—according to young Mr. Caldwell—due not to the clouds alone, but to forest fires many hundreds of miles away, in Canada. As the day wore on, however, her anger gradually gave place to an extreme weariness and depression, and yet she dreaded going home, inventing things for herself to do; arranging and rearranging Ditmar's papers that he might have less trouble in sorting them, putting those uppermost which she thought he would deem the most important. Perhaps he would come in, late! In a world of impending chaos the brilliantly lighted office was a tiny refuge to which she clung. At last she put on her coat and rubbers, faring forth

reluctantly into the wet.

At first when she entered the bedroom she thought it empty, though the gas was burning, and them she saw Lise lying face downward on the bed. For a moment she stood still, then closed the door softly.

"Lise," she said.

"What?"

Janet sat down on the bed, putting out her hand. Unconsciously she began to stroke Lise's hand, and presently it turned and tightened on her own.

"Lise," she said, "I understand why you—" she could not bring herself to pronounce the words "got drunk,"—"I understand why you did it. I oughtn't to have talked to you that way. But it was terrible to wake up and see you."

For awhile Lise did not reply. Then she raised herself, feeling her hair with an involuntary gesture, regarding her sister with a bewildered look, her face puckered. Her eyes burned, and under them were black shadows.

"How do you mean—you understand?" she asked slowly. "You never hit the booze."

Even Lise's language, which ordinarily offended her, failed to change her sudden impassioned and repentant mood. She was astonished at herself for this sudden softening, since she did not really love Lise, and all day she had hated her, wished never to see her again.

"No, but I can understand how it would be to want to," Janet said. "Lise,
I guess we're searching—both of us for something we'll never find."

Lise stared at her with a contracted, puzzled expression, as of a person awaking from sleep, all of whose faculties are being strained toward comprehension.

"What do you mean?" she demanded. "You and me? You're all right—you've got no kick coming."

"Life is hard, it's hard on girls like us—we want things we can't have."
Janet was at a loss to express herself.

"Well, it ain't any pipe dream," Lise agreed. Her glance turned involuntarily toward the picture of the Olympian dinner party pinned on the wall. "Swells have a good time," she added.

"Maybe they pay for it, too," said Janet.

"I wouldn't holler about paying—it's paying and not getting the goods," declared Lise.

"You'll pay, and you won't get it. That kind of life is—hell," Janet cried.

Self-centered as Lise was, absorbed in her own trouble and present physical discomfort, this unaccustomed word from her sister and the vehemence with which it was spoken surprised and frightened her, brought home to her some hint of the terror in Janet's soul.

"Me for the water wagon," she said.

Janet was not convinced. She had hoped to discover the identity of the man who had taken Lise to Gruber's, but she did not attempt to continue the conversation. She rose and took off her hat.

"Why don't you go to bed?" she asked. "I'll tell mother you have a headache and bring in your supper."

"Well, I don't care if I do," replied Lise, gratefully.

Perhaps the most disconcerting characteristic of that complex affair, the human organism, is the lack of continuity of its moods. The soul, so called, is as sensitive to physical conditions as a barometer: affected by lack of sleep, by smells and sounds, by food, by the weather—whether a day be sapphire or obsidian. And the resolutions arising from one mood are thwarted by the actions of the next. Janet had observed this phenomenon, and sometimes, when it troubled her, she thought herself the most inconsistent and vacillating of creatures. She had resolved, far instance, before she fell asleep, to leave the Chippering Mill, to banish Ditmar from her life, to get a position in Boston, whence she could send some of her wages home: and in the morning, as she made her way to the office, the determination gave her a sense of peace and unity. But the northwest wind was blowing. It had chased away the mist and the clouds, the smoke from Canada. The sun shone with a high brilliancy, the elms of the Common

cast sharp, black shadow-patterns on the pavements, and when she reached the office and looked out of his window she saw the blue river covered with quicksilver waves chasing one another across the current. Ditmar had not yet returned to Hampton. About ten o'clock, as she was copying out some figures for Mr. Price, young Mr. Caldwell approached her. He had a Boston newspaper in his hand.

"Have you seen this article about Mr. Ditmar?" he asked.

"About Mr. Ditmar? No."

"It's quite a send-off for the Colonel," said Caldwell, who was wont at times to use the title facetiously. "Listen; `One of the most notable figures in the Textile industry of the United States, Claude Ditmar, Agent of the Chippering Mill.'" Caldwell spread out the page and pointed to a picture. "There he is, as large as life."

A little larger than life, Janet thought. Ditmar was one of those men who, as the expression goes, "take" well, a valuable asset in semi-public careers; and as he stood in the sunlight on the steps of the building where they had "snap-shotted" him he appeared even more massive, forceful, and preponderant than she had known him. Beholding him thus set forth and praised in a public print, he seemed suddenly to have been distantly removed from her, to have reacquired at a bound the dizzy importance he had possessed for her before she became his stenographer. She found it impossible to realize that this was the Ditmar who had pursued and desired her; at times supplicating, apologetic, abject; and again revealed by the light in his eyes and the trembling of his hand as the sinister and ruthless predatory male from whom—since the revelation in her sister Lise she had determined to flee, and whom she had persuaded herself she despised. He was a bigger man than she had thought, and as she read rapidly down the column the fascination that crept over her was mingled with disquieting doubt of her own powers: it was now difficult to believe she had dominated or could ever dominate this self-sufficient, successful person, the list of whose achievements and qualities was so alluringly set forth by an interviewer who himself had fallen a victim.

The article carried the implication that the modern, practical, American business man was the highest type as yet evolved by civilization: and Ditmar, referred to as "a wizard of the textile industry," was emphatically one who had earned the gratitude of the grand old Commonwealth. By the efforts of such sons she continued to maintain her commanding position among her sister states. Prominent among the qualities contributing to his success was open-mindedness, "a willingness to be shown," to scrap machinery when his competitors still clung to older methods. The Chippering Mill had never had a serious strike, —indication of an ability to deal with labour; and Mr. Ditmar's views on labour followed: if his people had a grievance, let them come to him, and settle it between them. No unions. He had consistently refused to recognize them. There was mention of the Bradlaugh order as being the largest commission ever given to a single mill, a reference to the excitement and speculation it had aroused in trade circles. Claude Ditmar's ability to put it through was unquestioned; one had only to look at him,—tenacity, forcefulness, executiveness were written all over him.... In addition, the article contained much material of an autobiographical nature that must—Janet thought—have been supplied by Ditmar himself, whose modesty had evidently shrunk from the cruder self-eulogy of an interview. But she recognized several characteristic phrases.

Caldwell, watching her as she read, was suddenly fascinated. During a trip abroad, while still an undergraduate, he had once seen the face of an actress, a really good Parisian actress, light up in that way; and it had revealed to him, in a flash, the meaning of enthusiasm. Now Janet became vivid for him. There must be something unusual in a person whose feelings could be so intense, whose emotions rang so true. He was not unsophisticated. He had sometimes wondered why Ditmar had promoted her, though acknowledging her ability. He admired Ditmar, but had no illusions about him. Harvard, and birth in a social stratum where emphasis is superfluous, enabled him to smile at the reporter's exuberance; and he was the more drawn toward her to see on Janet's flushed face the hint of a smile as she looked up at him when she had finished.

"The Colonel hypnotized that reporter," he said, as he took the paper; and her laugh, despite its little tremor, betrayed in her an unsuspected, humorous sense of proportion. "Well, I'll take off my hat to him," Caldwell went on. "He is a wonder, he's got the mill right up to capacity in a week. He's agreed to deliver those goods to the Bradlaughs by the first of April, you know, and Holster, of the Clarendon, swears it can't be done, he says Ditmar's crazy. Well, I stand to lose twenty-five dollars on him."

This loyalty pleased Janet, it had the strange effect of reviving loyalty in her. She liked this evidence of Dick Caldwell's confidence. He was a self-contained and industrious young man, with crisp curly hair, cordial and friendly yet never intimate with the other employer; liked by them—but it was tacitly understood his footing differed from theirs. He was a cousin of the Chipperings, and destined for rapid promotion. He went away every Saturday, it was known that he spent Sundays and holidays in delightful places, to return reddened and tanned; and though he never spoke about these excursions,

and put on no airs of superiority, there was that in his manner and even in the cut of his well-worn suits proclaiming him as belonging to a sphere not theirs, to a category of fortunate beings whose stumbles are not fatal, who are sustained from above. Even Ditmar was not of these.

"I've just been showing a lot of highbrows through the mill," he told Janet. "They asked questions enough to swamp a professor of economics."

And Janet was suddenly impelled to ask:—"Will you take me through sometime, Mr. Caldwell?"

"You've never been through?" he exclaimed. "Why, we'll go now, if you can spare the time."

Her face had become scarlet.

"Don't tell Mr. Ditmar," she begged. "You see—he wanted to take me himself."

"Not a word," Caldwell promised as they left the office together and went downstairs to the strong iron doors that led to the Cotton Department. The showing through of occasional visitors had grown rather tiresome; but now his curiosity and interest were aroused, he was conscious of a keen stimulation when he glanced at Janet's face. Its illumination perplexed him. The effect was that of a picture obscurely hung and hitherto scarcely noticed on which the light had suddenly been turned. It glowed with a strange and disturbing radiance....

As for Janet, she was as one brought suddenly to the realization of a miracle in whose presence she had lived for many years and never before suspected; the miracle of machinery, of the triumph of man over nature. In the brief space of an hour she beheld the dirty bales flung off the freight cars on the sidings transformed into delicate fabrics wound from the looms; cotton that only last summer, perhaps, while she sat typewriting at her window, had been growing in the fields of the South. She had seen it torn by the bale-breakers, blown into the openers, loosened, cleansed, and dried; taken up by the lappers, pressed into batting, and passed on to the carding machines, to emerge like a wisp of white smoke in a sliver and coil automatically in a can. Once more it was flattened into a lap, given to a comber that felt out its fibres, removing with superhuman precision those for the finer fabric too short, thrusting it forth again in another filmy sliver ready for the drawing frames. Six of these gossamer ropes were taken up, and again six. Then came the Blubbers and the roving frames, twisting and winding, the while maintaining the most delicate of tensions lest the rope break, running the strands together into a thread constantly growing stronger and finer, until it was ready for spinning.

Caldwell stood close to her, shouting his explanations in her ear, while she strained to follow them. But she was bewildered and entranced by the marvellous swiftness, accuracy and ease with which each of the complex machines, fed by human hands, performed its function. These human hands were swift, too, as when they thrust the bobbins of roving on the ring-spinning frames to be twisted into yarn. She saw a woman, in the space of an instant, mend a broken thread. Women and boys were here, doffer boys to lift off the full bobbins of yarn with one hand and set on the empty bobbins with the other: while skilled workmen, alert for the first sign of trouble, followed up and down in its travels the long frame of the mule-spinner. After the spinning, the heavy spools of yarn were carried to a beam-warper, standing alone like a huge spider's web, where hundreds of threads were stretched symmetrically and wound evenly, side by side, on a large cylinder, forming the warp of the fabric to be woven on the loom. First, however, this warp must be stiffened or "slashed" in starch and tallow, dried over heated drums, and finally wound around one great beam from which the multitude of threads are taken up, one by one, and slipped through the eyes of the loom harnesses by women who sit all day under the north windows overlooking the canal—the "drawers-in" of whom Ditmar had spoken. Then the harnesses are put on the loom, the threads attached to the cylinder on which the cloth is to be wound. The looms absorbed and fascinated Janet above all else. It seemed as if she would never tire of watching the rhythmic rise and fall of the harnesses,—each rapid movement making a V in the warp, within the angle of which the tiny shuttles darted to and fro, to and fro, carrying the thread that filled the cloth with a swiftness so great the eye could scarcely follow it; to be caught on the other side when the angle closed, and flung back, and back again! And in the elaborate patterns not one, but several harnesses were used, each awaiting its turn for the impulse bidding it rise and fall!... Abruptly, as she gazed, one of the machines halted, a weaver hurried up, searched the warp for the broken thread, tied it, and started the loom again.

"That's intelligent of it," said Caldwell, in her ear. But she could only nod in reply.

The noise in the weaving rooms was deafening, the heat oppressive. She began to wonder how these men and women, boys and girls bore the strain all day long. She had never thought much about them before save to compare vaguely their drudgery with that from which now she had been emancipated; but she began to feel a new respect, a new concern, a new curiosity and interest as she watched them passing from place to place with indifference between the whirling belts, up and down the narrow aisles, flanked on either side by that bewildering, clattering machinery whose polished surfaces

continually caught and flung back the light of the electric bulbs on the ceiling. How was it possible to live for hours at a time in this bedlam without losing presence of mind and thrusting hand or body in the wrong place, or becoming deaf? She had never before realized what mill work meant, though she had read of the accidents. But these people—even the children—seemed oblivious to the din and the danger, intent on their tasks, unconscious of the presence of a visitor, save occasionally when she caught a swift glance from a woman or girl a glance, perhaps, of envy or even of hostility. The dark, foreign faces glowed, and instantly grew dull again, and then she was aware of lurking terrors, despite her exaltation, her sense now of belonging to another world, a world somehow associated with Ditmar. Was it not he who had lifted her farther above all this? Was it not by grace of her association with him she was there, a spectator of the toil beneath? Yet the terror persisted. She, presently, would step out of the noise, the oppressive moist heat of the drawing and spinning rooms, the constant, remorseless menace of whirling wheels and cogs and belts. But they?... She drew closer to Caldwell's side.

"I never knew—" she said. "It must be hard to work here."

He smiled at her, reassuringly.

"Oh, they don't mind it," he replied. "It's like a health resort compared to the conditions most of them live in at home. Why, there's plenty of ventilation here, and you've got to have a certain amount of heat and moisture, because when cotton is cold and dry it can't be drawn or spin, and when it's hot and dry the electricity is troublesome. If you think this moisture is bad you ought to see a mill with the old vapour-pot system with the steam shooting out into the room. Look here!" He led Janet to the apparatus in which the pure air is forced through wet cloths, removing the dust, explaining how the ventilation and humidity were regulated automatically, how the temperature of the room was controlled by a thermostat.

"There isn't an agent in the country who's more concerned about the welfare of his operatives than Mr. Ditmar. He's made a study of it, he's spent thousands of dollars, and as soon as these machines became practical he put 'em in. The other day when I was going through the room one of these shuttles flew off, as they sometimes do when the looms are running at high speed. A woman was pretty badly hurt. Ditmar came right down."

"He really cares about them," said Janet. She liked Caldwell's praise of
Ditmar, yet she spoke a little doubtfully.

"Of course he cares. But it's common sense to make 'em as comfortable and happy as possible—isn't it? He won't stand for being held up, and he'd be stiff enough if it came to a strike. I don't blame him for that. Do you?"

Janet was wondering how ruthless Ditmar could be if his will were crossed.... They had left the room with its noise and heat behind them and were descending the worn, oaken treads of the spiral stairway of a neighbouring tower. Janet shivered a little, and her face seemed almost feverish as she turned to Caldwell and thanked him.

"Oh, it was a pleasure, Miss Bumpus," he declared. "And sometime, when you want to see the Print Works or the Worsted Department, let me know—I'm your man. And—I won't mention it."

She did not answer. As they made their way back to the office he glanced at her covertly, astonished at the emotional effect in her their tour had produced. Though not of an inflammable temperament, he himself was stirred, and it was she who, unaccountably, had stirred him: suggested, in these processes he saw every day, and in which he was indeed interested, something deeper, more significant and human than he had guessed, and which he was unable to define....

Janet herself did not know why this intimate view of the mills, of the people who worked in them had so greatly moved her. All day she thought of them. And the distant throb of the machinery she felt when her typewriter was silent meant something to her now—she could not say what. When she found herself listening for it, her heart beat faster. She had lived and worked beside it, and it had not existed for her, it had had no meaning, the mills might have been empty. She had, indeed, many, many times seen these men and women, boys and girls trooping away from work, she had strolled through the quarters in which they lived, speculated on the lands from which they had come; but she had never really thought of them as human beings, individuals, with problems and joys and sorrows and hopes and fears like her own. Some such discovery was borne in upon her. And always an essential function of this revelation, looming larger than ever in her consciousness, was Ditmar. It was for Ditmar they toiled, in Ditmar's hands were their very existences, his was the stupendous responsibility and power.

As the afternoon wore, desire to see these toilers once more took possession of her. From the white cupola perched above the huge mass of the Clarendon Mill across the water sounded the single stroke

of a bell, and suddenly the air was pulsing with sounds flung back and forth by the walls lining the river. Seizing her hat and coat, she ran down the stairs and through the vestibule and along the track by the canal to the great gates, which her father was in the act of unbarring. She took a stand beside him, by the gatehouse. Edward showed a mild surprise.

"There ain't anything troubling you—is there, Janet?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"I wanted to see the hands come out," she said.

Sometimes, as at present, he found Janet's whims unaccountable.

"Well, I should have presumed you'd know what they look like by this time. You'd better stay right close to me, they're a rough lot, with no respect or consideration for decent folks—these foreigners. I never could see why the government lets 'em all come over here." He put on the word "foreigners" an emphasis of contempt and indignation, pathetic because of its peculiar note of futility. Janet paid no attention to him. Her ears were strained to catch the rumble of feet descending the tower stairs, her eyes to see the vanguard as it came from the doorway—the first tricklings of a flood that instantly filled the yard and swept onward and outward, irresistibly, through the narrow gorge of the gates. Impossible to realize this as the force which, when distributed over the great spaces of the mills, performed an orderly and useful task! for it was now a turbid and lawless torrent unconscious of its swollen powers, menacing, breathlessly exciting to behold. It seemed to Janet indeed a torrent as she clung to the side of the gatehouse as one might cling to the steep bank of a mountain brook after a cloud-burst. And suddenly she had plunged into it. The desire was absurd, perhaps, but not to be denied,—the desire to mix with it, feel it, be submerged and swept away by it, losing all sense of identity. She heard her father call after her, faintly—the thought crossed her mind that his appeals were always faint,—and then she was being carried along the canal, eastward, the pressure relaxing somewhat when the draining of the side streets began.

She remembered, oddly, the Stanley Street bridge where the many streams met and mingled, streams from the Arundel, the Patuxent, the Arlington and the Clarendon; and, eager to prolong and intensify her sensations, hurried thither, reaching it at last and thrusting her way outward until she had gained the middle, where she stood grasping the rail. The great structure was a-tremble from the assault, its footpaths and its roadway overrun with workers, dodging between trolleys and trucks,—some darting nimbly, dinner pails in hand, along the steel girders. Doffer boys romped and whistled, young girls in jaunty, Faber Street clothes and flowered hats, linked to one another for protection, chewed gum and joked, but for the most part these workers were silent, the apathy of their faces making a strange contrast with the hurry, hurry of their feet and set intentness of their bodies as they sped homeward to the tenements. And the clothes of these were drab, save when the occasional colour of a hooded peasant's shawl, like the slightly faded tints of an old master, lit up a group of women. Here, going home to their children, were Italian mothers bred through centuries to endurance and patience; sallow Jewesses, gaunt, bearded Jews with shadowy, half-closed eyes and wrinkled brows, broad-faced Lithuanians, flat-headed Russians; swarthy Italian men and pale, blond Germans mingled with muddy Syrians and nondescript Canadians. And suddenly the bridge was empty, the army vanished as swiftly as it came!

Janet turned. Through the haze of smoke she saw the sun drop like a ball of fire cooled to redness, whose course is spent. The delicate lines of the upper bridge were drawn in sepia against crimson-gilt; for an instant the cupola of the Clarendon became jasper, and far, far above floated in the azure a cloud of pink jeweller's cotton. Even as she strove to fix these colours in her mind they vanished, the western sky faded to magenta, to purple-mauve; the corridor of the river darkened, on either side pale lights sparkled from the windows of the mills, while down the deepened blue of the waters came floating iridescent suds from the washing of the wools. It was given to her to know that which an artist of living memory has called the incommunicable thrill of things….

CHAPTER VIII

The after-effects of this experience of Janet's were not what ordinarily are called "spiritual," though we may some day arrive at a saner meaning of the term, include within it the impulses and needs of the entire organism. It left her with a renewed sense of energy and restlessness, brought her nearer to

high discoveries of mysterious joys which a voice out of the past called upon her to forego, a voice somehow identified with her father! It was faint, ineffectual. In obeying it, would she not lose all life had to give? When she came in to supper her father was concerned about her because, instead of walking home with him she had left him without explanation to plunge into the crowd of workers. Her evident state of excitement had worried him, her caprice was beyond his comprehension. And how could she explain the motives that led to it? She was sure he had never felt like that; and as she evaded his questions the something within her demanding life and expression grew stronger and more rebellious, more contemptuous of the fear-precepts congenial to a nature timorous and less vitalized.

After supper, unable to sit still, she went out, and, filled with the spirit of adventure, hurried toward Faber Street, which was already thronging with people. It was bright here and gay, the shops glittered, and she wandered from window to window until she found herself staring at a suit of blue cloth hung on a form, beneath which was a card that read, "Marked down to $20." And suddenly the suggestion flashed into her mind, why shouldn't she buy it? She had the money, she needed a new suit for the winter, the one she possessed was getting shabby…but behind the excuse of necessity was the real reason triumphantly proclaiming itself—she would look pretty in it, she would be transformed, she would be buying a new character to which she would have to live up. The old Janet would be cast off with the old raiment; the new suit would announce to herself and to the world a Janet in whom were released all those longings hitherto disguised and suppressed, and now become insupportable! This was what the purchase meant, a change of existence as complete as that between the moth and the butterfly; and the realization of this fact, of the audacity she was resolved to commit made her hot as she gazed at the suit. It was modest enough, yet it had a certain distinction of cut, it looked expensive: twenty dollars was not cheap, to be sure, but as the placard announced, it had the air of being much more costly—even more costly than thirty dollars, which seemed fabulous. Though she strove to remain outwardly calm, her heart beat rapidly as she entered the store and asked for the costume, and was somewhat reassured by the comportment of the saleswoman, who did not appear to think the request preposterous, to regard her as a spendthrift and a profligate. She took down the suit from the form and led Janet to a cabinet in the back of the shop, where it was tried on.

"It's worth every bit of thirty dollars," she heard the woman say, "but we've had it here for some time, and it's no use for our trade. You can't sell anything like that in Hampton, there's no taste here, it's too good, it ain't showy enough. My, it fits you like it was made for you, and it's just your style—and you can see it wants a lady to wear it. Your old suit is too tight—I guess you've filled out some since you bought it."

She turned Janet around and around, patting the skirt here and there, and then stood off a little way, with clasped hands, her expression almost rapturous. Janet's breath came fast as she gazed into the mirror and buttoned up the coat. Was the woman's admiration cleverly feigned? this image she beheld an illusion? or did she really look different, distinguished? and if not beautiful—alluring? She had had a momentary apprehension, almost sickening, that she would be too conspicuous, but the saleswoman had anticipated that objection with the magical word "lady."

"I'll take it," she announced.

"Well, you couldn't have done better if you'd gone to Boston," declared the woman. "It's one chance in a thousand. Will you wear it?"

"Yes," said Janet faintly…. "Just put my old suit in a box, and I'll call for it in an hour."

The woman's sympathetic smile followed her as she left the shop. She had an instant of hesitation, of an almost panicky desire to go back and repair her folly, ere it was too late. Why had she taken her money with her that evening, if not with some deliberate though undefined purpose? But she was ashamed to face the saleswoman again, and her elation was not to be repressed—an elation optically presented by a huge electric sign on the farther side of the street that flashed through all the colours of the spectrum, surrounded by running fire like the running fire in her soul. Deliciously self-conscious, her gaze fixed ahead, she pressed through the Wednesday night crowds, young mill men and women in their best clothes, housewives and fathers of families with children and bundles. In front of the Banner office a group blocked the pavement staring up at the news bulletin, which she paused to read. "Five Millionaire Directors Indicted in New York," "State Treasurer Accused of Graft," "Murdock Fortune Contested by Heirs." The phrases seemed meaningless, and she hurried on again…. She was being noticed! A man looked at her, twice, the first glance accidental, the second arresting, appealing, subtly flattering, agitating—she was sure he had turned and was following her. She hastened her steps. It was wicked, what she was doing, but she gloried in it; and even the sight, in burning red letters, of Gruber's Cafe failed to bring on a revulsion by its association with her sister Lise. The fact that Lise had got drunk there meant nothing to her now. She gazed curiously at the illuminated, orange-coloured panes separated by curving leads, at the design of a harp in green, at the sign "Ladies' Entrance"; listened

eagerly to the sounds of voices and laughter that came from within. She looked cautiously over her shoulder, a shadow appeared, she heard a voice, low, insinuating....

Four blocks farther down she stopped. The man was no longer following her. She had been almost self-convinced of an intention to go to Eda's—not quite. Of late her conscience had reproached her about Eda, Janet had neglected her. She told herself she was afraid of Eda's uncanny and somewhat nauseating flair for romance; and to show Eda the new suit, though she would relish her friend's praise, would be the equivalent of announcing an affair of the heart which she, Janet, would have indignantly to deny. She was not going to Eda's. She knew now where she was going. A prepared but hitherto undisclosed decree of fate had bade her put money in her bag that evening, directed her to the shop to buy the dress, and would presently impel her to go to West Street—nay, was even now so impelling her. Ahead of her were the lights of the Chippering Mill, in her ears was the rhythmic sound of the looms working of nights on the Bradlaugh order. She reached the canal. The white arc above the end of the bridge cast sharp, black shadows of the branches of the trees on the granite, the thousand windows of the mill shone yellow, reflected in the black water. Twice she started to go, twice she paused, held by the presage of a coming event, a presage that robbed her of complete surprise when she heard footsteps on the bridge, saw the figure of a man halting at the crown of the arch to look back at the building he had left, his shoulders squared, his hand firmly clasping the rail. Her heart was throbbing with the looms, and yet she stood motionless, until he turned and came rapidly down the slope of the arch and stopped in front of her. Under the arc lamp it was almost as bright as day.

"Miss Bumpus!" he exclaimed.

"Mr. Ditmar" she said.

"Were you—were you coming to the office?"

"I was just out walking," she told him. "I thought you were in Boston."

"I came home," he informed her, somewhat superfluously, his eyes never leaving her, wandering hungrily from her face to her new suit, and back again to her face. "I got here on the seven o'clock train, I wanted to see about those new Blubbers."

"They finished setting them up this afternoon," she said.

"How did you know?"

"I asked Mr. Orcutt about it—I thought you might telephone."

"You're a wonder," was his comment. "Well, we've got a running start on that order," and he threw a glance over his shoulder at the mill. "Everything going full speed ahead. When we put it through I guess I'll have to give you some of the credit."

"Oh, I haven't done anything," she protested.

"More than you think. You've taken so much off my shoulders I couldn't get along without you." His voice vibrated, reminding her of the voices of those who made sentimental recitations for the graphophone. It sounded absurd, yet it did not repel her: something within her responded to it. "Which way were you going?" he inquired.

"Home," she said.

"Where do you live?"

"In Fillmore Street." And she added with a touch of defiance: "It's a little street, three blocks above Hawthorne, off East Street."

"Oh yes," he said vaguely, as though he had not understood. "I'll come with you as far as the bridge—along the canal. I've got so much to say to you."

"Can't you say it to-morrow?"

"No, I can't; there are so many people in the office—so many interruptions, I mean. And then, you never give me a chance."

She stood hesitating, a struggle going on within her. He had proposed the route along the canal because nobody would be likely to recognize them, and her pride resented this. On the other hand, there was the sweet allurement of the adventure she craved, which indeed she had come out to seek and by a strange fatality found—since he had appeared on the bridge almost as soon as she reached it. The sense of fate was strong upon her. Curiosity urged her, and, thanks to the eulogy she had read of

him that day, to the added impression of his power conveyed by the trip through the mills, Ditmar loomed larger than ever in her consciousness.

"What do you want to say?" she asked.

"Oh, lots of things."

She felt his hand slipping under her arm, his fingers pressing gently but firmly into her flesh, and the experience of being impelled by a power stronger than herself, a masculine power, was delicious. Her arm seemed to burn where he touched her.

"Have I done something to offend you?" she heard him say. "Or is it because you don't like me?"

"I'm not sure whether I like you or not," she told him. "I don't like seeing you—this way. And why should you want to know me and see me outside of the office? I'm only your stenographer."

"Because you're you—because you're different from any woman I ever met.
You don't understand what you are—you don't see yourself."

"I made up my mind last night I wouldn't stay in your office any longer," she informed him.

"For God's sake, why?" he exclaimed. "I've been afraid of that. Don't go—I don't know what I'd do. I'll be careful—I won't get you talked about."

"Talked about!" She tore herself away from him. "Why should you get me talked about?" she cried.

He was frightened. "No, no," he stammered, "I didn't mean—"

"What did you mean?"

"Well—as you say, you're my stenographer, but that's no reason why we shouldn't be friends. I only meant—I wouldn't do anything to make our friendship the subject of gossip."

Suddenly she began to find a certain amusement in his confusion and penitence, she achieved a pleasurable sense of advantage, of power over him.

"Why should you want me? I don't know anything, I've never had any advantages—and you have so much. I read an article in the newspaper about you today—Mr. Caldwell gave it to me—"

"Did you like it?" he interrupted, naively.

"Well, in some places it was rather funny."

"Funny? How?"

"Oh, I don't know." She had been quick to grasp in it the journalistic lack of restraint hinted at by Caldwell. "I liked it, but I thought it praised you too much, it didn't criticize you enough."

He laughed. In spite of his discomfort, he found her candour refreshing. From the women to whom he had hitherto made love he had never got anything but flattery.

"I want you to criticize me," he said.

But she went on relentlessly:—"When I read in that article how successful you were, and how you'd got everything you'd started out to get, and how some day you might be treasurer and president of the Chippering Mill, well—" Despairing of giving adequate expression to her meaning, she added, "I didn't see how we could be friends."

"You wanted me for a friend?" he interrupted eagerly.

"I couldn't help knowing you wanted me—you've shown it so plainly. But I didn't see how it could be. You asked me where I lived—in a little flat that's no better than a tenement. I suppose you would call it a tenement. It's dark and ugly, it only has four rooms, and it smells of cooking. You couldn't come there—don't you see how impossible it is? And you wouldn't care to be talked about yourself, either," she added vehemently.

This defiant sincerity took him aback. He groped for words.

"Listen!" he urged. "I don't want to do anything you wouldn't like, and honestly I don't know what I'd do if you left me. I've come to depend on you. And you may not believe it, but when I got that Bradlaugh order I thought of you, I said to myself 'She'll be pleased, she'll help me to put it over.'"

She thrilled at this, she even suffered him, for some reason unknown to herself, to take her arm again.

"How could I help you?"

"Oh, in a thousand ways—you ought to know, you do a good deal of thinking for me, and you can help me by just being there. I can't explain it, but I feel somehow that things will go right. I've come to depend on you."

He was a little surprised to find himself saying these things he had not intended to say, and the lighter touch he had always possessed in dealing with the other sex, making him the envied of his friends, had apparently abandoned him. He was appalled at the possibility of losing her.

"I've never met a woman like you," he went on, as she remained silent. "You're different—I don't know what it is about you, but you are." His voice was low, caressing, his head was bent down to her, his shoulder pressed against her shoulder. "I've never had a woman friend before, I've never wanted one until now."

She wondered about his wife.

"You've got brains—I've never met a woman with brains."

"Oh, is that why?" she exclaimed.

"You're beautiful," he whispered. "It's queer, but I didn't know it at first. You're more beautiful to-night than I've ever seen you."

They had come almost to Warren Street. Suddenly realizing that they were standing in the light, that people were passing to and fro over the end of the bridge, she drew away from him once more, this time more gently.

"Let's walk back a little way," he proposed.

"I must go home—it's late."

"It's only nine o'clock."

"I have an errand to do, and they'll expect me. Good night."

"Just one more turn!" he pleaded.

But she shook her head, backing away from him.

"You'll see me to-morrow," she told him. She didn't know why she said that. She hurried along Warren Street without once looking over her shoulder; her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground, the sound of music was in her ears, the lights sparkled. She had had an adventure, at last, an adventure that magically had transformed her life! She was beautiful! No one had ever told her that before. And he had said that he needed her. She smiled as, with an access of tenderness, in spite of his experience and power she suddenly felt years older than Ditmar. She could help him!...

She was breathless when she reached the shop in Faber Street.

"I hope I haven't kept you waiting," she said.

"Oh no, we don't close until ten," answered the saleswoman. She was seated quietly sewing under the lamp.

"I wonder whether you'd mind if I put on my old suit again, and carried this?" Janet asked.

The expression of sympathy and understanding in the woman's eyes, as she rose, brought the blood swiftly to Janet's face. She felt that her secret had been guessed. The change effected, Janet went homeward swiftly, to encounter, on the corner of Faber Street, her sister Lise, whose attention was immediately attracted by the bundle.

"What have you got there, angel face?" she demanded.

"A new suit," said Janet.

"You don't tell me—where'd you get it? at the Paris?"

"No, at Dowling's."

"Say, I'll bet it was that plain blue thing marked down to twenty!"

"Well, what if it was?"

Lise, when surprised or scornful, had a peculiarly irritating way of whistling through her teeth.

"Twenty bucks! Gee, you'll be getting your clothes in Boston next. Well, as sure as I live when I went by that window the other day when they first knocked it down I said to Sadie, `those are the rags Janet would buy if she had the ready.' Have you got another raise out of Ditmar?"

"If I have, it isn't any business of yours," Janet retorted. "I've got a right to do as I please with my own money."

"Oh sure," said Lise, and added darkly: "I guess Ditmar likes to see you look well."

After this Janet refused obstinately to speak to Lise, to answer, when they reached home, her pleadings and complaints to their mother that Janet had bought a new suit and refused to exhibit it. And finally, when they had got to bed, Janet lay long awake in passionate revolt against this new expression of the sordidness and lack of privacy in which she was forced to live, made the more intolerable by the close, sultry darkness of the room and the snoring of Lise.

In the morning, however, after a groping period of semiconsciousness during the ringing of the bells, the siren startled her into awareness and alertness. It had not wholly lost its note of terror, but the note had somehow become exhilarating, an invitation to adventure and to life; and Lise's sarcastic comments as to the probable reasons why she did not put on the new suit had host their power of exasperation. Janet compromised, wearing a blouse of china silk hitherto reserved for "best." The day was bright, and she went rapidly toward the mill, glorying in the sunshine and the autumn sharpness of the air; and her thoughts were not so much of Ditmar as of something beyond him, of which he was the medium. She was going, not to meet him, but to meet that. When she reached the office she felt weak, her fingers trembled as she took off her hat and jacket and began to sort out the mail. And she had to calm herself with the assurance that her relationship with Ditmar had undergone no change. She had merely met him by the canal, and he had talked to her. That was all. He had, of course, taken her arm: it tingled when she remembered it. But when he suddenly entered the room her heart gave a bound. He closed the door, he took off his hat, and stood gazing at her—while she continued arranging letters. Presently she was forced to glance at him. His bearing, his look, his confident smile all proclaimed that he, at least, believed things to be changed. He glowed with health and vigour, with an aggressiveness from which she shrank, yet found delicious.

"How are you this morning?" he said at last—this morning as distinguished from all other mornings.

"I'm well, as usual," she answered. She herself was sometimes surprised by her ability to remain outwardly calm.

"Why did you run away from me last night?"

"I didn't run away, I had to go home," she said, still arranging the letters.

"We could have had a little walk. I don't believe you had to go home at all. You just wanted an excuse to get away from me."

"I didn't need an excuse," she told him. He moved toward her, but she took a paper from the desk and carried it to a file across the room.

"I thought we were going to be friends," he said.

"Being friends doesn't mean being foolish," she retorted. "And Mr.
Orcutt's waiting to see you."

"Let him wait."

He sat down at his desk, but his blood was warm, and he read the typewritten words of the topmost letter of the pile without so much as grasping the meaning of them. From time to time he glanced up at Janet as she flitted about the room. By George, she was more desirable than he had ever dared to imagine! He felt temporarily balked, but hopeful. On his way to the mill he had dwelt with Epicurean indulgence on this sight of her, and he had not been disappointed. He had also thought that he might venture upon more than the mere feasting of his eyes, yet found an inspiring alleviation in the fact that she by no means absolutely repulsed him. Her attitude toward him had undergone a subtle transformation. There could be no doubt of that. She was almost coquettish. His eyes lingered. The china silk blouse was slightly open at the neck, suggesting the fullness of her throat; it clung to the

outline of her shoulders. Overcome by an impulse he could not control, he got up and went toward her, but she avoided him.

"I'll tell Mr. Orcutt you've come," she said, rather breathlessly, as she reached the door and opened it. Ditmar halted in his steps at the sight of the tall, spectacled figure of the superintendent on the threshold.

Orcutt hesitated, looking from one to the other.

"I've been waiting for you," he said, after a moment, "the rest of that lot didn't come in this morning. I've telephoned to the freight agent."

Ditmar stared at him uncomprehendingly. Orcutt repeated the information.

"Oh well, keep after him, get him to trace them."

"I'm doing that," replied the conscientious Orcutt.

"How's everything else going?" Ditmar demanded, with unlooked-for geniality. "You mustn't take things too hard, Orcutt, don't wear yourself out."

Mr. Orcutt was relieved. He had expected an outburst of the exasperation that lately had characterized his superior. They began to chat. Janet had escaped.

"Miss Bumpus told me you wanted to see me. I was just going to ring you up," Ditmar informed him.

"She's a clever young woman, seems to take such an interest in things," Orcutt observed. "And she's always on the job. Only yesterday I saw her going through the mill with young Caldwell."

Ditmar dropped the paper-weight he held.

"Oh, she went through, did she?"

After Orcutt departed he sat for awhile whistling a tune, from a popular musical play, keeping time by drumming with his fingers on the desk.

That Mr. Semple, the mill treasurer, came down from Boston that morning to confer with Ditmar was for Janet in the nature of a reprieve. She sat by her window, and as her fingers flew over the typewriter keys she was swept by surges of heat in which ecstasy and shame and terror were strangely commingled. A voice within her said, "This can't go on, this can't go on! It's too terrible! Everyone in the office will notice it—there will be a scandal. I ought to go away while there is yet time—to-day." Though the instinct of flight was strong within her, she was filled with rebellion at the thought of leaving when Adventure was flooding her drab world with light, even as the mill across the waters was transfigured by the heavy golden wash of the autumn sun. She had made at length the discovery that Adventure had to do with Man, was inconceivable without him.

Racked by these conflicting impulses of self-preservation on the one hand and what seemed self-realization on the other, she started when, toward the middle of the afternoon, she heard Ditmar's voice summoning her to take his letters; and went palpitating, leaving the door open behind her, seating herself on the far side of the desk, her head bent over her book. Her neck, where her hair grew in wisps behind her ear, seemed to burn: Ditmar's glance was focussed there. Her hands were cold as she wrote.... Then, like a deliverer, she saw young Caldwell coming in from the outer office, holding a card in his hand which he gave to Ditmar, who sat staring at it.

"Siddons?" he said. "Who's Siddons?"

Janet, who had risen, spoke up.

"Why, he's been making the Hampton `survey.' You wrote him you'd see him—don't you remember, Mr. Ditmar?"

"Don't go!" exclaimed Ditmar. "You can't tell what those confounded reformers will accuse you of if you don't have a witness."

Janet sat down again. The sharpness of Ditmar's tone was an exhilarating reminder of the fact that, in dealing with strangers, he had come more or less to rely on her instinctive judgment; while the implied appeal of his manner on such occasions emphasized the pleasurable sense of his dependence, of her own usefulness. Besides, she had been curious about the `survey' at the time it was first mentioned, she wished to hear Ditmar's views concerning it. Mr. Siddons proved to be a small and sallow young man with a pointed nose and bright, bulbous brown eyes like a chipmunk's. Indeed, he reminded one of

a chipmunk. As he whisked himself in and seized Ditmar's hand he gave a confused impression of polite self-effacement as well as of dignity and self-assertion; he had the air of one who expects opposition, and though by no means desiring it, is prepared to deal with it. Janet smiled. She had a sudden impulse to drop the heavy book that lay on the corner of the desk to see if he would jump.

"How do you do, Mr. Ditmar?" he said. "I've been hoping to have this pleasure."

"My secretary, Miss Bumpus," said Ditmar.

Mr. Siddons quivered and bowed. Ditmar, sinking ponderously into his chair, seemed suddenly, ironically amused, grinning at Janet as he opened a drawer of his desk and offered the visitor a cigar.

"Thanks, I don't smoke," said Mr. Siddons.

Ditmar lit one for himself.

"Now, what can I do for you?" he asked.

"Well, as I wrote you in my letter, I was engaged to make as thorough an examination as possible of the living conditions and housing of the operatives in the city of Hampton. I'm sure you'd be interested in hearing something of the situation we found."

"I suppose you've been through our mills," said Ditmar.

"No, the fact is—"

"You ought to go through. I think it might interest you," Ditmar put a slight emphasis on the pronoun. "We rather pride ourselves on making things comfortable and healthy for our people."

"I've no doubt of it—in fact, I've been so informed. It's because of your concern for the welfare of your workers in the mills that I ventured to come and talk to you of how most of them live when they're at home," replied Siddons, as Janet thought, rather neatly. "Perhaps, though living in Hampton, you don't quite realize what the conditions are. I know a man who has lived in Boston ten years and who hasn't ever seen the Bunker Hill monument."

"The Bunker Hill monument's a public affair," retorted Ditmar, "anybody can go there who has enough curiosity and interest. But I don't see how you can expect me to follow these people home and make them clean up their garbage and wash their babies. I shouldn't want anybody to interfere with my private affairs."

"But when you get to a point where private affairs become a public menace?" Siddons objected. "Mr. Ditmar, I've seen block after block of tenements ready to crumble. There are no provisions for foundations, thickness of walls, size of timbers and columns, and if these houses had been deliberately erected to make a bonfire they couldn't have answered the purpose better. If it were not for the danger to life and the pity of making thousands of families homeless, a conflagration would be a blessing, although I believe the entire north or south side of the city would go under certain conditions. The best thing you could do would be to burn whole rows of these tenements, they are ideal breeding grounds for disease. In the older sections of the city you've got hundreds of rear houses here, houses moved back on the lots, in some extreme cases with only four-foot courts littered with refuse,—houses without light, without ventilation, and many of the rooms where these people are cooking and eating and sleeping are so damp and foul they're not fit to put dogs in. You've got some blocks with a density of over five hundred to the acre, and your average density is considerably over a hundred."

"Are things any worse than in any other manufacturing city?" asked
Ditmar.

"That isn't the point," said Siddons. "The point is that they're bad, they're dangerous, they're inhuman. If you could go into these tenements as I have done and see the way some of these people live, it would make you sick the Poles and Lithuanians and Italians especially. You wouldn't treat cattle that way. In some households of five rooms, including the kitchen, I found as many as fourteen, fifteen, and once seventeen people living. You've got an alarming infant death-rate."

"Isn't it because these people want to live that way?" Ditmar inquired. "They actually like it, they wouldn't be happy in anything but a pig-sty—they had 'em in Europe. And what do you expect us to do? Buy land and build flats for them? Inside of a month they'd have all the woodwork stripped off for kindling, the drainage stopped up, the bathtubs filled with ashes. I know, because it's been tried."

Tilted back in his chair, he blew a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling, and his eyes sought Janet's. She avoided them, resenting a little the assumption of approval she read in them. Her mind, sensitive to

new ideas, had been keenly stimulated as she listened to Siddons, who began patiently to dwell once more on the ill effect of the conditions he had discovered on the welfare of the entire community. She had never thought of this. She was surprised that Ditmar should seem to belittle it. Siddons was a new type in her experience. She could understand and to a certain extent maliciously enjoy Ditmar's growing exasperation with him; he had a formal, precise manner of talking, as though he spent most of his time presenting cases in committees: and in warding off Ditmar's objections he was forever indulging in such maddening phrases as, "Before we come to that, let me say a word just here." Ditmar hated words. His outbursts, his efforts to stop the flow of them were not unlike the futile charges of a large and powerful animal harassed by a smaller and more agile one. With nimble politeness, with an exasperating air of deference to Ditmar's opinions, Mr. Siddons gave ground, only to return to the charge; yet, despite a manner and method which, when contrasted to Ditmar's, verged on the ludicrous, Mr. Siddons had a force and fire of his own, nervous, almost fanatical: when he dwelt on the misery he had seen, and his voice trembled from the intensity of his feeling, Janet began to be moved. It was odd, considering the struggle for existence of her own family, that these foreigners had remained outside the range of her sympathy.

"I guess you'll find," Ditmar had interrupted peremptorily, "I guess you'll find, if you look up the savings banks statistics, these people have got millions tucked away. And they send a lot of it to the other side, they go back themselves, and though they live like cattle, they manage to buy land. Ask the real estate men. Why, I could show you a dozen who worked in the mills a few years ago and are capitalists to-day."

"I don't doubt it, Mr. Ditmar," Siddons gracefully conceded. "But what does it prove? Merely the cruelty of an economic system based on ruthless competition. The great majority who are unable to survive the test pay the price. And the community also pays the price, the state and nation pay it. And we have this misery on our consciences. I've no doubt you could show me some who have grown rich, but if you would let me I could take you to families in desperate want, living in rooms too dark to read in at midday in clear weather, where the husband doesn't get more than seven dollars a week when the mills are running full time, where the woman has to look out for the children and work for the lodgers, and even with lodgers they get into debt, and the woman has to go into the mills to earn money for winter clothing. I've seen enough instances of this kind to offset the savings bank argument. And even then, when you have a family where the wife and older children work, where the babies are put out to board, where there are three and four lodgers in a room, why do you suppose they live that way? Isn't it in the hope of freeing themselves ultimately from these very conditions? And aren't these conditions a disgrace to Hampton and America?"

"Well, what am I to do about it?" Ditmar demanded.

"I see that these operatives have comfortable and healthful surroundings in the mill, I've spent money to put in the latest appliances. That's more than a good many mills I could mention attempt."

"You are a person of influence, Mr. Ditmar, you have more influence than any man in Hampton. You can bring pressure to bear on the city council to enforce and improve the building ordinances, you can organize a campaign of public opinion against certain property owners."

"Yes," retorted Ditmar, "and what then? You raise the rents, and you won't get anybody to live in the houses. They'll move out to settlements like Glendale full of dirt and vermin and disease and live as they're accustomed to. What you reformers are actually driving at is that we should raise wages—isn't it? If we raised wages they'd live like rats anyway. I give you credit for sincerity, Mr. Siddons, but I don't want you to think I'm not as much interested in the welfare of these people as you and the men behind you. The trouble is, you only see one side of this question. When you're in my position, you're up against hard facts. We can't pay a dubber or a drawing tender any more than he's worth, whether he has a wife or children in the mills or whether he hasn't. We're in competition with other mills, we're in competition with the South. We can't regulate the cost of living. We do our best to make things right in the mills, and that's all we can do. We can't afford to be sentimental about life. Competition's got to be the rule, the world's made that way. Some are efficient and some aren't. Good God, any man who's had anything to do with hiring labour and running a plant has that drummed into him hard. You talk about ordinances, laws—there are enough laws and ordinances in this city and in this state right now. If we have any more the mills will have to shut down, and these people will starve—all of 'em." Ditmar's chair came down on its four legs, and he flung his cigar away. "Send me a copy of your survey when it's published. I'll look it over."

"Well, what do you think of the nerve of a man like that?" Ditmar exploded, when Mr. Siddons had bowed himself out. "Comes in here to advise me that it's my business to look out for the whole city of Hampton. I'd like to see him up against this low-class European labour trying to run a mill with them. They're here one day and there the next, they don't know what loyalty is. You've got to drive 'em—if you

give 'em an inch they'll jump at your throat, dynamite your property. Why, there's nothing I wouldn't do for them if I could depend on them, I'd build 'em houses, I'd have automobiles to take 'em home. As it is, I do my best, though they don't deserve it,—in slack seasons I run half time when I oughtn't to be running at all."

His tone betrayed an effort of self-justification, and his irritation had been increased by the suspicion in Janet of a certain lack of the sympathy on which he had counted. She sat silent, gazing searchingly at his face.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "You don't mean to say you agree with that kind of talk?"

"I was wondering—" she began.

"What?"

"If you were—if you could really understand those who are driven to work in order to keep alive?"

"Understand them! Why not?" he asked.

"Because—because you're on top, you've always been successful, you're pretty much your own master—and that makes it different. I'm not blaming you—in your place I'd be the same, I'm sure. But this man, Siddons, made me think. I've lived like that, you see, I know what it is, in a way."

"Not like these foreigners!" he protested.

"Oh, almost as bad," she cried with vehemence, and Ditmar, stopped suddenly in his pacing as by a physical force, looked at her with the startled air of the male who has inadvertently touched off one of the many hidden springs in the feminine emotional mechanism. "How do you know what it is to live in a squalid, ugly street, in dark little rooms that smell of cooking, and not be able to have any of the finer, beautiful things in life? Unless you'd wanted these things as I've wanted them, you couldn't know. Oh, I can understand what it would feel like to strike, to wish to dynamite men like you!"

"You can!" he exclaimed in amazement. "You!"

"Yes, me. You don't understand these people, you couldn't feel sorry for them any more than you could feel sorry for me. You want them to run your mills for you, you don't want to know how they feel or how they live, and you just want me—for your pleasure."

He was indeed momentarily taken aback by this taunt, which no woman in his experience had had the wit and spirit to fling at him, but he was not the type of man to be shocked by it. On the contrary, it swept away his irritation, and as a revelation of her inner moltenness stirred him to a fever heat as he approached and stood over her.

"You little—panther!" he whispered. "You want beautiful things, do you?
Well, I'll give 'em to you. I'll take care of you."

"Do you think I want them from you?" she retorted, almost in tears. "Do you think I want anybody to take care of me? That shows how little you know me. I want to be independent, to do my work and pay for what I get."

Janet herself was far from comprehending the complexity of her feelings. Ditmar had not apologized or feigned an altruism for which she would indeed have despised him. The ruthlessness of his laugh—the laugh of the red-blooded man who makes laws that he himself may be lawless shook her with a wild appeal. "What do I care about any others—I want you!" such was its message. And against this paradoxical wish to be conquered, intensified by the magnetic field of his passion, battled her self-assertion, her pride, her innate desire to be free, to escape now from a domination the thought of which filled her with terror. She felt his cheek brushing against her hair, his fingers straying along her arm; for the moment she was hideously yet deliciously powerless. Then the emotion of terror conquered—terror of the unknown—and she sprang away, dropping her note-book and running to the window, where she stood swaying.

"Janet, you're killing me," she heard him say. "For God's sake, why can't you trust me?"

She did not answer, but gazed out at the primrose lights beginning to twinkle fantastically in the distant mills. Presently she turned. Ditmar was in his chair. She crossed the room to the electric switch, turning on the flood of light, picked up her tote-book and sat down again.

"Don't you intend to answer your letters?" she asked.

He reached out gropingly toward the pile of his correspondence, seized the topmost letter, and began

to dictate, savagely. She experienced a certain exultation, a renewed and pleasurable sense of power as she took down his words.

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