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A FAR COUNTRY

By Winston Churchill

BOOK 1.

I.

My name is Hugh Paret. I was a corporation lawyer, but by no means a typical one, the choice of my profession being merely incidental, and due, as will be seen, to the accident of environment. The book I am about to write might aptly be called The Autobiography of a Romanticist. In that sense, if in no other, I have been a typical American, regarding my country as the happy hunting-ground of enlightened self-interest, as a function of my desires. Whether or not I have completely got rid of this romantic virus I must leave to those the aim of whose existence is to eradicate it from our literature and our life. A somewhat Augean task!

I have been impelled therefore to make an attempt at setting forth, with what frankness and sincerity I may, with those powers of selection of which I am capable, the life I have lived in this modern America; the passions I have known, the evils I have done. I endeavour to write a biography of the inner life; but in order to do this I shall have to relate those causal experiences of the outer existence that take place in the world of space and time, in the four walls of the home, in the school and university, in the noisy streets, in the realm of business and politics. I shall try to set down, impartially, the motives that have impelled my actions, to reveal in some degree the amazing mixture of good and evil which has made me what I am to-day: to avoid the tricks of memory and resist the inherent desire to present myself other and better than I am. Your American romanticist is a sentimental spoiled child who believes in miracles, whose needs are mostly baubles, whose desires are dreams. Expediency is his

motto. Innocent of a knowledge of the principles of the universe, he lives in a state of ceaseless activity, admitting no limitations, impatient of all restrictions. What he wants, he wants very badly indeed. This wanting things was the corner-stone of my character, and I believe that the science of the future will bear me out when I say that it might have been differently built upon. Certain it is that the system of education in vogue in the 70's and 80's never contemplated the search for natural corner-stones.

At all events, when I look back upon the boy I was, I see the beginnings of a real person who fades little by little as manhood arrives and advances, until suddenly I am aware that a stranger has taken his place....

I lived in a city which is now some twelve hours distant from the Atlantic seaboard. A very different city, too, it was in youth, in my grandfather's day and my father's, even in my own boyhood, from what it has since become in this most material of ages.

There is a book of my photographs, preserved by my mother, which I have been looking over lately. First is presented a plump child of two, gazing in smiling trustfulness upon a world of sunshine; later on a lean boy in plaided kilts, whose wavy, chestnut-brown hair has been most carefully parted on the side by Norah, his nurse. The face is still childish. Then appears a youth of fourteen or thereabout in long trousers and the queerest of short jackets, standing beside a marble table against a classic background; he is smiling still in undiminished hope and trust, despite increasing vexations and crossings, meaningless lessons which had to be learned, disciplines to rack an aspiring soul, and long, uncomfortable hours in the stiff pew of the First Presbyterian Church. Associated with this torture is a peculiar Sunday smell and the faint rustling of silk dresses. I can see the stern black figure of Dr. Pound, who made interminable statements to the Lord.

"Oh, Lord," I can hear him say, "thou knowest..."

These pictures, though yellowed and faded, suggest vividly the being I once was, the feelings that possessed and animated me, love for my playmates, vague impulses struggling for expression in a world forever thwarting them. I recall, too, innocent dreams of a future unidentified, dreams from which I emerged vibrating with an energy that was lost for lack of a definite objective: yet it was constantly being renewed. I often wonder what I might have become if it could have been harnessed, directed! Speculations are vain. Calvinism, though it had begun to make compromises, was still a force in those days, inimical to spontaneity and human instincts. And when I think of Calvinism I see, not Dr. Pound, who preached it, but my father, who practised and embodied it. I loved him, but he made of righteousness a stern and terrible thing implying not joy, but punishment, the, suppression rather than the expansion of aspirations. His religion seemed woven all of austerity, contained no shining threads to catch my eye. Dreams, to him, were matters for suspicion and distrust.

I sometimes ask myself, as I gaze upon his portrait now, the duplicate of the one painted for the Bar Association, whether he ever could have felt the secret, hot thrills I knew and did not identify with religion. His religion was real to him, though he failed utterly to make it comprehensible to me. The apparent calmness, evenness of his life awed me. A successful lawyer, a respected and trusted citizen, was he lacking somewhat in virility, vitality? I cannot judge him, even to-day. I never knew him. There were times in my youth when the curtain of his unfamiliar spirit was withdrawn a little: and once, after I had passed the crisis of some childhood disease, I awoke to find him bending over my bed with a tender expression that surprised and puzzled me.

He was well educated, and from his portrait a shrewd observer might divine in him a genteel taste for literature. The fine features bear witness to the influence of an American environment, yet suggest the intellectual Englishman of Matthew Arnold's time. The face is distinguished, ascetic, the chestnut hair lighter and thinner than my own; the side whiskers are not too obtrusive, the eyes blue-grey. There is a large black cravat crossed and held by a cameo pin, and the coat has odd, narrow lapels. His habits of mind were English, although he harmonized well enough with the manners and traditions of a city whose inheritance was Scotch-Irish; and he invariably drank tea for breakfast. One of my earliest recollections is of the silver breakfast service and egg-cups which my great-grandfather brought with him from Sheffield to Philadelphia shortly after the Revolution. His son, Dr. Hugh Moreton Paret, after whom I was named, was the best known physician of the city in the decorous, Second Bank days.

My mother was Sarah Breck. Hers was my Scotch-Irish side. Old Benjamin Breck, her grandfather, undaunted by sea or wilderness, had come straight from Belfast to the little log settlement by the great river that mirrored then the mantle of primeval forest on the hills. So much for chance. He kept a store with a side porch and square-paned windows, where hams and sides of bacon and sugar loaves in blue glazed paper hung beside ploughs and calico prints, barrels of flour, of molasses and rum, all of which had been somehow marvellously transported over the passes of those forbidding mountains,—passes we blithely thread to-day in dining cars and compartment sleepers. Behind the store were moored the barges that floated down on the swift current to the Ohio, carrying goods to even remoter settlements

in the western wilderness.

Benjamin, in addition to his emigrant's leather box, brought with him some of that pigment that was to dye the locality for generations a deep blue. I refer, of course, to his Presbyterianism. And in order the better to ensure to his progeny the fastness of this dye, he married the granddaughter of a famous divine, celebrated in the annals of New England,—no doubt with some injustice,—as a staunch advocate on the doctrine of infant damnation. My cousin Robert Breck had old Benjamin's portrait, which has since gone to the Kinley's. Heaven knows who painted it, though no great art were needed to suggest on canvas the tough fabric of that sitter, who was more Irish than Scotch. The heavy stick he holds might, with a slight stretch of the imagination, be a blackthorn; his head looks capable of withstanding many blows; his hand of giving many. And, as I gazed the other day at this picture hanging in the shabby suburban parlour, I could only contrast him with his anaemic descendants who possessed the likeness. Between the children of poor Mary Kinley,—Cousin Robert's daughter, and the hardy stock of the old country there is a gap indeed!

Benjamin Breck made the foundation of a fortune. It was his son who built on the Second Bank the wide, corniced mansion in which to house comfortably his eight children. There, two tiers above the river, lived my paternal grandfather, Dr. Paret, the Breck's physician and friend; the Durretts and the Hambletons, iron-masters; the Hollisters, Sherwins, the McAlerys and Ewanses,—Breck connections,—the Willetts and Ogilvys; in short, everyone of importance in the days between the 'thirties and the Civil War. Theirs were generous houses surrounded by shade trees, with glorious back yards—I have been told—where apricots and pears and peaches and even nectarines grew.

The business of Breck and Company, wholesale grocers, descended to my mother's first cousin, Robert Breck, who lived at Claremore. The very sound of that word once sufficed to give me a shiver of delight; but the Claremore I knew has disappeared as completely as Atlantis, and the place is now a suburb (hateful word!) cut up into building lots and connected with Boyne Street and the business section of the city by trolley lines. Then it was "the country," and fairly saturated with romance. Cousin Robert, when he came into town to spend his days at the store, brought with him some of this romance, I had almost said of this aroma. He was no suburbanite, but rural to the backbone, professing a most proper contempt for dwellers in towns.

Every summer day that dawned held Claremore as a possibility. And such was my capacity for joy that my appetite would depart completely when I heard my mother say, questioningly and with proper wifely respect—

"If you're really going off on a business trip for a day or two, Mr. Paret" (she generally addressed my father thus formally), "I think I'll go to Robert's and take Hugh."

"Shall I tell Norah to pack, mother," I would exclaim, starting up.

"We'll see what your father thinks, my dear."

"Remain at the table until you are excused, Hugh," he would say.

Released at length, I would rush to Norah, who always rejoiced with me, and then to the wire fence which marked the boundary of the Peters domain next door, eager, with the refreshing lack of consideration characteristic of youth, to announce to the Peterses—who were to remain at home the news of my good fortune. There would be Tom and Alfred and Russell and Julia and little Myra with her grass-stained knees, faring forth to seek the adventures of a new day in the shady western yard. Myra was too young not to look wistful at my news, but the others pretended indifference, seeking to lessen my triumph. And it was Julia who invariably retorted "We can go out to Uncle Jake's farm whenever we want to. Can't we, Tom?"…

No journey ever taken since has equalled in ecstasy that leisurely trip of thirteen miles in the narrow-gauge railroad that wound through hot fields of nodding corn tassels and between delicious, acrid-smelling woods to Claremore. No silent palace "sleeping in the sun," no edifice decreed by Kubla Khan could have worn more glamour than the house of Cousin Robert Breck.

It stood half a mile from the drowsy village, deep in its own grounds amidst lawns splashed with shadows, with gravel paths edged—in barbarous fashion, if you please with shells. There were flower beds of equally barbarous design; and two iron deer, which, like the figures on Keats's Grecian urn, were ever ready poised to flee,—and yet never fled. For Cousin Robert was rich, as riches went in those days: not only rich, but comfortable. Stretching behind the house were sweet meadows of hay and red clover basking in the heat, orchards where the cows cropped beneath the trees, arbours where purple clusters of Concords hung beneath warm leaves: there were woods beyond, into which, under the guidance of Willie Breck, I made adventurous excursions, and in the autumn gathered hickories and

walnuts. The house was a rambling, wooden mansion painted grey, with red scroll-work on its porches and horsehair furniture inside. Oh, the smell of its darkened interior on a midsummer day! Like the flavour of that choicest of tropical fruits, the mangosteen, it baffles analysis, and the nearest I can come to it is a mixture of matting and corn-bread, with another element too subtle to define.

The hospitality of that house! One would have thought we had arrived, my mother and I, from the ends of the earth, such was the welcome we got from Cousin Jenny, Cousin Robert's wife, from Mary and Helen with the flaxen pig-tails, from Willie, whom I recall as permanently without shoes or stockings. Met and embraced by Cousin Jenny at the station and driven to the house in the squeaky surrey, the moment we arrived she and my mother would put on the dressing-sacks I associated with hot weather, and sit sewing all day long in rocking-chairs at the coolest end of the piazza. The women of that day scorned lying down, except at night, and as evening came on they donned starched dresses; I recall in particular one my mother wore, with little vertical stripes of black and white, and a full skirt. And how they talked, from the beginning of the visit until the end! I have often since wondered where the topics came from.

It was not until nearly seven o'clock that the train arrived which brought home my Cousin Robert. He was a big man; his features and even his ample moustache gave a disconcerting impression of rugged integrity, and I remember him chiefly in an alpaca or seersucker coat. Though much less formal, more democratic—in a word—than my father, I stood in awe of him for a different reason, and this I know now was because he possessed the penetration to discern the flaws in my youthful character,—flaws that persisted in manhood. None so quick as Cousin Robert to detect deceptions which were hidden from my mother.

His hobby was carpentering, and he had a little shop beside the stable filled with shining tools which Willie and I, in spite of their attractions, were forbidden to touch. Willie, by dire experience, had learned to keep the law; but on one occasion I stole in alone, and promptly cut my finger with a chisel. My mother and Cousin Jenny accepted the fiction that the injury had been done with a flint arrowhead that Willie had given me, but when Cousin Robert came home and saw my bound hand and heard the story, he gave me a certain look which sticks in my mind.

"Wonderful people, those Indians were!" he observed. "They could make arrowheads as sharp as chisels."

I was most uncomfortable....

He had a strong voice, and spoke with a rising inflection and a marked accent that still remains peculiar to our locality, although it was much modified in my mother and not at all noticeable in my father; with an odd nasal alteration of the burr our Scotch-Irish ancestors had brought with them across the seas. For instance, he always called my father Mr. Par-r-ret. He had an admiration and respect for him that seemed to forbid the informality of "Matthew." It was shared by others of my father's friends and relations.

"Sarah," Cousin Robert would say to my mother, "you're coddling that boy, you ought to lam him oftener. Hand him over to me for a couple of months—I'll put him through his paces.... So you're going to send him to college, are you? He's too good for old Benjamin's grocery business."

He was very fond of my mother, though he lectured her soundly for her weakness in indulging me. I can see him as he sat at the head of the supper table, carving liberal helpings which Mary and Helen and Willie devoured with country appetites, watching our plates.

"What's the matter, Hugh? You haven't eaten all your lamb."

"He doesn't like fat, Robert," my mother explained.

"I'd teach him to like it if he were my boy."

"Well, Robert, he isn't your boy," Cousin Jenny would remind him.... His bark was worse than his bite. Like many kind people he made use of brusqueness to hide an inner tenderness, and on the train he was hail fellow well met with every Tom, Dick and Harry that commuted,—although the word was not invented in those days,—and the conductor and brakeman too. But he had his standards, and held to them....

Mine was not a questioning childhood, and I was willing to accept the scheme of things as presented to me entire. In my tenderer years, when I had broken one of the commandments on my father's tablet (there were more than ten), and had, on his home-coming, been sent to bed, my mother would come softly upstairs after supper with a book in her hand; a book of selected Bible stories on which Dr. Pound had set the seal of his approval, with a glazed picture cover, representing Daniel in the lions' den and

an angel standing beside him. On the somewhat specious plea that Holy Writ might have a chastening effect, she was permitted to minister to me in my shame. The amazing adventure of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego particularly appealed to an imagination needing little stimulation. It never occurred to me to doubt that these gentlemen had triumphed over caloric laws. But out of my window, at the back of the second storey, I often saw a sudden, crimson glow in the sky to the southward, as though that part of the city had caught fire. There were the big steel-works, my mother told me, belonging to Mr. Durrett and Mr. Hambleton, the father of Ralph Hambleton and the grandfather of Hambleton Durrett, my schoolmates at Miss Caroline's. I invariably connected the glow, not with Hambleton and Ralph, but with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego! Later on, when my father took me to the steel-works, and I beheld with awe a huge pot filled with molten metal that ran out of it like water, I asked him—if I leaped into that stream, could God save me? He was shocked. Miracles, he told me, didn't happen any more.

"When did they stop?" I demanded.

"About two thousand years ago, my son," he replied gravely.

"Then," said I, "no matter how much I believed in God, he wouldn't save me if I jumped into the big kettle for his sake?"

For this I was properly rebuked and silenced.

My boyhood was filled with obsessing desires. If God, for example, had cast down, out of his abundant store, manna and quail in the desert, why couldn't he fling me a little pocket money? A paltry quarter of a dollar, let us say, which to me represented wealth. To avoid the reproach of the Pharisees, I went into the closet of my bed-chamber to pray, requesting that the quarter should be dropped on the north side of Lyme Street, between Stamford and Tryon; in short, as conveniently near home as possible. Then I issued forth, not feeling overconfident, but hoping. Tom Peters, leaning over the ornamental cast-iron fence which separated his front yard from the street, presently spied me scanning the sidewalk.

"What are you looking for, Hugh?" he demanded with interest.

"Oh, something I dropped," I answered uneasily.

"What?"

Naturally, I refused to tell. It was a broiling, midsummer day; Julia and Russell, who had been warned to stay in the shade, but who were engaged in the experiment of throwing the yellow cat from the top of the lattice fence to see if she would alight on her feet, were presently attracted, and joined in the search. The mystery which I threw around it added to its interest, and I was not inconsiderably annoyed. Suppose one of them were to find the quarter which God had intended for me? Would that be justice?

"It's nothing," I said, and pretended to abandon the quest—to be renewed later. But this ruse failed; they continued obstinately to search; and after a few minutes Tom, with a shout, picked out of a hot crevice between the bricks—a nickel!

"It's mine!" I cried fiercely.

"Did you lose it?" demanded Julia, the canny one, as Tom was about to give it up.

My lying was generally reserved for my elders.

"N-no," I said hesitatingly, "but it's mine all the same. It was—sent to me."

"Sent to you!" they exclaimed, in a chorus of protest and derision. And how, indeed, was I to make good my claim? The Peterses, when assembled, were a clan, led by Julia and in matters of controversy, moved as one. How was I to tell them that in answer to my prayers for twenty-five cents, God had deemed five all that was good for me?

"Some—somebody dropped it there for me."

"Who?" demanded the chorus. "Say, that's a good one!"

Tears suddenly blinded me. Overcome by chagrin, I turned and flew into the house and upstairs into my room, locking the door behind me. An interval ensued, during which I nursed my sense of wrong, and it pleased me to think that the money would bring a curse on the Peters family. At length there came a knock on the door, and a voice calling my name.

"Hugh! Hugh!"

It was Tom.

"Hughie, won't you let me in? I want to give you the nickel."

"Keep it!" I shouted back. "You found it."

Another interval, and then more knocking.

"Open up," he said coaxingly. "I—I want to talk to you."

I relented, and let him in. He pressed the coin into my hand. I refused; he pleaded.

"You found it," I said, "it's yours."

"But—but you were looking for it."

"That makes no difference," I declared magnanimously.

Curiosity overcame him.

"Say, Hughie, if you didn't drop it, who on earth did?"

"Nobody on earth," I replied cryptically….

Naturally, I declined to reveal the secret. Nor was this by any means the only secret I held over the Peters family, who never quite knew what to make of me. They were not troubled with imaginations. Julia was a little older than Tom and had a sharp tongue, but over him I exercised a distinct fascination, and I knew it. Literal himself, good-natured and warm-hearted, the gift I had of tingeing life with romance (to put the thing optimistically), of creating kingdoms out of back yards—at which Julia and Russell sniffed—held his allegiance firm.

II.

I must have been about twelve years of age when I realized that I was possessed of the bard's inheritance. A momentous journey I made with my parents to Boston about this time not only stimulated this gift, but gave me the advantage of which other travellers before me have likewise availed themselves—of being able to take certain poetic liberties with a distant land that my friends at home had never seen. Often during the heat of summer noons when we were assembled under the big maple beside the lattice fence in the Peters' yard, the spirit would move me to relate the most amazing of adventures. Our train, for instance, had been held up in the night by a band of robbers in black masks, and rescued by a traveller who bore a striking resemblance to my Cousin Robert Breck. He had shot two of the robbers. These fabrications, once started, flowed from me with ridiculous ease. I experienced an unwonted exhilaration, exaltation; I began to believe that they had actually occurred. In vain the astute Julia asserted that there were no train robbers in the east. What had my father done? Well, he had been very brave, but he had had no pistol. Had I been frightened? No, not at all; I, too, had wished for a pistol. Why hadn't I spoken of this before? Well, so many things had happened to me I couldn't tell them all at once. It was plain that Julia, though often fascinated against her will, deemed this sort of thing distinctly immoral.

I was a boy divided in two. One part of me dwelt in a fanciful realm of his own weaving, and the other part was a commonplace and protesting inhabitant of a world of lessons, disappointments and discipline. My instincts were not vicious. Ideas bubbled up within me continually from an apparently inexhaustible spring, and the very strength of the longings they set in motion puzzled and troubled my parents: what I seem to see most distinctly now is a young mind engaged in a ceaseless struggle for self-expression, for self-development, against the inertia of a tradition of which my father was the embodiment. He was an enigma to me then. He sincerely loved me, he cherished ambitions concerning me, yet thwarted every natural, budding growth, until I grew unconsciously to regard him as my enemy, although I had an affection for him and a pride in him that flared up at times. Instead of confiding to him my aspirations, vague though they were, I became more and more secretive as I grew older. I knew instinctively that he regarded these aspirations as evidences in my character of serious moral flaws. And I would sooner have suffered many afternoons of his favourite punishment—solitary

confinement in my room—than reveal to him those occasional fits of creative fancy which caused me to neglect my lessons in order to put them on paper. Loving literature, in his way, he was characteristically incapable of recognizing the literary instinct, and the symptoms of its early stages he mistook for inherent frivolity, for lack of respect for the truth; in brief, for original sin. At the age of fourteen I had begun secretly (alas, how many things I did secretly!) to write stories of a sort, stories that never were finished.

He regarded reading as duty, not pleasure. He laid out books for me, which I neglected. He was part and parcel of that American environment in which literary ambition was regarded as sheer madness. And no one who has not experienced that environment can have any conception of the pressure it exerted to stifle originality, to thrust the new generation into its religious and commercial moulds. Shall we ever, I wonder, develop the enlightened education that will know how to take advantage of such initiative as was mine? that will be on the watch for it, sympathize with it and guide it to fruition?

I was conscious of still another creative need, that of dramatizing my ideas, of converting them into action. And this need was to lead me farther than ever afield from the path of righteousness. The concrete realization of ideas, as many geniuses will testify, is an expensive undertaking, requiring a little pocket money; and I have already touched upon that subject. My father did not believe in pocket money. A sea story that my Cousin Donald Ewan gave me at Christmas inspired me to compose one of a somewhat different nature; incidentally, I deemed it a vast improvement on Cousin Donald's book. Now, if I only had a boat, with the assistance of Ham Durrett and Tom Peters, Gene Hollister and Perry Blackwood and other friends, this story of mine might be staged. There were, however, as usual, certain seemingly insuperable difficulties: in the first place, it was winter time; in the second, no facilities existed in the city for operations of a nautical character; and, lastly, my Christmas money amounted only to five dollars. It was my father who pointed out these and other objections. For, after a careful perusal of the price lists I had sent for, I had been forced to appeal to him to supply additional funds with which to purchase a row-boat. Incidentally, he read me a lecture on extravagance, referred to my last month's report at the Academy, and finished by declaring that he would not permit me to have a boat even in the highly improbable case of somebody's presenting me with one. Let it not be imagined that my ardour or my determination were extinguished. Shortly after I had retired from his presence it occurred to me that he had said nothing to forbid my making a boat, and the first thing I did after school that day was to procure, for twenty-five cents, a second-hand book on boat construction. The woodshed was chosen as a shipbuilding establishment. It was convenient—and my father never went into the back yard in cold weather. Inquiries of lumber-yards developing the disconcerting fact that four dollars and seventy-five cents was inadequate to buy the material itself, to say nothing of the cost of steaming and bending the ribs, I reluctantly abandoned the ideal of the graceful craft I had sketched, and compromised on a flat bottom. Observe how the ways of deception lead to transgression: I recalled the cast-off lumber pile of Jarvis, the carpenter, a good-natured Englishman, coarse and fat: in our neighbourhood his reputation for obscenity was so well known to mothers that I had been forbidden to go near him or his shop. Grits Jarvis, his son, who had inherited the talent, was also contraband. I can see now the huge bulk of the elder Jarvis as he stood in the melting, soot-powdered snow in front of his shop, and hear his comments on my pertinacity.

"If you ever wants another man's missus when you grows up, my lad, Gawd 'elp 'im!"

"Why should I want another man's wife when I don't want one of my own?" I demanded, indignant.

He laughed with his customary lack of moderation.

"You mind what old Jarvis says," he cried. "What you wants, you gets."

I did get his boards, by sheer insistence. No doubt they were not very valuable, and without question he more than made up for them in my mother's bill. I also got something else of equal value to me at the moment,—the assistance of Grits, the contraband; daily, after school, I smuggled him into the shed through the alley, acquiring likewise the services of Tom Peters, which was more of a triumph than it would seem. Tom always had to be "worked up" to participation in my ideas, but in the end he almost invariably succumbed. The notion of building a boat in the dead of winter, and so far from her native element, naturally struck him at first as ridiculous. Where in Jehoshaphat was I going to sail it if I ever got it made? He much preferred to throw snowballs at innocent wagon drivers.

All that Tom saw, at first, was a dirty, coal-spattered shed with dim recesses, for it was lighted on one side only, and its temperature was somewhere below freezing. Surely he could not be blamed for a tempered enthusiasm! But for me, all the dirt and cold and discomfort were blotted out, and I beheld a gallant craft manned by sturdy seamen forging her way across blue water in the South Seas. Treasure Island, alas, was as yet unwritten; but among my father's books were two old volumes in which I had hitherto taken no interest, with crude engravings of palms and coral reefs, of naked savages and tropical mountains covered with jungle, the adventures, in brief, of one Captain Cook. I also discovered

a book by a later traveller. Spurred on by a mysterious motive power, and to the great neglect of the pons asinorum and the staple products of the Southern States, I gathered an amazing amount of information concerning a remote portion of the globe, of head-hunters and poisoned stakes, of typhoons, of queer war-craft that crept up on you while you were dismantling galleons, when desperate hand-to-hand encounters ensued. Little by little as I wove all this into personal adventures soon to be realized, Tom forgot the snowballs and the maddened grocery-men who chased him around the block; while Grits would occasionally stop sawing and cry out:—"Ah, s'y!" frequently adding that he would be G—d—d.

The cold woodshed became a chantry on the New England coast, the alley the wintry sea soon to embrace our ship, the saw-horses—which stood between a coal-bin on one side and unused stalls filled with rubbish and kindling on the other—the ways; the yard behind the lattice fence became a backwater, the flapping clothes the sails of ships that took refuge there—on Mondays and Tuesdays. Even my father was symbolized with unparalleled audacity as a watchful government which had, up to the present, no inkling of our semi-piratical intentions! The cook and the housemaid, though remonstrating against the presence of Grits, were friendly confederates; likewise old Cephas, the darkey who, from my earliest memory, carried coal and wood and blacked the shoes, washed the windows and scrubbed the steps.

One afternoon Tom went to work....

The history of the building of the good ship Petrel is similar to that of all created things, a story of trial and error and waste. At last, one March day she stood ready for launching. She had even been caulked; for Grits, from an unknown and unquestionably dubious source, had procured a bucket of tar, which we heated over afire in the alley and smeared into every crack. It was natural that the news of such a feat as we were accomplishing should have leaked out, that the "yard" should have been visited from time to time by interested friends, some of whom came to admire, some to scoff, and all to speculate. Among the scoffers, of course, was Ralph Hambleton, who stood with his hands in his pockets and cheerfully predicted all sorts of dire calamities. Ralph was always a superior boy, tall and a trifle saturnine and cynical, with an amazing self-confidence not wholly due to the wealth of his father, the iron-master. He was older than I.

"She won't float five minutes, if you ever get her to the water," was his comment, and in this he was supported on general principles by Julia and Russell Peters. Ralph would have none of the Petrel, or of the South Seas either; but he wanted,—so he said,—"to be in at the death." The Hambletons were one of the few families who at that time went to the sea for the summer, and from a practical knowledge of craft in general Ralph was not slow to point out the defects of ours. Tom and I defended her passionately.

Ralph was not a romanticist. He was a born leader, excelling at organized games, exercising over boys the sort of fascination that comes from doing everything better and more easily than others. It was only during the progress of such enterprises as this affair of the Petrel that I succeeded in winning their allegiance; bit by bit, as Tom's had been won, fanning their enthusiasm by impersonating at once Achilles and Homer, recruiting while relating the Odyssey of the expedition in glowing colours. Ralph always scoffed, and when I had no scheme on foot they went back to him. Having surveyed the boat and predicted calamity, he departed, leaving a circle of quaint and youthful figures around the Petrel in the shed: Gene Hollister, romantically inclined, yet somewhat hampered by a strict parental supervision; Ralph's cousin Ham Durrett, who was even then a rather fat boy, good-natured but selfish; Don and Harry Ewan, my second cousins; Mac and Nancy Willett and Sam and Sophy McAlery. Nancy was a tomboy, not to be denied, and Sophy her shadow. We held a council, the all-important question of which was how to get the Petrel to the water, and what water to get her to. The river was not to be thought of, and Blackstone Lake some six miles from town. Finally, Logan's mill-pond was decided on,—a muddy sheet on the outskirts of the city. But how to get her to Logan's mill-pond? Cephas was at length consulted. It turned out that he had a coloured friend who went by the impressive name of Thomas Jefferson Taliaferro (pronounced Tolliver), who was in the express business; and who, after surveying the boat with some misgivings,—for she was ten feet long,—finally consented to transport her to "tide-water" for the sum of two dollars. But it proved that our combined resources only amounted to a dollar and seventy-five cents. Ham Durrett never contributed to anything. On this sum Thomas Jefferson compromised.

Saturday dawned clear, with a stiff March wind catching up the dust into eddies and whirling it down the street. No sooner was my father safely on his way to his office than Thomas Jefferson was reported to be in the alley, where we assembled, surveying with some misgivings Thomas Jefferson's steed, whose ability to haul the Petrel two miles seemed somewhat doubtful. Other difficulties developed; the door in the back of the shed proved to be too narrow for our ship's beam. But men embarked on a desperate enterprise are not to be stopped by such trifles, and the problem was solved by sawing out

two adjoining boards. These were afterwards replaced with skill by the ship's carpenter, Able Seaman Grits Jarvis. Then the Petrel by heroic efforts was got into the wagon, the seat of which had been removed, old Thomas Jefferson perched himself precariously in the bow and protestingly gathered up his rope-patched reins.

"Folks'll 'low I'se plum crazy, drivin' dis yere boat," he declared, observing with concern that some four feet of the stern projected over the tail-board. "Ef she topples, I'll git to heaven quicker'n a bullet."

When one is shanghaied, however,—in the hands of buccaneers,—it is too late to withdraw. Six shoulders upheld the rear end of the Petrel, others shoved, and Thomas Jefferson's rickety horse began to move forward in spite of himself. An expression of sheer terror might have been observed on the old negro's crinkled face, but his voice was drowned, and we swept out of the alley. Scarcely had we travelled a block before we began to be joined by all the boys along the line of march; marbles, tops, and even incipient baseball games were abandoned that Saturday morning; people ran out of their houses, teamsters halted their carts. The breathless excitement, the exaltation I had felt on leaving the alley were now tinged with other feelings, unanticipated, but not wholly lacking in delectable quality,—concern and awe at these unforeseen forces I had raised, at this ever growing and enthusiastic body of volunteers springing up like dragon's teeth in our path. After all, was not I the hero of this triumphal procession? The thought was consoling, exhilarating. And here was Nancy marching at my side, a little subdued, perhaps, but unquestionably admiring and realizing that it was I who had created all this. Nancy, who was the aptest of pupils, the most loyal of followers, though I did not yet value her devotion at its real worth, because she was a girl. Her imagination kindled at my touch. And on this eventful occasion she carried in her arms a parcel, the contents of which were unknown to all but ourselves. At length we reached the muddy shores of Logan's pond, where two score eager hands volunteered to assist the Petrel into her native element.

Alas! that the reality never attains to the vision. I had beheld, in my dreams, the Petrel about to take the water, and Nancy Willett standing very straight making a little speech and crashing a bottle of wine across the bows. This was the content of the mysterious parcel; she had stolen it from her father's cellar. But the number of uninvited spectators, which had not been foreseen, considerably modified the programme,—as the newspapers would have said. They pushed and crowded around the ship, and made frank and even brutal remarks as to her seaworthiness; even Nancy, inured though she was to the masculine sex, had fled to the heights, and it looked at this supreme moment as though we should have to fight for the Petrel. An attempt to muster her doughty buccaneers failed; the gunner too had fled,—Gene Hollister; Ham Durrett and the Ewanses were nowhere to be seen, and a muster revealed only Tom, the fidus Achates, and Grits Jarvis.

"Ah, s'y!" he exclaimed in the teeth of the menacing hordes. "Stand back, carn't yer? I'll bash yer face in, Johnny. Whose boat is this?"

Shall it be whispered that I regretted his belligerency? Here, in truth, was the drama staged,—my drama, had I only been able to realize it. The good ship beached, the headhunters hemming us in on all sides, the scene prepared for one of those struggles against frightful odds which I had so graphically related as an essential part of our adventures.

"Let's roll the cuss in the fancy collar," proposed one of the head-hunters,—meaning me.

"I'll stove yer slats if yer touch him," said Grits, and then resorted to appeal. "I s'y, carn't yer stand back and let a chap 'ave a charnst?"

The head-hunters only jeered. And what shall be said of the Captain in this moment of peril? Shall it be told that his heart was beating wildly?—bumping were a better word. He was trying to remember that he was the Captain. Otherwise, he must admit with shame that he, too, should have fled. So much for romance when the test comes. Will he remain to fall fighting for his ship? Like Horatius, he glanced up at the hill, where, instead of the porch of the home where he would fain have been, he beheld a wisp of a girl standing alone, her hat on the back of her head, her hair flying in the wind, gazing intently down at him in his danger. The renegade crew was nowhere to be seen. There are those who demand the presence of a woman in order to be heroes....

"Give us a chance, can't you?" he cried, repeating Grits's appeal in not quite such a stentorian tone as he would have liked, while his hand trembled on the gunwale. Tom Peters, it must be acknowledged, was much more of a buccaneer when it was a question of deeds, for he planted himself in the way of the belligerent chief of the head-hunters (who spoke with a decided brogue).

"Get out of the way!" said Tom, with a little squeak in his voice. Yet there he was, and he deserves a tribute.

An unlooked-for diversion saved us from annihilation, in the shape of one who had a talent for creating them. We were bewilderingly aware of a girlish figure amongst us.

"You cowards!" she cried. "You cowards!"

Lithe, and fairly quivering with passion, it was Nancy who showed us how to face the head-hunters. They gave back. They would have been brave indeed if they had not retreated before such an intense little nucleus of energy and indignation!...

"Ah, give 'em a chanst," said their chief, after a moment.... He even helped to push the boat towards the water. But he did not volunteer to be one of those to man the Petrel on her maiden voyage. Nor did Logan's pond, that wild March day, greatly resemble the South Seas. Nevertheless, my eye on Nancy, I stepped proudly aboard and seized an "oar." Grits and Tom followed,—when suddenly the Petrel sank considerably below the water-line as her builders had estimated it. Ere we fully realized this, the now friendly head-hunters had given us a shove, and we were off! The Captain, who should have been waving good-bye to his lady love from the poop, sat down abruptly,—the crew likewise; not, however, before she had heeled to the scuppers, and a half-bucket of iced water had run it. Head-hunters were mere daily episodes in Grits's existence, but water... He muttered something in cockney that sounded like a prayer.... The wind was rapidly driving us toward the middle of the pond, and something cold and ticklish was seeping through the seats of our trousers. We sat like statues....

The bright scene etched itself in my memory—the bare brown slopes with which the pond was bordered, the Irish shanties, the clothes-lines with red flannel shirts snapping in the biting wind; Nancy motionless on the bank; the group behind her, silent now, impressed in spite of itself at the sight of our intrepidity.

The Petrel was sailing stern first.... Would any of us, indeed, ever see home again? I thought of my father's wrath turned to sorrow because he had refused to gratify a son's natural wish and present him with a real rowboat.... Out of the corners of our eyes we watched the water creeping around the gunwale, and the very muddiness of it seemed to enhance its coldness, to make the horrors of its depths more mysterious and hideous. The voice of Grits startled us.

"O Gawd," he was saying, "we're a-going to sink, and I carn't swim! The blarsted tar's give way back here."

"Is she leaking?" I cried.

"She's a-filling up like a bath tub," he lamented.

Slowly but perceptibly, in truth, the bow was rising, and above the whistling of the wind I could hear his chattering as she settled.... Then several things happened simultaneously: an agonized cry behind me, distant shouts from the shore, a sudden upward lunge of the bow, and the torture of being submerged, inch by inch, in the icy, yellow water. Despite the splashing behind me, I sat as though paralyzed until I was waist deep and the boards turned under me, and then, with a spasmodic contraction of my whole being I struck out—only to find my feet on the muddy bottom. Such was the inglorious end of the good ship Petrel! For she went down, with all hands, in little more than half a fathom of water.... It was not until then I realized that we had been blown clear across the pond!

Figures were running along the shore. And as Tom and I emerged dragging Grits between us,—for he might have been drowned there abjectly in the shallows,—we were met by a stout and bare-armed Irishwoman whose scanty hair, I remember, was drawn into a tight knot behind her head; and who seized us, all three, as though we were a bunch of carrots.

"Come along wid ye!" she cried.

Shivering, we followed her up the hill, the spectators of the tragedy, who by this time had come around the pond, trailing after. Nancy was not among them. Inside the shanty into which we were thrust were two small children crawling about the floor, and the place was filled with steam from a wash-tub against the wall and a boiler on the stove. With a vigorous injunction to make themselves scarce, the Irishwoman slammed the door in the faces of the curious and ordered us to remove our clothes. Grits was put to bed in a corner, while Tom and I, provided with various garments, huddled over the stove. There fell to my lot the red flannel shirt which I had seen on the clothes-line. She gave us hot coffee, and was back at her wash-tub in no time at all, her entire comment on a proceeding that seemed to Tom and me to have certain elements of gravity being, "By's will be by's!" The final ironical touch was given the anti-climax when our rescuer turned out to be the mother of the chief of the head-hunters himself! He had lingered perforce with his brothers and sister outside the cabin until dinner time, and when he came in he was meek as Moses.

Thus the ready hospitality of the poor, which passed over the heads of Tom and me as we ate bread and onions and potatoes with a ravenous hunger. It must have been about two o'clock in the afternoon when we bade good-bye to our preserver and departed for home....

At first we went at a dog-trot, but presently slowed down to discuss the future looming portentously ahead of us. Since entire concealment was now impossible, the question was,—how complete a confession would be necessary? Our cases, indeed, were dissimilar, and Tom's incentive to hold back the facts was not nearly so great as mine. It sometimes seemed to me in those days unjust that the Peterses were able on the whole to keep out of criminal difficulties, in which I was more or less continuously involved: for it did not strike me that their sins were not those of the imagination. The method of Tom's father was the slipper. He and Tom understood each other, while between my father and myself was a great gulf fixed. Not that Tom yearned for the slipper; but he regarded its occasional applications as being as inevitable as changes in the weather; lying did not come easily to him, and left to himself he much preferred to confess and have the matter over with. I have already suggested that I had cultivated lying, that weapon of the weaker party, in some degree, at least, in self-defence.

Tom was loyal. Moreover, my conviction would probably deprive him for six whole afternoons of my company, on which he was more or less dependent. But the defence of this case presented unusual difficulties, and we stopped several times to thrash them out. We had been absent from dinner, and doubtless by this time Julia had informed Tom's mother of the expedition, and anyone could see that our clothing had been wet. So I lingered in no little anxiety behind the Peters stable while he made the investigation. Our spirits rose considerably when he returned to report that Julia had unexpectedly been a trump, having quieted his mother by the surmise that he was spending the day with his Aunt Fanny. So far, so good. The problem now was to decide upon what to admit. For we must both tell the same story.

It was agreed that we had fallen into Logan's Pond from a raft: my suggestion. Well, said Tom, the Petrel hadn't proved much better than a raft, after all. I was in no mood to defend her.

This designation of the Petrel as a "raft" was my first legal quibble. The question to be decided by the court was, What is a raft? just as the supreme tribunal of the land has been required, in later years, to decide, What is whiskey? The thing to be concealed if possible was the building of the "raft," although this information was already in the possession of a number of persons, whose fathers might at any moment see fit to congratulate my own on being the parent of a genius. It was a risk, however, that had to be run. And, secondly, since Grits Jarvis was contraband, nothing was to be said about him.

I have not said much about my mother, who might have been likened on such occasions to a grand jury compelled to indict, yet torn between loyalty to an oath and sympathy with the defendant. I went through the Peters yard, climbed the wire fence, my object being to discover first from Ella, the housemaid, or Hannah, the cook, how much was known in high quarters. It was Hannah who, as I opened the kitchen door, turned at the sound, and set down the saucepan she was scouring.

"Is it home ye are? Mercy to goodness!" (this on beholding my shrunken costume) "Glory be to God you're not drownded! and your mother worritin' her heart out! So it's into the wather ye were?"

I admitted it.

"Hannah?" I said softly.

"What then?"

"Does mother know—about the boat?"

"Now don't ye be wheedlin'."

I managed to discover, however, that my mother did not know, and surmised that the best reason why she had not been told had to do with Hannah's criminal acquiescence concerning the operations in the shed. I ran into the front hall and up the stairs, and my mother heard me coming and met me on the landing.

"Hugh, where have you been?"

As I emerged from the semi-darkness of the stairway she caught sight of my dwindled garments, of the trousers well above my ankles. Suddenly she had me in her arms and was kissing me passionately. As she stood before me in her grey, belted skirt, the familiar red-and-white cameo at her throat, her heavy hair parted in the middle, in her eyes was an odd, appealing look which I know now was a sign of mother love struggling with a Presbyterian conscience. Though she inherited that conscience, I have often thought she might have succeeded in casting it off—or at least some of it—had it not been for the

fact that in spite of herself she worshipped its incarnation in the shape of my father. Her voice trembled a little as she drew me to the sofa beside the window.

"Tell me about what happened, my son," she said.

It was a terrible moment for me. For my affections were still quiveringly alive in those days, and I loved her. I had for an instant an instinctive impulse to tell her the whole story,—South Sea Islands and all! And I could have done it had I not beheld looming behind her another figure which represented a stern and unsympathetic Authority, and somehow made her, suddenly, of small account. Not that she would have understood the romance, but she would have comprehended me. I knew that she was powerless to save me from the wrath to come. I wept. It was because I hated to lie to her,—yet I did so. Fear gripped me, and—like some respectable criminals I have since known—I understood that any confession I made would inexorably be used against me.... I wonder whether she knew I was lying? At any rate, the case appeared to be a grave one, and I was presently remanded to my room to be held over for trial....

Vividly, as I write, I recall the misery of the hours I have spent, while awaiting sentence, in the little chamber with the honeysuckle wall-paper and steel engravings of happy but dumpy children romping in the fields and groves. On this particular March afternoon the weather had become morne, as the French say; and I looked down sadly into the grey back yard which the wind of the morning had strewn with chips from the Petrel. At last, when shadows were gathering in the corners of the room, I heard footsteps. Ella appeared, prim and virtuous, yet a little commiserating. My father wished to see me, downstairs. It was not the first time she had brought that summons, and always her manner was the same!

The scene of my trials was always the sitting room, lined with grim books in their walnut cases. And my father sat, like a judge, behind the big desk where he did his work when at home. Oh, the distance between us at such an hour! I entered as delicately as Agag, and the expression in his eye seemed to convict me before I could open my mouth.

"Hugh," he said, "your mother tells me that you have confessed to going, without permission, to Logan's Pond, where you embarked on a raft and fell into the water."

The slight emphasis he contrived to put on the word raft sent a colder shiver down my spine than the iced water had done. What did he know? or was this mere suspicion? Too late, now, at any rate, to plead guilty.

"It was a sort of a raft, sir," I stammered.

"A sort of a raft," repeated my father. "Where, may I ask, did you find it?"

"I—I didn't exactly find it, sir."

"Ah!" said my father. (It was the moment to glance meaningly at the jury.) The prisoner gulped. "You didn't exactly find it, then. Will you kindly explain how you came by it?"

"Well, sir, we—I—put it together."

"Have you any objection to stating, Hugh, in plain English, that you made it?"

"No, sir, I suppose you might say that I made it."

"Or that it was intended for a row-boat?"

Here was the time to appeal, to force a decision as to what constituted a row-boat.

"Perhaps it might be called a row-boat, sir," I said abjectly.

"Or that, in direct opposition to my wishes and commands in forbidding you to have a boat, to spend your money foolishly and wickedly on a whim, you constructed one secretly in the woodshed, took out a part of the back partition, thus destroying property that did, not belong to you, and had the boat carted this morning to Logan's Pond?" I was silent, utterly undone. Evidently he had specific information.... There are certain expressions that are, at times, more than mere figures of speech, and now my father's wrath seemed literally towering. It added visibly to his stature.

"Hugh," he said, in a voice that penetrated to the very corners of my soul, "I utterly fail to understand you. I cannot imagine how a son of mine, a son of your mother who is the very soul of truthfulness and honour—can be a liar." (Oh, the terrible emphasis he put on that word!) "Nor is it as if this were a new tendency—I have punished you for it before. Your mother and I have tried to do our duty by you, to

instil into you Christian teaching. But it seems wholly useless. I confess that I am at a less how to proceed. You seem to have no conscience whatever, no conception of what you owe to your parents and your God. You not only persistently disregard my wishes and commands, but you have, for many months, been leading a double life, facing me every day, while you were secretly and continually disobeying me. I shudder to think where this determination of yours to have what you desire at any price will lead you in the future. It is just such a desire that distinguishes wicked men from good."

I will not linger upon a scene the very remembrance of which is painful to this day.... I went from my father's presence in disgrace, in an agony of spirit that was overwhelming, to lock the door of my room and drop face downward on the bed, to sob until my muscles twitched. For he had, indeed, put into me an awful fear. The greatest horror of my boyish imagination was a wicked man. Was I, as he had declared, utterly depraved and doomed in spite of myself to be one?

There came a knock at my door—Ella with my supper. I refused to open, and sent her away, to fall on my knees in the darkness and pray wildly to a God whose attributes and character were sufficiently confused in my mind. On the one hand was the stern, despotic Monarch of the Westminster Catechism, whom I addressed out of habit, the Father who condemned a portion of his children from the cradle. Was I one of those who he had decreed before I was born must suffer the tortures of the flames of hell? Putting two and two together, what I had learned in Sunday school and gathered from parts of Dr. Pound's sermons, and the intimation of my father that wickedness was within me, like an incurable disease,—was not mine the logical conclusion? What, then, was the use of praying?... My supplications ceased abruptly. And my ever ready imagination, stirred to its depths, beheld that awful scene of the last day: the darkness, such as sometimes creeps over the city in winter, when the jaundiced smoke falls down and we read at noonday by gas-light. I beheld the tortured faces of the wicked gathered on the one side, and my mother on the other amongst the blessed, gazing across the gulf at me with yearning and compassion. Strange that it did not strike me that the sight of the condemned whom they had loved in life would have marred if not destroyed the happiness of the chosen, about to receive their crowns and harps! What a theology—that made the Creator and Preserver of all mankind thus illogical!

III.

Although I was imaginative, I was not morbidly introspective, and by the end of the first day of my incarceration my interest in that solution had waned. At times, however, I actually yearned for someone in whom I could confide, who could suggest a solution. I repeat, I would not for worlds have asked my father or my mother or Dr. Pound, of whom I had a wholesome fear, or perhaps an unwholesome one. Except at morning Bible reading and at church my parents never mentioned the name of the Deity, save to instruct me formally. Intended or no, the effect of my religious training was to make me ashamed of discussing spiritual matters, and naturally I failed to perceive that this was because it laid its emphasis on personal salvation.... I did not, however, become an unbeliever, for I was not of a nature to contemplate with equanimity a godless universe....

My sufferings during these series of afternoon confinements did not come from remorse, but were the result of a vague sense of injury; and their effect was to generate within me a strange motive power, a desire to do something that would astound my father and eventually wring from him the confession that he had misjudged me. To be sure, I should have to wait until early manhood, at least, for the accomplishment of such a coup. Might it not be that I was an embryonic literary genius? Many were the books I began in this ecstasy of self-vindication, only to abandon them when my confinement came to an end.

It was about this time, I think, that I experienced one of those shocks which have a permanent effect upon character. It was then the custom for ladies to spend the day with one another, bringing their sewing; and sometimes, when I unexpectedly entered the sitting-room, the voices of my mother's visitors would drop to a whisper. One afternoon I returned from school to pause at the head of the stairs. Cousin Bertha Ewan and Mrs. McAlery were discussing with my mother an affair that I judged from the awed tone in which they spoke might prove interesting.

"Poor Grace," Mrs. McAlery was saying, "I imagine she's paid a heavy penalty. No man alive will be faithful under those circumstances."

I stopped at the head of the stairs, with a delicious, guilty feeling.

"Have they ever heard of her?" Cousin Bertha asked.

"It is thought they went to Spain," replied Mrs. McAlery, solemnly, yet not without a certain zest. "Mr. Jules Hollister will not have her name mentioned in his presence, you know. And Whitcomb chased them as far as New York with a horse-pistol in his pocket. The report is that he got to the dock just as the ship sailed. And then, you know, he went to live somewhere out West,—in Iowa, I believe."

"Did he ever get a divorce?" Cousin Bertha inquired.

"He was too good a church member, my dear," my mother reminded her.

"Well, I'd have got one quick enough, church member or no church member," declared Cousin Bertha, who had in her elements of daring.

"Not that I mean for a moment to excuse her," Mrs. McAlery put in, "but Edward Whitcomb did have a frightful temper, and he was awfully strict with her, and he was old enough, anyhow, to be her father. Grace Hollister was the last woman in the world I should have suspected of doing so hideous a thing. She was so sweet and simple."

"Jennings was very attractive," said my Cousin Bertha. "I don't think I ever saw a handsomer man. Now, if he had looked at me—"

The sentence was never finished, for at this crucial moment I dropped a grammar….

I had heard enough, however, to excite my curiosity to the highest pitch. And that evening, when I came in at five o'clock to study, I asked my mother what had become of Gene Hollister's aunt.

"She went away, Hugh," replied my mother, looking greatly troubled.

"Why?" I persisted.

"It is something you are too young to understand."

Of course I started an investigation, and the next day at school I asked the question of Gene Hollister himself, only to discover that he believed his aunt to be dead! And that night he asked his mother if his Aunt Grace were really alive, after all? Whereupon complications and explanations ensued between our parents, of which we saw only the surface signs…. My father accused me of eavesdropping (which I denied), and sentenced me to an afternoon of solitary confinement for repeating something which I had heard in private. I have reason to believe that my mother was also reprimanded.

It must not be supposed that I permitted the matter to rest. In addition to Grits Jarvis, there was another contraband among my acquaintances, namely, Alec Pound, the scrape-grace son of the Reverend Doctor Pound. Alec had an encyclopaedic mind, especially well stocked with the kind of knowledge I now desired; first and last he taught me much, which I would better have got in another way. To him I appealed and got the story, my worst suspicions being confirmed. Mrs. Whitcomb's house had been across the alley from that of Mr. Jennings, but no one knew that anything was "going on," though there had been signals from the windows—the neighbours afterwards remembered….

I listened shudderingly.

"But," I cried, "they were both married!"

"What difference does that make when you love a woman?" Alec replied grandly. "I could tell you much worse things than that."

This he proceeded to do. Fascinated, I listened with a sickening sensation. It was a mild afternoon in spring, and we stood in the deep limestone gutter in front of the parsonage, a little Gothic wooden house set in a gloomy yard.

"I thought," said I, "that people couldn't love any more after they were married, except each other."

Alec looked at me pityingly.

"You'll get over that notion," he assured me.

Thus another ingredient entered my character. Denied its food at home, good food, my soul eagerly consumed and made part of itself the fermenting stuff that Alec Pound so willing distributed. And it was fermenting stuff. Let us see what it did to me. Working slowly but surely, it changed for me the dawning mystery of sex into an evil instead of a holy one. The knowledge of the tragedy of Grace Hollister started me to seeking restlessly, on bookshelves and elsewhere, for a secret that forever

eluded me, and forever led me on. The word fermenting aptly describes the process begun, suggesting as it does something closed up, away from air and sunlight, continually working in secret, engendering forces that fascinated, yet inspired me with fear. Undoubtedly this secretiveness of our elders was due to the pernicious dualism of their orthodox Christianity, in which love was carnal and therefore evil, and the flesh not the gracious soil of the spirit, but something to be deplored and condemned, exorcised and transformed by the miracle of grace. Now love had become a terrible power (gripping me) whose enchantment drove men and women from home and friends and kindred to the uttermost parts of the earth....

It was long before I got to sleep that night after my talk with Alec Pound. I alternated between the horror and the romance of the story I had heard, supplying for myself the details he had omitted: I beheld the signals from the windows, the clandestine meetings, the sudden and desperate flight. And to think that all this could have happened in our city not five blocks from where I lay!

My consternation and horror were concentrated on the man,—and yet I recall a curious bifurcation. Instead of experiencing that automatic righteous indignation which my father and mother had felt, which had animated old Mr. Jules Hollister when he had sternly forbidden his daughter's name to be mentioned in his presence, which had made these people outcasts, there welled up within me an intense sympathy and pity. By an instinctive process somehow linked with other experiences, I seemed to be able to enter into the feelings of these two outcasts, to understand the fearful yet fascinating nature of the impulse that had led them to elude the vigilance and probity of a world with which I myself was at odds. I pictured them in a remote land, shunned by mankind. Was there something within me that might eventually draw me to do likewise? The desire in me to which my father had referred, which would brook no opposition, which twisted and squirmed until it found its way to its object? I recalled the words of Jarvis, the carpenter, that if I ever set my heart on another man's wife, God help him. God help me!

A wicked man! I had never beheld the handsome and fascinating Mr. Jennings, but I visualised him now; dark, like all villains, with a black moustache and snapping black eyes. He carried a cane. I always associated canes with villains. Whereupon I arose, groped for the matches, lighted the gas, and gazing at myself in the mirror was a little reassured to find nothing sinister in my countenance....

Next to my father's faith in a Moral Governor of the Universe was his belief in the Tariff and the Republican Party. And this belief, among others, he handed on to me. On the cinder playground of the Academy we Republicans used to wage, during campaigns, pitched battles for the Tariff. It did not take a great deal of courage to be a Republican in our city, and I was brought up to believe that Democrats were irrational, inferior, and—with certain exceptions like the Hollisters—dirty beings. There was only one degree lower, and that was to be a mugwump. It was no wonder that the Hollisters were Democrats, for they had a queer streak in them; owing, no doubt, to the fact that old Mr. Jules Hollister's mother had been a Frenchwoman. He looked like a Frenchman, by the way, and always wore a skullcap.

I remember one autumn afternoon having a violent quarrel with Gene Hollister that bade fair to end in blows, when he suddenly demanded:—"I'll bet you anything you don't know why you're a Republican."

"It's because I'm for the Tariff," I replied triumphantly.

But his next question floored me. What, for example, was the Tariff? I tried to bluster it out, but with no success.

"Do you know?" I cried finally, with sudden inspiration.

It turned out that he did not.

"Aren't we darned idiots," he asked, "to get fighting over something we don't know anything about?"

That was Gene's French blood, of course. But his question rankled. And how was I to know that he would have got as little satisfaction if he had hurled it into the marching ranks of those imposing torch-light processions which sometimes passed our house at night, with drums beating and fifes screaming and torches waving,—thousands of citizens who were for the Tariff for the same reason as I: to wit, because they were Republicans.

Yet my father lived and died in the firm belief that the United States of America was a democracy!

Resolved not to be caught a second time in such a humiliating position by a Democrat, I asked my

father that night what the Tariff was. But I was too young to understand it, he said. I was to take his word for it that the country would go to the dogs if the Democrats got in and the Tariff were taken away. Here, in a nutshell, though neither he nor I realized it, was the political instruction of the marching hordes. Theirs not to reason why. I was too young, they too ignorant. Such is the method of Authority!

The steel-mills of Mr. Durrett and Mr. Hambleton, he continued, would be forced to shut down, and thousands of workmen would starve. This was just a sample of what would happen. Prosperity would cease, he declared. That word, Prosperity, made a deep impression on me, and I recall the certain reverential emphasis he laid on it. And while my solicitude for the workmen was not so great as his and Mr. Durrett's, I was concerned as to what would happen to us if those twin gods, the Tariff and Prosperity, should take their departure from the land. Knowing my love for the good things of the table, my father intimated, with a rare humour I failed to appreciate, that we should have to live henceforth in spartan simplicity. After that, like the intelligent workman, I was firmer than ever for the Tariff.

Such was the idealistic plane on which—and from a good man—I received my first political instruction! And for a long time I connected the dominance of the Republican Party with the continuation of manna and quails, in other words, with nothing that had to do with the spiritual welfare of any citizen, but with clothing and food and material comforts. My education was progressing….

Though my father revered Plato and Aristotle, he did not, apparently, take very seriously the contention that that government alone is good "which seeks to attain the permanent interests of the governed by evolving the character of its citizens." To put the matter brutally, politics, despite the lofty sentiments on the transparencies in torchlight processions, had only to do with the belly, not the soul.

Politics and government, one perceives, had nothing to do with religion, nor education with any of these. A secularized and disjointed world! Our leading citizens, learned in the classics though some of them might be, paid no heed to the dictum of the Greek idealist, who was more practical than they would have supposed. "The man who does not carry his city within his heart is a spiritual starveling."

One evening, a year or two after that tariff campaign, I was pretending to study my lessons under the student lamp in the sitting-room while my mother sewed and my father wrote at his desk, when there was a ring at the door-bell. I welcomed any interruption, even though the visitor proved to be only the druggist's boy; and there was always the possibility of a telegram announcing, for instance, the death of a relative. Such had once been the case when my Uncle Avery Paret had died in New York, and I was taken out of school for a blissful four days for the funeral.

I went tiptoeing into the hall and peeped over the banisters while Ella opened the door. I heard a voice which I recognized as that of Perry Blackwood's father asking for Mr. Paret; and then to my astonishment, I saw filing after him into the parlour some ten or twelve persons. With the exception of Mr. Ogilvy, who belonged to one of our old families, and Mr. Watling, a lawyer who had married the youngest of Gene Hollister's aunts, the visitors entered stealthily, after the manner of burglars; some of these were heavy-jowled, and all had an air of mystery that raised my curiosity and excitement to the highest pitch. I caught hold of Ella as she came up the stairs, but she tore herself free, and announced to my father that Mr. Josiah Blackwood and other gentlemen had asked to see him. My father seemed puzzled as he went downstairs…. A long interval elapsed, during which I did not make even a pretence of looking at my arithmetic. At times the low hum of voices rose to what was almost an uproar, and on occasions I distinguished a marked Irish brogue.

"I wonder what they want?" said my mother, nervously.

At last we heard the front door shut behind them, and my father came upstairs, his usually serene face wearing a disturbed expression.

"Who in the world was it, Mr. Paret?" asked my mother.

My father sat down in the arm-chair. He was clearly making an effort for self-control.

"Blackwood and Ogilvy and Watling and some city politicians," he exclaimed.

"Politicians!" she repeated. "What did they want? That is, if it's anything you can tell me," she added apologetically.

"They wished me to be the Republican candidate for the mayor of this city."

This tremendous news took me off my feet. My father mayor!

"Of course you didn't consider it, Mr. Paret," my mother was saying.

"Consider it!" he echoed reprovingly. "I can't imagine what Ogilvy and Watling and Josiah Blackwood were thinking of! They are out of their heads. I as much as told them so."

This was more than I could bear, for I had already pictured myself telling the news to envious schoolmates.

"Oh, father, why didn't you take it?" I cried.

By this time, when he turned to me, he had regained his usual expression.

"You don't know what you're talking about, Hugh," he said. "Accept a political office! That sort of thing is left to politicians."

The tone in which he spoke warned me that a continuation of the conversation would be unwise, and my mother also understood that the discussion was closed. He went back to his desk, and began writing again as though nothing had happened.

As for me, I was left in a palpitating state of excitement which my father's self-control or sang-froid only served to irritate and enhance, and my head was fairly spinning as, covertly, I watched his pen steadily covering the paper.

How could he—how could any man of flesh and blood sit down calmly after having been offered the highest honour in the gift of his community! And he had spurned it as if Mr. Blackwood and the others had gratuitously insulted him! And how was it, if my father so revered the Republican Party that he would not suffer it to be mentioned slightingly in his presence, that he had refused contemptuously to be its mayor?...

The next day at school, however, I managed to let it be known that the offer had been made and declined. After all, this seemed to make my father a bigger man than if he had accepted it. Naturally I was asked why he had declined it.

"He wouldn't take it," I replied scornfully. "Office-holding should be left to politicians."

Ralph Hambleton, with his precocious and cynical knowledge of the world, minimized my triumph by declaring that he would rather be his grandfather, Nathaniel Durrett, than the mayor of the biggest city in the country. Politicians, he said, were bloodsuckers and thieves, and the only reason for holding office was that it enabled one to steal the taxpayers' money....

As I have intimated, my vision of a future literary career waxed and waned, but a belief that I was going to be Somebody rarely deserted me. If not a literary lion, what was that Somebody to be? Such an environment as mine was woefully lacking in heroic figures to satisfy the romantic soul. In view of the experience I have just related, it is not surprising that the notion of becoming a statesman did not appeal to me; nor is it to be wondered at, despite the somewhat exaggerated respect and awe in which Ralph's grandfather was held by my father and other influential persons, that I failed to be stirred by the elements of greatness in the grim personality of our first citizen, the iron-master. For he possessed such elements. He lived alone in Ingrain Street in an uncompromising mansion I always associated with the Sabbath, not only because I used to be taken there on decorous Sunday visits by my father, but because it was the very quintessence of Presbyterianism. The moment I entered its "portals"—as Mr. Hawthorne appropriately would have called them—my spirit was overwhelmed and suffocated by its formality and orderliness. Within its stern walls Nathaniel Durrett had made a model universe of his own, such as the Deity of the Westminster Confession had no doubt meant his greater one to be if man had not rebelled and foiled him.... It was a world from which I was determined to escape at any cost.

My father and I were always ushered into the gloomy library, with its high ceiling, with its long windows that reached almost to the rococo cornice, with its cold marble mantelpiece that reminded me of a tombstone, with its interminable book shelves filled with yellow bindings. On the centre table, in addition to a ponderous Bible, was one of those old-fashioned carafes of red glass tipped with blue surmounted by a tumbler of blue tipped with red. Behind this table Mr. Durrett sat reading a volume of sermons, a really handsome old man in his black tie and pleated shirt; tall and spare, straight as a ramrod, with a finely moulded head and straight nose and sinewy hands the colour of mulberry stain. He called my father by his first name, an immense compliment, considering how few dared to do so.

"Well, Matthew," the old man would remark, after they had discussed Dr. Pound's latest flight on the nature of the Trinity or the depravity of man, or horticulture, or the Republican Party, "do you have any better news of Hugh at school?"

"I regret to say, Mr. Durrett," my father would reply, "that he does not yet seem to be aroused to a sense of his opportunities."

Whereupon Mr. Durrett would gimble me with a blue eye that lurked beneath grizzled brows, quite as painful a proceeding as if he used an iron tool. I almost pity myself when I think of what a forlorn stranger I was in their company. They two, indeed, were of one kind, and I of another sort who could never understand them,—nor they me. To what depths of despair they reduced me they never knew, and yet they were doing it all for my good! They only managed to convince me that my love of folly was ineradicable, and that I was on my way head first for perdition. I always looked, during these excruciating and personal moments, at the coloured glass bottle.

"It grieves me to hear it, Hugh," Mr. Durrett invariably declared.
"You'll never come to any good without study. Now when I was your age..."

I knew his history by heart, a common one in this country, although he made an honourable name instead of a dishonourable one. And when I contrast him with those of his successors whom I was to know later...! But I shall not anticipate. American genius had not then evolved the false entry method of overcapitalization. A thrilling history, Mr. Durrett's, could I but have entered into it. I did not reflect then that this stern old man must have throbbed once; nay, fire and energy still remained in his bowels, else he could not have continued to dominate a city. Nor did it occur to me that the great steel-works that lighted the southern sky were the result of a passion, of dreams similar to those possessing me, but which I could not express. He had founded a family whose position was virtually hereditary, gained riches which for those days were great, compelled men to speak his name with a certain awe. But of what use were such riches as his when his religion and morality compelled him to banish from him all the joys in the power of riches to bring?

No, I didn't want to be an iron-master. But it may have been about this time that I began to be impressed with the power of wealth, the adulation and reverence it commanded, the importance in which it clothed all who shared in it....

The private school I attended in the company of other boys with whom I was brought up was called Densmore Academy, a large, square building of a then hideous modernity, built of smooth, orange-red bricks with threads of black mortar between them. One reads of happy school days, yet I fail to recall any really happy hours spent there, even in the yard, which was covered with black cinders that cut you when you fell. I think of it as a penitentiary, and the memory of the barred lower windows gives substance to this impression.

I suppose I learned something during the seven years of my incarceration. All of value, had its teachers known anything of youthful psychology, of natural bent, could have been put into me in three. At least four criminally wasted years, to say nothing of the benumbing and desiccating effect of that old system of education! Chalk and chalk-dust! The Mediterranean a tinted portion of the map, Italy a man's boot which I drew painfully, with many yawns; history no glorious epic revealing as it unrolls the Meaning of Things, no revelation of that wondrous distillation of the Spirit of man, but an endless marching and counter-marching up and down the map, weary columns of figures to be learned by rote instantly to be forgotten again. "On June the 7th General So-and-so proceeded with his whole army—" where? What does it matter? One little chapter of Carlyle, illuminated by a teacher of understanding, were worth a million such text-books. Alas, for the hatred of Virgil! "Paret" (a shiver), "begin at the one hundred and thirtieth line and translate!" I can hear myself droning out in detestable English a meaningless portion of that endless journey of the pious AEneas; can see Gene Hollister, with heart-rending glances of despair, stumbling through Cornelius Nepos in an unventilated room with chalk-rubbed blackboards and heavy odours of ink and stale lunch. And I graduated from Densmore Academy, the best school in our city, in the 80's, without having been taught even the rudiments of citizenship.

Knowledge was presented to us as a corpse, which bit by bit we painfully dissected. We never glimpsed the living, growing thing, never experienced the Spirit, the same spirit that was able magically to waft me from a wintry Lyme Street to the South Seas, the energizing, electrifying Spirit of true achievement, of life, of God himself. Little by little its flames were smothered until in manhood there seemed no spark of it left alive. Many years were to pass ere it was to revive again, as by a miracle. I travelled. Awakening at dawn, I saw, framed in a port-hole, rose-red Seriphos set in a living blue that paled the sapphire; the seas Ulysses had sailed, and the company of the Argonauts. My soul was steeped in unimagined colour, and in the memory of one rapturous instant is gathered what I was soon to see of Greece, is focussed the meaning of history, poetry and art. I was to stand one evening in spring on the mound where heroes sleep and gaze upon the plain of Marathon between darkening mountains and the blue thread of the strait peaceful now, flushed with pink and white blossoms of fruit and almond trees; to sit on the cliff-throne whence a Persian King had looked down upon a Salamis fought and lost.... In that port-hole glimpse a Themistocles was revealed, a Socrates, a Homer and a Phidias, an AEschylus, and a Pericles; yes, and a John brooding Revelations on his sea-girt rock as twilight falls over the waters....

I saw the Roman Empire, that Scarlet Woman whose sands were dyed crimson with blood to appease her harlotry, whose ships were laden with treasures from the immutable East, grain from the valley of the Nile, spices from Arabia, precious purple stuffs from Tyre, tribute and spoil, slaves and jewels from conquered nations she absorbed; and yet whose very emperors were the unconscious instruments of a Progress they wot not of, preserved to the West by Marathon and Salamis. With Caesar's legions its message went forth across Hispania to the cliffs of the wild western ocean, through Hercynian forests to tribes that dwelt where great rivers roll up their bars by misty, northern seas, and even to Celtic fastnesses beyond the Wall....

IV.

In and out of my early memories like a dancing ray of sunlight flits the spirit of Nancy. I was always fond of her, but in extreme youth I accepted her incense with masculine complacency and took her allegiance for granted, never seeking to fathom the nature of the spell I exercised over her. Naturally other children teased me about her; but what was worse, with that charming lack of self-consciousness and consideration for what in after life are called the finer feelings, they teased her about me before me, my presence deterring them not at all. I can see them hopping around her in the Peters yard crying out:—"Nancy's in love with Hugh! Nancy's in love with Hugh!"

A sufficiently thrilling pastime, this, for Nancy could take care of herself. I was a bungler beside her when it came to retaliation, and not the least of her attractions for me was her capacity for anger: fury would be a better term. She would fly at them—even as she flew at the head-hunters when the Petrel was menaced; and she could run like a deer. Woe to the unfortunate victim she overtook! Masculine strength, exercised apologetically, availed but little, and I have seen Russell Peters and Gene Hollister retire from such encounters humiliated and weeping. She never caught Ralph; his methods of torture were more intelligent and subtle than Gene's and Russell's, but she was his equal when it came to a question of tongues.

"I know what's the matter with you, Ralph Hambleton," she would say.
"You're jealous." An accusation that invariably put him on the defensive.
"You think all the girls are in love with you, don't you?"

These scenes I found somewhat embarrassing. Not so Nancy. After discomfiting her tormenters, or wounding and scattering them, she would return to my side.... In spite of her frankly expressed preference for me she had an elusiveness that made a continual appeal to my imagination. She was never obvious or commonplace, and long before I began to experience the discomforts and sufferings of youthful love I was fascinated by a nature eloquent with contradictions and inconsistencies. She was a tomboy, yet her own sex was enhanced rather than overwhelmed by contact with the other: and no matter how many trees she climbed she never seemed to lose her daintiness. It was innate.

She could, at times, be surprisingly demure. These impressions of her daintiness and demureness are particularly vivid in a picture my memory has retained of our walking together, unattended, to Susan Blackwood's birthday party. She must have been about twelve years old. It was the first time I had escorted her or any other girl to a party; Mrs. Willett had smiled over the proceeding, but Nancy and I took it most seriously, as symbolic of things to come. I can see Powell Street, where Nancy lived, at four o'clock on a mild and cloudy December afternoon, the decorous, retiring houses, Nancy on one side of the pavement by the iron fences and I on the other by the tree boxes. I can't remember her dress, only the exquisite sense of her slimness and daintiness comes back to me, of her dark hair in a long braid tied with a red ribbon, of her slender legs clad in black stockings of shining silk. We felt the occasion to be somehow too significant, too eloquent for words....

In silence we climbed the flight of stone steps that led up to the Blackwood mansion, when suddenly the door was opened, letting out sounds of music and revelry. Mr. Blackwood's coloured butler, Ned, beamed at us hospitably, inviting us to enter the brightness within. The shades were drawn, the carpets were covered with festal canvas, the folding doors between the square rooms were flung back, the prisms of the big chandeliers flung their light over animated groups of matrons and children. Mrs. Watling, the mother of the Watling twins—too young to be present was directing with vivacity the game of "King William was King James's son," and Mrs. McAlery was playing the piano.

"Now choose you East, now choose you West,
Now choose the one you love the best!"

Tom Peters, in a velvet suit and consequently very miserable, refused to embrace Ethel Hollister; while the scornful Julia lurked in a corner: nothing would induce her to enter such a foolish game. I experienced a novel discomfiture when Ralph kissed Nancy.... Afterwards came the feast, from which Ham Durrett, in a pink paper cap with streamers, was at length forcibly removed by his mother. Thus early did he betray his love for the flesh pots....

It was not until I was sixteen that a player came and touched the keys of my soul, and it awoke, bewildered, at these first tender notes. The music quickened, tripping in ecstasy, to change by subtle phrases into themes of exquisite suffering hitherto unexperienced. I knew that I loved Nancy.

With the advent of longer dresses that reached to her shoe tops a change had come over her. The tomboy, the willing camp-follower who loved me and was unashamed, were gone forever, and a mysterious, transfigured being, neither girl nor woman, had magically been evolved. Could it be possible that she loved me still? My complacency had vanished; suddenly I had become the aggressor, if only I had known how to "aggress"; but in her presence I was seized by an accursed shyness that paralyzed my tongue, and the things I had planned to say were left unuttered. It was something—though I did not realize it—to be able to feel like that.

The time came when I could no longer keep this thing to myself. The need of an outlet, of a confidant, became imperative, and I sought out Tom Peters. It was in February; I remember because I had ventured—with incredible daring—to send Nancy an elaborate, rosy Valentine; written on the back of it in a handwriting all too thinly disguised was the following verse, the triumphant result of much hard thinking in school hours:—

> Should you of this the sender guess
> Without another sign,
> Would you repent, and rest content
> To be his Valentine

I grew hot and cold by turns when I thought of its possible effects on my chances.

One of those useless, slushy afternoons, I took Tom for a walk that led us, as dusk came on, past Nancy's house. Only by painful degrees did I succeed in overcoming my bashfulness; but Tom, when at last I had blurted out the secret, was most sympathetic, although the ailment from which I suffered was as yet outside of the realm of his experience. I have used the word "ailment" advisedly, since he evidently put my trouble in the same category with diphtheria or scarlet fever, remarking that it was "darned hard luck." In vain I sought to explain that I did not regard it as such in the least; there was suffering, I admitted, but a degree of bliss none could comprehend who had not felt it. He refused to be envious, or at least to betray envy; yet he was curious, asking many questions, and I had reason to think before we parted that his admiration for me was increased. Was it possible that he, too, didn't love Nancy? No, it was funny, but he didn't. He failed to see much in girls: his tone remained commiserating, yet he began to take an interest in the progress of my suit.

For a time I had no progress to report. Out of consideration for those members of our weekly dancing class whose parents were Episcopalians the meetings were discontinued during Lent, and to call would have demanded a courage not in me; I should have become an object of ridicule among my friends and I would have died rather than face Nancy's mother and the members of her household. I set about making ingenious plans with a view to encounters that might appear casual. Nancy's school was dismissed at two, so was mine. By walking fast I could reach Salisbury Street, near St. Mary's Seminary for Young Ladies, in time to catch her, but even then for many days I was doomed to disappointment. She was either in company with other girls, or else she had taken another route; this I surmised led past Sophy McAlery's house, and I enlisted Tom as a confederate. He was to make straight for the McAlery's on Elm while I followed Powell, two short blocks away, and if Nancy went to Sophy's and left there alone he was to announce the fact by a preconcerted signal. Through long and persistent practice he had acquired a whistle shrill enough to wake the dead, accomplished by placing a finger of each hand between his teeth;—a gift that was the envy of his acquaintances, and the subject of much discussion as to whether his teeth were peculiar. Tom insisted that they were; it was an added distinction.

On this occasion he came up behind Nancy as she was leaving Sophy's gate and immediately sounded the alarm. She leaped in the air, dropped her school-books and whirled on him.

"Tom Peters! How dare you frighten me so!" she cried.

Tom regarded her in sudden dismay.

"I—I didn't mean to," he said. "I didn't think you were so near."

"But you must have seen me."

"I wasn't paying much attention," he equivocated,—a remark not calculated to appease her anger.

"Why were you doing it?"

"I was just practising," said Tom.

"Practising!" exclaimed Nancy, scornfully. "I shouldn't think you needed to practise that any more."

"Oh, I've done it louder," he declared, "Listen!"

She seized his hands, snatching them away from his lips. At this critical moment I appeared around the corner considerably out of breath, my heart beating like a watchman's rattle. I tried to feign nonchalance.

"Hello, Tom," I said. "Hello, Nancy. What's the matter?"

"It's Tom—he frightened me out of my senses." Dropping his wrists, she gave me a most disconcerting look; there was in it the suspicion of a smile. "What are you doing here, Hugh?"

"I heard Tom," I explained.

"I should think you might have. Where were you?"

"Over in another street," I answered, with deliberate vagueness. Nancy had suddenly become demure. I did not dare look at her, but I had a most uncomfortable notion that she suspected the plot. Meanwhile we had begun to walk along, all three of us, Tom, obviously ill at ease and discomfited, lagging a little behind. Just before we reached the corner I managed to kick him. His departure was by no means graceful.

"I've got to go;" he announced abruptly, and turned down the side street.
We watched his sturdy figure as it receded.

"Well, of all queer boys!" said Nancy, and we walked on again.

"He's my best friend," I replied warmly.

"He doesn't seem to care much for your company," said Nancy.

"Oh, they have dinner at half past two," I explained.

"Aren't you afraid of missing yours, Hugh?" she asked wickedly.

"I've got time. I'd—I'd rather be with you." After making which audacious remark I was seized by a spasm of apprehension. But nothing happened. Nancy remained demure. She didn't remind me that I had reflected upon Tom.

"That's nice of you, Hugh."

"Oh, I'm not saying it because it's nice," I faltered. "I'd rather be with you than—with anybody."

This was indeed the acme of daring. I couldn't believe I had actually said it. But again I received no rebuke; instead came a remark that set me palpitating, that I treasured for many weeks to come.

"I got a very nice valentine," she informed me.

"What was it like?" I asked thickly.

"Oh, beautiful! All pink lace and—and Cupids, and the picture of a young man and a young woman in a garden."

"Was that all?"

"Oh, no, there was a verse, in the oddest handwriting. I wonder who sent it?"

"Perhaps Ralph," I hazarded ecstatically.

"Ralph couldn't write poetry," she replied disdainfully. "Besides, it was very good poetry."

I suggested other possible authors and admirers. She rejected them all. We reached her gate, and I lingered. As she looked down at me from the stone steps her eyes shone with a soft light that filled me

with radiance, and into her voice had come a questioning, shy note that thrilled the more because it revealed a new Nancy of whom I had not dreamed.

"Perhaps I'll meet you again—coming from school," I said.

"Perhaps," she answered. "You'll be late to dinner, Hugh, if you don't go...."

I was late, and unable to eat much dinner, somewhat to my mother's alarm. Love had taken away my appetite.... After dinner, when I was wandering aimlessly about the yard, Tom appeared on the other side of the fence.

"Don't ever ask me to do that again," he said gloomily.

I did meet Nancy again coming from school, not every day, but nearly every day. At first we pretended that there was no arrangement in this, and we both feigned surprise when we encountered one another. It was Nancy who possessed the courage that I lacked. One afternoon she said:—"I think I'd better walk with the girls to-morrow, Hugh."

I protested, but she was firm. And after that it was an understood thing that on certain days I should go directly home, feeling like an exile. Sophy McAlery had begun to complain: and I gathered that Sophy was Nancy's confidante. The other girls had begun to gossip. It was Nancy who conceived the brilliant idea—the more delightful because she said nothing about it to me—of making use of Sophy. She would leave school with Sophy, and I waited on the corner near the McAlery house. Poor Sophy! She was always of those who piped while others danced. In those days she had two straw-coloured pigtails, and her plain, faithful face is before me as I write. She never betrayed to me the excitement that filled her at being the accomplice of our romance.

Gossip raged, of course. Far from being disturbed, we used it, so to speak, as a handle for our love-making, which was carried on in an inferential rather than a direct fashion. Were they saying that we were lovers? Delightful! We laughed at one another in the sunshine.... At last we achieved the great adventure of a clandestine meeting and went for a walk in the afternoon, avoiding the houses of our friends. I've forgotten which of us had the boldness to propose it. The crocuses and tulips had broken the black mould, the flower beds in the front yards were beginning to blaze with scarlet and yellow, the lawns had turned a living green. What did we talk about? The substance has vanished, only the flavour remains.

One awoke of a morning to the twittering of birds, to walk to school amidst delicate, lace-like shadows of great trees acloud with old gold: the buds lay curled like tiny feathers on the pavements. Suddenly the shade was dense, the sunlight white and glaring, the odour of lilacs heavy in the air, spring in all its fulness had come,—spring and Nancy. Just so subtly, yet with the same seeming suddenness had budded and come to leaf and flower a perfect understanding, which nevertheless remained undefined. This, I had no doubt, was my fault, and due to the incomprehensible shyness her presence continued to inspire. Although we did not altogether abandon our secret trysts, we began to meet in more natural ways; there were garden parties and picnics where we strayed together through the woods and fields, pausing to tear off, one by one, the petals of a daisy, "She loves me, she loves me not." I never ventured to kiss her; I always thought afterwards I might have done so, she had seemed so willing, her eyes had shone so expectantly as I sat beside her on the grass; nor can I tell why I desired to kiss her save that this was the traditional thing to do to the lady one loved. To be sure, the very touch of her hand was galvanic. Paradoxically, I saw the human side of her, the yielding gentleness that always amazed me, yet I never overcame my awe of the divine; she was a being sacrosanct. Whether this idealism were innate or the result of such romances as I had read I cannot say.... I got, indeed, an avowal of a sort. The weekly dancing classes having begun again, on one occasion when she had waltzed twice with Gene Hollister I protested.

"Don't be silly, Hugh," she whispered. "Of course I like you better than anyone else—you ought to know that."

We never got to the word "love," but we knew the feeling.

One cloud alone flung its shadow across these idyllic days. Before I was fully aware of it I had drawn very near to the first great junction-point of my life, my graduation from Densmore Academy. We were to "change cars," in the language of Principal Haime. Well enough for the fortunate ones who were to continue the academic journey, which implied a postponement of the serious business of life; but month after month of the last term had passed without a hint from my father that I was to change cars. Again and again I almost succeeded in screwing up my courage to the point of mentioning college to him,—never quite; his manner, though kind and calm, somehow strengthened my suspicion that I had been judged and found wanting, and doomed to "business": galley slavery, I deemed it, humdrum, prosaic,

degrading! When I thought of it at night I experienced almost a frenzy of self-pity. My father couldn't intend to do that, just because my monthly reports hadn't always been what he thought they ought to be! Gene Hollister's were no better, if as good, and he was going to Princeton. Was I, Hugh Paret, to be denied the distinction of being a college man, the delights of university existence, cruelly separated and set apart from my friends whom I loved! held up to the world and especially to Nancy Willett as good for nothing else! The thought was unbearable. Characteristically, I hoped against hope.

I have mentioned garden parties. One of our annual institutions was Mrs. Willett's children's party in May; for the Willett house had a garden that covered almost a quarter of a block. Mrs. Willett loved children, the greatest regret of her life being that providence had denied her a large family. As far back as my memory goes she had been something of an invalid; she had a sweet, sad face, and delicate hands so thin as to seem almost transparent; and she always sat in a chair under the great tree on the lawn, smiling at us as we soared to dizzy heights in the swing, or played croquet, or scurried through the paths, and in and out of the latticed summer-house with shrieks of laughter and terror. It all ended with a feast at a long table made of sawhorses and boards covered with a white cloth, and when the cake was cut there was wild excitement as to who would get the ring and who the thimble.

We were more decorous, or rather more awkward now, and the party began with a formal period when the boys gathered in a group and pretended indifference to the girls. The girls were cleverer at it, and actually achieved the impression that they were indifferent. We kept an eye on them, uneasily, while we talked. To be in Nancy's presence and not alone with Nancy was agonizing, and I wondered at a sang-froid beyond my power to achieve, accused her of coldness, my sufferings being the greater because she seemed more beautiful, daintier, more irreproachable than I had ever seen her. Even at that early age she gave evidence of the social gift, and it was due to her efforts that we forgot our best clothes and our newly born self-consciousness. When I begged her to slip away with me among the currant bushes she whispered:—"I can't, Hugh. I'm the hostess, you know."

I had gone there in a flutter of anticipation, but nothing went right that day. There was dancing in the big rooms that looked out on the garden; the only girl with whom I cared to dance was Nancy, and she was busy finding partners for the backward members of both sexes; though she was my partner, to be sure, when it all wound up with a Virginia reel on the lawn. Then, at supper, to cap the climax of untoward incidents, an animated discussion was begun as to the relative merits of the various colleges, the girls, too, taking sides. Mac Willett, Nancy's cousin, was going to Yale, Gene Hollister to Princeton, the Ewan boys to our State University, while Perry Blackwood and Ralph Hambleton and Ham Durrett were destined for Harvard; Tom Peters, also, though he was not to graduate from the Academy for another year. I might have known that Ralph would have suspected my misery. He sat triumphantly next to Nancy herself, while I had been told off to entertain the faithful Sophy. Noticing my silence, he demanded wickedly:—"Where are you going, Hugh?"

"Harvard, I think," I answered with as bold a front as I could muster. "I haven't talked it over with my father yet." It was intolerable to admit that I of them all was to be left behind.

Nancy looked at me in surprise. She was always downright.

"Oh, Hugh, doesn't your father mean to put you in business?" she exclaimed.

A hot flush spread over my face. Even to her I had not betrayed my apprehensions on this painful subject. Perhaps it was because of this very reason, knowing me as she did, that she had divined my fate. Could my father have spoken of it to anyone?

"Not that I know of," I said angrily. I wondered if she knew how deeply she had hurt me. The others laughed. The colour rose in Nancy's cheeks, and she gave me an appealing, almost tearful look, but my heart had hardened. As soon as supper was over I left the table to wander, nursing my wrongs, in a far corner of the garden, gay shouts and laughter still echoing in my ears. I was negligible, even my pathetic subterfuge had been detected and cruelly ridiculed by these friends whom I had always loved and sought out, and who now were so absorbed in their own prospects and happiness that they cared nothing for mine. And Nancy! I had been betrayed by Nancy!… Twilight was coming on. I remember glancing down miserably at the new blue suit I had put on so hopefully for the first time that afternoon.

Separating the garden from the street was a high, smooth board fence with a little gate in it, and I had my hand on the latch when I heard the sound of hurrying steps on the gravel path and a familiar voice calling my name.

"Hugh! Hugh!"

I turned. Nancy stood before me.

"Hugh, you're not going!"

"Yes, I am."

"Why?"

"If you don't know, there's no use telling you."

"Just because I said your father intended to put you in business! Oh, Hugh, why are you so foolish and so proud? Do you suppose that anyone—that I—think any the worse of you?"

Yes, she had read me, she alone had entered into the source of that prevarication, the complex feelings from which it sprang. But at that moment I could not forgive her for humiliating me. I hugged my grievance.

"It was true, what I said," I declared hotly. "My father has not spoken. It is true that I'm going to college, because I'll make it true. I may not go this year."

She stood staring in sheer surprise at sight of my sudden, quivering passion. I think the very intensity of it frightened her. And then, without more ado, I opened the gate and was gone….

That night, though I did not realize it, my journey into a Far Country was begun.

The misery that followed this incident had one compensating factor. Although too late to electrify Densmore and Principal Haime with my scholarship, I was determined to go to college now, somehow, sometime. I would show my father, these companions of mine, and above all Nancy herself the stuff of which I was made, compel them sooner or later to admit that they had misjudged me. I had been possessed by similar resolutions before, though none so strong, and they had a way of sinking below the surface of my consciousness, only to rise again and again until by sheer pressure they achieved realization.

Yet I might have returned to Nancy if something had not occurred which I would have thought unbelievable: she began to show a marked preference for Ralph Hambleton. At first I regarded this affair as the most obvious of retaliations. She, likewise, had pride. Gradually, however, a feeling of uneasiness crept over me: as pretence, her performance was altogether too realistic; she threw her whole soul into it, danced with Ralph as often as she had ever danced with me, took walks with him, deferred to his opinions until, in spite of myself, I became convinced that the preference was genuine. I was a curious mixture of self-confidence and self-depreciation, and never had his superiority seemed more patent than now. His air of satisfaction was maddening.

How well I remember his triumph on that hot, June morning of our graduation from Densmore, a triumph he had apparently achieved without labour, and which he seemed to despise. A fitful breeze blew through the chapel at the top of the building; we, the graduates, sat in two rows next to the platform, and behind us the wooden benches nicked by many knives—were filled with sisters and mothers and fathers, some anxious, some proud and some sad. So brief a span, like that summer's day, and youth was gone! Would the time come when we, too, should sit by the waters of Babylon and sigh for it? The world was upside down.

We read the one hundred and third psalm. Then Principal Haime, in his long "Prince Albert" and a ridiculously inadequate collar that emphasized his scrawny neck, reminded us of the sacred associations we had formed, of the peculiar responsibilities that rested on us, who were the privileged of the city. "We had crossed to-day," he said, "an invisible threshold. Some were to go on to higher institutions of learning. Others…" I gulped. Quoting the Scriptures, he complimented those who had made the most of their opportunities. And it was then that he called out, impressively, the name of Ralph Forrester Hambleton. Summa cum laude! Suddenly I was seized with passionate, vehement regrets at the sound of the applause. I might have been the prize scholar, instead of Ralph, if I had only worked, if I had only realized what this focussing day of graduation meant! I might have been a marked individual, with people murmuring words of admiration, of speculation concerning the brilliancy of my future!… When at last my name was called and I rose to receive my diploma it seemed as though my incompetency had been proclaimed to the world…

That evening I stood in the narrow gallery of the flag-decked gymnasium and watched Nancy dancing with Ralph.

I let her go without protest or reproach. A mysterious lesion seemed to have taken place, I felt astonished and relieved, yet I was heavy with sadness. My emancipation had been bought at a price. Something hitherto spontaneous, warm and living was withering within me.

V.

It was true to my father's character that he should have waited until the day after graduation to discuss my future, if discussion be the proper word. The next evening at supper he informed me that he wished to talk to me in the sitting-room, whither I followed him with a sinking heart. He seated himself at his desk, and sat for a moment gazing at me with a curious and benumbing expression, and then the blow fell.

"Hugh, I have spoken to your Cousin Robert Breck about you, and he has kindly consented to give you a trial."

"To give me a trial, sir!" I exclaimed.

"To employ you at a small but reasonable salary."

I could find no words to express my dismay. My dreams had come to this, that I was to be made a clerk in a grocery store! The fact that it was a wholesale grocery store was little consolation.

"But father," I faltered, "I don't want to go into business."

"Ah!" The sharpness of the exclamation might have betrayed to me the pain in which he was, but he recovered himself instantly. And I could see nothing but an inexorable justice closing in on me mechanically; a blind justice, in its inability to read my soul. "The time to have decided that," he declared, "was some years ago, my son. I have given you the best schooling a boy can have, and you have not shown the least appreciation of your advantages. I do not enjoy saying this, Hugh, but in spite of all my efforts and of those of your mother, you have remained undeveloped and irresponsible. My hope, as you know, was to have made you a professional man, a lawyer, and to take you into my office. My father and grandfather were professional men before me. But you are wholly lacking in ambition."

And I had burned with it all my life!

"I have ambition," I cried, the tears forcing themselves to my eyes.

"Ambition—for what, my son?"

I hesitated. How could I tell him that my longings to do something, to be somebody in the world were never more keen than at that moment? Matthew Arnold had not then written his definition of God as the stream of tendency by which we fulfil the laws of our being; and my father, at any rate, would not have acquiesced in the definition. Dimly but passionately I felt then, as I had always felt, that I had a mission to perform, a service to do which ultimately would be revealed to me. But the hopelessness of explaining this took on, now, the proportions of a tragedy. And I could only gaze at him.

"What kind of ambition, Hugh?" he repeated sadly.

"I—I have sometimes thought I could write, sir, if I had a chance. I like it better than anything else. I—I have tried it. And if I could only go to college—"

"Literature!" There was in his voice a scandalized note.

"Why not, father?" I asked weakly.

And now it was he who, for the first time, seemed to be at a loss to express himself. He turned in his chair, and with a sweep of the hand indicated the long rows of musty-backed volumes. "Here," he said, "you have had at your disposal as well-assorted a small library as the city contains, and you have not availed yourself of it. Yet you talk to me of literature as a profession. I am afraid, Hugh, that this is merely another indication of your desire to shun hard work, and I must tell you frankly that I fail to see in you the least qualification for such a career. You have not even inherited my taste for books. I venture to say, for instance, that you have never even read a paragraph of Plutarch, and yet when I was your age I was completely familiar with the Lives. You will not read Scott or Dickens."

The impeachment was not to be denied, for the classics were hateful to me. Naturally I was afraid to make such a damning admission. My father had succeeded in presenting my ambition as the height of absurdity and presumption, and with something of the despair of a shipwrecked mariner my eyes rested on the green expanses of those book-backs, Bohn's Standard Library! Nor did it occur to him or to me that one might be great in literature without having read so much as a gritty page of them….

He finished his argument by reminding me that worthless persons sought to enter the arts in the

search for a fool's paradise, and in order to satisfy a reprehensible craving for notoriety. The implication was clear, that imaginative production could not be classed as hard work. And he assured me that literature was a profession in which no one could afford to be second class. A Longfellow, a Harriet Beecher Stowe, or nothing. This was a practical age and a practical country. We had indeed produced Irvings and Hawthornes, but the future of American letters was, to say the least, problematical. We were a utilitarian people who would never create a great literature, and he reminded me that the days of the romantic and the picturesque had passed. He gathered that I desired to be a novelist. Well, novelists, with certain exceptions, were fantastic fellows who blew iridescent soap-bubbles and who had no morals. In the face of such a philosophy as his I was mute. The world appeared a dreary place of musty offices and smoky steel-works, of coal dust, of labour without a spark of inspiration. And that other, the world of my dreams, simply did not exist.

Incidentally my father had condemned Cousin Robert's wholesale grocery business as a refuge of the lesser of intellect that could not achieve the professions,—an inference not calculated to stir my ambition and liking for it at the start.

I began my business career on the following Monday morning. At breakfast, held earlier than usual on my account, my mother's sympathy was the more eloquent for being unspoken, while my father wore an air of unwonted cheerfulness; charging me, when I departed, to give his kindest remembrances to my Cousin Robert Breck. With a sense of martyrdom somehow deepened by this attitude of my parents I boarded a horse-car and went down town. Early though it was, the narrow streets of the wholesale district reverberated with the rattle of trucks and echoed with the shouts of drivers. The day promised to be scorching. At the door of the warehouse of Breck and Company I was greeted by the ineffable smell of groceries in which the suggestion of parched coffee prevailed. This is the sharpest remembrance of all, and even to-day that odour affects me somewhat in the manner that the interior of a ship affects a person prone to seasickness. My Cousin Robert, in his well-worn alpaca coat, was already seated at his desk behind the clouded glass partition next the alley at the back of the store, and as I entered he gazed at me over his steel-rimmed spectacles with that same disturbing look of clairvoyance I have already mentioned as one of his characteristics. The grey eyes were quizzical, and yet seemed to express a little commiseration.

"Well, Hugh, you've decided to honour us, have you?" he asked.

"I'm much obliged for giving me the place, Cousin Robert," I replied.

But he had no use for that sort of politeness, and he saw through me, as always.

"So you're not too tony for the grocery business, eh?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"It was good enough for old Benjamin Breck," he said. "Well, I'll give you a fair trial, my boy, and no favouritism on account of relationship, any more than to Willie."

His strong voice resounded through the store, and presently my cousin Willie appeared in answer to his summons, the same Willie who used to lead me, on mischief bent, through the barns and woods and fields of Claremore. He was barefoot no longer, though freckled still, grown lanky and tall; he wore a coarse blue apron that fell below his knees, and a pencil was stuck behind his ear.

"Get an apron for Hugh," said his father.

Willie's grin grew wider.

"I'll fit him out," he said.

"Start him in the shipping department," directed Cousin Robert, and turned to his letters.

I was forthwith provided with an apron, and introduced to the slim and anaemic but cheerful Johnny Hedges, the shipping clerk, hard at work in the alley. Secretly I looked down on my fellow-clerks, as one destined for a higher mission, made out of better stuff,—finer stuff. Despite my attempt to hide this sense of superiority they were swift to discover it; and perhaps it is to my credit as well as theirs that they did not resent it. Curiously enough, they seemed to acknowledge it. Before the week was out I had earned the nickname of Beau Brummel.

"Say, Beau," Johnny Hedges would ask, when I appeared of a morning, "what happened in the great world last night?"

I had an affection for them, these fellow-clerks, and I often wondered at their contentment with the drab lives they led, at their self-congratulation for "having a job" at Breck and Company's.

"You don't mean to say you like this kind of work?" I exclaimed one day to Johnny Hedges, as we sat on barrels of XXXX flour looking out at the hot sunlight in the alley.

"It ain't a question of liking it, Beau," he rebuked me. "It's all very well for you to talk, since your father's a millionaire" (a fiction so firmly embedded in their heads that no amount of denial affected it), "but what do you think would happen to me if I was fired? I couldn't go home and take it easy—you bet not. I just want to shake hands with myself when I think that I've got a home, and a job like this. I know a feller—a hard worker he was, too who walked the pavements for three months when the Colvers failed, and couldn't get nothing, and took to drink, and the last I heard of him he was sleeping in police stations and walking the ties, and his wife's a waitress at a cheap hotel. Don't you think it's easy to get a job."

I was momentarily sobered by the earnestness with which he brought home to me the relentlessness of our civilization. It seemed incredible. I should have learned a lesson in that store. Barring a few discordant days when the orders came in too fast or when we were short handed because of sickness, it was a veritable hive of happiness; morning after morning clerks and porters arrived, pale, yet smiling, and laboured with cheerfulness from eight o'clock until six, and departed as cheerfully for modest homes in obscure neighbourhoods that seemed to me areas of exile. They were troubled with no visions of better things. When the travelling men came in from the "road" there was great hilarity. Important personages, these, looked up to by the city clerks; jolly, reckless, Elizabethan-like rovers, who had tasted of the wine of liberty—and of other wines with the ineradicable lust for the road in their blood. No more routine for Jimmy Bowles, who was king of them all. I shudder to think how much of my knowledge of life I owe to this Jimmy, whose stories would have filled a quarto volume, but could on no account have been published; for a self-respecting post-office would not have allowed them to pass through the mails. As it was, Jimmy gave them circulation enough. I can still see his round face, with the nose just indicated, his wicked, twinkling little eyes, and I can hear his husky voice fall to a whisper when "the boss" passed through the store. Jimmy, when visiting us, always had a group around him. His audacity with women amazed me, for he never passed one of the "lady clerks" without some form of caress, which they resented but invariably laughed at. One day he imparted to me his code of morality: he never made love to another man's wife, so he assured me, if he knew the man! The secret of life he had discovered in laughter, and by laughter he sold quantities of Cousin Robert's groceries.

Mr. Bowles boasted of a catholic acquaintance in all the cities of his district, but before venturing forth to conquer these he had learned his own city by heart. My Cousin Robert was not aware of the fact that Mr. Bowles "showed" the town to certain customers. He even desired to show it to me, but an epicurean strain in my nature held me back. Johnny Hedges went with him occasionally, and Henry Schneider, the bill clerk, and I listened eagerly to their experiences, afterwards confiding them to Tom….

There were times when, driven by an overwhelming curiosity, I ventured into certain strange streets, alone, shivering with cold and excitement, gripped by a fascination I did not comprehend, my eyes now averted, now irresistibly raised toward the white streaks of light that outlined the windows of dark houses….

One winter evening as I was going home, I encountered at the mail-box a young woman who shot at me a queer, twisted smile. I stood still, as though stunned, looking after her, and when halfway across the slushy street she turned and smiled again. Prodigiously excited, I followed her, fearful that I might be seen by someone who knew me, nor was it until she reached an unfamiliar street that I ventured to overtake her. She confounded me by facing me.

"Get out!" she cried fiercely.

I halted in my tracks, overwhelmed with shame. But she continued to regard me by the light of the street lamp.

"You didn't want to be seen with me on Second Street, did you? You're one of those sneaking swells."

The shock of this sudden onslaught was tremendous. I stood frozen to the spot, trembling, convicted, for I knew that her accusation was just; I had wounded her, and I had a desire to make amends.

"I'm sorry," I faltered. "I didn't mean—to offend you. And you smiled—" I got no farther. She began to laugh, and so loudly that I glanced anxiously about. I would have fled, but something still held me, something that belied the harshness of her laugh.

"You're just a kid," she told me. "Say, you get along home, and tell your mamma I sent you."

Whereupon I departed in a state of humiliation and self-reproach I had never before known, wandering about aimlessly for a long time. When at length I arrived at home, late for supper, my

mother's solicitude only served to deepen my pain. She went to the kitchen herself to see if my mince-pie were hot, and served me with her own hands. My father remained at his place at the head of the table while I tried to eat, smiling indulgently at her ministrations.

"Oh, a little hard work won't hurt him, Sarah," he said. "When I was his age I often worked until eleven o'clock and never felt the worse for it. Business must be pretty good, eh, Hugh?"

I had never seen him in a more relaxing mood, a more approving one. My mother sat down beside me.... Words seem useless to express the complicated nature of my suffering at that moment,—my remorse, my sense of deception, of hypocrisy,—yes, and my terror. I tried to talk naturally, to answer my father's questions about affairs at the store, while all the time my eyes rested upon the objects of the room, familiar since childhood. Here were warmth, love, and safety. Why could I not be content with them, thankful for them? What was it in me that drove me from these sheltering walls out into the dark places? I glanced at my father. Had he ever known these wild, destroying desires? Oh, if I only could have confided in him! The very idea of it was preposterous. Such placidity as theirs would never understand the nature of my temptations, and I pictured to myself their horror and despair at my revelation. In imagination I beheld their figures receding while I drifted out to sea, alone. Would the tide—which was somehow within me—carry me out and out, in spite of all I could do?

"Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core...."

I did not shirk my tasks at the store, although I never got over the feeling that a fine instrument was being employed where a coarser one would have done equally well. There were moments when I was almost overcome by surges of self-commiseration and of impotent anger: for instance, I was once driven out of a shop by an incensed German grocer whom I had asked to settle a long-standing account. Yet the days passed, the daily grind absorbed my energies, and when I was not collecting, or tediously going over the stock in the dim recesses of the store, I was running errands in the wholesale district, treading the burning brick of the pavements, dodging heavy trucks and drays and perspiring clerks who flew about with memorandum pads in their hands, or awaiting the pleasure of bank tellers. Save Harvey, the venerable porter, I was the last to leave the store in the evening, and I always came away with the taste on my palate of Breck and Company's mail, it being my final duty to "lick" the whole of it and deposit it in the box at the corner. The gum on the envelopes tasted of winter-green.

My Cousin Robert was somewhat astonished at my application.

"We'll make a man of you yet, Hugh," he said to me once, when I had performed a commission with unexpected despatch....

Business was his all-in-all, and he had an undisguised contempt for higher education. To send a boy to college was, in his opinion, to run no inconsiderable risk of ruining him. What did they amount to when they came home, strutting like peacocks, full of fads and fancies, and much too good to associate with decent, hard-working citizens? Nevertheless when autumn came and my friends departed with eclat for the East, I was desperate indeed! Even the contemplation of Robert Breck did not console me, and yet here, in truth, was a life which might have served me as a model. His store was his castle; and his reputation for integrity and square dealing as wide as the city. Often I used to watch him with a certain envy as he stood in the doorway, his hands in his pockets, and greeted fellow-merchant and banker with his genuine and dignified directness. This man was his own master. They all called him "Robert," and they made it clear by their manner that they knew they were addressing one who fulfilled his obligations and asked no favours.

Crusty old Nathaniel Durrett once declared that when you bought a bill of goods from Robert Breck you did not have to check up the invoice or employ a chemist. Here was a character to mould upon. If my ambition could but have been bounded by Breck and Company, I, too, might have come to stand in that doorway content with a tribute that was greater than Caesar's.

I had been dreading the Christmas holidays, which were indeed to be no holidays for me. And when at length they arrived they brought with them from the East certain heroes fashionably clad, citizens now of a larger world than mine. These former companions had become superior beings, they could not help showing it, and their presence destroyed the Balance of Things. For alas, I had not wholly abjured the feminine sex after all! And from being a somewhat important factor in the lives of Ruth Hollister and other young women I suddenly became of no account. New interests, new rivalries and loyalties had arisen in which I had no share; I must perforce busy myself with invoices of flour and coffee and canned fruits while sleigh rides and coasting and skating expeditions to Blackstone Lake followed one another day after day,—for the irony of circumstances had decreed a winter uncommonly cold. There were evening parties, too, where I felt like an alien, though my friends were guilty of no conscious

neglect; and had I been able to accept the situation simply, I should not have suffered.

The principal event of those holidays was a play given in the old Hambleton house (which later became the Boyne Club), under the direction of the lively and talented Mrs. Watling. I was invited, indeed, to participate; but even if I had had the desire I could not have done so, since the rehearsals were carried on in the daytime. Nancy was the leading lady. I have neglected to mention that she too had been away almost continuously since our misunderstanding, for the summer in the mountains,—a sojourn recommended for her mother's health; and in the autumn she had somewhat abruptly decided to go East to boarding-school at Farmington. During the brief months of her absence she had marvellously acquired maturity and aplomb, a worldliness of manner and a certain frivolity that seemed to put those who surrounded her on a lower plane. She was only seventeen, yet she seemed the woman of thirty whose role she played. First there were murmurs, then sustained applause. I scarcely recognized her: she had taken wings and soared far above me, suggesting a sphere of power and luxury hitherto unimagined and beyond the scope of the world to which I belonged.

Her triumph was genuine. When the play was over she was immediately surrounded by enthusiastic admirers eager to congratulate her, to dance with her. I too would have gone forward, but a sense of inadequacy, of unimportance, of an inability to cope with her, held me back, and from a corner I watched her sweeping around the room, holding up her train, and leaning on the arm of Bob Lansing, a classmate whom Ralph had brought home from Harvard. Then it was Ralph's turn: that affair seemed still to be going on. My feelings were a strange medley of despondency and stimulation….

Our eyes met. Her partner now was Ham Durrett. Capriciously releasing him, she stood before me,

"Hugh, you haven't asked me to dance, or even told me what you thought of the play."

"I thought it was splendid," I said lamely.

Because she refrained from replying I was farther than ever from understanding her. How was I to divine what she felt? or whether any longer she felt at all? Here, in this costume of a woman of the world, with the string of pearls at her neck to give her the final touch of brilliancy, was a strange, new creature who baffled and silenced me…. We had not gone halfway across the room when she halted abruptly.

"I'm tired," she exclaimed. "I don't feel like dancing just now," and led the way to the big, rose punch-bowl, one of the Durretts' most cherished possessions. Glancing up at me over the glass of lemonade I had given her she went on: "Why haven't you been to see me since I came home? I've wanted to talk to you, to hear how you are getting along."

Was she trying to make amends, or reminding me in this subtle way of the cause of our quarrel? What I was aware of as I looked at her was an attitude, a vantage point apparently gained by contact with that mysterious outer world which thus vicariously had laid its spell on me; I was tremendously struck by the thought that to achieve this attitude meant emancipation, invulnerability against the aches and pains which otherwise our fellow-beings had the power to give us; mastery over life,—the ability to choose calmly, as from a height, what were best for one's self, untroubled by loves and hates. Untroubled by loves and hates! At that very moment, paradoxically, I loved her madly, but with a love not of the old quality, a love that demanded a vantage point of its own. Even though she had made an advance—and some elusiveness in her manner led me to doubt it I could not go to her now. I must go as a conqueror,—a conqueror in the lists she herself had chosen, where the prize is power.

"Oh, I'm getting along pretty well," I said. "At any rate, they don't complain of me."

"Somehow," she ventured, "somehow it's hard to think of you as a business man."

I took this for a reference to the boast I had made that I would go to college.

"Business isn't so bad as it might be," I assured her.

"I think a man ought to go away to college," she declared, in what seemed another tone. "He makes friends, learns certain things,—it gives him finish. We are very provincial here."

Provincial! I did not stop to reflect how recently she must have acquired the word; it summed up precisely the self-estimate at which I had arrived. The sting went deep. Before I could think of an effective reply Nancy was being carried off by the young man from the East, who was clearly infatuated. He was not provincial. She smiled back at me brightly over his shoulder…. In that instant were fused in one resolution all the discordant elements within me of aspiration and discontent. It was not so much that I would show Nancy what I intended to do—I would show myself; and I felt a sudden elation, and accession of power that enabled me momentarily to despise the puppets with whom she

danced.... From this mood I was awakened with a start to feel a hand on my shoulder, and I turned to confront her father, McAlery Willett; a gregarious, easygoing, pleasure-loving gentleman who made only a pretence of business, having inherited an ample fortune from his father, unique among his generation in our city in that he paid some attention to fashion in his dress; good living was already beginning to affect his figure. His mellow voice had a way of breaking an octave.

"Don't worry, my boy," he said. "You stick to business. These college fellows are cocks of the walk just now, but some day you'll be able to snap your fingers at all of 'em."

The next day was dark, overcast, smoky, damp-the soft, unwholesome dampness that follows a spell of hard frost. I spent the morning and afternoon on the gloomy third floor of Breck and Company, making a list of the stock. I remember the place as though I had just stepped out of it, the freight elevator at the back, the dusty, iron columns, the continuous piles of cases and bags and barrels with narrow aisles between them; the dirty windows, spotted and soot-streaked, that looked down on Second Street. I was determined now to escape from all this, and I had my plan in mind.

No sooner had I swallowed my supper that evening than I set out at a swift pace for a modest residence district ten blocks away, coming to a little frame house set back in a yard,—one of those houses in which the ringing of the front door-bell produces the greatest commotion; children's voices were excitedly raised and then hushed. After a brief silence the door was opened by a pleasant-faced, brown-bearded man, who stood staring at me in surprise. His hair was rumpled, he wore an old house coat with a hole in the elbow, and with one finger he kept his place in the book which he held in his hand.

"Hugh Paret!" he exclaimed.

He ushered me into a little parlour lighted by two lamps, that bore every evidence of having been recently vacated. Its features somehow bespoke a struggle for existence; as though its occupants had worried much and loved much. It was a room best described by the word "home"—home made more precious by a certain precariousness. Toys and school-books strewed the floor, a sewing-bag and apron lay across the sofa, and in one corner was a roll-topped desk of varnished oak. The seats of the chairs were comfortably depressed.

So this was where Mr. Wood lived! Mr. Wood, instructor in Latin and Greek at Densmore Academy. It was now borne in on me for the first time that he did live and have his ties like any other human being, instead of just appearing magically from nowhere on a platform in a chalky room at nine every morning, to vanish again in the afternoon. I had formerly stood in awe of his presence. But now I was suddenly possessed by an embarrassment, and (shall I say it?) by a commiseration bordering on contempt for a man who would consent to live thus for the sake of being a schoolteacher. How strange that civilization should set such a high value on education and treat its functionaries with such neglect!

Mr. Wood's surprise at seeing me was genuine. For I had never shown a particular interest in him, nor in the knowledge which he strove to impart.

"I thought you had forgotten me, Hugh," he said, and added whimsically: "most boys do, when they graduate."

I felt the reproach, which made it the more difficult for me to state my errand.

"I knew you sometimes took pupils in the evening, Mr. Wood."

"Pupils,—yes," he replied, still eyeing me. Suddenly his eyes twinkled. He had indeed no reason to suspect me of thirsting for learning. "But I was under the impression that you had gone into business, Hugh."

"The fact is, sir," I explained somewhat painfully, "that I am not satisfied with business. I feel—as if I ought to know more. And I came to see if you would give me lessons about three nights a week, because I want to take the Harvard examinations next summer."

Thus I made it appear, and so persuaded myself, that my ambition had been prompted by a craving for knowledge. As soon as he could recover himself he reminded me that he had on many occasions declared I had a brain.

"Your father must be very happy over this decision of yours," he said.

That was the point, I told him. It was to be a surprise for my father; I was to take the examinations first, and inform him afterwards.

To my intense relief, Mr. Wood found the scheme wholly laudable, and entered into it with zest. He

produced examinations of preceding years from a pigeonhole in his desk, and inside of half an hour the arrangement was made, the price of the lessons settled. They were well within my salary, which recently had been raised....

When I went down town, or collecting bills for Breck and Company, I took a text-book along with me in the street-cars. Now at last I had behind my studies a driving force. Algebra, Latin, Greek and history became worth while, means to an end. I astonished Mr. Wood; and sometimes he would tilt back his chair, take off his spectacles and pull his beard.

"Why in the name of all the sages," he would demand, "couldn't you have done this well at school? You might have led your class, instead of Ralph Hambleton."

I grew very fond of Mr. Wood, and even of his thin little wife, who occasionally flitted into the room after we had finished. I fully intended to keep up with them in after life, but I never did. I forgot them completely....

My parents were not wholly easy in their minds concerning me; they were bewildered by the new aspect I presented. For my lately acquired motive was strong enough to compel me to restrict myself socially, and the evenings I spent at home were given to study, usually in my own room. Once I was caught with a Latin grammar: I was just "looking over it," I said. My mother sighed. I knew what was in her mind; she had always been secretly disappointed that I had not been sent to college. And presently, when my father went out to attend a trustee's meeting, the impulse to confide in her almost overcame me; I loved her with that affection which goes out to those whom we feel understand us, but I was learning to restrain my feelings. She looked at me wistfully.... I knew that she would insist on telling my father, and thus possibly frustrate my plans. That I was not discovered was due to a certain quixotic twist in my father's character. I was working now, and though not actually earning my own living, he no longer felt justified in prying into my affairs.

When June arrived, however, my tutor began to show signs that his conscience was troubling him, and one night he delivered his ultimatum. The joke had gone far enough, he implied. My intentions, indeed, he found praiseworthy, but in his opinion it was high time that my father were informed of them; he was determined to call at my father's office.

The next morning was blue with the presage of showers; blue, too, with the presage of fate. An interminable morning. My tasks had become utterly distasteful. And in the afternoon, so when I sat down to make out invoices, I wrote automatically the names of the familiar customers, my mind now exalted by hope, now depressed by anxiety. The result of an interview perhaps even now going on would determine whether or no I should be immediately released from a slavery I detested. Would Mr. Wood persuade my father? If not, I was prepared to take more desperate measures; remain in the grocery business I would not. In the evening, as I hurried homeward from the corner where the Boyne Street car had dropped me, I halted suddenly in front of the Peters house, absorbing the scene where my childhood had been spent: each of these spreading maples was an old friend, and in these yards I had played and dreamed. An unaccountable sadness passed over me as I walked on toward our gate; I entered it, gained the doorway of the house and went upstairs, glancing into the sitting room. My mother sat by the window, sewing. She looked up at me with an ineffable expression, in which I read a trace of tears.

"Hugh!" she exclaimed.

I felt very uncomfortable, and stood looking down at her.

"Why didn't you tell us, my son?" In her voice was in truth reproach; yet mingled with that was another note, which I think was pride.

"What has father said?" I asked.

"Oh, my dear, he will tell you himself. I—I don't know—he will talk to you."

Suddenly she seized my hands and drew me down to her, and then held me away, gazing into my face with a passionate questioning, her lips smiling, her eyes wet. What did she see? Was there a subtler relationship between our natures than I guessed? Did she understand by some instinctive power the riddle within me? divine through love the force that was driving me on she knew not whither, nor I? At the sound of my father's step in the hall she released me. He came in as though nothing had happened.

"Well, Hugh, are you home?" he said....

Never had I been more impressed, more bewildered by his self-command than at that time. Save for the fact that my mother talked less than usual, supper passed as though nothing had happened.

Whether I had shaken him, disappointed him, or gained his reluctant approval I could not tell. Gradually his outward calmness turned my suspense to irritation….

But when at length we were alone together, I gained a certain reassurance. His manner was not severe. He hesitated a little before beginning.

"I must confess, Hugh; that I scarcely know what to say about this proceeding of yours. The thing that strikes me most forcibly is that you might have confided in your mother and myself."

Hope flashed up within me, like an explosion.

"I—I wanted to surprise you, father. And then, you see, I thought it would be wiser to find out first how well I was likely to do at the examinations."

My father looked at me. Unfortunately he possessed neither a sense of humour nor a sense of tragedy sufficient to meet such a situation. For the first time in my life I beheld him at a disadvantage; for I had, somehow, managed at length to force him out of position, and he was puzzled. I was quick to play my trump card.

"I have been thinking it over carefully," I told him, "and I have made up my mind that I want to go into the law."

"The law!" he exclaimed sharply.

"Why, yes, sir. I know that you were disappointed because I did not do sufficiently well at school to go to college and study for the bar."

I felt indeed a momentary pang, but I remembered that I was fighting for my freedom.

"You seemed satisfied where you were," he said in a puzzled voice, "and your Cousin Robert gives a good account of you."

"I've tried to do the work as well as I could, sir," I replied. "But I don't like the grocery business, or any other business. I have a feeling that I'm not made for it."

"And you think, now, that you are made for the law?" he asked, with the faint hint of a smile.

"Yes, sir, I believe I could succeed at it. I'd like to try," I replied modestly.

"You've given up the idiotic notion of wishing to be an author?"

I implied that he himself had convinced me of the futility of such a wish. I listened to his next words as in a dream.

"I must confess to you, Hugh, that there are times when I fail to understand you. I hope it is as you say, that you have arrived at a settled conviction as to your future, and that this is not another of those caprices to which you have been subject, nor a desire to shirk honest work. Mr. Wood has made out a strong case for you, and I have therefore determined to give you a trial. If you pass the examinations with credit, you may go to college, but if at any time you fail to make good progress, you come home, and go into business again. Is that thoroughly understood?"

I said it was, and thanked him effusively…. I had escaped,—the prison doors had flown open. But it is written that every happiness has its sting; and my joy, intense though it was, had in it a core of remorse….

I went downstairs to my mother, who was sitting in the hall by the open door.

"Father says I may go!" I said.

She got up and took me in her arms.

"My dear, I am so glad, although we shall miss you dreadfully…. Hugh?"

"Yes, mother."

"Oh, Hugh, I so want you to be a good man!"

Her cry was a little incoherent, but fraught with a meaning that came home to me, in spite of myself….

A while later I ran over to announce to the amazed Tom Peters that I was actually going to Harvard

with him. He stood in the half-lighted hallway, his hands in his pockets, blinking at me.

"Hugh, you're a wonder!" he cried. "How in Jehoshaphat did you work it?"…

I lay long awake that night thinking over the momentous change so soon to come into my life, wondering exultantly what Nancy Willett would say now. I was not one, at any rate, to be despised or neglected.

VI.

The following September Tom Peters and I went East together. In the early morning Boston broke on us like a Mecca as we rolled out of the old Albany station, joint lords of a "herdic." How sharply the smell of the salt-laden east wind and its penetrating coolness come back to me! I seek in vain for words to express the exhilarating effect of that briny coolness on my imagination, and of the visions it summoned up of the newer, larger life into which I had marvellously been transported. We alighted at the Parker House, full-fledged men of the world, and tried to act as though the breakfast of which we partook were merely an incident, not an Event; as though we were Seniors, and not freshmen, assuming an indifference to the beings by whom we were surrounded and who were breakfasting, too, —although the nice-looking ones with fresh faces and trim clothes were all undoubtedly Olympians. The better to proclaim our nonchalance, we seated ourselves on a lounge of the marble-paved lobby and smoked cigarettes. This was liberty indeed! At length we departed for Cambridge, in another herdic.

Boston! Could it be possible? Everything was so different here as to give the place the aspect of a dream: the Bulfinch State House, the decorous shops, the still more decorous dwellings with the purple-paned windows facing the Common; Back Bay, still boarded up, ivy-spread, suggestive of a mysterious and delectable existence. We crossed the Charles River, blue-grey and still that morning; traversed a nondescript district, and at last found ourselves gazing out of the windows at the mellowed, plum-coloured bricks of the University buildings…. All at once our exhilaration evaporated as the herdic rumbled into a side street and backed up before the door of a not-too-inviting, three-storied house with a queer extension on top. Its steps and vestibule were, however, immaculate. The bell was answered by a plainly overworked servant girl, of whom we inquired for Mrs. Bolton, our landlady. There followed a period of waiting in a parlour from which the light had been almost wholly banished, with slippery horsehair furniture and a marble-topped table; and Mrs. Bolton, when she appeared, dressed in rusty black, harmonized perfectly with the funereal gloom. She was a tall, rawboned, severe lady with a peculiar red-mottled complexion that somehow reminded one of the outcropping rocks of her native New England soil.

"You want to see your rooms, I suppose," she remarked impassively when we had introduced ourselves, and as we mounted the stairs behind her Tom, in a whisper, nicknamed her "Granite Face." Presently she left us.

"Hospitable soul!" said Tom, who, with his hands in his pockets, was gazing at the bare walls of our sitting-room. "We'll have to go into the house-furnishing business, Hughie. I vote we don't linger here to-day—we'll get melancholia."

Outside, however, the sun was shining brightly, and we departed immediately to explore Cambridge and announce our important presences to the proper authorities…. We went into Boston to dine…. It was not until nine o'clock in the evening that we returned and the bottom suddenly dropped out of things. He who has tasted that first, acute homesickness of college will know what I mean. It usually comes at the opening of one's trunk. The sight of the top tray gave me a pang I shall never forget. I would not have believed that I loved my mother so much! These articles had been packed by her hands; and in one corner, among the underclothes on which she had neatly sewed my initials, lay the new Bible she had bought. "Hugh Moreton Paret, from his Mother. September, 1881." I took it up (Tom was not looking) and tried to read a passage, but my eyes were blurred. What was it within me that pressed and pressed until I thought I could bear the pain of it no longer? I pictured the sitting-room at home, and my father and mother there, thinking of me. Yes, I must acknowledge it; in the bitterness of that moment I longed to be back once more in the railed-off space on the floor of Breck and Company, writing invoices….

Presently, as we went on silently with our unpacking, we became aware of someone in the doorway.

"Hello, you fellows!" he cried. "We're classmates, I guess."

We turned to behold an ungainly young man in an ill-fitting blue suit. His face was pimply, his eyes a Teutonic blue, his yellow hair rumpled, his naturally large mouth was made larger by a friendly grin.

"I'm Hermann Krebs," he announced simply. "Who are you?"

We replied, I regret to say, with a distinct coolness that did not seem to bother him in the least. He advanced into the room, holding out a large, red, and serviceable hand, evidently it had never dawned on him that there was such a thing in the world as snobbery. But Tom and I had been "coached" by Ralph Hambleton and Perry Blackwood, warned to be careful of our friendships. There was a Reason! In any case Mr. Krebs would not have appealed to us. In answer to a second question he was informed what city we hailed from, and he proclaimed himself likewise a native of our state.

"Why, I'm from Elkington!" he exclaimed, as though the fact sealed our future relationships. He seated himself on Tom's trunk and added: "Welcome to old Harvard!"

We felt that he was scarcely qualified to speak for "old Harvard," but we did not say so.

"You look as if you'd been pall-bearers for somebody," was his next observation.

To this there seemed no possible reply.

"You fellows are pretty well fixed here," he went on, undismayed, gazing about a room which had seemed to us the abomination of desolation. "Your folks must be rich. I'm up under the skylight."

Even this failed to touch us. His father—he told us with undiminished candour—had been a German emigrant who had come over in '49, after the cause of liberty had been lost in the old country, and made eye-glasses and opera glasses. There hadn't been a fortune in it. He, Hermann, had worked at various occupations in the summer time, from peddling to farming, until he had saved enough to start him at Harvard. Tom, who had been bending over his bureau drawer, straightened up.

"What did you want to come here for?" he demanded.

"Say, what did you?" Mr. Krebs retorted genially. "To get an education, of course."

"An education!" echoed Tom.

"Isn't Harvard the oldest and best seat of learning in America?" There was an exaltation in Krebs's voice that arrested my attention, and made me look at him again. A troubled chord had been struck within me.

"Sure," said Tom.

"What did you come for?" Mr. Krebs persisted.

"To sow my wild oats," said Tom. "I expect to have something of a crop, too."

For some reason I could not fathom, it suddenly seemed to dawn on Mr.
Krebs, as a result of this statement, that he wasn't wanted.

"Well, so long," he said, with a new dignity that curiously belied the informality of his farewell.

An interval of silence followed his departure.

"Well, he's got a crust!" said Tom, at last.

My own feeling about Mr. Krebs had become more complicated; but I took my cue from Tom, who dealt with situations simply.

"He'll come in for a few knockouts," he declared. "Here's to old Harvard, the greatest institution of learning in America! Oh, gee!"

Our visitor, at least, made us temporarily forget our homesickness, but it returned with redoubled intensity when we had put out the lights and gone to bed.

Before we had left home it had been mildly hinted to us by Ralph and Perry Blackwood that scholarly eminence was not absolutely necessary to one's welfare and happiness at Cambridge. The hint had been somewhat superfluous; but the question remained, what was necessary? With a view of getting some light on this delicate subject we paid a visit the next evening to our former friends and schoolmates, whose advice was conveyed with a masterly circumlocution that impressed us both. There are some things that may not be discussed directly, and the conduct of life at a modern university—which is a reflection of life in the greater world—is one of these. Perry Blackwood and Ham did most of

the talking, while Ralph, characteristically, lay at full length on the window-seat, interrupting with an occasional terse and cynical remark very much to the point. As a sophomore, he in particular seemed lifted immeasurably above us, for he was—as might have been expected already a marked man in his class. The rooms which he shared with his cousin made a tremendous impression on Tom and me, and seemed palatial in comparison to our quarters at Mrs. Bolton's, eloquent of the freedom and luxury of undergraduate existence; their note, perhaps, was struck by the profusion of gay sofa pillows, then something of an innovation. The heavy, expensive furniture was of a pattern new to me; and on the mantel were three or four photographs of ladies in the alluring costume of the musical stage, in which Tom evinced a particular interest.

"Did grandfather send 'em?" he inquired.

"They're Ham's," said Ralph, and he contrived somehow to get into those two words an epitome of his cousin's character. Ham was stouter, and his clothes were more striking, more obviously expensive than ever.... On our way homeward, after we had walked a block or two in silence, Tom exclaimed: —"Don't make friends with the friendless!—eh, Hughie? We knew enough to begin all right, didn't we?"...

Have I made us out a pair of deliberate, calculating snobs? Well, after all it must be remembered that our bringing up had not been of sufficient liberality to include the Krebses of this world. We did not, indeed, spend much time in choosing and weighing those whom we should know and those whom we should avoid; and before the first term of that Freshman year was over Tom had become a favourite. He had the gift of making men feel that he delighted in their society, that he wished for nothing better than to sit for hours in their company, content to listen to the arguments that raged about him. Once in a while he would make a droll observation that was greeted with fits of laughter. He was always referred to as "old Tom," or "good old Tom"; presently, when he began to pick out chords on the banjo, it was discovered that he had a good tenor voice, though he could not always be induced to sing.... Somewhat to the jeopardy of the academic standard that my father expected me to sustain, our rooms became a rendezvous for many clubable souls whose maudlin, midnight attempts at harmony often set the cocks crowing.

"Free from care and despair,
What care we?
'Tis wine, 'tis wine
That makes the jollity."

As a matter of truth, on these occasions it was more often beer; beer transported thither in Tom's new valise,—given him by his mother,—and stuffed with snow to keep the bottles cold. Sometimes Granite Face, adorned in a sky-blue wrapper, would suddenly appear in the doorway to declare that we were a disgrace to her respectable house: the university authorities should be informed, etc., etc. Poor woman, we were outrageously inconsiderate of her.... One evening as we came through the hall we caught a glimpse in the dimly lighted parlour of a young man holding a shy and pale little girl on his lap, Annie, Mrs. Bolton's daughter: on the face of our landlady was an expression I had never seen there, like a light. I should scarcely have known her. Tom and I paused at the foot of the stairs. He clutched my arm.

"Darned if it wasn't our friend Krebs!" he whispered.

While I was by no means so popular as Tom, I got along fairly well. I had escaped from provincialism, from the obscure purgatory of the wholesale grocery business; new vistas, exciting and stimulating, had been opened up; nor did I offend the sensibilities and prejudices of the new friends I made, but gave a hearty consent to a code I found congenial. I recognized in the social system of undergraduate life at Harvard a reflection of that of a greater world where I hoped some day to shine; yet my ambition did not prey upon me. Mere conformity, however, would not have taken me very far in a sphere from which I, in common with many others, desired not to be excluded.... One day, in an idle but inspired moment, I paraphrased a song from "Pinafore," applying it to a college embroglio, and the brief and lively vogue it enjoyed was sufficient to indicate a future usefulness. I had "found myself." This was in the last part of the freshman year, and later on I became a sort of amateur, class poet-laureate. Many were the skits I composed, and Tom sang them....

During that freshman year we often encountered Hermann Krebs, whistling merrily, on the stairs.

"Got your themes done?" he would inquire cheerfully.

And Tom would always mutter, when he was out of earshot: "He has got a crust!"

When I thought about Krebs at all,—and this was seldom indeed,—his manifest happiness puzzled me.

Our cool politeness did not seem to bother him in the least; on the contrary, I got the impression that it amused him. He seemed to have made no friends. And after that first evening, memorable for its homesickness, he never ventured to repeat his visit to us.

One windy November day I spied his somewhat ludicrous figure striding ahead of me, his trousers above his ankles. I was bundled up in a new ulster,—of which I was secretly quite proud,—but he wore no overcoat at all.

"Well, how are you getting along?" I asked, as I overtook him.

He made clear, as he turned, his surprise that I should have addressed him at all, but immediately recovered himself.

"Oh, fine," he responded. "I've had better luck than I expected. I'm correspondent for two or three newspapers. I began by washing windows, and doing odd jobs for the professors' wives." He laughed. "I guess that doesn't strike you as good luck."

He showed no resentment at my patronage, but a self-sufficiency that made my sympathy seem superfluous, giving the impression of an inner harmony and content that surprised me.

"I needn't ask how you're getting along," he said....

At the end of the freshman year we abandoned Mrs. Bolton's for more desirable quarters.

I shall not go deeply into my college career, recalling only such incidents as, seen in the retrospect, appear to have had significance. I have mentioned my knack for song-writing; but it was not, I think, until my junior year there was startlingly renewed in me my youthful desire to write, to create something worth while, that had so long been dormant.

The inspiration came from Alonzo Cheyne, instructor in English; a remarkable teacher, in spite of the finicky mannerisms which Tom imitated. And when, in reading aloud certain magnificent passages, he forgot his affectations, he managed to arouse cravings I thought to have deserted me forever. Was it possible, after all, that I had been right and my father wrong? that I might yet be great in literature?

A mere hint from Alonzo Cheyne was more highly prized by the grinds than fulsome praise from another teacher. And to his credit it should be recorded that the grinds were the only ones he treated with any seriousness; he took pains to answer their questions; but towards the rest of us, the Chosen, he showed a thinly veiled contempt. None so quick as he to detect a simulated interest, or a wily effort to make him ridiculous; and few tried this a second time, for he had a rapier-like gift of repartee that transfixed the offender like a moth on a pin. He had a way of eyeing me at times, his glasses in his hand, a queer smile on his lips, as much as to imply that there was one at least among the lost who was made for better things. Not that my work was poor, but I knew that it might have been better. Out of his classes, however, beyond the immediate, disturbing influence of his personality I would relapse into indifference....

Returning one evening to our quarters, which were now in the "Yard," I found Tom seated with a blank sheet before him, thrusting his hand through his hair and biting the end of his penholder to a pulp. In his muttering, which was mixed with the curious, stingless profanity of which he was master, I caught the name of Cheyne, and I knew that he was facing the crisis of a fortnightly theme. The subject assigned was a narrative of some personal experience, and it was to be handed in on the morrow. My own theme was already, written.

"I've been holding down this chair for an hour, and I can't seem to think of a thing." He rose to fling himself down on the lounge. "I wish I was in Canada."

"Why Canada?"

"Trout fishing with Uncle Jake at that club of his where he took me last summer." Tom gazed dreamily at the ceiling. "Whenever I have some darned foolish theme like this to write I want to go fishing, and I want to go like the devil. I'll get Uncle Jake to take you, too, next summer."

"I wish you would."

"Say, that's living all right, Hughie, up there among the tamaracks and balsams!" And he began, for something like the thirtieth time, to relate the adventures of the trip.

As he talked, the idea presented itself to me with sudden fascination to use this incident as the subject of Tom's theme; to write it for him, from his point of view, imitating the droll style he would have had if he had been able to write; for, when he was interested in any matter, his oral narrative did

not lack vividness. I began to ask him questions: what were the trees like, for instance? How did the French-Canadian guides talk? He had the gift of mimicry: aided by a partial knowledge of French I wrote down a few sentences as they sounded. The canoe had upset and he had come near drowning. I made him describe his sensations.

"I'll write your theme for you," I exclaimed, when he had finished.

"Gee, not about that!"

"Why not? It's a personal experience."

His gratitude was pathetic.... By this time I was so full of the subject that it fairly clamoured for expression, and as I wrote the hours flew. Once in a while I paused to ask him a question as he sat with his chair tilted back and his feet on the table, reading a detective story. I sketched in the scene with bold strokes; the desolate bois brule on the mountain side, the polished crystal surface of the pool broken here and there with the circles left by rising fish; I pictured Armand, the guide, his pipe between his teeth, holding the canoe against the current; and I seemed to smell the sharp tang of the balsams, to hear the roar of the rapids below. Then came the sudden hooking of the big trout, habitant oaths from Armand, bouleversement, wetness, darkness, confusion; a half-strangled feeling, a brief glimpse of green things and sunlight, and then strangulation, or what seemed like it; strangulation, the sense of being picked up and hurled by a terrific force whither? a blinding whiteness, in which it was impossible to breathe, one sharp, almost unbearable pain, then another, then oblivion.... Finally, awakening, to be confronted by a much worried Uncle Jake.

By this time the detective story had fallen to the floor, and Tom was huddled up in his chair, asleep. He arose obediently and wrapped a wet towel around his head, and began to write. Once he paused long enough to mutter:—"Yes, that's about it,—that's the way I felt!" and set to work again, mechanically,—all the praise I got for what I deemed a literary achievement of the highest order! At three o'clock, a.m., he finished, pulled off his clothes automatically and tumbled into bed. I had no desire for sleep. My brain was racing madly, like an engine without a governor. I could write! I could write! I repeated the words over and over to myself. All the complexities of my present life were blotted out, and I beheld only the long, sweet vista of the career for which I was now convinced that nature had intended me. My immediate fortunes became unimportant, immaterial. No juice of the grape I had ever tasted made me half so drunk.... With the morning, of course, came the reaction, and I suffered the after sensations of an orgie, awaking to a world of necessity, cold and grey and slushy, and necessity alone made me rise from my bed. My experience of the night before might have taught me that happiness lies in the trick of transforming necessity, but it did not. The vision had faded,—temporarily, at least; and such was the distraction of the succeeding days that the subject of the theme passed from my mind....

One morning Tom was later than usual in getting home. I was writing a letter when he came in, and did not notice him, yet I was vaguely aware of his standing over me. When at last I looked up I gathered from his expression that something serious had happened, so mournful was his face, and yet so utterly ludicrous.

"Say, Hugh, I'm in the deuce of a mess," he announced.

"What's the matter?" I inquired.

He sank down on the table with a groan.

"It's Alonzo," he said.

Then I remembered the theme.

"What—what's he done?" I demanded.

"He says I must become a writer. Think of it, me a writer! He says I'm a young Shakespeare, that I've been lazy and hid my light under a bushel! He says he knows now what I can do, and if I don't keep up the quality, he'll know the reason why, and write a personal letter to my father. Oh, hell!"

In spite of his evident anguish, I was seized with a convulsive laughter.
Tom stood staring at me moodily.

"You think it's funny,—don't you? I guess it is, but what's going to become of me? That's what I want to know. I've been in trouble before, but never in any like this. And who got me into it? You!"

Here was gratitude!

"You've got to go on writing 'em, now." His voice became desperately pleading. "Say, Hugh, old man, you can temper 'em down—temper 'em down gradually. And by the end of the year, let's say, they'll be about normal again."

He seemed actually shivering.

"The end of the year!" I cried, the predicament striking me for the first time in its fulness. "Say, you've got a crust!"

"You'll do it, if I have to hold a gun over you," he announced grimly.

Mingled with my anxiety, which was real, was an exultation that would not down. Nevertheless, the idea of developing Tom into a Shakespeare,—Tom, who had not the slightest desire to be one I was appalling, besides having in it an element of useless self-sacrifice from which I recoiled. On the other hand, if Alonzo should discover that I had written his theme, there were penalties I did not care to dwell upon …. With such a cloud hanging over me I passed a restless night.

As luck would have it the very next evening in the level light under the elms of the Square I beheld sauntering towards me a dapper figure which I recognized as that of Mr. Cheyne himself. As I saluted him he gave me an amused and most disconcerting glance; and when I was congratulating myself that he had passed me he stopped.

"Fine weather for March, Paret," he observed.

"Yes, sir," I agreed in a strange voice.

"By the way," he remarked, contemplating the bare branches above our heads, "that was an excellent theme your roommate handed in. I had no idea that he possessed such—such genius. Did you, by any chance, happen to read it?"

"Yes, sir,—I read it."

"Weren't you surprised?" inquired Mr. Cheyne.

"Well, yes, sir—that is—I mean to say he talks just like that, sometimes—that is, when it's anything he cares about."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Cheyne. "That's interesting, most interesting. In all my experience, I do not remember a case in which a gift has been developed so rapidly. I don't want to give the impression—ah that there is no room for improvement, but the thing was very well done, for an undergraduate. I must confess I never should have suspected it in Peters, and it's most interesting what you say about his cleverness in conversation." He twirled the head of his stick, apparently lost in reflection. "I may be wrong," he went on presently, "I have an idea it is you—" I must literally have jumped away from him. He paused a moment, without apparently noticing my panic, "that it is you who have influenced Peters."

"Sir?"

"I am wrong, then. Or is this merely commendable modesty on your part?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"Then my hypothesis falls to the ground. I had greatly hoped," he added meaningly, "that you might be able to throw some light on this mystery."

I was dumb.

"Paret," he asked, "have you time to come over to my rooms for a few minutes this evening?"

"Certainly, sir."

He gave me his number in Brattle Street….

Like one running in a nightmare and making no progress I made my way home, only to learn from Hallam,—who lived on the same floor,—that Tom had inconsiderately gone to Boston for the evening, with four other weary spirits in search of relaxation! Avoiding our club table, I took what little nourishment I could at a modest restaurant, and restlessly paced the moonlit streets until eight o'clock, when I found myself in front of one of those low-gabled colonial houses which, on less soul-shaking occasions, had exercised a great charm on my imagination. My hand hung for an instant over the bell…. I must have rung it violently, for there appeared almost immediately an old lady in a lace cap, who

greeted me with gentle courtesy, and knocked at a little door with glistening panels. The latch was lifted by Mr. Cheyne himself.

"Come in, Paret," he said, in a tone that was unexpectedly hospitable.

I have rarely seen a more inviting room. A wood fire burned brightly on the brass andirons, flinging its glare on the big, white beam that crossed the ceiling, and reddening the square panes of the windows in their panelled recesses. Between these were rows of books,—attractive books in chased bindings, red and blue; books that appealed to be taken down and read. There was a table covered with reviews and magazines in neat piles, and a lamp so shaded as to throw its light only on the white blotter of the pad. Two easy chairs, covered with flowered chintz, were ranged before the fire, in one of which I sank, much bewildered, upon being urged to do so.

I utterly failed to recognize "Alonzo" in this new atmosphere. And he had, moreover, dropped the subtly sarcastic manner I was wont to associate with him.

"Jolly old house, isn't it?" he observed, as though I had casually dropped in on him for a chat; and he stood, with his hands behind him stretched to the blaze, looking down at me. "It was built by a certain Colonel Draper, who fought at Louisburg, and afterwards fled to England at the time of the Revolution. He couldn't stand the patriots, I'm not so sure that I blame him, either. Are you interested in colonial things, Mr. Paret?"

I said I was. If the question had concerned Aztec relics my answer would undoubtedly have been the same. And I watched him, dazedly, while he took down a silver porringer from the shallow mantel shelf.

"It's not a Revere," he said, in a slightly apologetic tone as though to forestall a comment, "but it's rather good, I think. I picked it up at a sale in Dorchester. But I have never been able to identify the coat of arms."

He showed me a ladle, with the names of "Patience and William Simpson" engraved quaintly thereon, and took down other articles in which I managed to feign an interest. Finally he seated himself in the chair opposite, crossed his feet, putting the tips of his fingers together and gazing into the fire.

"So you thought you could fool me," he said, at length.

I became aware of the ticking of a great clock in the corner. My mouth was dry.

"I am going to forgive you," he went on, more gravely, "for several reasons. I don't flatter, as you know. It's because you carried out the thing so perfectly that I am led to think you have a gift that may be cultivated, Paret. You wrote that theme in the way Peters would have written it if he had not been—what shall I say?—scripturally inarticulate. And I trust it may do you some good if I say it was something of a literary achievement, if not a moral one."

"Thank you, sir," I faltered.

"Have you ever," he inquired, lapsing a little into his lecture-room manner, "seriously thought of literature as a career? Have you ever thought of any career seriously?"

"I once wished to be a writer, sir," I replied tremulously, but refrained from telling him of my father's opinion of the profession. Ambition—a purer ambition than I had known for years—leaped within me at his words. He, Alonzo Cheyne, had detected in me the Promethean fire!

I sat there until ten o'clock talking to the real Mr. Cheyne, a human Mr. Cheyne unknown in the lecture-room. Nor had I suspected one in whom cynicism and distrust of undergraduates (of my sort) seemed so ingrained, of such idealism. He did not pour it out in preaching; delicately, unobtrusively and on the whole rather humorously he managed to present to me in a most disillusionizing light that conception of the university held by me and my intimate associates. After I had left him I walked the quiet streets to behold as through dissolving mists another Harvard, and there trembled in my soul like the birth-struggle of a flame something of the vision later to be immortalized by St. Gaudens, the spirit of Harvard responding to the spirit of the Republic—to the call of Lincoln, who voiced it. The place of that bronze at the corner of Boston Common was as yet empty, but I have since stood before it to gaze in wonder at the light shining in darkness on mute, uplifted faces, black faces! at Harvard's son leading them on that the light might live and prevail.

I, too, longed for a Cause into which I might fling myself, in which I might lose myself... I halted on the sidewalk to find myself staring from the opposite side of the street at a familiar house, my old landlady's, Mrs. Bolton's, and summoned up before me was the tired, smiling face of Hermann Krebs. Was it because when he had once spoken so crudely of the University I had seen the reflection of her

spirit in his eyes? A light still burned in the extension roof—Krebs's light; another shone dimly through the ground glass of the front door. Obeying a sudden impulse, I crossed the street.

Mrs. Bolton, in the sky-blue wrapper, and looking more forbidding than ever, answered the bell. Life had taught her to be indifferent to surprises, and it was I who became abruptly embarrassed.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Paret," she said, as though I had been a frequent caller. I had never once darkened her threshold since I had left her house.

"Yes," I answered, and hesitated…. "Is Mr. Krebs in?"

"Well," she replied in a lifeless tone, which nevertheless had in it a touch of bitterness, "I guess there's no reason why you and your friends should have known he was sick."

"Sick!" I repeated. "Is he very sick?"

"I calculate he'll pull through," she said. "Sunday the doctor gave him up. And no wonder! He hasn't had any proper food since he's be'n here!" She paused, eyeing me. "If you'll excuse me, Mr. Paret, I was just going up to him when you rang."

"Certainly," I replied awkwardly. "Would you be so kind as to tell him—when he's well enough—that I came to see him, and that I'm sorry?"

There was another pause, and she stood with a hand defensively clutching the knob.

"Yes, I'll tell him," she said.

With a sense of having been baffled, I turned away.

Walking back toward the Yard my attention was attracted by a slowly approaching cab whose occupants were disturbing the quiet of the night with song.

"Shollity—'tis wine, 'tis wine, that makesh—shollity."

The vehicle drew up in front of a new and commodious building,—I believe the first of those designed to house undergraduates who were willing to pay for private bathrooms and other modern luxuries; out of one window of the cab protruded a pair of shoeless feet, out of the other a hatless head I recognized as belonging to Tom Peters; hence I surmised that the feet were his also. The driver got down from the box, and a lively argument was begun inside—for there were other occupants—as to how Mr. Peters was to be disembarked; and I gathered from his frequent references to the "Shgyptian obelisk" that the engineering problem presented struck him as similar to the unloading of Cleopatra's Needle.

"Careful, careful!" he cautioned, as certain expelling movements began from within, "Easy, Ham, you jam-fool, keep the door shut, y'll break me."

"Now, Jerry, all heave sh'gether!" exclaimed a voice from the blackness of the interior.

"Will ye wait a minute, Mr. Durrett, sir?" implored the cabdriver. "You'll be after ruining me cab entirely." (Loud roars and vigorous resistance from the obelisk, the cab rocking violently.) "This gintleman" (meaning me) "will have him by the head, and I'll get hold of his feet, sir." Which he did, after a severe kick in the stomach.

"Head'sh all right, Martin."

"To be sure it is, Mr. Peters. Now will ye rest aisy awhile, sir?"

"I'm axphyxiated," cried another voice from the darkness, the mined voice of Jerome Kyme, our classmate.

"Get the tackles under him!" came forth in commanding tones from Conybear.

In the meantime many windows had been raised and much gratuitous advice was being given. The three occupants of the cab's seat who had previously clamoured for Mr. Peters' removal, now inconsistently resisted it; suddenly he came out with a jerk, and we had him fairly upright on the pavement minus a collar and tie and the buttons of his evening waistcoat. Those who remained in the cab engaged in a riotous game of hunt the slipper, while Tom peered into the dark interior, observing gravely the progress of the sport. First flew out an overcoat and a much-battered hat, finally the pumps, all of which in due time were adjusted to his person, and I started home with him, with much parting counsel from the other three.

"Whereinell were you, Hughie?" he inquired. "Hunted all over for you. Had a sousin' good time. Went to Babcock's—had champagne—then to see Babesh in—th'—Woods. Ham knows one of the Babesh had supper with four of 'em. Nice Babesh!"

"For heaven's sake don't step on me again!" I cried.

"Sh'poloshize, old man. But y'know I'm William Shakespheare. C'n do what I damplease." He halted in the middle of the street and recited dramatically:—

"'Not marble, nor th' gilded monuments
Of prinches sh'll outlive m' powerful rhyme.'"

"How's that, Alonzho, b'gosh?"

"Where did you learn it?" I demanded, momentarily forgetting his condition.

"Fr'm Ralph," he replied, "says I wrote it. Can't remember…."

After I had got him to bed,—a service I had learned to perform with more or less proficiency,—I sat down to consider the events of the evening, to attempt to get a proportional view. The intensity of my disgust was not hypocritical as I gazed through the open door into the bedroom and recalled the times when I, too, had been in that condition. Tom Peters drunk, and sleeping it off, was deplorable, without doubt; but Hugh Paret drunk was detestable, and had no excuse whatever. Nor did I mean by this to set myself on a higher ethical plane, for I felt nothing but despair and humility. In my state of clairvoyance I perceived that he was a better man, than I, and that his lapses proceeded from a love of liquor and the transcendent sense of good-fellowship that liquor brings.

VII.

The crisis through which I passed at Cambridge, inaugurated by the events I have just related, I find very difficult to portray. It was a religious crisis, of course, and my most pathetic memory concerning it is of the vain attempts to connect my yearnings and discontents with the theology I had been taught; I began in secret to read my Bible, yet nothing I hit upon seemed to point a way out of my present predicament, to give any definite clew to the solution of my life. I was not mature enough to reflect that orthodoxy was a Sunday religion unrelated to a world whose wheels were turned by the motives of self-interest; that it consisted of ideals not deemed practical, since no attempt was made to put them into practice in the only logical manner,—by reorganizing civilization to conform with them. The implication was that the Christ who had preached these ideals was not practical.… There were undoubtedly men in the faculty of the University who might have helped me had I known of them; who might have given me, even at that time, a clew to the modern, logical explanation of the Bible as an immortal record of the thoughts and acts of men who had sought to do just what I was seeking to do,—connect the religious impulse to life and make it fruitful in life: an explanation, by the way, a thousand-fold more spiritual than the old. But I was hopelessly entangled in the meshes of the mystic, the miraculous and supernatural. If I had analyzed my yearnings, I might have realized that I wanted to renounce the life I had been leading, not because it was sinful, but because it was aimless. I had not learned that the Greek word for sin is "a missing of the mark." Just aimlessness! I had been stirred with the desire to perform some service for which the world would be grateful: to write great literature, perchance. But it had never been suggested to me that such swellings of the soul are religious, that religion is that kind of feeling, of motive power that drives the writer and the scientist, the statesman and the sculptor as well as the priest and the Prophet to serve mankind for the joy of serving: that religion is creative, or it is nothing: not mechanical, not a force imposed from without, but a driving power within. The "religion" I had learned was salvation from sin by miracle: sin a deliberate rebellion, not a pathetic missing of the mark of life; useful service of man, not the wandering of untutored souls who had not been shown the way. I felt religious. I wanted to go to church, I wanted to maintain, when it was on me, that exaltation I dimly felt as communion with a higher power, with God, and which also was identical with my desire to write, to create.…

I bought books, sets of Wordsworth and Keats, of Milton and Shelley and Shakespeare, and hid them away in my bureau drawers lest Tom and my friends should see them. These too I read secretly, making excuses for not joining in the usual amusements. Once I walked to Mrs. Bolton's and inquired rather shamefacedly for Hermann Krebs, only to be informed that he had gone out.… There were lapses, of course, when I went off on the old excursions,—for the most part the usual undergraduate follies,

though some were of a more serious nature; on these I do not care to dwell. Sex was still a mystery.... Always I awoke afterwards to bitter self-hatred and despair.... But my work in English improved, and I earned the commendation and friendship of Mr. Cheyne. With a wisdom for which I was grateful he was careful not to give much sign of it in classes, but the fact that he was "getting soft on me" was evident enough to be regarded with suspicion. Indeed the state into which I had fallen became a matter of increasing concern to my companions, who tried every means from ridicule to sympathy, to discover its cause and shake me out of it. The theory most accepted was that I was in love.

"Come on now, Hughie—tell me who she is. I won't give you away," Tom would beg. Once or twice, indeed, I had imagined I was in love with the sisters of Boston classmates whose dances I attended; to these parties Tom, not having overcome his diffidence in respect to what he called "social life," never could be induced to go.

It was Ralph who detected the true cause of my discontent. Typical as no other man I can recall of the code to which we had dedicated ourselves, the code that moulded the important part of the undergraduate world and defied authority, he regarded any defection from it in the light of treason. An instructor, in a fit of impatience, had once referred to him as the Mephistopheles of his class; he had fatal attractions, and a remarkable influence. His favourite pastime was the capricious exercise of his will on weaker characters, such as his cousin, Ham Durrett; if they "swore off," Ralph made it his business to get them drunk again, and having accomplished this would proceed himself to administer a new oath and see that it was kept. Alcohol seemed to have no effect whatever on him. Though he was in the class above me, I met him frequently at a club to which I had the honour to belong, then a suite of rooms over a shop furnished with a pool and a billiard table, easy-chairs and a bar. It has since achieved the dignity of a house of its own.

We were having, one evening, a "religious" argument, Cinibar, Laurens and myself and some others. I can't recall how it began; I think Cinibar had attacked the institution of compulsory chapel, which nobody defended; there was something inherently wrong, he maintained, with a religion to which men had to be driven against their wills. Somewhat to my surprise I found myself defending a Christianity out of which I had been able to extract but little comfort and solace. Neither Laurens nor Conybear, however, were for annihilating it: although they took the other side of the discussion of a subject of which none of us knew anything, their attacks were but half-hearted; like me, they were still under the spell exerted by a youthful training.

We were all of us aware of Ralph, who sat at some distance looking over the pages of an English sporting weekly. Presently he flung it down.

"Haven't you found out yet that man created God, Hughie?" he inquired. "And even if there were a personal God, what reason have you to think that man would be his especial concern, or any concern of his whatever? The discovery of evolution has knocked your Christianity into a cocked hat."

I don't remember how I answered him. In spite of the superficiality of his own arguments, which I was not learned enough to detect, I was ingloriously routed. Darwin had kicked over the bucket, and that was all there was to it.... After we had left the club both Conybear and Laurens admitted they were somewhat disturbed, declaring that Ralph had gone too far. I spent a miserable night, recalling the naturalistic assertions he had made so glibly, asking myself again and again how it was that the religion to which I so vainly clung had no greater effect on my actions and on my will, had not prevented me from lapses into degradation. And I hated myself for having argued upon a subject that was still sacred. I believed in Christ, which is to say that I believed that in some inscrutable manner he existed, continued to dominate the world and had suffered on my account.

To whom should I go now for a confirmation of my wavering beliefs? One of the results—it will be remembered of religion as I was taught it was a pernicious shyness, and even though I had found a mentor and confessor, I might have hesitated to unburden myself. This would be different from arguing with Ralph Hambleton. In my predicament, as I was wandering through the yard, I came across a notice of an evening talk to students in Holder Chapel, by a clergyman named Phillips Brooks. This was before the time, let me say in passing, when his sermons at Harvard were attended by crowds of undergraduates. Well, I stood staring at the notice, debating whether I should go, trying to screw up my courage; for I recognized clearly that such a step, if it were to be of any value, must mean a distinct departure from my present mode of life; and I recall thinking with a certain revulsion that I should have to "turn good." My presence at the meeting would be known the next day to all my friends, for the idea of attending a religious gathering when one was not forced to do so by the authorities was unheard of in our set. I should be classed with the despised "pious ones" who did such things regularly. I shrank from the ridicule. I had, however, heard of Mr. Brooks from Ned Symonds, who was by no means of the pious type, and whose parents attended Mr. Brooks's church in Boston.... I left my decision in abeyance. But when evening came I stole away from the club table, on the plea of an engagement, and

made my way rapidly toward Holder Chapel. I had almost reached it—when I caught a glimpse of Symonds and of some others approaching,—and I went on, to turn again. By this time the meeting, which was in a room on the second floor, had already begun. Palpitating, I climbed the steps; the door of the room was slightly ajar; I looked in; I recall a distinct sensation of surprise,—the atmosphere of that meeting was so different from what I had expected. Not a "pious" atmosphere at all! I saw a very tall and heavy gentleman, dressed in black, who sat, wholly at ease, on the table! One hand was in his pocket, one foot swung clear of the ground; and he was not preaching, but talking in an easy, conversational tone to some forty young men who sat intent on his words. I was too excited to listen to what he was saying, I was making a vain attempt to classify him. But I remember the thought, for it struck me with force,—that if Christianity were so thoroughly discredited by evolution, as Ralph Hambleton and other agnostics would have one believe, why should this remarkably sane and able-looking person be standing up for it as though it were still an established and incontrovertible fact?

He had not, certainly, the air of a dupe or a sentimentalist, but inspired confidence by his very personality. Youthlike, I watched him narrowly for flaws, for oratorical tricks, for all kinds of histrionic symptoms. Again I was near the secret; again it escaped me. The argument for Christianity lay not in assertions about it, but in being it. This man was Christianity…. I must have felt something of this, even though I failed to formulate it. And unconsciously I contrasted his strength, which reinforced the atmosphere of the room, with that of Ralph Hambleton, who was, a greater influence over me than I have recorded, and had come to sway me more and more, as he had swayed others. The strength of each was impressive, yet this Mr. Brooks seemed to me the bodily presentment of a set of values which I would have kept constantly before my eyes…. I felt him drawing me, overcoming my hesitation, belittling my fear of ridicule. I began gently to open the door—when something happened,—one of those little things that may change the course of a life. The door made little noise, yet one of the men sitting in the back of the room chanced to look around, and I recognized Hermann Krebs. His face was still sunken from his recent illness. Into his eyes seemed to leap a sudden appeal, an appeal to which my soul responded yet I hurried down the stairs and into the street. Instantly I regretted my retreat, I would have gone back, but lacked the courage; and I strayed unhappily for hours, now haunted by that look of Krebs, now wondering what the remarkably sane-looking and informal clergyman whose presence dominated the little room had been talking about. I never learned, but I did live to read his biography, to discover what he might have talked about,—for he if any man believed that life and religion are one, and preached consecration to life's task.

Of little use to speculate whether the message, had I learned it then, would have fortified and transformed me!

In spite of the fact that I was unable to relate to a satisfying conception of religion my new-born determination, I made up my mind, at least, to renounce my tortuous ways. I had promised my father to be a lawyer; I would keep my promise, I would give the law a fair trial; later on, perhaps, I might demonstrate an ability to write. All very praiseworthy! The season was Lent, a fitting time for renunciations and resolves. Although I had more than once fallen from grace, I believed myself at last to have settled down on my true course—when something happened. The devil interfered subtly, as usual—now in the person of Jerry Kyme. It should be said in justice to Jerry that he did not look the part. He had sunny-red, curly hair, mischievous blue eyes with long lashes, and he harboured no respect whatever for any individual or institution, sacred or profane; he possessed, however, a shrewd sense of his own value, as many innocent and unsuspecting souls discovered as early as our freshman year, and his method of putting down the presumptuous was both effective and unique. If he liked you, there could be no mistake about it.

One evening when I was engaged in composing a theme for Mr. Cheyne on no less a subject than the interpretation of the work of William Wordsworth, I found myself unexpectedly sprawling on the floor, in my descent kicking the table so vigorously as to send the ink-well a foot or two toward the ceiling. This, be it known, was a typical proof of Jerry's esteem. For he had entered noiselessly, jerking the back of my chair, which chanced to be tilted, and stood with his hands in his pockets, surveying the ruin he had wrought, watching the ink as it trickled on the carpet. Then he picked up the book.

"Poetry, you darned old grind!" he exclaimed disgustedly. "Say, Parry, I don't know what's got into you, but I want you to come home with me for the Easter holidays. It'll do you good. We'll be on the Hudson, you know, and we'll manage to make life bearable somehow."

I forgot my irritation, in sheer surprise.

"Why, that's mighty good of you, Jerry—" I began, struggling to my feet.

"Oh, rot!" he exclaimed. "I shouldn't ask you if I didn't want you."

There was no denying the truth of this, and after he had gone I sat for a long time with my pen in my

mouth, reflecting as to whether or not I should go. For I had the instinct that here was another cross-roads, that more depended on my decision than I cared to admit. But even then I knew what I should do. Ridiculous not to—I told myself. How could a week or ten days with Jerry possibly affect my newborn, resolve?

Yet the prospect, now, of a visit to the Kymes' was by no means so glowing as it once would have been. For I had seen visions, I had dreamed dreams, beheld a delectable country of my very own. A year ago—nay, even a month ago—how such an invitation would have glittered!… I returned at length to my theme, over which, before Jerry's arrival, I had been working feverishly. But now the glamour had gone from it.

Presently Tom came in.

"Anyone been here?" he demanded.

"Jerry," I told him.

"What did he want?"

"He wanted me to go home with him at Easter."

"You're going, of course."

"I don't know. I haven't decided."

"You'd be a fool not to," was Tom's comment. It voiced, succinctly, a prevailing opinion.

It was the conclusion I arrived at in my own mind. But just why I had been chosen for the honour, especially at such a time, was a riddle. Jerry's invitations were charily given, and valued accordingly; and more than once, at our table, I had felt a twinge of envy when Conybear or someone else had remarked, with the proper nonchalance, in answer to a question, that they were going to Weathersfield. Such was the name of the Kyme place….

I shall never forget the impression made on me by the decorous luxury of that big house, standing amidst its old trees, halfway up the gentle slope that rose steadily from the historic highway where poor Andre was captured. I can see now the heavy stone pillars of its portico vignetted in a flush of tenderest green, the tulips just beginning to flame forth their Easter colours in the well-kept beds, the stately, well-groomed evergreens, the vivid lawns, the clipped hedges. And like an overwhelming wave of emotion that swept all before it, the impressiveness of wealth took possession of me. For here was a kind of wealth I had never known, that did not exist in the West, nor even in the still Puritan environs of Boston where I had visited. It took itself for granted, proclaimed itself complacently to have solved all problems. By ignoring them, perhaps. But I was too young to guess this. It was order personified, gaining effect at every turn by a multitude of details too trivial to mention were it not for the fact that they entered deeply into my consciousness, until they came to represent, collectively, the very flower of achievement. It was a wealth that accepted tribute calmly, as of inherent right. Law and tradition defended its sanctity more effectively than troops. Literature descended from her high altar to lend it dignity; and the long, silent library displayed row upon row of the masters, appropriately clad in morocco or calf,—Smollett, Macaulay, Gibbon, Richardson, Fielding, Scott, Dickens, Irving and Thackeray, as though each had striven for a tablet here. Art had denied herself that her canvases might be hung on these walls; and even the Church, on that first Sunday of my visit, forgot the blood of her martyrs that she might adorn an appropriate niche in the setting. The clergyman, at one of the dinner parties, gravely asked a blessing as upon an Institution that included and absorbed all other institutions in its being….

The note of that house was a tempered gaiety. Guests arrived from New York, spent the night and departed again without disturbing the even tenor of its ways. Unobtrusive servants ministered to their wants,—and to mine….

Conybear was there, and two classmates from Boston, and we were treated with the amiable tolerance accorded to college youths and intimates of the son of the house. One night there was a dance in our honour. Nor have I forgotten Jerry's sister, Nathalie, whom I had met at Class Days, a slim and willowy, exotic young lady of the Botticelli type, with a crown of burnished hair, yet more suggestive of a hothouse than of spring. She spoke English with a French accent. Capricious, impulsive, she captured my interest because she put a high value on her favour; she drove me over the hills, informing me at length that I was sympathique—different from the rest; in short, she emphasized and intensified what I may call the Weathersfield environment, stirred up in me new and vague aspirations that troubled yet excited me.

Then there was Mrs. Kyme, a pretty, light-hearted lady, still young, who seemed to have no intention of growing older, who romped and played songs for us on the piano. The daughter of an old but now impecunious Westchester family, she had been born to adorn the position she held, she was adapted by nature to wring from it the utmost of the joys it offered. From her, rather than from her husband, both of the children seemed to have inherited. I used to watch Mr. Grosvenor Kyme as he sat at the end of the dinner-table, dark, preoccupied, taciturn, symbolical of a wealth new to my experience, and which had about it a certain fabulous quality. It toiled not, neither did it spin, but grew as if by magic, day and night, until the very conception of it was overpowering. What must it be to have had ancestors who had been clever enough to sit still until a congested and discontented Europe had begun to pour its thousands and hundreds of thousands into the gateway of the western world, until that gateway had become a metropolis? ancestors, of course, possessing what now suddenly appeared to me as the most desirable of gifts—since it reaped so dazzling a harvest-business foresight. From time to time these ancestors had continued to buy desirable corners, which no amount of persuasion had availed to make them relinquish. Lease them, yes; sell them, never! By virtue of such a system wealth was as inevitable as human necessity; and the thought of human necessity did not greatly bother me. Mr. Kyme's problem of life was not one of making money, but of investing it. One became automatically a personage….

It was due to one of those singular coincidences—so interesting a subject for speculation—that the man who revealed to me this golden romance of the Kyme family was none other than a resident of my own city, Mr. Theodore Watling, now become one of our most important and influential citizens; a corporation lawyer, new and stimulating qualification, suggesting as it did, a deus ex machina of great affairs. That he, of all men, should come to Weathersfield astonished me, since I was as yet to make the connection between that finished, decorous, secluded existence and the source of its being. The evening before my departure he arrived in company with two other gentlemen, a Mr. Talbot and a Mr. Saxes, whose names were spoken with respect in a sphere of which I had hitherto taken but little cognizance-Wall Street. Conybear informed me that they were "magnates,"… We were sitting in the drawing-room at tea, when they entered with Mr. Watling, and no sooner had he spoken to Mrs. Kyme than his quick eye singled me out of the group.

"Why, Hugh!" he exclaimed, taking my hand. "I had no idea I should meet you here—I saw your father only last week, the day I left home." And he added, turning to Mrs. Kyme, "Hugh is the son of Mr. Matthew Paret, who has been the leader of our bar for many years."

The recognition and the tribute to my father were so graciously given that I warmed with gratitude and pride, while Mr. Kyme smiled a little, remarking that I was a friend of Jerry's. Theodore Watling, for being here, had suddenly assumed in my eyes a considerable consequence, though the note he struck in that house was a strange one. It was, however, his own note, and had a certain distinction, a ring of independence, of the knowledge of self-worth. Dinner at Weathersfield we youngsters had usually found rather an oppressive ceremony, with its shaded lights and precise ritual over which Mr. Kyme presided like a high priest; conversation had been restrained. That night, as Johnnie Laurens afterwards expressed it, "things loosened up," and Mr. Watling was responsible for the loosening. Taking command of the Kyme dinner table appeared to me to be no mean achievement, but this is just what he did, without being vulgar or noisy or assertive. Suavitar in modo, forbiter in re. If, as I watched him there with a newborn pride and loyalty, I had paused to reconstruct the idea that the mention of his name would formerly have evoked, I suppose I should have found him falling short of my notion of a gentleman; it had been my father's opinion; but Mr. Watling's marriage to Gene Hollister's aunt had given him a standing with us at home. He possessed virility, vitality in a remarkable degree, yet some elusive quality that was neither tact nor delicacy—though related to these differentiated him from the commonplace, self-made man of ability. He was just off the type. To liken him to a clothing store model of a well-built, broad-shouldered man with a firm neck, a handsome, rather square face not lacking in colour and a conventional, drooping moustache would be slanderous; yet he did suggest it. Suggesting it, he redeemed it: and the middle western burr in his voice was rather attractive than otherwise. He had not so much the air of belonging there, as of belonging anywhere—one of those anomalistic American citizens of the world who go abroad and make intimates of princes. Before the meal was over he had inspired me with loyalty and pride, enlisted the admiration of Jerry and Conybear and Johnnie Laurens; we followed him into the smoking-room, sitting down in a row on a leather lounge behind our elders.

Here, now that the gentlemen were alone, there was an inspiring largeness in their talk that fired the imagination. The subject was investments, at first those of coal and iron in my own state, for Mr. Watling, it appeared, was counsel for the Boyne Iron Works.

"It will pay you to keep an eye on that company, Mr. Kyme," he said, knocking the ashes from his cigar. "Now that old Mr. Durrett's gone—"

"You don't mean to say Nathaniel Durrett's dead!" said Mr. Kyme.

The lawyer nodded.

"The old regime passed with him. Adolf Scherer succeeds him, and you may take my word for it, he's a coming man. Mr. Durrett, who was a judge of men, recognized that. Scherer was an emigrant, he had ideas, and rose to be a foreman. For the last few years Mr. Durrett threw everything on his shoulders...."

Little by little the scope of the discussion was enlarged until it ranged over a continent, touching lightly upon lines of railroad, built or projected, across the great west our pioneers had so lately succeeded in wresting from the savages, upon mines of copper and gold hidden away among the mountains, and millions of acres of forest and grazing lands which a complacent government would relinquish provided certain technicalities were met: touching lightly, too, very lightly,—upon senators and congressmen at Washington. And for the first time I learned that not the least of the functions of these representatives of the people was to act as the medium between capital and investment, to facilitate the handing over of the Republic's resources to those in a position to develop them. The emphasis was laid on development, or rather on the resulting prosperity for the country: that was the justification, and it was taken for granted as supreme. Nor was it new to me; this cult of prosperity. I recalled the torch-light processions of the tariff enthusiasts of my childhood days, my father's championship of the Republican Party. He had not idealized politicians, either. For the American, politics and ethics were strangers.

Thus I listened with increasing fascination to these gentlemen in evening clothes calmly treating the United States as a melon patch that existed largely for the purpose of being divided up amongst a limited and favored number of persons. I had a feeling of being among the initiated. Where, it may be asked, were my ideals? Let it not be supposed that I believed myself to have lost them. If so, the impression I have given of myself has been wholly inadequate. No, they had been transmuted, that is all, transmuted by the alchemy of Weathersfield, by the personality of Theodore Watling into brighter visions. My eyes rarely left his face; I hung on his talk, which was interspersed with native humour, though he did not always join in the laughter, sometimes gazing at the fire, as though his keen mind were grappling with a problem suggested. I noted the respect in which his opinions were held, and my imagination was fired by an impression of the power to be achieved by successful men of his profession, by the evidence of their indispensability to capital itself.... At last when the gentlemen rose and were leaving the room, Mr. Watling lingered, with his hand on my arm.

"Of course you're going through the Law School, Hugh," he said.

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"Good!" he exclaimed emphatically. "The law, to-day, is more of a career than ever, especially for a young man with your antecedents and advantages, and I know of no city in the United States where I would rather start practice, if I were a young man, than ours. In the next twenty years we shall see a tremendous growth. Of course you'll be going into your father's office. You couldn't do better. But I'll keep an eye on you, and perhaps I'll be able to help you a little, too."

I thanked him gratefully.

A famous artist, who started out in youth to embrace a military career and who failed to pass an examination at West Point, is said to have remarked that if silicon had been a gas he would have been a soldier. I am afraid I may have given the impression that if I had not gone to Weathersfield and encountered Mr. Watling I might not have been a lawyer. This impression would be misleading. And while it is certain that I have not exaggerated the intensity of the spiritual experience I went through at Cambridge, a somewhat belated consideration for the truth compels me to register my belief that the mood would in any case have been ephemeral. The poison generated by the struggle of my nature with its environment had sunk too deep, and the very education that was supposed to make a practical man of me had turned me into a sentimentalist. I became, as will be seen, anything but a practical man in the true sense, though the world in which I had been brought up and continued to live deemed me such. My father was greatly pleased when I wrote him that I was now more than ever convinced of the wisdom of choosing the law as my profession, and was satisfied that I had come to my senses at last. He had still been prepared to see me "go off at a tangent," as he expressed it. On the other hand, the powerful effect of the appeal made by Weathersfield and Mr. Watling must not be underestimated. Here in one object lesson was emphasized a host of suggestions each of which had made its impression. And when I returned to Cambridge Alonzo Cheyne knew that he had lost me....

I pass over the rest of my college course, and the years I spent at the Harvard Law School, where were instilled into me without difficulty the dictums that the law was the most important of all

professions, that those who entered it were a priestly class set aside to guard from profanation that Ark of the Covenant, the Constitution of the United States. In short, I was taught law precisely as I had been taught religion,—scriptural infallibility over again,—a static law and a static theology,—a set of concepts that were supposed to be equal to any problems civilization would have to meet until the millennium. What we are wont to call wisdom is often naively innocent of impending change. It has no barometric properties.

I shall content myself with relating one incident only of this period. In the January of my last year I went with a party of young men and girls to stay over Sunday at Beverly Farms, where Mrs. Fremantle —a young Boston matron had opened her cottage for the occasion. This "cottage," a roomy, gabled structure, stood on a cliff, at the foot of which roared the wintry Atlantic, while we danced and popped corn before the open fires. During the daylight hours we drove about the country in sleighs, or made ridiculous attempts to walk on snow-shoes.

On Sunday afternoon, left temporarily to my own devices, I wandered along the cliff, crossing into the adjoining property. The wind had fallen; the waves, much subdued, broke rhythmically against the rocks; during the night a new mantle of snow had been spread, and the clouds were still low and menacing. As I strolled I became aware of a motionless figure ahead of me,—one that seemed oddly familiar; the set of the shabby overcoat on the stooping shoulders, the unconscious pose contributed to a certain sharpness of individuality; in the act of challenging my memory, I halted. The man was gazing at the seascape, and his very absorption gave me a sudden and unfamiliar thrill. The word absorption precisely expresses my meaning, for he seemed indeed to have become a part of his surroundings,—an harmonious part. Presently he swung about and looked at me as though he had expected to find me there—and greeted me by name.

"Krebs!" I exclaimed.

He smiled, and flung out his arm, indicating the scene. His eyes at that moment seemed to reflect the sea,—they made the gaunt face suddenly beautiful.

"This reminds me of a Japanese print," he said.

The words, or the tone in which he spoke, curiously transformed the picture. It was as if I now beheld it, anew, through his vision: the grey water stretching eastward to melt into the grey sky, the massed, black trees on the hillside, powdered with white, the snow in rounded, fantastic patches on the huge boulders at the foot of the cliff. Krebs did not seem like a stranger, but like one whom I had known always,—one who stood in a peculiar relationship between me and something greater I could not define. The impression was fleeting, but real.... I remember wondering how he could have known anything about Japanese prints.

"I didn't think you were still in this part of the country," I remarked awkwardly.

"I'm a reporter on a Boston newspaper, and I've been sent up here to interview old Mr. Dome, who lives in that house," and he pointed to a roof above the trees. "There is a rumour, which I hope to verify, that he has just given a hundred thousand dollars to the University."

"And—won't he see you?"

"At present he's taking a nap," said Krebs. "He comes here occasionally for a rest."

"Do you like interviewing?" I asked.

He smiled again.

"Well, I see a good many different kinds of people, and that's interesting."

"But—being a reporter?" I persisted.

This continued patronage was not a conscious expression of superiority on my part, but he did not seem to resent it. He had aroused my curiosity.

"I'm going into the law," he said.

The quiet confidence with which he spoke aroused, suddenly, a twinge of antagonism. He had every right to go into the law, of course, and yet!... my query would have made it evident to me, had I been introspective in those days, that the germ of the ideal of the profession, implanted by Mr. Watling, was expanding. Were not influential friends necessary for the proper kind of career? and where were Krebs's? In spite of the history of Daniel Webster and a long line of American tradition, I felt an incongruity in my classmate's aspiration. And as he stood there, gaunt and undoubtedly hungry, his

eyes kindling, I must vaguely have classed him with the revolutionaries of all the ages; must have felt in him, instinctively, a menace to the stability of that Order with which I had thrown my fortunes. And yet there were comparatively poor men in the Law School itself who had not made me feel this way! He had impressed me against my will, taken me by surprise, commiseration had been mingled with other feelings that sprang out of the memory of the night I had called on him, when he had been sick. Now I resented something in him which Tom Peters had called "crust."

"The law!" I repeated. "Why?"

"Well," he said, "even when I was a boy, working at odd jobs, I used to think if I could ever be a lawyer I should have reached the top notch of human dignity."

Once more his smile disarmed me.

"And now" I asked curiously.

"You see, it was an ideal with me, I suppose. My father was responsible for that. He had the German temperament of '48, and when he fled to this country, he expected to find Utopia." The smile emerged again, like the sun shining through clouds, while fascination and antagonism again struggled within me. "And then came frightful troubles. For years he could get only enough work to keep him and my mother alive, but he never lost his faith in America. 'It is man,' he would say, 'man has to grow up to it—to liberty.' Without the struggle, liberty would be worth nothing. And he used to tell me that we must all do our part, we who had come here, and not expect everything to be done for us. He had made that mistake. If things were bad, why, put a shoulder to the wheel and help to make them better.

"That helped me," he continued, after a moment's pause. "For I've seen a good many things, especially since I've been working for a newspaper. I've seen, again and again, the power of the law turned against those whom it was intended to protect, I've seen lawyers who care a great deal more about winning cases than they do about justice, who prostitute their profession to profit making,—profit making for themselves and others. And they are often the respectable lawyers, too, men of high standing, whom you would not think would do such things. They are on the side of the powerful, and the best of them are all retained by rich men and corporations. And what is the result? One of the worst evils, I think, that can befall a country. The poor man goes less and less to the courts. He is getting bitter, which is bad, which is dangerous. But men won't see it."

It was on my tongue to refute this, to say that everybody had a chance. I could indeed recall many arguments that had been drilled into me; quotations, even, from court decisions. But something prevented me from doing this,—something in his manner, which was neither argumentative nor combative.

"That's why I am going into the law," he added. "And I intend to stay in it if I can keep alive. It's a great chance for me—for all of us. Aren't you at the Law School?"

I nodded. Once more, as his earnest glance fell upon me, came that suggestion of a subtle, inexplicable link between us; but before I could reply, steps were heard behind us, and an elderly servant, bareheaded, was seen coming down the path.

"Are you the reporter?" he demanded somewhat impatiently of Krebs. "If you want to see Mr. Dome, you'd better come right away. He's going out for a drive."

For a while, after he had shaken my hand and departed, I stood in the snow, looking after him....

VIII

On the Wednesday of that same week the news of my father's sudden and serious illness came to me in a telegram, and by the time I arrived at home it was too late to see him again alive. It was my first experience with death, and what perplexed me continually during the following days was an inability to feel the loss more deeply. When a child, I had been easily shaken by the spectacle of sorrow. Had I, during recent years, as a result of a discovery that emotions arising from human relationships lead to discomfort and suffering, deliberately been forming a shell, until now I was incapable of natural feelings? Of late I had seemed closer to my father, and his letters, though formal, had given evidence of his affection; in his repressed fashion he had made it clear that he looked forward to the time when I

was to practise with him. Why was it then, as I gazed upon his fine features in death, that I experienced no intensity of sorrow? What was it in me that would not break down? He seemed worn and tired, yet I had never thought of him as weary, never attributed to him any yearning. And now he was released.

I wondered what had been his private thoughts about himself, his private opinions about life; and when I reflect now upon my lack of real knowledge at five and twenty, I am amazed at the futility of an expensive education which had failed to impress upon me the simple, basic fact that life was struggle; that either development or retrogression is the fate of all men, that characters are never completely made, but always in the making. I had merely a disconcerting glimpse of this truth, with no powers of formulation, as I sat beside my mother in the bedroom, where every article evoked some childhood scene. Here was the dent in the walnut foot-board of the bed made, one wintry day, by the impact of my box of blocks; the big arm-chair, covered with I know not what stiff embroidery, which had served on countless occasions as a chariot driven to victory. I even remembered how every Wednesday morning I had been banished from the room, which had been so large a part of my childhood universe, when Ella, the housemaid, had flung open all its windows and crowded its furniture into the hall.

The thought of my wanderings since then became poignant, almost terrifying. The room, with all its memories, was unchanged. How safe I had been within its walls! Why could I not have been, content with what it represented? of tradition, of custom,—of religion? And what was it within me that had lured me away from these?

I was miserable, indeed, but my misery was not of the kind I thought it ought to be. At moments, when my mother relapsed into weeping, I glanced at her almost in wonder. Such sorrow as hers was incomprehensible. Once she surprised and discomfited me by lifting her head and gazing fixedly at me through her tears.

I recall certain impressions of the funeral. There, among the pall-bearers, was my Cousin Robert Breck, tears in the furrows of his cheeks. Had he loved my father more than I? The sight of his grief moved me suddenly and strongly.... It seemed an age since I had worked in his store, and yet here he was still, coming to town every morning and returning every evening to Claremore, loving his friends, and mourning them one by one. Was this, the spectacle presented by my Cousin Robert, the reward of earthly existence? Were there no other prizes save those known as greatness of character and depth of human affections? Cousin Robert looked worn and old. The other pall-bearers, men of weight, of long standing in the community, were aged, too; Mr. Blackwood, and Mr. Jules Hollister; and out of place, somehow, in this new church building. It came to me abruptly that the old order was gone,—had slipped away during my absence. The church I had known in boyhood had been torn down to make room for a business building on Boyne Street; the edifice in which I sat was expensive, gave forth no distinctive note; seemingly transitory with its hybrid interior, its shiny oak and blue and red organ-pipes, betokening a compromised and weakened faith. Nondescript, likewise, seemed the new minister, Mr. Randlett, as he prayed unctuously in front of the flowers massed on the platform. I vaguely resented his laudatory references to my father.

The old church, with its severity, had actually stood for something. It was the Westminster Catechism in wood and stone, and Dr. Pound had been the human incarnation of that catechism, the fit representative of a wrathful God, a militant shepherd who had guarded with vigilance his respectable flock, who had protested vehemently against the sins of the world by which they were surrounded, against the "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." How Dr. Pound would have put the emphasis of the Everlasting into those words!

Against what was Mr. Randlett protesting?

My glance wandered to the pews which held the committees from various organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Bar Association, which had come to do honour to my father. And there, differentiated from the others, I saw the spruce, alert figure of Theodore Watling. He, too, represented a new type and a new note,—this time a forceful note, a secular note that had not belonged to the old church, and seemed likewise anomalistic in the new....

During the long, slow journey in the carriage to the cemetery my mother did not raise her veil. It was not until she reached out and seized my hand, convulsively, that I realized she was still a part of my existence.

In the days that followed I became aware that my father's death had removed a restrictive element, that I was free now to take without criticism or opposition whatever course in life I might desire. It may be that I had apprehended even then that his professional ideals would not have coincided with my own. Mingled with this sense of emancipation was a curious feeling of regret, of mourning for something I had never valued, something fixed and dependable for which he had stood, a rock and a

refuge of which I had never availed myself!… When his will was opened it was found that the property had been left to my mother during her lifetime. It was larger than I had thought, four hundred thousand dollars, shrewdly invested, for the most part, in city real estate. My father had been very secretive as to money matters, and my mother had no interest in them.

Three or four days later I received in the mail a typewritten letter signed by Theodore Watling, expressing sympathy for my bereavement, and asking me to drop in on him, down town, before I should leave the city. In contrast to the somewhat dingy offices where my father had practised in the Blackwood Block, the quarters of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon on the eighth floor of the new Durrett Building were modern to a degree, finished in oak and floored with marble, with a railed-off space where young women with nimble fingers played ceaselessly on typewriters. One of them informed me that Mr. Watling was busy, but on reading my card added that she would take it in. Meanwhile, in company with two others who may have been clients, I waited. This, then, was what it meant to be a lawyer of importance, to have, like a Chesterfield, an ante-room where clients cooled their heels and awaited one's pleasure…

The young woman returned, and led me through a corridor to a door on which was painted Mr. Wailing.

I recall him tilted back in his chair in a debonnair manner beside his polished desk, the hint of a smile on his lips; and leaning close to him was a yellow, owl-like person whose eyes, as they turned to me, gave the impression of having stared for years into hard, artificial lights. Mr. Watling rose briskly.

"How are you, Hugh?" he said, the warmth of his greeting tempered by just the note of condolence suitable to my black clothes. "I'm glad you came. I wanted to see you before you went back to Cambridge. I must introduce you to Judge Bering, of our State Supreme Court. Judge, this is Mr. Paret's boy."

The judge looked me over with a certain slow impressiveness, and gave me a soft and fleshy hand.

"Glad to know you, Mr. Paret. Your father was a great loss to our bar," he declared.

I detected in his tone and manner a slight reservation that could not be called precisely judicial dignity; it was as though, in these few words, he had gone to the limit of self-commitment with a stranger—a striking contrast to the confidential attitude towards Mr. Watling in which I had surprised him.

"Judge," said Mr. Watling, sitting down again, "do you recall that time we all went up to Mr. Paret's house and tried to induce him to run for mayor? That was before you went on the lower bench."

The judge nodded gloomily, caressing his watch chain, and suddenly rose to go.

"That will be all right, then?" Mr. Watling inquired cryptically, with a smile. The other made a barely perceptible inclination of the head and departed. Mr. Watling looked at me. "He's one of the best men we have on the bench to-day," he added. There was a trace of apology in his tone.

He talked a while of my father, to whom, so he said, he had looked up ever since he had been admitted to the bar.

"It would be a pleasure to me, Hugh, as well as a matter of pride," he said cordially, but with dignity, "to have Matthew Paret's son in my office. I suppose you will be wishing to take your mother somewhere this summer, but if you care to come here in the autumn, you will be welcome. You will begin, of course, as other young men begin,—as I began. But I am a believer in blood, and I'll be glad to have you. Mr. Fowndes and Mr. Ripon feel the same way." He escorted me to the door himself.

Everywhere I went during that brief visit home I was struck by change, by the crumbling and decay of institutions that once had held me in thrall, by the superimposition of a new order that as yet had assumed no definite character. Some of the old landmarks had disappeared; there were new and aggressive office buildings, new and aggressive residences, new and aggressive citizens who lived in them, and of whom my mother spoke with gentle deprecation. Even Claremore, that paradise of my childhood, had grown shrivelled and shabby, even tawdry, I thought, when we went out there one Sunday afternoon; all that once represented the magic word "country" had vanished. The old flat piano, made in Philadelphia ages ago, the horsehair chairs and sofa had been replaced by a nondescript furniture of the sort displayed behind plate-glass windows of the city's stores: rocking-chairs on stands, upholstered in clashing colours, their coiled springs only half hidden by tassels, and "ornamental" electric fixtures, instead of the polished coal-oil lamps. Cousin Jenny had grown white, Willie was a staid bachelor, Helen an old maid, while Mary had married a tall, anaemic young man with glasses, Walter Kinley, whom Cousin Robert had taken into the store. As I contemplated the Brecks odd

questions suggested themselves: did honesty and warm-heartedness necessarily accompany a lack of artistic taste? and was virtue its own reward, after all? They drew my mother into the house, took off her wraps, set her down in the most comfortable rocker, and insisted on making her a cup of tea.

I was touched. I loved them still, and yet I was conscious of reservations concerning them. They, too, seemed a little on the defensive with me, and once in a while Mary was caustic in her remarks.

"I guess nothing but New York will be good enough for Hugh now. He'll be taking Cousin Sarah away from us."

"Not at all, my dear," said my mother, gently, "he's going into Mr. Watling's office next autumn."

"Theodore Watling?" demanded Cousin Robert, pausing in his carving.

"Yes, Robert. Mr. Watling has been good enough to say that he would like to have Hugh. Is there anything—?"

"Oh, I'm out of date, Sarah," Cousin Robert replied, vigorously severing the leg of the turkey. "These modern lawyers are too smart for me. Watling's no worse than the others, I suppose,—only he's got more ability."

"I've never heard anything against him," said my mother in a pained voice. "Only the other day McAlery Willett congratulated me that Hugh was going to be with him."

"You mustn't mind Robert, Sarah," put in Cousin Jenny,—a remark reminiscent of other days.

"Dad has a notion that his generation is the only honest one," said Helen, laughingly, as she passed a plate.

I had gained a sense of superiority, and I was quite indifferent to Cousin Robert's opinion of Mr. Watling, of modern lawyers in general. More than once a wave of self-congratulation surged through me that I had possessed the foresight and initiative to get out of the wholesale grocery business while there was yet time. I looked at Willie, still freckled, still literal, still a plodder, at Walter Kinley, and I thought of the drabness of their lives; at Cousin Robert himself as he sat smoking his cigar in the bay-window on that dark February day, and suddenly I pitied him. The suspicion struck me that he had not prospered of late, and this deepened to a conviction as he talked.

"The Republican Party is going to the dogs," he asserted.

"It used to be an honourable party, but now it is no better than the other. Politics are only conducted, now, for the purpose of making unscrupulous men rich, sir. For years I furnished this city with good groceries, if I do say it myself. I took a pride in the fact that the inmates of the hospitals, yes, and the dependent poor in the city's institutions, should have honest food. You can get anything out of the city if you are willing to pay the politicians for it. I lost my city contracts. Why? Because I refused to deal with scoundrels. Weill and Company and other unscrupulous upstarts are willing to do so, and poison the poor and the sick with adulterated groceries! The first thing I knew was that the city auditor was holding back my bills for supplies, and paying Weill's. That's what politics and business, yes, sir, and the law, have come to in these days. If a man wants to succeed, he must turn into a rascal."

I was not shocked, but I was silent, uncomfortable, wishing that it were time to take the train back to the city. Cousin Robert's face was more worn than I had thought, and I contrasted him inevitably with the forceful person who used to stand, in his worn alpaca coat, on the pavement in front of his store, greeting with clear-eyed content his fellow merchants of the city. Willie Breck, too, was silent, and Walter Kinley took off his glasses and wiped them. In the meanwhile Helen had left the group in which my mother sat, and, approaching us, laid her hands on her father's shoulders.

"Now, dad," she said, in affectionate remonstrance, "you're excited about politics again, and you know it isn't good for you. And besides, they're not worth it."

"You're right, Helen," he replied. Under the pressure of her hands he made a strong effort to control himself, and turned to address my mother across the room.

"I'm getting to be a crotchety old man," he said. "It's a good thing I have a daughter to remind me of it."

"It is a good thing, Robert," said my mother.

During the rest of our visit he seemed to have recovered something of his former spirits and poise,

taking refuge in the past. They talked of their own youth, of families whose houses had been landmarks on the Second Bank.

"I'm worried about your Cousin Robert, Hugh," my mother confided to me, when we were at length seated in the train. "I've heard rumours that things are not so well at the store as they might be." We looked out at the winter landscape, so different from that one which had thrilled every fibre of my being in the days when the railroad on which we travelled had been a winding narrow gauge. The orchards—those that remained—were bare; stubble pricked the frozen ground where tassels had once waved in the hot, summer wind. We flew by row after row of ginger-bread, suburban houses built on "villa plots," and I read in large letters on a hideous sign-board, "Woodbine Park."

"Hugh, have you ever heard anything against—Mr. Watling?"

"No, mother," I said. "So far as I knew, he is very much looked up to by lawyers and business men. He is counsel, I believe, for Mr. Blackwood's street car line on Boyne Street. And I told you, I believe, that I met him once at Mr. Kyme's."

"Poor Robert!" she sighed. "I suppose business trouble does make one bitter,—I've seen it so often. But I never imagined that it would overtake Robert, and at his time of life! It is an old and respected firm, and we have always had a pride in it." …

That night, when I was going to bed, it was evident that the subject was still in her mind. She clung to my hand a moment.

"I, too, am afraid of the new, Hugh," she said, a little tremulously. "We all grow so, as age comes on."

"But you are not old, mother," I protested.

"I have a feeling, since your father has gone, that I have lived my life, my dear, though I'd like to stay long enough to see you happily married—to have grandchildren. I was not young when you were born." And she added, after a little while, "I know nothing about business affairs, and now—now that your father is no longer here, sometimes I'm afraid—"

"Afraid of what, mother?"

She tried to smile at me through her tears. We were in the old sitting-room, surrounded by the books.

"I know it's foolish, and it isn't that I don't trust you. I know that the son of your father couldn't do anything that was not honourable. And yet I am afraid of what the world is becoming. The city is growing so fast, and so many new people are coming in. Things are not the same. Robert is right, there. And I have heard your father say the same thing. Hugh, promise me that you will try to remember always what he was, and what he would wish you to be!"

"I will, mother," I answered. "But I think you would find that Cousin Robert exaggerates a little, makes things seem worse than they really are. Customs change, you know. And politics were never well—Sunday schools." I, too, smiled a little. "Father knew that. And he would never take an active part in them."

"He was too fine!" she exclaimed.

"And now," I continued, "Cousin Robert has happened to come in contact with them through business. That is what has made the difference in him. Before, he always knew they were corrupt, but he rarely thought about them."

"Hugh," she said suddenly, after a pause, "you must remember one thing,—that you can afford to be independent. I thank God that your father has provided for that!"

I was duly admitted, the next autumn, to the bar of my own state, and was assigned to a desk in the offices of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon. Larry Weed was my immediate senior among the apprentices, and Larry was a hero-worshipper. I can see him now. He suggested a bullfrog as he sat in the little room we shared in common, his arms akimbo over a law book, his little legs doubled under him, his round, eyes fixed expectantly on the doorway. And even if I had not been aware of my good fortune in being connected with such a firm as Theodore Watling's, Larry would shortly have brought it home to me. During those weeks when I was making my first desperate attempts at briefing up the law I was sometimes interrupted by his exclamations when certain figures went by in the corridor.

"Say, Hugh, do you know who that was?"

"No."

"Miller Gorse."

"Who's he?"

"Do you mean to say you never heard of Miller Gorse?"

"I've been away a long time," I would answer apologetically. A person of some importance among my contemporaries at Harvard, I had looked forward to a residence in my native city with the complacency of one who has seen something of the world,—only to find that I was the least in the new kingdom. And it was a kingdom. Larry opened up to me something of the significance and extent of it, something of the identity of the men who controlled it.

"Miller Gorse," he said impressively, "is the counsel for the railroad."

"What railroad? You mean the—" I was adding, when he interrupted me pityingly.

"After you've been here a while you'll find out there's only one railroad in this state, so far as politics are concerned. The Ashuela and Northern, the Lake Shore and the others don't count."

I refrained from asking any more questions at that time, but afterwards I always thought of the Railroad as spelled with a capital.

"Miller Gorse isn't forty yet," Larry told me on another occasion.
"That's doing pretty well for a man who comes near running this state."

For the sake of acquiring knowledge, I endured Mr. Weed's patronage. I inquired how Mr. Gorse ran the state.

"Oh, you'll find out soon enough," he assured me.

"But Mr. Barbour's president of the Railroad."

"Sure. Once in a while they take something up to him, but as a rule he leaves things to Gorse."

Whereupon I resolved to have a good look at Mr. Gorse at the first opportunity. One day Mr. Watling sent out for some papers.

"He's in there now;" said Larry. "You take 'em."

"In there" meant Mr. Watling's sanctum. And in there he was. I had only a glance at the great man, for, with a kindly but preoccupied "Thank you, Hugh," Mr. Watling took the papers and dismissed me. Heaviness, blackness and impassivity,—these were the impressions of Mr. Gorse which I carried away from that first meeting. The very solidity of his flesh seemed to suggest the solidity of his position. Such, say the psychologists, is the effect of prestige.

I remember well an old-fashioned picture puzzle in one of my boyhood books. The scene depicted was to all appearances a sylvan, peaceful one, with two happy lovers seated on a log beside a brook; but presently, as one gazed at the picture, the head of an animal stood forth among the branches, and then the body; more animals began to appear, bit by bit; a tiger, a bear, a lion, a jackal, a fox, until at last, whenever I looked at the page, I did not see the sylvan scene at all, but only the predatory beasts of the forest. So, one by one, the figures of the real rulers of the city superimposed themselves for me upon the simple and democratic design of Mayor, Council, Board of Aldermen, Police Force, etc., that filled the eye of a naive and trusting electorate which fondly imagined that it had something to say in government. Miller Gorse was one of these rulers behind the screen, and Adolf Scherer, of the Boyne Iron Works, another; there was Leonard Dickinson of the Corn National Bank; Frederick Grierson, becoming wealthy in city real estate; Judah B. Tallant, who, though outlawed socially, was deferred to as the owner of the Morning Era; and even Ralph Hambleton, rapidly superseding the elderly and conservative Mr. Lord, who had hitherto managed the great Hambleton estate. Ralph seemed to have become, in a somewhat gnostic manner, a full-fledged financier. Not having studied law, he had been home for four years when I became a legal fledgling, and during the early days of my apprenticeship I was beholden to him for many "eye openers" concerning the conduct of great affairs. I remember him sauntering into my room one morning when Larry Weed had gone out on an errand.

"Hello, Hughie," he said, with his air of having nothing to do. "Grinding it out? Where's Watling?"

"Isn't he in his office?"

"No."

"Well, what can we do for you?" I asked.

Ralph grinned.

"Perhaps I'll tell you when you're a little older. You're too young." And he sank down into Larry Weed's chair, his long legs protruding on the other side of the table. "It's a matter of taxes. Some time ago I found out that Dickinson and Tallant and others I could mention were paying a good deal less on their city property than we are. We don't propose to do it any more—that's all."

"How can Mr. Watling help you?" I inquired.

"Well, I don't mind giving you a few tips about your profession, Hughie. I'm going to get Watling to fix it up with the City Hall gang. Old Lord doesn't like it, I'll admit, and when I told him we had been contributing to the city long enough, that I proposed swinging into line with other property holders, he began to blubber about disgrace and what my grandfather would say if he were alive. Well, he isn't alive. A good deal of water has flowed under the bridges since his day. It's a mere matter of business, of getting your respectable firm to retain a City Hall attorney to fix it up with the assessor."

"How about the penitentiary?" I ventured, not too seriously.

"I shan't go to the penitentiary, neither will Watling. What I do is to pay a lawyer's fee. There isn't anything criminal in that, is there?"

For some time after Ralph had departed I sat reflecting upon this new knowledge, and there came into my mind the bitterness of Cousin Robert Breck against this City Hall gang, and his remarks about lawyers. I recalled the tone in which he had referred to Mr. Watling. But Ralph's philosophy easily triumphed. Why not be practical, and become master of a situation which one had not made, and could not alter, instead of being overwhelmed by it? Needless to say, I did not mention the conversation to Mr. Watling, nor did he dwindle in my estimation. These necessary transactions did not interfere in any way with his personal relationships, and his days were filled with kindnesses. And was not Mr. Ripon, the junior partner, one of the evangelical lights of the community, conducting advanced Bible classes every week in the Church of the Redemption?... The unfolding of mysteries kept me alert. And I understood that, if I was to succeed, certain esoteric knowledge must be acquired, as it were, unofficially. I kept my eyes and ears open, and applied myself, with all industry, to the routine tasks with which every young man in a large legal firm is familiar. I recall distinctly my pride when, the Board of Aldermen having passed an ordinance lowering the water rates, I was intrusted with the responsibility of going before the court in behalf of Mr. Ogilvy's water company, obtaining a temporary restricting order preventing the ordinance from going at once into effect. Here was an affair in point. Were it not for lawyers of the calibre of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon, hard-earned private property would soon be confiscated by the rapacious horde. Once in a while I was made aware that Mr. Watling had his eye on me.

"Well, Hugh," he would say, "how are you getting along? That's right, stick to it, and after a while we'll hand the drudgery over to somebody else."

He possessed the supreme quality of a leader of men in that he took pains to inform himself concerning the work of the least of his subordinates; and he had the gift of putting fire into a young man by a word or a touch of the hand on the shoulder. It was not difficult for me, therefore, to comprehend Larry Weed's hero-worship, the loyalty of other members of the firm or of those occupants of the office whom I have not mentioned. My first impression of him, which I had got at Jerry Kyme's, deepened as time went on, and I readily shared the belief of those around me that his legal talents easily surpassed those of any of his contemporaries. I can recall, at this time, several noted cases in the city when I sat in court listening to his arguments with thrills of pride. He made us all feel—no matter how humble may have been our contributions to the preparation—that we had a share in his triumphs. We remembered his manner with judges and juries, and strove to emulate it. He spoke as if there could be no question as to his being right as to the law and the facts, and yet, in some subtle way that bated analysis, managed not to antagonize the court. Victory was in the air in that office. I do not mean to say there were not defeats; but frequently these defeats, by resourcefulness, by a never-say-die spirit, by a consummate knowledge, not only of the law, but of other things at which I have hinted, were turned into ultimate victories. We fought cases from one court to another, until our opponents were worn out or the decision was reversed. We won, and that spirit of winning got into the blood. What was most impressed on me in those early years, I think, was the discovery that there was always a path—if one were clever enough to find it—from one terrace to the next higher. Staying power was the most prized of all the virtues. One could always, by adroitness, compel a legal opponent to fight the matter out all over again on new ground, or at least on ground partially new. If the Court of Appeals should fail one, there was the Supreme Court; there was the opportunity, also, to shift from the state to the federal courts; and likewise the much-prized device known as a change of venue, when a judge was supposed to be "prejudiced."

IX.

As my apprenticeship advanced I grew more and more to the inhabitants of our city into two kinds, the who were served, and the inefficient, who were separate efficient, neglected; but the mental process of which the classification was the result was not so deliberate as may be supposed. Sometimes, when an important client would get into trouble, the affair took me into the police court, where I saw the riff-raff of the city penned up, waiting to have justice doled out to them: weary women who had spent the night in cells, indifferent now as to the front they presented to the world, the finery rued that they had tended so carefully to catch the eyes of men on the darkened streets; brazen young girls, who blazed forth defiance to all order; derelict men, sodden and hopeless, with scrubby beards; shifty looking burglars and pickpockets. All these I beheld, at first with twinges of pity, later to mass them with the ugly and inevitable with whom society had to deal somehow. Lawyers, after all, must be practical men. I came to know the justices of these police courts, as well as other judges. And underlying my acquaintance with all of them was the knowledge—though not on the threshold of my consciousness—that they depended for their living, every man of them, those who were appointed and those who were elected, upon a political organization which derived its sustenance from the element whence came our clients. Thus by degrees the sense of belonging to a special priesthood had grown on me.

I recall an experience with that same Mr. Nathan. Weill, the wholesale grocer of whose commerce with the City Hall my Cousin Robert Breck had so bitterly complained. Late one afternoon Mr. Weill's carriage ran over a child on its way up-town through one of the poorer districts. The parents, naturally, were frantic, and the coachman was arrested. This was late in the afternoon, and I was alone in the office when the telephone rang. Hurrying to the police station, I found Mr. Weill in a state of excitement and abject fear, for an ugly crowd had gathered outside.

"Could not Mr. Watling or Mr. Fowndes come?" demanded the grocer.

With an inner contempt for the layman's state of mind on such occasions I assured him of my competency to handle the case. He was impressed, I think, by the sergeant's deference, who knew what it meant to have such an office as ours interfere with the affair. I called up the prosecuting attorney, who sent to Monahan's saloon, close by, and procured a release for the coachman on his own recognizance, one of many signed in blank and left there by the justice for privileged cases. The coachman was hustled out by a back door, and the crowd dispersed.

The next morning, while a score or more of delinquents sat in the anxious seats, Justice Garry recognized me and gave me precedence. And Mr. Weill, with a sigh of relief, paid his fine.

"Mr. Paret, is it?" he asked, as we stood together for a moment on the sidewalk outside the court. "You have managed this well. I will remember."

He was sued, of course. When he came to the office he insisted on discussing the case with Mr. Watling, who sent for me.

"That is a bright young man," Mr. Weill declared, shaking my hand. "He will get on."

"Some day," said Mr. Watling, "he may save you a lot of money, Weill."

"When my friend Mr. Watling is United States Senator,—eh?"

Mr. Watling laughed. "Before that, I hope. I advise you to compromise this suit, Weill," he added. "How would a thousand dollars strike you? I've had Paret look up the case, and he tells me the little girl has had to have an operation."

"A thousand dollars!" cried the grocer. "What right have these people to let their children play on the streets? It's an outrage."

"Where else have the children to play?" Mr. Watling touched his arm. "Weill," he said gently, "suppose it had been your little girl?" The grocer pulled out his handkerchief and mopped his bald forehead. But he rallied a little.

"You fight these damage cases for the street railroads all through the courts."

"Yes," Mr. Watling agreed, "but there a principle is involved. If the railroads once got into the way of paying damages for every careless employee, they would soon be bankrupt through blackmail. But here you have a child whose father is a poor janitor and can't afford sickness. And your coachman, I imagine, will be more particular in the future."

In the end Mr. Weill made out a cheque and departed in a good humour, convinced that he was well out of the matter. Here was one of many instances I could cite of Mr. Watling's tenderness of heart. I felt, moreover, as if he had done me a personal favour, since it was I who had recommended the compromise. For I had been to the hospital and had seen the child on the cot,—a dark little thing, lying still in her pain, with the bewildered look of a wounded animal....

Not long after this incident of Mr. Weill's damage suit I obtained a more or less definite promotion by the departure of Larry Weed. He had suddenly developed a weakness of the lungs. Mr. Watling got him a place in Denver, and paid his expenses west.

The first six or seven years I spent in the office of Wading, Fowndes and Ripon were of importance to my future career, but there is little to relate of them. I was absorbed not only in learning law, but in acquiring that esoteric knowledge at which I have hinted—not to be had from my seniors and which I was convinced was indispensable to a successful and lucrative practice. My former comparison of the organization of our city to a picture puzzle wherein the dominating figures become visible only after long study is rather inadequate. A better analogy would be the human anatomy: we lawyers, of course, were the brains; the financial and industrial interests the body, helpless without us; the City Hall politicians, the stomach that must continually be fed. All three, law, politics and business, were interdependent, united by a nervous system too complex to be developed here. In these years, though I worked hard and often late, I still found time for convivialities, for social gaieties, yet little by little without realizing the fact, I was losing zest for the companionship of my former intimates. My mind was becoming polarized by the contemplation of one object, success, and to it human ties were unconsciously being sacrificed.

Tom Peters began to feel this, even at a time when I believed myself still to be genuinely fond of him. Considering our respective temperaments in youth, it is curious that he should have been the first to fall in love and marry. One day he astonished me by announcing his engagement to Susan Blackwood.

"That ends the liquor, Hughie," he told me, beamingly. "I promised her
I'd eliminate it."

He did eliminate it, save for mild relapses on festive occasions. A more seemingly incongruous marriage could scarcely be imagined, and yet it was a success from the start. From a slim, silent, self-willed girl Susan had grown up into a tall, rather rawboned and energetic young woman. She was what we called in those days "intellectual," and had gone in for kindergartens, and after her marriage she turned out to be excessively domestic; practising her theories, with entire success, upon a family that showed a tendency to increase at an alarming rate. Tom, needless to say, did not become intellectual. He settled down—prematurely, I thought—into what is known as a family man, curiously content with the income he derived from the commission business and with life in general; and he developed a somewhat critical view of the tendencies of the civilization by which he was surrounded. Susan held it also, but she said less about it. In the comfortable but unpretentious house they rented on Cedar Street we had many discussions, after the babies had been put to bed and the door of the living-room closed, in order that our voices might not reach the nursery. Perry Blackwood, now Tom's brother-in-law, was often there. He, too, had lapsed into what I thought was an odd conservatism. Old Josiah, his father, being dead, he occupied himself mainly with looking after certain family interests, among which was the Boyne Street car line. Among "business men" he was already getting the reputation of being a little difficult to deal with. I was often the subject of their banter, and presently I began to suspect that they regarded my career and beliefs with some concern. This gave me no uneasiness, though at limes I lost my temper. I realized their affection for me; but privately I regarded them as lacking in ambition, in force, in the fighting qualities necessary for achievement in this modern age. Perhaps, unconsciously, I pitied them a little.

"How is Judah B. to-day, Hughie?" Tom would inquire. "I hear you've put him up for the Boyne Club, now that Mr. Watling has got him out of that libel suit."

"Carter Ives is dead," Perry would add, sarcastically, "let bygones be bygones."

It was well known that Mr. Tallant, in the early days of his newspaper, had blackmailed Mr. Ives out of some hundred thousand dollars. And that this, more than any other act, stood in the way, with certain recalcitrant gentlemen, of his highest ambition, membership in the Boyne.

"The trouble with you fellows is that you refuse to deal with conditions as you find them," I retorted. "We didn't make them, and we can't change them. Tallant's a factor in the business life of this city, and he has to be counted with."

Tom would shake his head exasperatingly.

"Why don't you get after Ralph?" I demanded. "He doesn't antagonize Tallant, either."

"Ralph's hopeless," said Tom. "He was born a pirate, you weren't, Hughie. We think there's a chance for his salvation, don't we, Perry?"

I refused to accept the remark as flattering.

Another object of their assaults was Frederick Grierson, who by this time had emerged from obscurity as a small dealer in real estate into a manipulator of blocks and corners.

"I suppose you think it's a lawyer's business to demand an ethical bill of health of every client," I said. "I won't stand up for all of Tallant's career, of course, but Mr. Wading has a clear right to take his cases. As for Grierson, it seems to me that's a matter of giving a dog a bad name. Just because his people weren't known here, and because he has worked up from small beginnings. To get down to hard-pan, you fellows don't believe in democracy,—in giving every man a chance to show what's in him."

"Democracy is good!" exclaimed Perry. "If the kind of thing we're coming to is democracy, God save the state!"...

On the other hand I found myself drawing closer to Ralph Hambleton, sometimes present at these debates, as the only one of my boyhood friends who seemed to be able to "deal with conditions as he found them." Indeed, he gave one the impression that, if he had had the making of them, he would not have changed them.

"What the deuce do you expect?" I once heard him inquire with good-natured contempt. "Business isn't charity, it's war.

"There are certain things," maintained Perry, stoutly, "that gentlemen won't do."

"Gentlemen!" exclaimed Ralph, stretching his slim six feet two: We were sitting in the Boyne Club. "It's ungentlemanly to kill, or burn a town or sink a ship, but we keep armies and navies for the purpose. For a man with a good mind, Perry, you show a surprising inability to think things, out to a logical conclusion. What the deuce is competition, when you come down to it? Christianity? Not by a long shot! If our nations are slaughtering men and starving populations in other countries,—are carried on, in fact, for the sake of business, if our churches are filled with business men and our sky pilots pray for the government, you can't expect heathen individuals like me to do business on a Christian basis,—if there is such a thing. You can make rules for croquet, but not for a game that is based on the natural law of the survival of the fittest. The darned fools in the legislatures try it occasionally, but we all know it's a sop to the 'common people.' Ask Hughie here if there ever was a law put on the statute books that his friend Watling couldn't get 'round'? Why, you've got competition even among the churches. Yours, where I believe you teach in the Sunday school, would go bankrupt if it proclaimed real Christianity. And you'll go bankrupt if you practise it, Perry, my boy. Some early, wide-awake, competitive, red-blooded bird will relieve you of the Boyne Street car line."

It was one of this same new and "fittest" species who had already relieved poor Mr. McAlery Willett of his fortune. Mr. Willett was a trusting soul who had never known how to take care of himself or his money, people said, and now that he had lost it they blamed him. Some had been saved enough for him and Nancy to live on in the old house, with careful economy. It was Nancy who managed the economy, who accomplished remarkable things with a sum they would have deemed poverty in former days. Her mother had died while I was at Cambridge. Reverses did not subdue Mr. Willett's spirits, and the fascination modern "business" had for him seemed to grow in proportion to the misfortunes it had caused him. He moved into a tiny office in the Durrett Building, where he appeared every morning about half-past ten to occupy himself with heaven knows what short cuts to wealth, with prospectuses of companies in Mexico or Central America or some other distant place: once, I remember, it was a tea, company in which he tried to interest his friends, to raise in the South a product he maintained would surpass Orange Pekoe. In the afternoon between three and four he would turn up at the Boyne Club, as well groomed, as spruce as ever, generally with a flower in his buttonhole. He never forgot that he was a gentleman, and he had a gentleman's notions of the fitness of things, and it was against his principles to use, a gentleman's club for the furtherance of his various enterprises.

"Drop into my office some day, Dickinson," he would say. "I think I've got something there that might interest you!"

He reminded me, when I met him, that he had always predicted I would get along in life....

The portrait of Nancy at this period is not so easily drawn. The decline of the family fortunes seemed

to have had as little effect upon her as upon her father, although their characters differed sharply. Something of that spontaneity, of that love of life and joy in it she had possessed in youth she must have inherited from McAlery Willett, but these qualities had disappeared in her long before the coming of financial reverses. She was nearing thirty, and in spite of her beauty and the rarer distinction that can best be described as breeding, she had never married. Men admired her, but from a distance; she kept them at arm's length, they said: strangers who visited the city invariably picked her out of an assembly and asked who she was; one man from New York who came to visit Ralph and who had been madly in love with her, she had amazed many people by refusing, spurning all he might have given her. This incident seemed a refutation of the charge that she was calculating. As might have been foretold, she had the social gift in a remarkable degree, and in spite of the limitations of her purse the knack of dressing better than other women, though at that time the organization of our social life still remained comparatively simple, the custom of luxurious and expensive entertainment not having yet set in.

The more I reflect upon those days, the more surprising does it seem that I was not in love with her. It may be that I was, unconsciously, for she troubled my thoughts occasionally, and she represented all the qualities I admired in her sex. The situation that had existed at the time of our first and only quarrel had been reversed, I was on the highroad to the worldly success I had then resolved upon, Nancy was poor, and for that reason, perhaps, prouder than ever. If she was inaccessible to others, she had the air of being peculiarly inaccessible to me—the more so because some of the superficial relics of our intimacy remained, or rather had been restored. Her very manner of camaraderie seemed paradoxically to increase the distance between us. It piqued me. Had she given me the least encouragement, I am sure I should have responded; and I remember that I used occasionally to speculate as to whether she still cared for me, and took this method of hiding her real feelings. Yet, on the whole, I felt a certain complacency about it all; I knew that suffering was disagreeable, I had learned how to avoid it, and I may have had, deep within me, a feeling that I might marry her after all. Meanwhile my life was full, and gave promise of becoming even fuller, more absorbing and exciting in the immediate future.

One of the most fascinating figures, to me, of that Order being woven, like a cloth of gold, out of our hitherto drab civilization,—an Order into which I was ready and eager to be initiated,—was that of Adolf Scherer, the giant German immigrant at the head of the Boyne Iron Works. His life would easily lend itself to riotous romance. In the old country, in a valley below the castle perched on the rack above, he had begun life by tending his father's geese. What a contrast to "Steeltown" with its smells and sickening summer heat, to the shanty where Mrs. Scherer took boarders and bent over the wash-tub! She, too, was an immigrant, but lived to hear her native Wagner from her own box at Covent Garden; and he to explain, on the deck of an imperial yacht, to the man who might have been his sovereign certain processes in the manufacture of steel hitherto untried on that side of the Atlantic. In comparison with Adolf Scherer, citizen of a once despised democracy, the minor prince in whose dominions he had once tended geese was of small account indeed!

The Adolf Scherer of that day—though it is not so long ago as time flies—was even more solid and impressive than the man he afterwards became, when he reached the dizzier heights from which he delivered to an eager press opinions on politics and war, eugenics and woman's suffrage and other subjects that are the despair of specialists. Had he stuck to steel, he would have remained invulnerable. But even then he was beginning to abandon the field of production for that of exploitation: figuratively speaking, he had taken to soap, which with the aid of water may be blown into beautiful, iridescent bubbles to charm the eye. Much good soap, apparently, has gone that way, never to be recovered. Everybody who was anybody began to blow bubbles about that time, and the bigger the bubble the greater its attraction for investors of hard-earned savings. Outside of this love for financial iridescence, let it be called, Mr. Scherer seemed to care little then for glitter of any sort. Shortly after his elevation to the presidency of the Boyne Iron Works he had been elected a member of the Boyne Club,—an honour of which, some thought, he should have been more sensible; but generally, when in town, he preferred to lunch at a little German restaurant annexed to a saloon, where I used often to find him literally towering above the cloth,—for he was a giant with short legs,—his napkin tucked into his shirt front, engaged in lively conversation with the ministering Heinrich. The chef at the club, Mr. Scherer insisted, could produce nothing equal to Heinrich's sauer-kraut and sausage. My earliest relationship with Mr. Scherer was that of an errand boy, of bringing to him for his approval papers which might not be intrusted to a common messenger. His gruffness and brevity disturbed me more than I cared to confess. I was pretty sure that he eyed me with the disposition of the self-made to believe that college educations and good tailors were the heaviest handicaps with which a young man could be burdened: and I suspected him of an inimical attitude toward the older families of the city. Certain men possessed his confidence; and he had built, as it were, a stockade about them, sternly keeping the rest of the world outside. In Theodore Watling he had a childlike faith.

Thus I studied him, with a deliberation which it is the purpose of these chapters to confess, though he little knew that he was being made the subject of analysis. Nor did I ever venture to talk with him, but

held strictly to my role of errand boy,—even after the conviction came over me that he was no longer indifferent to my presence. The day arrived, after some years, when he suddenly thrust toward me a big, hairy hand that held the document he was examining.

"Who drew this, Mr. Paret!" he demanded.

Mr. Ripon, I told him.

The Boyne Works were buying up coal-mines, and this was a contract looking to the purchase of one in Putman County, provided, after a certain period of working, the yield and quality should come up to specifications. Mr. Scherer requested me to read one of the sections, which puzzled him. And in explaining it an idea flashed over me.

"Do you mind my making a suggestion, Mr. Scherer?" I ventured.

"What is it?" he asked brusquely.

I showed him how, by the alteration of a few words, the difficulty to which he had referred could not only be eliminated, but that certain possible penalties might be evaded, while the apparent meaning of the section remained unchanged. In other words, it gave the Boyne Iron Works an advantage that was not contemplated. He seized the paper, stared at what I had written in pencil on the margin, and then stared at me. Abruptly, he began to laugh.

"Ask Mr. Wading what he thinks of it?"

"I intended to, provided it had your approval, sir," I replied.

"You have my approval, Mr. Paret," he declared, rather cryptically, and with the slight German hardening of the v's into which he relapsed at times. "Bring it to the Works this afternoon."

Mr. Wading agreed to the alteration. He looked at me amusedly.

"Yes, I think that's an improvement, Hugh," he said. I had a feeling that I had gained ground, and from this time on I thought I detected a change in his attitude toward me; there could be no doubt about the new attitude of Mr. Scherer, who would often greet me now with a smile and a joke, and sometimes went so far as to ask my opinions.... Then, about six months later, came the famous Ribblevale case that aroused the moral indignation of so many persons, among whom was Perry Blackwood.

"You know as well as I do, Hugh, how this thing is being manipulated," he declared at Tom's one Sunday evening; "there was nothing the matter with the Ribblevale Steel Company—it was as right as rain before Leonard Dickinson and Grierson and Scherer and that crowd you train with began to talk it down at the Club. Oh, they're very compassionate. I've heard 'em. Dickinson, privately, doesn't think much of Ribblevale paper, and Pugh" (the president of the Ribblevale) "seems worried and looks badly. It's all very clever, but I'd hate to tell you in plain words what I'd call it."

"Go ahead," I challenged him audaciously. "You haven't any proof that the Ribblevale wasn't in trouble."

"I heard Mr. Pugh tell my father the other day it was a d—d outrage. He couldn't catch up with these rumours, and some of his stockholders were liquidating."

"You, don't suppose Pugh would want to admit his situation, do you?" I asked.

"Pugh's a straight man," retorted Perry. "That's more than I can say for any of the other gang, saving your presence. The unpleasant truth is that Scherer and the Boyne people want the Ribblevale, and you ought to know it if you don't." He looked at me very hard through the glasses he had lately taken to wearing. Tom, who was lounging by the fire, shifted his position uneasily. I smiled, and took another cigar.

"I believe Ralph is right, Perry, when he calls you a sentimentalist. For you there's a tragedy behind every ordinary business transaction. The Ribblevale people are having a hard time to keep their heads above water, and immediately you smell conspiracy. Dickinson and Scherer have been talking it down. How about it, Tom?"

But Tom, in these debates, was inclined to be noncommittal, although it was clear they troubled him.

"Oh, don't ask me, Hughie," he said.

"I suppose I ought to cultivate the scientific point of view, and look with impartial interest at this

industrial cannibalism," returned Perry, sarcastically. "Eat or be eaten that's what enlightened self-interest has come to. After all, Ralph would say, it is nature, the insect world over again, the victim duped and crippled before he is devoured, and the lawyer—how shall I put it?—facilitating the processes of swallowing and digesting...."

There was no use arguing with Perry when he was in this vein....

Since I am not writing a technical treatise, I need not go into the details of the Ribblevale suit. Since it to say that the affair, after a while, came apparently to a deadlock, owing to the impossibility of getting certain definite information from the Ribblevale books, which had been taken out of the state. The treasurer, for reasons of his own, remained out of the state also; the ordinary course of summoning him before a magistrate in another state had naturally been resorted to, but the desired evidence was not forthcoming.

"The trouble is," Mr. Wading explained to Mr. Scherer, "that there is no law in the various states with a sufficient penalty attached that will compel the witness to divulge facts he wishes to conceal."

It was the middle of a February afternoon, and they were seated in deep, leather chairs in one corner of the reading room of the Boyne Club. They had the place to themselves. Fowndes was there also, one leg twisted around the other in familiar fashion, a bored look on his long and sallow face. Mr. Wading had telephoned to the office for me to bring them some papers bearing on the case.

"Sit down, Hugh," he said kindly.

"Now we have present a genuine legal mind," said Mr. Scherer, in the playful manner he had adopted of late, while I grinned appreciatively and took a chair. Mr. Watling presently suggested kidnapping the Ribblevale treasurer until he should promise to produce the books as the only way out of what seemed an impasse. But Mr. Scherer brought down a huge fist on his knee.

"I tell you it is no joke, Watling, we've got to win that suit," he asserted.

"That's all very well," replied Mr. Watling. "But we're a respectable firm, you know. We haven't had to resort to safe-blowing, as yet."

Mr. Scherer shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say it were a matter of indifference to him what methods were resorted to. Mr. Watling's eyes met mine; his glance was amused, yet I thought I read in it a query as to the advisability, in my presence, of going too deeply into the question of ways and means. I may have been wrong. At any rate, its sudden effect was to embolden me to give voice to an idea that had begun to simmer in my mind, that excited me, and yet I had feared to utter it. This look of my chief's, and the lighter tone the conversation had taken decided me.

"Why wouldn't it be possible to draw up a bill to fit the situation?" I inquired.

Mr. Wading started.

"What do you mean?" he asked quickly.

All three looked at me. I felt the blood come into my face, but it was too late to draw back.

"Well—the legislature is in session. And since, as Mr. Watling says, there is no sufficient penalty in other states to compel the witness to produce the information desired, why not draw up a bill and—and have it passed—" I paused for breath—"imposing a sufficient penalty on home corporations in the event of such evasions. The Ribblevale Steel Company is a home corporation."

I had shot my bolt.... There followed what was for me an anxious silence, while the three of them continued to stare at me. Mr. Watling put the tips of his fingers together, and I became aware that he was not offended, that he was thinking rapidly.

"By George, why not, Fowndes?" he demanded.

"Well," said Fowndes, "there's an element of risk in such a proceeding I need not dwell upon."

"Risk!" cried the senior partner vigorously. "There's risk in everything. They'll howl, of course. But they howl anyway, and nobody ever listens to them. They'll say it's special legislation, and the Pilot will print sensational editorials for a few days. But what of it? All of that has happened before. I tell you, if we can't see those books, we'll lose the suit. That's in black and white. And, as a matter of justice, we're entitled to know what we want to know."

"There might be two opinions as to that," observed Fowndes, with his sardonic smile.

Mr. Watling paid no attention to this remark. He was already deep in thought. It was characteristic of his mind to leap forward, seize a suggestion that often appeared chimerical to a man like Fowndes and turn it into an accomplished Fact. "I believe you've hit it, Hugh," he said. "We needn't bother about the powers of the courts in other states. We'll put into this bill an appeal to our court for an order on the clerk to compel the witness to come before the court and testify, and we'll provide for a special commissioner to take depositions in the state where the witness is. If the officers of a home corporation who are outside of the state refuse to testify, the penalty will be that the ration goes into the hands of a receiver."

Fowndes whistled.

"That's going some!" he said.

"Well, we've got to go some. How about it, Scherer?"

Even Mr. Scherer's brown eyes were snapping.

"We have got to win that suit, Watling."

We were all excited, even Fowndes, I think, though he remained expressionless. Ours was the tense excitement of primitive man in chase: the quarry which had threatened to elude us was again in view, and not unlikely to fall into our hands. Add to this feeling, on my part, the thrill that it was I who had put them on the scent. I had all the sensations of an aspiring young brave who for the first time is admitted to the councils of the tribe!

"It ought to be a popular bill, too," Mr. Schemer was saying, with a smile of ironic appreciation at the thought of demagogues advocating it. "We should have one of Lawler's friends introduce it."

"Oh, we shall have it properly introduced," replied Mr. Wading.

"It may come back at us," suggested Fowndes pessimistically. "The Boyne Iron Works is a home corporation too, if I am not mistaken."

"The Boyne Iron Works has the firm of Wading, Fowndes and Ripon behind it," asserted Mr. Scherer, with what struck me as a magnificent faith.

"You mustn't forget Paret," Mr. Watling reminded him, with a wink at me.

We had risen. Mr. Scherer laid a hand on my arm.

"No, no, I do not forget him. He will not permit me to forget him."

A remark, I thought, that betrayed some insight into my character… Mr. Watling called for pen and paper and made then and there a draft of the proposed bill, for no time was to be lost. It was dark when we left the Club, and I recall the elation I felt and strove to conceal as I accompanied my chief back to the office. The stenographers and clerks were gone; alone in the library we got down the statutes and set to work. to perfect the bill from the rough draft, on which Mr. Fowndes had written his suggestions. I felt that a complete yet subtle change had come over my relationship with Mr. Watling.

In the midst of our labours he asked me to call up the attorney for the Railroad. Mr. Gorse was still at his office.

"Hello! Is that you, Miller?" Mr. Watling said. "This is Wading. When can I see you for a few minutes this evening? Yes, I am leaving for Washington at nine thirty. Eight o'clock. All right, I'll be there."

It was almost eight before he got the draft finished to his satisfaction, and I had picked it out on the typewriter. As I handed it to him, my chief held it a moment, gazing at me with an odd smile.

"You seem to have acquired a good deal of useful knowledge, here and there, Hugh," he observed.

"I've tried to keep my eyes open, Mr. Watling," I said.

"Well," he said, "there are a great many things a young man practising law in these days has to learn for himself. And if I hadn't given you credit for some cleverness, I shouldn't have wanted you here. There's only one way to look at—at these matters we have been discussing, my boy, that's the common-sense way, and if a man doesn't get that point of view by himself, nobody can teach it to him. I needn't enlarge upon it"

"No, sir," I said.

He smiled again, but immediately became serious.

"If Mr. Gorse should approve of this bill, I'm going to send you down to the capital—to-night. Can you go?"

I nodded.

"I want you to look out for the bill in the legislature. Of course there won't be much to do, except to stand by, but you will get a better idea of what goes on down there."

I thanked him, and told him I would do my best.

"I'm sure of that," he replied. "Now it's time to go to see Gorse."

The legal department of the Railroad occupied an entire floor of the Corn Bank building. I had often been there on various errands, having on occasions delivered sealed envelopes to Mr. Gorse himself, approaching him in the ordinary way through a series of offices. But now, following Mr. Watling through the dimly lighted corridor, we came to a door on which no name was painted, and which was presently opened by a stenographer. There was in the proceeding a touch of mystery that revived keenly my boyish love for romance; brought back the days when I had been, in turn, Captain Kidd and Ali Baba.

I have never realized more strongly than in that moment the psychological force of prestige. Little by little, for five years, an estimate of the extent of Miller Gorse's power had been coming home to me, and his features stood in my mind for his particular kind of power. He was a tremendous worker, and often remained in his office until ten and eleven at night. He dismissed the stenographer by the wave of a hand which seemed to thrust her bodily out of the room.

"Hello, Miller," said Mr. Watling.

"Hello, Theodore," replied Mr. Gorse.

"This is Paret, of my office."

"I know," said Mr. Gorse, and nodded toward me. I was impressed by the felicity with which a cartoonist of the Pilot had once caricatured him by the use of curved lines. The circle of the heavy eyebrows ended at the wide nostrils; the mouth was a crescent, but bowed downwards; the heavy shoulders were rounded. Indeed, the only straight line to be discerned about him was that of his hair, black as bitumen, banged across his forehead; even his polished porphyry eyes were constructed on some curvilinear principle, and never seemed to focus. It might be said of Mr. Gorse that he had an overwhelming impersonality. One could never be quite sure that one's words reached the mark.

In spite of the intimacy which I knew existed between them, in my presence at least Mr. Gorse's manner was little different with Mr. Watling than it was with other men. Mr. Wading did not seem to mind. He pulled up a chair close to the desk and began, without any preliminaries, to explain his errand.

"It's about the Ribblevale affair," he said. "You know we have a suit."

Gorse nodded.

"We've got to get at the books, Miller,—that's all there is to it. I told you so the other day. Well, we've found out a way, I think."

He thrust his hand in his pocket, while the railroad attorney remained impassive, and drew out the draft of the bill. Mr. Gorse read it, then read it over again, and laid it down in front of him.

"Well," he said.

"I want to put that through both houses and have the governor's signature to it by the end of the week."

"It seems a little raw, at first sight, Theodore," said Mr. Gorse, with the suspicion of a smile.

My chief laughed a little.

"It's not half so raw as some things I might mention, that went through like greased lightning," he replied. "What can they do? I believe it will hold water. Tallant's, and most of the other newspapers in the state, won't print a line about it, and only Socialists and Populists read the Pilot. They're disgruntled anyway. The point is, there's no other way out for us. Just think a moment, bearing in mind

what I've told you about the case, and you'll see it."

Mr. Gorse took up the paper again, and read the draft over.

"You know as well as I do, Miller, how dangerous it is to leave this Ribblevale business at loose ends. The Carlisle steel people and the Lake Shore road are after the Ribblevale Company, and we can't afford to run any risk of their getting it. It's logically a part of the Boyne interests, as Scherer says, and Dickinson is ready with the money for the reorganization. If the Carlisle people and the Lake Shore get it, the product will be shipped out by the L and G, and the Railroad will lose. What would Barbour say?"

Mr. Barbour, as I have perhaps mentioned, was the president of the Railroad, and had his residence in the other great city of the state. He was then, I knew, in the West.

"We've got to act now," insisted Mr. Watling. "That's open and shut. If you have any other plan, I wish you'd trot it out. If not, I want a letter to Paul Varney and the governor. I'm going to send Paret down with them on the night train."

It was clear to me then, in the discussion following, that Mr. Watling's gift of persuasion, though great, was not the determining factor in Mr. Gorse's decision. He, too, possessed boldness, though he preferred caution. Nor did the friendship between the two enter into the transaction. I was impressed more strongly than ever with the fact that a lawsuit was seldom a mere private affair between two persons or corporations, but involved a chain of relationships and nine times out of ten that chain led up to the Railroad, which nearly always was vitally interested in these legal contests. Half an hour of masterly presentation of the situation was necessary before Mr. Gorse became convinced that the introduction of the bill was the only way out for all concerned.

"Well, I guess you're right, Theodore," he said at length. Whereupon he seized his pen and wrote off two notes with great rapidity. These he showed to Mr. Watling, who nodded and returned them. They were folded and sealed, and handed to me. One was addressed to Colonel Paul Varney, and the other to the Hon. W. W. Trulease, governor of the state.

"You can trust this young man?" demanded Mr. Gorse.

"I think so," replied Mr. Watling, smiling at me. "The bill was his own idea."

The railroad attorney wheeled about in his chair and looked at me; looked around me, would better express it, with his indefinite, encompassing yet inclusive glance. I had riveted his attention. And from henceforth, I knew, I should enter into his calculations. He had made for me a compartment in his mind.

"His own idea!" he repeated.

"I merely suggested it," I was putting in, when he cut me short.

"Aren't you the son of Matthew Paret?"

"Yes," I said.

He gave me a queer glance, the significance of which I left untranslated. My excitement was too great to analyze what he meant by this mention of my father....

When we reached the sidewalk my chief gave me a few parting instructions.

"I need scarcely say, Hugh," he added, "that your presence in the capital should not be advertised as connected with this—legislation. They will probably attribute it to us in the end, but if you're reasonably careful, they'll never be able to prove it. And there's no use in putting our cards on the table at the beginning."

"No indeed, sir!" I agreed.

He took my hand and pressed it.

"Good luck," he said. "I know you'll get along all right."

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