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A FAR COUNTRY

By Winston Churchill

BOOK 3.

XVIII.

As the name of our city grew to be more and more a byword for sudden and fabulous wealth, not only were the Huns and the Slavs, the Czechs and the Greeks drawn to us, but it became the fashion for distinguished Englishmen and Frenchmen and sometimes Germans and Italians to pay us a visit when they made the grand tour of America. They had been told that they must not miss us; scarcely a week went by in our community—so it was said—in which a full-fledged millionaire was not turned out. Our visitors did not always remain a week,—since their rapid journeyings from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Canada to the Gulf rarely occupied more than four,—but in the books embodying their mature comments on the manners, customs and crudities of American civilization no less than a chapter was usually devoted to us; and most of the adjectives in their various languages were exhausted in the attempt to prove how symptomatic we were of the ambitions and ideals of the Republic. The fact that many of these gentlemen—literary and otherwise—returned to their own shores better fed and with larger balances in the banks than when they departed is neither here nor there. Egyptians are proverbially created to be spoiled.

The wiser and more fortunate of these travellers and students of life brought letters to Mr. and Mrs. Hambleton Durrett. That household was symptomatic—if they liked—of the new order of things; and it was rare indeed when both members of it were at home to entertain them. If Mr. Durrett were in the city, and they did not happen to be Britons with sporting proclivities, they simply were not entertained:

when Mrs. Durrett received them dinners were given in their honour on the Durrett gold plate, and they spent cosey and delightful hours conversing with her in the little salon overlooking the garden, to return to their hotels and jot down paragraphs on the superiority of the American women over the men. These particular foreigners did not lay eyes on Mr. Durrett, who was in Florida or in the East playing polo or engaged in some other pursuit. One result of the lavishness and luxury that amazed them they wrote—had been to raise the standard of culture of the women, who were our leisure class. But the travellers did not remain long enough to arrive at any conclusions of value on the effect of luxury and lavishness on the sacred institution of marriage.

If Mr. Nathaniel Durrett could have returned to his native city after fifteen years or so in the grave, not the least of the phenomena to startle him would have been that which was taking place in his own house. For he would have beheld serenely established in that former abode of Calvinism one of the most reprehensible of exotic abominations, a 'mariage de convenance;' nor could he have failed to observe, moreover, the complacency with which the descendants of his friends, the pew holders in Dr. Pound's church, regarded the matter: and not only these, but the city at large. The stronghold of Scotch Presbyterianism had become a London or a Paris, a Gomorrah!

Mrs. Hambleton Durrett went her way, and Mr. Durrett his. The less said about Mr. Durrett's way—even in this suddenly advanced age—the better. As for Nancy, she seemed to the distant eye to be walking through life in a stately and triumphant manner. I read in the newspapers of her doings, her comings and goings; sometimes she was away for months together, often abroad; and when she was at home I saw her, but infrequently, under conditions more or less formal. Not that she was formal,—or I: our intercourse seemed eloquent of an intimacy in a tantalizing state of suspense. Would that intimacy ever be renewed? This was a question on which I sometimes speculated. The situation that had suspended or put an end to it, as the case might be, was never referred to by either of us.

One afternoon in the late winter of the year following that in which we had given a dinner to the Scherers (where the Durretts had rather marvellously appeared together) I left my office about three o'clock—a most unusual occurrence. I was restless, unable to fix my mind on my work, filled with unsatisfied yearnings the object of which I sought to keep vague, and yet I directed my steps westward along Boyne Street until I came to the Art Museum, where a loan exhibition was being held. I entered, bought a catalogue, and presently found myself standing before number 103, designated as a portrait of Mrs. Hambleton Durrett,—painted in Paris the autumn before by a Polish artist then much in vogue, Stanislaus Czesky. Nancy—was it Nancy?—was standing facing me, tall, superb in the maturity of her beauty, with one hand resting on an antique table, a smile upon her lips, a gentle mockery in her eyes as though laughing at the world she adorned. With the smile and the mockery—somehow significant, too, of an achieved inaccessibility—went the sheen of her clinging gown and the glint of the heavy pearls drooping from her high throat to her waist. These caught the eye, but failed at length to hold it, for even as I looked the smile faded, the mockery turned to wistfulness. So I thought, and looked again—to see the wistfulness: the smile had gone, the pearls seemed heavier. Was it a trick of the artist? had he seen what I saw, or thought I saw? or was it that imagination which by now I might have learned to suspect and distrust. Wild longings took possession of me, for the portrait had seemed to emphasize at once how distant now she was from me, and yet how near! I wanted to put that nearness to the test. Had she really changed? did anyone really change? and had I not been a fool to accept the presentment she had given me? I remembered those moments when our glances had met as across barriers in flashes of understanding. After all, the barriers were mere relics of the superstition of the past. What if I went to her now? I felt that I needed her as I never had needed anyone in all my life.... I was aroused by the sound of lowered voices beside me.

"That's Mrs. Hambleton Durrett," I heard a woman say. "Isn't she beautiful?"

The note of envy struck me sharply—horribly. Without waiting to listen to the comment of her companion I hurried out of the building into the cold, white sunlight that threw into bold relief the mediocre houses of the street. Here was everyday life, but the portrait had suggested that which might have been—might be yet. What did I mean by this? I didn't know, I didn't care to define it,—a renewal of her friendship, of our intimacy. My being cried out for it, and in the world in which I lived we took what we wanted—why not this? And yet for an instant I stood on the sidewalk to discover that in new situations I was still subject to unaccountable qualms of that thing I had been taught to call "conscience"; whether it were conscience or not must be left to the psychologists. I was married—terrible word! the shadow of that Institution fell athwart me as the sun went under a cloud; but the sun came out again as I found myself walking toward the Durrett house reflecting that numbers of married men called on Nancy, and that what I had in mind in regard to her was nothing that the court would have pronounced an infringement upon the Institution.... I reached her steps, the long steps still guarded by the curved wrought-iron railings reminiscent of Nathaniel's day, though the "portals" were gone, a modern vestibule having replaced them; I rang the bell; the butler, flung open the doors. He, at any rate, did not seem surprised to see me here, he greeted me with respectful cordiality and led me,

as a favoured guest, through the big drawing-room into the salon.

"Mr. Paret, Madam!"

Nancy, rose quickly from the low chair where she sat cutting the pages of a French novel.

"Hugh!" she exclaimed. "I'm out if anyone calls. Bring tea," she added to the man, who retired. For a moment we stood gazing at each other, questioningly. "Well, won't you sit down and stay awhile?" she asked.

I took a chair on the opposite side of the fire.

"I just thought I'd drop in," I said.

"I am flattered," said Nancy, "that a person so affaire should find time to call on an old friend. Why, I thought you never left your office until seven o'clock."

"I don't, as a rule, but to-day I wasn't particularly busy, and I thought
I'd go round to the Art Museum and look at your portrait."

"More flattery! Hugh, you're getting quite human. What do you think of it?"

"I like it. I think it quite remarkable."

"Have a cigarette!"

I took one.

"So you really like it," she said.

"Don't you?"

"Oh, I think it's a trifle—romantic," she replied "But that's Czesky. He made me quite cross,—the feminine presentation of America, the spoiled woman who has shed responsibilities and is beginning to have a glimpse—just a little one—of the emptiness of it all."

I was stirred.

"Then why do you accept it, if it isn't you?" I demanded. "One doesn't refuse Czesky's canvases," she replied. "And what difference does it make? It amused him, and he was fairly subtle about it. Only those who are looking for romance, like you, are able to guess what he meant, and they would think they saw it anyway, even if he had painted me—extinct."

"Extinct!" I repeated.

She laughed.

"Hugh, you're a silly old goose!"

"That's why I came here, I think, to be told so," I said.

Tea was brought in. A sense of at-homeness stole over me,—I was more at home here in this room with Nancy, than in any other place in the world; here, where everything was at once soothing yet stimulating, expressive of her, even the smaller objects that caught my eye,—the crystal inkstand tipped with gold, the racks for the table books, her paper-cutter. Nancy's was a discriminating luxury. And her talk! The lightness with which she touched life, the unexplored depths of her, guessed at but never fathomed! Did she feel a little the need of me as I felt the need of her?

"Why, I believe you're incurably romantic, Hugh," she said laughingly, when the men had left the room. "Here you are, what they call a paragon of success, a future senator, Ambassador to England. I hear of those remarkable things you have done—even in New York the other day a man was asking me if I knew Mr. Paret, and spoke of you as one of the coming men. I suppose you will be moving there, soon. A practical success! It always surprises me when I think of it, I find it difficult to remember what a dreamer you were and here you turn out to be still a dreamer! Have you discovered, too, the emptiness of it all?" she inquired provokingly. "I must say you don't look it"—she gave me a critical, quizzical glance—"you look quite prosperous and contented, as though you enjoyed your power."

I laughed uneasily.

"And then," she continued, "and then one day when your luncheon has disagreed with you—you walk into a gallery and see a portrait of—of an old friend for whom in youth, when you were a dreamer, you

professed a sentimental attachment, and you exclaim that the artist is a discerning man who has discovered the secret that she has guarded so closely. She's sorry that she ever tried to console herself with baubles it's what you've suspected all along. But you'll just run around to see for yourself—to be sure of it." And she handed me my tea. "Come now, confess. Where are your wits—I hear you don't lack them in court."

"Well," I said, "if that amuses you—"

"It does amuse me," said Nancy, twining her fingers across her knee and regarding me smilingly, with parted lips, "it amuses me a lot—it's so characteristic."

"But it's not true, it's unjust," I protested vigorously, smiling, too, because the attack was so characteristic of her.

"What then?" she demanded.

"Well, in the first place, my luncheon didn't disagree with me. It never does."

She laughed. "But the sentiment—come now—the sentiment? Do you perceive any hint of emptiness—despair?"

Our chairs were very close, and she leaned forward a little.

"Emptiness or no emptiness," I said a little tremulously, "I know that I haven't been so contented, so happy for a long time."

She sat very still, but turned her gaze on the fire.

"You really wouldn't want to find that, Hugh," she said in another voice, at which I exclaimed. "No, I'm not being sentimental. But, to be serious, I really shouldn't care to think that of you. I'd like to think of you as a friend—a good friend—although we don't see very much of one another."

"But that's why I came, Nancy," I explained. "It wasn't just an impulse—that is, I've been thinking of you a great deal, all along. I miss you, I miss the way you look at things—your point of view. I can't see any reason why we shouldn't see something of each other—now—"

She continued to stare into the fire.

"No," she said at length, "I suppose there isn't any reason." Her mood seemed suddenly to change as she bent over and extinguished the flame under the kettle. "After all," she added gaily, "we live in a tolerant age, we've reached the years of discretion, and we're both too conventional to do anything silly—even if we wanted to—which we don't. We're neither of us likely to quarrel with the world as it is, I think, and we might as well make fun of it together. We'll begin with our friends. What do you think of Mr. Scherer's palace?"

"I hear you're building it for him."

"I told him to get Eyre," said Nancy, laughingly, "I was afraid he'd repeat the Gallatin Park monstrosity on a larger scale, and Eyre's the only man in this country who understands the French. It's been rather amusing," she went on, "I've had to fight Hilda, and she's no mean antagonist. How she hates me! She wanted a monstrosity, of course, a modernized German rock-grotto sort of an affair, I can imagine. She's been so funny when I've met her at dinner. 'I understand you take a great interest in the house, Mrs. Durrett.' Can't you hear her?"

"Well, you did get ahead of her," I said.

"I had to. I couldn't let our first citizen build a modern Rhine castle, could I? I have some public spirit left. And besides, I expect to build on Grant Avenue myself."

"And leave here?"

"Oh, it's too grubby, it's in the slums," said Nancy. "But I really owe you a debt of gratitude, Hugh, for the Scherers."

"I'm told Adolf's lost his head over you."

"It's not only over me, but over everything. He's so ridiculously proud of being on the board of the Children's Hospital.... You ought to hear him talking to old Mrs. Ogilvy, who of course can't get used to him at all,—she always has the air of inquiring what he's doing in that galley. She still thinks of him as Mr. Durrett's foreman."

The time flew. Her presence was like a bracing, tingling atmosphere in which I felt revived and exhilarated, self-restored. For Nancy did not question—she took me as I was. We looked out on the world, as it were, from the same window, and I could not help thinking that ours, after all, was a large view. The topics didn't matter—our conversation was fragrant with intimacy; and we were so close to each other it seemed incredible that we ever should be parted again. At last the little clock on the mantel chimed an hour, she started and looked up.

"Why, it's seven, Hugh!" she exclaimed, rising. "I'd no idea it was so late, and I'm dining with the Dickinsons. I've only just time to dress."

"It's been like a reunion, hasn't it?—a reunion after many years," I said. I held her hand unconsciously—she seemed to be drawing me to her, I thought she swayed, and a sudden dizziness seized me. Then she drew away abruptly, with a little cry. I couldn't be sure about the cry, whether I heard it or not, a note was struck in the very depths of me.

"Come in again," she said, "whenever you're not too busy." And a minute later I found myself on the street.

This was the beginning of a new intimacy with Nancy, resembling the old intimacy yet differing from it. The emotional note of our parting on the occasion I have just related was not again struck, and when I went eagerly to see her again a few days later I was conscious of limitations,—not too conscious: the freedom she offered and which I gladly accepted was a large freedom, nor am I quite sure that even I would have wished it larger, though there were naturally moments when I thought so: when I asked myself what I did wish, I found no answer. Though I sometimes chafed, it would have been absurd of me to object to a certain timidity or caution I began to perceive in her that had been absent in the old Nancy; but the old Nancy had ceased to exist, and here instead was a highly developed, highly specialized creature in whom I delighted; and after taking thought I would not have robbed her of fine acquired attribute. As she had truly observed, we were both conventional; conventionality was part of the price we had willingly paid for membership in that rarer world we had both achieved. It was a world, to be sure, in which we were rapidly learning to take the law into our own hands without seeming to defy it, in order that the fear of it might remain in those less fortunately placed and endowed: we had begun with the appropriation of the material property of our fellow-citizens, which we took legally; from this point it was, of course, merely a logical step to take—legally, too other gentlemen's human property—their wives, in short: the more progressive East had set us our example, but as yet we had been chary to follow it.

About this time rebellious voices were beginning to make themselves heard in the literary wilderness proclaiming liberty—liberty of the sexes. There were Russian novels and French novels, and pioneer English novels preaching liberty with Nietzschean stridency, or taking it for granted. I picked these up on Nancy's table.

"Reading them?" she said, in answer to my query. "Of course I'm reading them. I want to know what these clever people are thinking, even if I don't always agree with them, and you ought to read them too. It's quite true what foreigners say about our men,—that they live in a groove, that they haven't any range of conversation."

"I'm quite willing to be educated," I replied. "I haven't a doubt that I need it."

She was leaning back in her chair, her hands behind her head, a posture she often assumed. She looked up at me amusedly.

"I'll acknowledge that you're more teachable than most of them," she said. "Do you know, Hugh, sometimes you puzzle me greatly. When you are here and we're talking together I can never think of you as you are out in the world, fighting for power—and getting it. I suppose it's part of your charm, that there is that side of you, but I never consciously realize it. You're what they call a dual personality."

"That's a pretty hard name!" I exclaimed.

She laughed.

"I can't help it—you are. Oh, not disagreeably so, quite normally—that's the odd thing about you. Sometimes I believe that you were made for something different, that in spite of your success you have missed your 'metier.'"

"What ought I to have been?"

"How can I tell? A Goethe, perhaps—a Goethe smothered by a twentieth-century environment. Your

love of adventure isn't dead, it's been merely misdirected, real adventure, I mean, forth faring, straying into unknown paths. Perhaps you haven't yet found yourself."

"How uncanny!" I said, stirred and startled.

"You have a taste for literature, you know, though you've buried it. Give me Turgeniev. We'll begin with him…."

Her reading and the talks that followed it were exciting, amazingly stimulating…. Once Nancy gave me an amusing account of a debate which had taken place in the newly organized woman's discussion club to which she belonged over a rather daring book by an English novelist. Mrs. Dickinson had revolted.

"No, she wasn't really shocked, not in the way she thought she was," said
Nancy, in answer to a query of mine.

"How was she shocked, then?"

"As you and I are shocked."

"But I'm not shocked," I protested.

"Oh, yes, you are, and so am I—not on the moral side, nor is it the moral aspect that troubles Lula Dickinson. She thinks it's the moral aspect, but it's really the revolutionary aspect, the menace to those precious institutions from which we derive our privileges and comforts."

I considered this, and laughed.

"What's the use of being a humbug about it," said Nancy.

"But you're talking like a revolutionary," I said.

"I may be talking like one, but I'm not one. I once had the makings of one—of a good one,—a 'proper' one, as the English would say." She sighed.

"You regret it?" I asked curiously.

"Of course I regret it!" she cried. "What woman worth her salt doesn't regret it, doesn't want to live, even if she has to suffer for it? And those people—the revolutionaries, I mean, the rebels—they live, they're the only ones who do live. The rest of us degenerate in a painless paralysis we think of as pleasure. Look at me! I'm incapable of committing a single original act, even though I might conceive one. Well, there was a time when I should have been equal to anything and wouldn't have cared a—a damn."

I believed her….

I fell into the habit of dropping in on Nancy at least twice a week on my way from the office, and I met her occasionally at other houses. I did not tell Maude of that first impulsive visit; but one evening a few weeks later she asked me where I had been, and when I told her she made no comment. I came presently to the conclusion that this renewed intimacy did not trouble her—which was what I wished to believe. Of course I had gone to Nancy for a stimulation I failed to get at home, and it is the more extraordinary, therefore, that I did not become more discontented and restless: I suppose this was because I had grown to regard marriage as most of the world regarded it, as something inevitable and humdrum, as a kind of habit it is useless to try to shake off. But life is so full of complexities and anomalies that I still had a real affection for Maude, and I liked her the more because she didn't expect too much of me, and because she didn't complain of my friendship with Nancy although I should vehemently have denied there was anything to complain of. I respected Maude. If she was not a squaw, she performed religiously the traditional squaw duties, and made me comfortable: and the fact that we lived separate mental existences did not trouble me because I never thought of hers—or even that she had one. She had the children, and they seemed to suffice. She never renewed her appeal for my confidence, and I forgot that she had made it.

Nevertheless I always felt a tug at my heartstrings when June came around and it was time for her and the children to go to Mattapoisett for the summer; when I accompanied them, on the evening of their departure, to the smoky, noisy station and saw deposited in the sleeping-car their luggage and shawls and bundles. They always took the evening train to Boston; it was the best. Tom and Susan were invariably there with candy and toys to see them off—if Susan and her children had not already gone—and at such moments my heart warmed to Tom. And I was astonished as I clung to Matthew and Moreton and little Biddy at the affection that welled up within me, saddened when I kissed Maude

good-bye. She too was sad, and always seemed to feel compunctions for deserting me.

"I feel so selfish in leaving you all alone!" she would say. "If it weren't for the children—they need the sea air. But I know you don't miss me as I miss you. A man doesn't, I suppose.... Please don't work so hard, and promise me you'll come on and stay a long time. You can if you want to. We shan't starve." She smiled. "That nice room, which is yours, at the southeast corner, is always waiting for you. And you do like the sea, and seeing the sail-boats in the morning."

I felt an emptiness when the train pulled out. I did love my family, after all! I would go back to the deserted house, and I could not bear to look in at the nursery door, at the little beds with covers flung over them. Why couldn't I appreciate these joys when I had them?

One evening, as we went home in an open street-car together, after such a departure, Tom blurted out:—"Hugh, I believe I care for your family as much as for my own. I often wonder if you realize how wonderful these children are! My boys are just plain ruffians—although I think they're pretty decent ruffians, but Matthew has a mind—he's thoughtful—and an imagination. He'll make a name for himself some day if he's steered properly and allowed to develop naturally. Moreton's more like my boys. And as for Chickabiddy!—" words failed him.

I put my hand on his knee. I actually loved him again as I had loved and yearned for him as a child,—he was so human, so dependable. And why couldn't this feeling last? He disapproved—foolishly, I thought—of my professional career, and this was only one of his limitations. But I knew that he was loyal. Why hadn't I been able to breathe and be reasonably happy in that atmosphere of friendship and love in which I had been placed—or rather in which I had placed myself?.... Before the summer was a day or two older I had grown accustomed to being alone, and enjoyed the liberty; and when Maude and the children returned in the autumn, similarly, it took me some days to get used to the restrictions imposed by a household. I run the risk of shocking those who read this by declaring that if my family had been taken permanently out of my life, I should not long have missed them. But on the whole, in those years my marriage relation might be called a negative one. There were moments, as I have described, when I warmed to Maude, moments when I felt something akin to a violent antagonism aroused by little mannerisms and tricks she had. The fact that we got along as well as we did was probably due to the orthodox teaching with which we had been inoculated,—to the effect that matrimony was a moral trial, a shaking-down process. But moral trials were ceasing to appeal to people, and more and more of them were refusing to be shaken down. We didn't cut the Gordian knot, but we managed to loosen it considerably.

I have spoken of a new species of titans who inhabited the giant buildings in Wall Street, New York, and fought among themselves for possession of the United States of America. It is interesting to note that in these struggles a certain chivalry was observed among the combatants, no matter how bitter the rivalry: for instance, it was deemed very bad form for one of the groups of combatants to take the public into their confidence; cities were upset and stirred to the core by these conflicts, and the citizens never knew who was doing the fighting, but imagined that some burning issue was at stake that concerned them. As a matter of fact the issue always did concern them, but not in the way they supposed.

Gradually, out of the chaotic melee in which these titans were engaged had emerged one group more powerful than the rest and more respectable, whose leader was the Personality to whom I have before referred. He and his group had managed to gain control of certain conservative fortresses in various cities such as the Corn National Bank and the Ashuela Telephone Company—to mention two of many: Adolf Scherer was his ally, and the Boyne Iron Works, Limited, was soon to be merged by him into a greater corporation still. Leonard Dickinson might be called his local governor-general. We manned the parapets and kept our ears constantly to the ground to listen for the rumble of attacks; but sometimes they burst upon us fiercely and suddenly, without warning. Such was the assault on the Ashuela, which for years had exercised an apparently secure monopoly of the city's telephone service, which had been able to ignore with complacency the shrillest protests of unreasonable subscribers. Through the Pilot it was announced to the public that certain benevolent "Eastern capitalists" were ready to rescue them from their thraldom if the city would grant them a franchise. Mr. Lawler, the disinterestedness of whose newspaper could not be doubted, fanned the flame day by day, sent his reporters about the city gathering instances of the haughty neglect of the Ashuela, proclaiming its instruments antiquated compared with those used in more progressive cities, as compared with the very latest inventions which the Automatic Company was ready to install provided they could get their franchise. And the prices! These, too, would fall—under competition. It was a clever campaign. If the city would give them a franchise, that Automatic Company—so well named! would provide automatic instruments. Each subscriber, by means of a numerical disk, could call up any other, subscriber; there would be no central operator, no listening, no tapping of wires; the number of calls would be unlimited. As a proof of the confidence of these Eastern gentlemen in our city, they were willing to spend five millions, and present

more than six hundred telephones free to the city departments! What was fairer, more generous than this! There could be no doubt that popular enthusiasm was enlisted in behalf of the "Eastern Capitalists," who were made to appear in the light of Crusaders ready to rescue a groaning people from the thrall of monopoly. The excitement approached that of a presidential election, and became the dominant topic at quick-lunch counters and in street-cars. Cheap and efficient service! Down with the Bastille of monopoly!

As counsel for the Ashuela, Mr. Ogilvy sent for me, and by certain secret conduits of information at my disposal I was not long in discovering the disquieting fact that a Mr. Orthwein, who was described as a gentleman with fat fingers and a plausible manner, had been in town for a week and had been twice seen entering and emerging from Monahan's saloon. In short, Mr. Jason had already been "seen." Nevertheless I went to him myself, to find him for the first time in my experience absolutely non-committal.

"What's the Ashuela willing to do?" he demanded.

I mentioned a sum, and he shook his head. I mentioned another, and still he shook his head.

"Come 'round again," he said...

I was compelled to report this alarming situation to Ogilvy and Dickinson and a few chosen members of a panicky board of directors.

"It's that damned Grannis crowd," said Dickinson, mentioning an aggressive gentleman who had migrated from Chicago to Wall Street some five years before in a pink collar.

"But what's to be done?" demanded Ogilvy, playing nervously with a gold pencil on the polished table. He was one of those Americans who in a commercial atmosphere become prematurely white, and today his boyish, smooth-shaven face was almost as devoid of colour as his hair. Even Leonard Dickinson showed anxiety, which was unusual for him.

"You've got to fix it, Hugh," he said.

I did not see my way, but I had long ago learned to assume the unruffled air and judicial manner of speaking that inspires the layman with almost superstitious confidence in the lawyer....

"We'll find a way out," I said.

Mr. Jason, of course, held the key to the situation, and just how I was to get around him was problematical. In the meantime there was the public: to permit the other fellow to capture that was to be lacking in ordinary prudence; if its votes counted for nothing, its savings were desirable; and it was fast getting into a state of outrage against monopoly. The chivalry of finance did not permit of a revelation that Mr. Grannis and his buccaneers were behind the Automatic, but it was possible to direct and strengthen the backfire which the Era and other conservative newspapers had already begun. Mr. Tallant for delicate reasons being persona non grata at the Boyne Club, despite the fact that he had so many friends there, we met for lunch in a private room at the new hotel, and as we sipped our coffee and smoked our cigars we planned a series of editorials and articles that duly appeared. They made a strong appeal to the loyalty of our citizens to stand by the home company and home capital that had taken generous risks to give them service at a time when the future of the telephone business was by no means assured; they belittled the charges made by irresponsible and interested "parties," and finally pointed out, not without effect, that one logical consequence of having two telephone companies would be to compel subscribers in self-defence to install two telephones instead of one. And where was the saving in that?

"Say, Paret," said Judah B. when we had finished our labours; "if you ever get sick of the law, I'll give you a job on the Era's staff. This is fine, the way you put it. It'll do a lot of good, but how in hell are you going to handle Judd?...."

For three days the inspiration was withheld. And then, as I was strolling down Boyne Street after lunch gazing into the store windows it came suddenly, without warning. Like most inspirations worth anything, it was very simple. Within half an hour I had reached Monahan's saloon and found Mr. Jason out of bed, but still in his bedroom, seated meditatively at the window that looked over the alley.

"You know the crowd in New York behind this Automatic company as well as I do, Jason," I said. "Why do you want to deal with them when we've always been straight with you, when we're ready to meet them and go one better? Name your price."

"Suppose I do—what then," he replied. "This thing's gone pretty far. Under that damned new charter

the franchise has got to be bid for—hasn't it? And the people want this company. There'll be a howl from one end of this town to the other if we throw 'em down."

"We'll look out for the public," I assured him, smiling.

"Well," he said, with one of his glances that were like flashes, "what you got up your sleeve?"

"Suppose another telephone company steps in, and bids a little higher for the franchise. That relieves, your aldermen of all responsibility, doesn't it?"

"Another telephone company!" he repeated.

I had already named it on my walk.

"The Interurban," I said.

"A dummy company?" said Mr. Jason.

"Lively enough to bid something over a hundred thousand to the city for its franchise," I replied.

Judd Jason, with a queer look, got up and went to a desk in a dark corner, and after rummaging for a few moments in one of the pigeon-holes, drew forth a glass cylinder, which he held out as he approached me.

"You get it, Mr. Paret," he said.

"What is it?" I asked, "a bomb!"

"That," he announced, as he twisted the tube about in his long fingers, holding it up to the light, "is the finest brand of cigars ever made in Cuba. A gentleman who had every reason to be grateful to me—I won't say who he was—gave me that once. Well, the Lord made me so's I can't appreciate any better tobacco than those five-cent 'Bobtails' Monahan's got downstairs, and I saved it. I saved it for the man who would put something over me some day, and—you get it."

"Thank you," I said, unconsciously falling in with the semi-ceremony of his manner. "I do not flatter myself that the solution I have suggested did not also occur to you."

"You'll smoke it?" he asked.

"Surely."

"Now? Here with me?"

"Certainly," I agreed, a little puzzled. As I broke the seal, pulled out the cork and unwrapped the cigar from its gold foil he took a stick and rapped loudly on the floor. After a brief interval footsteps were heard on the stairs and Mike Monahan, white aproned and scarlet faced, appeared at the door.

"Bobtails," said Mr. Jason, laconically.

"It's them I thought ye'd be wanting," said the saloon-keeper, holding out a handful. Judd Jason lighted one, and began smoking reflectively.

I gazed about the mean room, with its litter of newspapers and reports, its shabby furniture, and these seemed to have become incongruous, out of figure in the chair facing me keeping with the thoughtful figure in the chair facing me.

"You had a college education, Mr. Paret," he remarked at length.

"Yes."

"Life's a queer thing. Now if I'd had a college education, like you, and you'd been thrown on the world, like me, maybe I'd be livin' up there on Grant Avenue and you'd be down here over the saloon."

"Maybe," I said, wondering uneasily whether he meant to imply a similarity in our gifts. But his manner remained impassive, speculative.

"Ever read Carlyle's 'French Revolution'?" he asked suddenly.

"Why, yes, part of it, a good while ago."

"When you was in college?"

"Yes."

"I've got a little library here," he said, getting up and raising the shades and opening the glass doors of a bookcase which had escaped my attention. He took down a volume of Carlyle, bound in half calf.

"Wouldn't think I cared for such things, would you?" he demanded as he handed it to me.

"Well, you never can tell what a man's real tastes are until you know him," I observed, to conceal my surprise.

"That's so," he agreed. "I like books—some books. If I'd had an education, I'd have liked more of 'em, known more about 'em. Now I can read this one over and over. That feller Carlyle was a genius, he could look right into the bowels of the volcano, and he was on to how men and women feet down there, how they hate, how they square 'emselves when they get a chance."

He had managed to bring before me vividly that terrible, volcanic flow on Versailles of the Paris mob. He put back the book and resumed his seat.

"And I know how these people fed down here, below the crust," he went on, waving his cigar out of the window, as though to indicate the whole of that mean district. "They hate, and their hate is molten hell. I've been through it."

"But you've got on top," I suggested.

"Sure, I've got on top. Do you know why? it's because I hated—that's why. A man's feelings, if they're strong enough, have a lot to do with what he becomes."

"But he has to have ability, too," I objected.

"Sure, he has to have ability, but his feeling is the driving power if he feels strong enough, he can make a little ability go a long way."

I was struck by the force of this remark. I scarcely recognized Judd Jason. The man, as he revealed himself, had become at once more sinister and more fascinating.

"I can guess how some of those Jacobins felt when they had the aristocrats in the dock. They'd got on top—the Jacobins, I mean. It's human nature to want to get on top—ain't it?" He looked at me and smiled, but he did not seem to expect a reply. "Well, what you call society, rich, respectable society like you belong to would have made a bum and a criminal out of me if I hadn't been too smart for 'em, and it's a kind of satisfaction to have 'em coming down here to Monahan's for things they can't have without my leave. I've got a half Nelson on 'em. I wouldn't live up on Grant Avenue if you gave me Scherer's new house."

I was silent.

"Instead of starting my career in college, I started in jail," he went on, apparently ignoring any effect he may have produced. So subtly, so dispassionately indeed was he delivering himself of these remarks that it was impossible to tell whether he meant their application to be personal, to me, or general, to my associates. "I went to jail when I was fourteen because I wanted a knife to make kite sticks, and I stole a razor from a barber. I was bitter when they steered me into a lockup in Hickory Street. It was full of bugs and crooks, and they put me in the same cell with an old-timer named 'Red' Waters; who was one of the slickest safe-blowers around in those days. Red took a shine to me, found out I had a head piece, and said their gang could use a clever boy. If I'd go in with him, I could make all kinds of money. I guess I might have joined the gang if Red hadn't kept talking—about how the boss of his district named Gallagher would come down and get him out,—and sure enough Gallagher did come down and get him out. I thought I'd rather be Gallagher than Red—Red had to serve time once in a while. Soon as he got out I went down to Gallagher's saloon, and there was Red leaning over the bar. 'Here's a smart kid! he says, 'He and me were room-mates over in Hickory Street.' He got to gassing me, and telling me I'd better come along with him, when Gallagher came in. 'What is it ye'd like to be, my son?' says he. A politician, I told him. I was through going to jail. Gallagher had a laugh you could hear all over the place. He took me on as a kind of handy boy around the establishment, and by and by I began to run errands and find out things for him. I was boss of that ward myself when I was twenty-six.... How'd you like that cigar?"

I praised it.

"It ought to have been a good one," he declared. "Well, I don't want to keep you here all afternoon telling you my life story."

I assured him I had been deeply interested.

"Pretty slick idea of yours, that dummy company, Mr. Paret. Go ahead and organize it." He rose, which was contrary to his custom on the departure of a visitor. "Drop in again. We'll talk about the books."...

I walked slowly back reflecting on this conversation, upon the motives impelling Mr. Jason to become thus confidential; nor was it the most comforting thought in the world that the artist in me had appealed to the artist in him, that he had hailed me as a breather. But for the grace of God I might have been Mr. Jason and he Mr. Paret: undoubtedly that was what he had meant to imply... And I was forced to admit that he had succeeded—deliberately or not—in making the respectable Mr. Paret just a trifle uncomfortable.

In the marble vestibule of the Corn National Bank I ran into Tallant, holding his brown straw hat in his hand and looking a little more moth-eaten than usual.

"Hello, Paret," he said "how is that telephone business getting along?"

"Is Dickinson in?" I asked.

Tallant nodded.

We went through the cool bank, with its shining brass and red mahogany, its tiled floor, its busy tellers attending to files of clients, to the president's sanctum in the rear. Leonard Dickinson, very spruce and dignified in a black cutaway coat, was dictating rapidly to a woman, stenographer, whom he dismissed when he saw us. The door was shut.

"I was just asking Paret about the telephone affair," said Mr. Tallant.

"Well, have you found a way out?" Leonard Dickinson looked questioningly at me.

"It's all right," I answered. "I've seen Jason."

"All right!" they both ejaculated at once.

"We win," I said.

They stood gazing at me. Even Dickinson, who was rarely ruffled, seemed excited.

"Do you mean to say you've fixed it?" he demanded.

I nodded. They stared at me in amazement.

"How the deuce did you manage it?"

"We organize the Interurban Telephone Company, and bid for the franchise—that's all."

"A dummy company!" cried Tallant. "Why, it's simple as ABC!"

Dickinson smiled. He was tremendously relieved, and showed it.

"That's true about all great ideas, Tallant," he said. "They're simple, only it takes a clever man to think of them."

"And Jason agrees?" Tallant demanded.

I nodded again. "We'll have to outbid the Automatic people. I haven't seen Bitter yet about the—about the fee."

"That's all right," said Leonard Dickinson, quickly. "I take off my hat to you. You've saved us. You can ask any fee you like," he added genially. "Let's go over to—to the Ashuela and get some lunch." He had been about to say the Club, but he remembered Mr. Tallant's presence in time. "Nothing's worrying you, Hugh?" he added, as we went out, followed by the glances of his employees.

"Nothing," I said....

XVIX.

Making money in those days was so ridiculously easy! The trouble was to know how to spend it. One evening when I got home I told Maude I had a surprise for her.

"A surprise?" she asked, looking up from a little pink smock she was making for Chickabiddy.

"I've bought that lot on Grant Avenue, next to the Ogilvys'."

She dropped her sewing, and stared at me.

"Aren't you pleased?" I asked. "At last we are going to have a house of our very own. What's the matter?"

"I can't bear the thought of leaving here. I'm so used to it. I've grown to love it. It's part of me."

"But," I exclaimed, a little exasperated, "you didn't expect to live here always, did you? The house has been too small for us for years. I thought you'd be delighted." (This was not strictly true, for I had rather expected some such action on her part.) "Most women would. Of course, if it's going to make such a difference to you as that, I'll sell the lot. That won't be difficult."

I got up, and started to go into my study. She half rose, and her sewing fell to the floor.

"Oh, why are we always having misunderstandings? Do sit down a minute, Hugh. Don't think I'm not appreciative," she pleaded. "It was—such a shock."

I sat down rather reluctantly.

"I can't express what I think," she continued, rather breathlessly, "but sometimes I'm actually frightened, we're going through life so fast in these days, and it doesn't seem as if we were getting the real things out of it. I'm afraid of your success, and of all the money you're making."

I smiled.

"I'm not so rich yet, as riches go in these days, that you need be alarmed," I said.

She looked at me helplessly a moment.

"I feel that it isn't—right, somehow, that you'll pay for it, that we'll pay for it. Goodness knows, we have everything we want, and more too. This house—this house is real, and I'm afraid that won't be a home, won't be real. That we'll be overwhelmed with—with things!"...

She was interrupted by the entrance of the children. But after dinner, when she had seen them to bed, as was her custom, she came downstairs into my study and said quietly:—"I was wrong, Hugh. If you want to build a house, if you feel that you'd be happier, I have no right to object. Of course my sentiment for this house is natural, the children were born here, but I've realized we couldn't live here always."

"I'm glad you look at it that way," I replied. "Why, we're already getting cramped, Maude, and now you're going to have a governess I don't know where you'd put her."

"Not too large, a house," she pleaded. "I know you think I'm silly, but this extravagance we see everywhere does make me uneasy. Perhaps it's because I'm provincial, and always shall be."

"Well, we must have a house large enough to be comfortable in," I said. "There's no reason why we shouldn't be comfortable." I thought it as well not to confess my ambitions, and I was greatly relieved that she did not reproach me for buying the lot without consulting her. Indeed, I was grateful for this unanticipated acquiescence, I felt nearer to her, than I had for a long time. I drew up another chair to my desk.

"Sit down and we'll make a few sketches, just for fun," I urged.

"Hugh," she said presently, as we were blacking out prospective rooms, "do you remember all those drawings and plans we made in England, on our wedding trip, and how we knew just what we wanted, and changed our minds every few days? And now we're ready to build, and haven't any ideas at all!"

"Yes," I answered—but I did not look at her.

"I have the book still—it's in the attic somewhere, packed away in a box. I suppose those plans would seem ridiculous now."

It was quite true,—now that we were ready to build the home that had been deferred so long, now that I had the money to spend without stint on its construction, the irony of life had deprived me of

those strong desires and predilections I had known on my wedding trip. What a joy it would have been to build then! But now I found myself: wholly lacking in definite ideas as to style and construction. Secretly, I looked forward to certain luxuries, such as a bedroom and dressing-room and warm tiled bathroom all to myself bachelor privacies for which I had longed. Two mornings later at the breakfast table Maude asked me if I had thought of an architect.

"Why, Archie Lammerton, I suppose. Who else is there? Have you anyone else in mind?"

"N-no," said Maude. "But I heard of such a clever man in Boston, who doesn't charge Mr. Lammerton's prices; and who designs such beautiful private houses."

"But we can afford to pay Lammerton's prices," I replied, smiling. "And why shouldn't we have the best?"

"Are you sure—he is the best, Hugh?"

"Everybody has him," I said.

Maude smiled in return.

"I suppose that's a good reason," she answered.

"Of course it's a good reason," I assured her. "These people—the people we know—wouldn't have had Lammerton unless he was satisfactory. What's the matter with his houses?"

"Well," said Maude, "they're not very original. I don't say they're not good, in away, but they lack a certain imagination. It's difficult for me to express what I mean, 'machine made' isn't precisely the idea, but there should be a certain irregularity in art—shouldn't there? I saw a reproduction in one of the architectural journals of a house in Boston by a man named Frey, that seemed to me to have great charm."

Here was Lucia, unmistakably.

"That's all very well," I said impatiently, "but when one has to live in a house, one wants something more than artistic irregularity. Lammerton knows how to build for everyday existence; he's a practical man, as well as a man of taste, he may not be a Christopher Wrenn, but he understands conveniences and comforts. His chimneys don't smoke, his windows are tight, he knows what systems of heating are the best, and whom to go to: he knows what good plumbing is. I'm rather surprised you don't appreciate that, Maude, you're so particular as to what kind of rooms the children shall have, and you want a schoolroom-nursery with all the latest devices, with sun and ventilation. The Berringers wouldn't have had him, the Hollisters and Dickinsons wouldn't have had him if his work lacked taste."

"And Nancy wouldn't have had him," added Maude, and she smiled once more.

"Well, I haven't consulted Nancy, or anyone else," I replied—a little tartly, perhaps. "You don't seem to realize that some fashions may have a basis of reason. They are not all silly, as Lucia seems to think. If Lammerton builds satisfactory houses, he ought to be forgiven for being the fashion, he ought to have a chance." I got up to leave. "Let's see what kind of a plan he'll draw up, at any rate."

Her glance was almost indulgent.

"Of course, Hugh. I want you to be satisfied, to be pleased," she said.

"And you?" I questioned, "you are to live in the house more than I."

"Oh, I'm sure it will turn out all right," she replied. "Now you'd better run along, I know you're late."

"I am late," I admitted, rather lamely. "If you don't care for Lammerton's drawings, we'll get another architect."

Several years before Mr. Lammerton had arrived among us with a Beaux Arts moustache and letters of introduction to Mrs. Durrett and others. We found him the most adaptable, the most accommodating of young men, always ready to donate his talents and his services to private theatricals, tableaux, and fancy-dress balls, to take a place at a table at the last moment. One of his most appealing attributes was his "belief" in our city,—a form of patriotism that culminated, in later years, in "million population" clubs. I have often heard him declare, when the ladies had left the dining-room, that there was positively no limit to our future growth; and, incidentally, to our future wealth. Such sentiments as these could not fail to add to any man's popularity, and his success was a foregone conclusion. Almost before we knew it he was building the new Union Station of which he had foreseen the need, to take care of the millions to which our population was to be swelled; building the new Post Office that the

unceasing efforts of Theodore Watling finally procured for us: building, indeed, Nancy's new house, the largest of our private mansions save Mr. Scherer's, a commission that had immediately brought about others from the Dickinsons and the Berringers.... That very day I called on him in his offices at the top of one of our new buildings, where many young draftsmen were bending over their boards. I was ushered into his private studio.

"I suppose you want something handsome, Hugh," he said, looking at me over his cigarette, "something commensurate with these fees I hear you are getting."

"Well, I want to be comfortable," I admitted.

We lunched at the Club together, where we talked over the requirements.

When he came to dinner the next week and spread out his sketch on the living-room table Maude drew in her breath.

"Why, Hugh," she exclaimed in dismay, "it's as big as—as big as the
White House!"

"Not quite," I answered, laughing with Archie. "We may as well take our ease in our old age."

"Take our ease!" echoed Maude. "We'll rattle 'round in it. I'll never get used to it."

"After a month, Mrs. Paret, I'll wager you'll be wondering how you ever got along without it," said Archie.

It was not as big as the White House, yet it could not be called small. I had seen, to that. The long facade was imposing, dignified, with a touch of conventionality and solidity in keeping with my standing in the city. It was Georgian, of plum-coloured brick with marble trimmings and marble wedges over the ample windows, some years later I saw the house by Ferguson, of New York, from which Archie had cribbed it. At one end, off the dining-room, was a semicircular conservatory. There was a small portico, with marble pillars, and in the ample, swift sloping roof many dormers; servants' rooms, Archie explained. The look of anxiety on Maude's face deepened as he went over the floor plans, the reception-room; dining room to seat thirty, the servants' hall; and upstairs Maude's room, boudoir and bath and dress closet, my "apartments" adjoining on one side and the children's on the other, and the guest-rooms with baths....

Maude surrendered, as one who gives way to the inevitable. When the actual building began we both of us experienced, I think; a certain mild excitement; and walked out there, sometimes with the children, in the spring evenings, and on Sunday afternoons. "Excitement" is, perhaps, too strong a word for my feelings: there was a pleasurable anticipation on my part, a looking forward to a more decorous, a more luxurious existence; a certain impatience at the delays inevitable in building. But a new legal commercial enterprise of magnitude began to absorb me at his time, and somehow the building of this home—the first that we possessed was not the event it should have been; there were moments when I felt cheated, when I wondered what had become of that capacity for enjoyment which in my youth had been so keen. I remember indeed, one grey evening when I went there alone, after the workmen had departed, and stood in the litter of mortar and bricks and boards gazing at the completed front of the house. It was even larger than I had imagined it from the plans; in the Summer twilight there was an air about it,—if not precisely menacing, at least portentous, with its gaping windows and towering roof. I was a little tired from a hard day; I had the odd feeding of having raised up something with which—momentarily at least—I doubted my ability to cope: something huge, impersonal; something that ought to have represented a fireside, a sanctuary, and yet was the embodiment of an element quite alien to the home; a restless element with which our American atmosphere had, by invisible degrees, become charged. As I stared at it, the odd fancy seized me that the building somehow typified my own career.... I had gained something, in truth, but had I not also missed something? something a different home would have embodied?

Maude and the children had gone, to the seaside.

With a vague uneasiness I turned away from the contemplation of those walls. The companion mansions were closed, their blinds tightly drawn; the neighbourhood was as quiet as the country, save for a slight but persistent noise that impressed itself on my consciousness. I walked around the house to spy in the back yard; a young girl rather stealthily gathering laths, and fragments of joists and flooring, and loading them into a child's express-wagon. She started when she saw me. She was little, more than a child, and the loose calico dress she wore seemed to emphasize her thinness. She stood stock-still, staring at me with frightened yet defiant eyes. I, too, felt a strange timidity in her presence.

"Why do you stop?" I asked at length.

"Say, is this your heap?" she demanded.

I acknowledged it. A hint of awe widened her eyes. Then site glanced at the half-filled wagon.

"This stuff ain't no use to you, is it?"

"No, I'm glad to have you take it."

She shifted to the other foot, but did not continue her gathering. An impulse seized me, I put down my walkingstick and began picking up pieces of wood, flinging them into the wagon. I looked at her again, rather furtively; she had not moved. Her attitude puzzled me, for it was one neither of surprise nor of protest. The spectacle of the "millionaire" owner of the house engaged in this menial occupation gave her no thrills. I finished the loading.

"There!" I said, and drew a dollar bill out of my pocket and gave it to her. Even then she did not thank me, but took up the wagon tongue and went off, leaving on me a disheartening impression of numbness, of life crushed out. I glanced up once more at the mansion I had built for myself looming in the dusk, and walked hurriedly away....

One afternoon some three weeks after we had moved into the new house, I came out of the Club, where I had been lunching in conference with Scherer and two capitalists from New York. It was after four o'clock, the day was fading, the street lamps were beginning to cast sickly streaks of jade-coloured light across the slush of the pavements. It was the sight of this slush (which for a brief half hour that morning had been pure snow, and had sent Matthew and Moreton and Biddy into ecstasies at the notion of a "real Christmas"), that brought to my mind the immanence of the festival, and the fact that I had as yet bought no presents. Such was the predicament in which I usually found myself on Christmas eve; and it was not without a certain sense of annoyance at the task thus abruptly confronting me that I got into my automobile and directed the chauffeur to the shopping district. The crowds surged along the wet sidewalks and overflowed into the street, and over the heads of the people I stared at the blazing shop-windows decked out in Christmas greens. My chauffeur, a bristly-haired Parisian, blew his horn insolently, men and women jostled each other to get out of the way, their holiday mood giving place to resentment as they stared into the windows of the limousine. With the American inability to sit still I shifted from one corner of the seat to another, impatient at the slow progress of the machine: and I felt a certain contempt for human beings, that they should make all this fuss, burden themselves with all these senseless purchases, for a tradition. The automobile stopped, and I fought my way across the sidewalk into the store of that time-honoured firm, Elgin, Yates and Garner, pausing uncertainly before the very counter where, some ten years before, I had bought an engagement ring. Young Mr. Garner himself spied me, and handing over a customer to a tired clerk, hurried forward to greet me, his manner implying that my entrance was in some sort an event. I had become used to this aroma of deference.

"What can I show you, Mr. Paret?" he asked.

"I don't know—I'm looking around," I said, vaguely, bewildered by the glittering baubles by which I was confronted. What did Maude want? While I was gazing into the case, Mr. Garner opened a safe behind him, laying before me a large sapphire set with diamonds in a platinum brooch; a beautiful stone, in the depths of it gleaming a fire like a star in an arctic sky. I had not given Maude anything of value of late. Decidedly, this was of value; Mr. Garner named the price glibly; if Mrs. Paret didn't care for it, it might be brought back or exchanged. I took it, with a sigh of relief. Leaving the store, I paused on the edge of the rushing stream of humanity, with the problem of the children's gifts still to be solved. I thought of my own childhood, when at Christmastide I had walked with my mother up and down this very street, so changed and modernized now; recalling that I had had definite desires, desperate ones; but my imagination failed me when I tried to summon up the emotions connected with them. I had no desires now: I could buy anything in reason in the whole street. What did Matthew and Moreton want? and little Biddy? Maude had not "spoiled" them; but they didn't seem to have any definite wants. The children made me think, with a sudden softening, of Tom Peters, and I went into a tobacconist's and bought him a box of expensive cigars. Then I told the chauffeur to take me to a toy-shop, where I stood staring through a plate-glass window at the elaborate playthings devised for the modern children of luxury. In the centre was a toy man-of-war, three feet in length, with turrets and guns, and propellers and a real steam-engine. As a boy I should have dreamed about it, schemed for it, bartered my immortal soul for it. But—if I gave it to Matthew, what was there for Moreton? A steam locomotive caught my eye, almost as elaborate. Forcing my way through the doors, I captured a salesman, and from a state bordering on nervous collapse he became galvanized into an intense alertness and respect when he understood my desires. He didn't know the price of the objects in question. He brought the proprietor, an obsequious little German who, on learning my name, repeated it in every sentence. For Biddy I chose a doll that was all but human; when held by a young woman for my inspection, it elicited murmurs of admiration from the women shoppers by whom we were

surrounded. The proprietor promised to make a special delivery of the three articles before seven o'clock....

Presently the automobile, after speeding up the asphalt of Grant Avenue, stopped before the new house. In spite of the change that house had made in my life, in three weeks I had become amazingly used to it; yet I had an odd feeling that Christmas eve as I stood under the portico with my key in the door, the same feeling of the impersonality of the place which I had experienced before. Not that for one moment I would have exchanged it for the smaller house we had left. I opened the door. How often, in that other house, I had come in the evening seeking quiet, my brain occupied with a problem, only to be annoyed by the romping of the children on the landing above. A noise in one end of it echoed to the other. But here, as I entered the hall, all was quiet: a dignified, deep-carpeted stairway swept upward before me, and on either side were wide, empty rooms; and in the subdued light of one of them I saw a dark figure moving silently about—the butler. He came forward to relieve me, deftly, of my hat and overcoat. Well, I had it at last, this establishment to which I had for so long looked forward. And yet that evening, as I hesitated in the hall, I somehow was unable to grasp that it was real and permanent, the very solidity of the walls and doors paradoxically suggested transientness, the butler a flitting ghost. How still the place was! Almost oppressively still. I recalled oddly a story of a peasant who, yearning for the great life, had stumbled upon an empty palace, its tables set with food in golden dishes. Before two days had passed he had fled from it in horror back to his crowded cottage and his drudgery in the fields. Never once had the sense of possession of the palace been realized. Nor did I feel that I possessed this house, though I had the deeds of it in my safe and the receipted bills in my files. It eluded me; seemed, in my, bizarre mood of that evening, almost to mock me. "You have built me," it seemed to say, "but I am stronger than you, because you have not earned me." Ridiculous, when the years of my labour and the size of my bank account were considered! Such, however, is the verbal expression of my feeling. Was the house empty, after all? Had something happened? With a slight panicky sensation I climbed the stairs, with their endless shallow treads, to hurry through the silent hallway to the schoolroom. Reassuring noises came faintly through the heavy door. I opened it. Little Biddy was careening round and round, crying out:—"To-morrow's Chris'mas! Santa Claus is coming tonight."

Matthew was regarding her indulgently, sympathetically, Moreton rather scornfully. The myth had been exploded for both, but Matthew still hugged it. That was the difference between them. Maude, seated on the floor, perceived me first, and glanced up at me with a smile.

"It's father!" she said.

Biddy stopped in the midst of a pirouette. At the age of seven she was still shy with me, and retreated towards Maude.

"Aren't we going to have a tree, father?" demanded Moreton, aggressively.
"Mother won't tell us—neither will Miss Allsop."

Miss Allsop was their governess.

"Why do you want a tree?" I asked.

"Oh, for Biddy," he said.

"It wouldn't be Christmas without a tree," Matthew declared, "—and Santa
Claus," he added, for his sister's benefit.

"Perhaps Santa Claus, when he sees we've got this big house, will think we don't need anything, and go on to some poorer children," said Maude. "You wouldn't blame him if he did that,—would you?"

The response to this appeal cannot be said to have been enthusiastic....

After dinner, when at last all of them were in bed, we dressed the tree; it might better be said that Maude and Miss Allsop dressed it, while I gave a perfunctory aid. Both the women took such a joy in the process, vying with each other in getting effects, and as I watched them eagerly draping the tinsel and pinning on the glittering ornaments I wondered why it was that I was unable to find the same joy as they. Thus it had been every Christmas eve. I was always tired when I got home, and after dinner relaxation set in.

An electrician had come while we were at the table, and had fastened on the little electric bulbs which did duty as candles.

"Oh," said Maude, as she stood off to survey the effect, "isn't it beautiful! Come, Miss Allsop, let's get the presents."

They flew out of the room, and presently hurried back with their arms full of the usual parcels: parcels from Maude's family in Elkington, from my own relatives, from the Blackwoods and the Peterses, from Nancy. In the meantime I had had my own contributions brought up, the man of war, the locomotive, the big doll. Maude stood staring.

"Hugh, they'll be utterly ruined!" she exclaimed.

"The boys might as well have something instructive," I replied, "and as for Biddy—nothing's too good for her."

"I might have known you wouldn't forget them, although you are so busy."....

We filled the three stockings hung by the great fireplace. Then, with a last lingering look at the brightness of the tree, she stood in the doorway and turned the electric switch.

"Not before seven to-morrow morning, Miss Allsop," she said. "Hugh, you will get up, won't you? You mustn't miss seeing them. You can go back to bed again."

I promised.

Evidently, this was Reality to Maude. And had it not been one of my dreams of marriage, this preparing for the children's Christmas, remembering the fierce desires of my own childhood? It struck me, after I had kissed her good night and retired to my dressing-room, that fierce desires burned within me still, but the objects towards which their flames leaped out differed. That was all. Had I remained a child, since my idea of pleasure was still that of youth? The craving far excitement, adventure, was still unslaked; the craving far freedom as keen as ever. During the whole of my married life, I had been conscious of an inner protest against "settling down," as Tom Peters had settled down. The smaller house from which we had moved, with its enforced propinquity, hard emphasized the bondage of marriage. Now I had two rooms to myself, in the undisputed possession of which I had taken a puerile delight. On one side of my dressing-room Archie Lammerton had provided a huge closet containing the latest devices for the keeping of a multitudinous wardrobe; there was a reading-lamp, and the easiest of easy-chairs, imported from England, while between the windows were shelves of Italian walnut which I had filled with the books I had bought while at Cambridge, and had never since opened. As I sank down in my chair that odd feeling of uneasiness, of transience and unreality, of unsatisfaction I had had ever since we had moved suddenly became intensified, and at the very moment when I had gained everything I had once believed a man could desire! I was successful, I was rich, my health had not failed, I had a wife who catered to my wishes, lovable children who gave no trouble and yet—there was still the void to be filled, the old void I had felt as a boy, the longing for something beyond me, I knew not what; there was the strange inability to taste any of these things, the need at every turn for excitement, for a stimulus. My marriage had been a disappointment, though I strove to conceal this from myself; a disappointment because it had not filled the requirements of my category—excitement and mystery: I had provided the setting and lacked the happiness. Another woman Nancy—might have given me the needed stimulation; and yet my thoughts did not dwell on Nancy that night, my longings were not directed towards her, but towards the vision of a calm, contented married happiness I had looked forward to in youth,—a vision suddenly presented once more by the sight of Maude's simple pleasure in dressing the Christmas tree. What restless, fiendish element in me prevented my enjoying that? I had something of the fearful feeling of a ghost in my own house and among my own family, of a spirit doomed to wander, unable to share in what should have been my own, in what would have saved me were I able to partake of it. Was it too late to make that effort?.... Presently the strains of music pervaded my consciousness, the chimes of Trinity ringing out in the damp night the Christmas hymn, Adeste Fideles. It was midnight it was Christmas. How clear the notes rang through the wet air that came in at my window! Back into the dim centuries that music led me, into candle-lit Gothic chapels of monasteries on wind-swept heights above the firs, and cathedrals in mediaeval cities. Twilight ages of war and scourge and stress and storm—and faith. "Oh, come, all ye Faithful!" What a strange thing, that faith whose flame so marvellously persisted, piercing the gloom; the Christmas myth, as I had heard someone once call it. Did it possess the power to save me? Save me from what? Ah, in this hour I knew. In the darkness the Danger loomed up before me, vague yet terrible, and I trembled. Why was not this Thing ever present, to chasten and sober me? The Thing was myself.

Into my remembrance, by what suggestion I know not, came that March evening when I had gone to Holder Chapel at Harvard to listen to a preacher, a personality whose fame and influence had since spread throughout the land. Some dim fear had possessed me then. I recalled vividly the man, and the face of Hermann Krebs as I drew back from the doorway....

When I awoke my disquieting, retrospective mood had disappeared, and yet there clung to me, minus the sanction of fear or reward or revealed truth, a certain determination to behave, on this day at least, more like a father and a husband: to make an effort to enter into the spirit of the festival, and see what

happened. I dressed in cheerful haste, took the sapphire pendant from its velvet box, tiptoed into the still silent schoolroom and hung it on the tree, flooding on the electric light that set the tinsel and globes ablaze. No sooner had I done this than I heard the patter of feet in the hallway, and a high-pitched voice—Biddy's —crying out:—"It's Santa Claus!"

Three small, flannel-wrappered figures stood in the doorway.

"Why, it's father!" exclaimed Moreton.

"And he's all dressed!" said Matthew.

"Oh-h-h!" cried Biddy, staring at the blazing tree, "isn't it beautiful!"

Maude was close behind them. She gave an exclamation of delighted surprise when she saw me, and then stood gazing with shining eyes at the children, especially at Biddy, who stood dazzled by the glory of the constellation confronting her.... Matthew, too, wished to prolong the moment of mystery. It was the practical Moreton who cried:—"Let's see what we've got!"

The assault and the sacking began. I couldn't help thinking as I watched them of my own wildly riotous, Christmas-morning sensations, when all the gifts had worn the aura of the supernatural; but the arrival of these toys was looked upon by my children as a part of the natural order of the universe. At Maude's suggestion the night before we had placed my presents, pieces de resistance, at a distance from the tree, in the hope that they would not be spied at once, that they would be in some sort a climax. It was Matthew who first perceived the ship, and identified it, by the card, as his property. To him it was clearly wonderful, but no miracle. He did not cry out, or call the attention of the others to it, but stood with his feet apart, examining it, his first remark being a query as to why it didn't fly the American flag. It's ensign was British. Then Moreton saw the locomotive, was told that it was his, and took possession of it violently. Why wasn't there more track? Wouldn't I get more track? I explained that it would go by steam, and he began unscrewing the cap on the little boiler until he was distracted by the man-of-war, and with natural acquisitiveness started to take possession of that. Biddy was bewildered by the doll, which Maude had taken up and was holding in her lap. She had had talking dolls before, and dolls that closed their eyes; she recognized this one, indeed, as a sort of super-doll, but her little mind was modern, too, and set no limits on what might be accomplished. She patted it, but was more impressed by the raptures of Miss Allsop, who had come in and was admiring it with some extravagance. Suddenly the child caught sight of her stocking, until now forgotten, and darted for the fireplace.

I turned to Maude, who stood beside me, watching them.

"But you haven't looked on the tree yourself," I reminded her.

She gave me an odd, questioning glance, and got up and set down the doll. As she stood for a moment gazing at the lights, she seemed very girlish in her dressing-gown, with her hair in two long plaits down her back.

"Oh, Hugh!" She lifted the pendant from the branch and held it up. Her gratitude, her joy at receiving a present was deeper than the children's!

"You chose it for me?"

I felt something like a pang when I thought how little trouble it had been.

"If you don't like it," I said, "or wish to have it changed—"

"Changed!" she exclaimed reproachfully. "Do you think I'd change it?
Only—it's much too valuable—"

I smiled.... Miss Allsop deftly undid the clasp and hung it around
Maude's neck.

"How it suits you, Mrs. Paret!" she cried....

This pendant was by no means the only present I had given Maude in recent years, and though she cared as little for jewels as for dress she seemed to attach to it a peculiar value and significance that disturbed and smote me, for the incident had revealed a love unchanged and unchangeable. Had she taken my gift as a sign that my indifference was melting?

As I went downstairs and into the library to read the financial page of the morning newspaper I asked myself, with a certain disquiet, whether, in the formal, complicated, and luxurious conditions in which

we now lived it might be possible to build up new ties and common interests. I reflected that this would involve confessions and confidences on my part, since there was a whole side of my life of which Maude knew nothing. I had convinced myself long ago that a man's business career was no affair of his wife's: I had justified that career to myself: yet I had always had a vague feeling that Maude, had she known the details, would not have approved of it. Impossible, indeed, for a woman to grasp these problems. They were outside of her experience.

Nevertheless, something might be done to improve our relationship, something which would relieve me of that uneasy lack of unity I felt when at home, of the lassitude and ennui I was wont to feel creeping over me on Sundays and holidays....

XX.

I find in relating those parts of my experience that seem to be of most significance I have neglected to tell of my mother's death, which occurred the year before we moved to Grant Avenue. She had clung the rest of her days to the house in which I had been born. Of late years she had lived in my children, and Maude's devotion to her had been unflagging. Truth compels me to say that she had long ceased to be a factor in my life. I have thought of her in later years.

Coincident with the unexpected feeling of fruitlessness that came to me with the Grant Avenue house, of things achieved but not realized or appreciated, was the appearance of a cloud on the business horizon; or rather on the political horizon, since it is hard to separate the two realms. There were signs, for those who could read, of a rising popular storm. During the earliest years of the new century the political atmosphere had changed, the public had shown a tendency to grow restless; and everybody knows how important it is for financial operations, for prosperity, that the people should mind their own business. In short, our commercial-romantic pilgrimage began to meet with unexpected resistance. It was as though the nation were entering into a senseless conspiracy to kill prosperity.

In the first place, in regard to the Presidency of the United States, a cog had unwittingly been slipped. It had always been recognized—as I have said—by responsible financial personages that the impulses of the majority of Americans could not be trusted, that these—who had inherited illusions of freedom—must be governed firmly yet with delicacy; unknown to them, their Presidents must be chosen for them, precisely as Mr. Watling had been chosen for the people of our state, and the popular enthusiasm manufactured later. There were informal meetings in New York, in Washington, where candidates were discussed; not that such and such a man was settled upon,—it was a process of elimination. Usually the affair had gone smoothly. For instance, a while before, a benevolent capitalist of the middle west, an intimate of Adolf Scherer, had become obsessed with the idea that a friend of his was the safest and sanest man for the head of the nation, had convinced his fellow-capitalists of this, whereupon he had gone ahead to spend his energy and his money freely to secure the nomination and election of this gentleman.

The Republican National Committee, the Republican National Convention were allowed to squabble to their hearts' content as to whether Smith, Jones or Brown should be nominated, but it was clearly understood that if Robinson or White were chosen there would be no corporation campaign funds. This applied also to the Democratic party, on the rare occasions when it seemed to have an opportunity of winning. Now, however, through an unpardonable blunder, there had got into the White House a President who was inclined to ignore advice, who appealed over the heads of the "advisers" to the populace; who went about tilting at the industrial structures we had so painfully wrought, and in frequent blasts of presidential messages enunciated new and heretical doctrines; who attacked the railroads, encouraged the brazen treason of labour unions, inspired an army of "muck-rakers" to fill the magazines with the wildest and most violent of language. State legislatures were emboldened to pass mischievous and restrictive laws, and much of my time began to be occupied in inducing, by various means, our courts to declare these unconstitutional. How we sighed for a business man or a lawyer in the White House! The country had gone mad, the stock-market trembled, the cry of "corporation control" resounded everywhere, and everywhere demagogues arose to inaugurate "reform campaigns," in an abortive attempt to "clean up politics." Down with the bosses, who were the tools of the corporations!

In our own city, which we fondly believed to be proof against the prevailing madness, a slight epidemic occurred; slight, yet momentarily alarming. Accidents will happen, even in the best regulated political organizations,—and accidents in these days appeared to be the rule. A certain Mr. Edgar

Greenhalge, a middle-aged, mild-mannered and inoffensive man who had made a moderate fortune in wholesale drugs, was elected to the School Board. Later on some of us had reason to suspect that Perry Blackwood—with more astuteness than he had been given credit for—was responsible for Mr. Greenhalge's candidacy. At any rate, he was not a man to oppose, and in his previous life had given no hint that he might become a trouble maker. Nothing happened for several months. But one day on which I had occasion to interview Mr. Jason on a little matter of handing over to the Railroad a piece of land belonging to the city, which was known as Billings' Bowl, he inferred that Mr. Greenhaige might prove a disturber of that profound peace with which the city administration had for many years been blessed.

"Who the hell is he?" was Mr. Jason's question.

It appeared that Mr. G.'s private life had been investigated, with disappointingly barren results; he was, seemingly, an anomalistic being in our Nietzschean age, an unaggressive man; he had never sold any drugs to the city; he was not a church member; nor could it be learned that he had ever wandered into those byways of the town where Mr. Jason might easily have got trace of him: if he had any vices, he kept them locked up in a safe-deposit box that could not be "located." He was very genial, and had a way of conveying disturbing facts—when he wished to convey them—under cover of the most amusing stories. Mr. Jason was not a man to get panicky. Greenhalge could be handled all right, only—what was there in it for Greenhalge?—a nut difficult for Mr. Jason to crack. The two other members of the School Board were solid. Here again the wisest of men was proved to err, for Mr. Greenhalge turned out to have powers of persuasion; he made what in religious terms would have been called a conversion in the case of another member of the board, an hitherto staunch old reprobate by the name of Muller, an ex-saloon-keeper in comfortable circumstances to whom the idea of public office had appealed.

Mr. Greenhalge, having got wind of certain transactions that interested him extremely, brought them in his good-natured way to the knowledge of Mr. Gregory, the district attorney, suggesting that he investigate. Mr. Gregory smiled; undertook, as delicately as possible, to convey to Mr. Greenhalge the ways of the world, and of the political world in particular, wherein, it seemed, everyone was a good fellow. Mr. Greenhalge was evidently a good fellow, and didn't want to make trouble over little things. No, Mr. Greenhalge didn't want to make trouble; he appreciated a comfortable life as much as Mr. Gregory; he told the district attorney a funny story which might or might not have had an application to the affair, and took his leave with the remark that he had been happy to make Mr. Gregory's acquaintance. On his departure the district attorney's countenance changed. He severely rebuked a subordinate for some trivial mistake, and walked as rapidly as he could carry his considerable weight to Monahan's saloon.... One of the things Mr. Gregory had pointed out incidentally was that Mr. Greenhalge's evidence was vague, and that a grand jury wanted facts, which might be difficult to obtain. Mr. Greenhalge, thinking over the suggestion, sent for Krebs. In the course of a month or two the investigation was accomplished, Greenhalge went back to Gregory; who repeated his homilies, whereupon he was handed a hundred or so typewritten pages of evidence.

It was a dramatic moment.

Mr. Gregory resorted to pleading. He was sure that Mr. Greenhalge didn't want to be disagreeable, it was true and unfortunate that such things were so, but they would be amended: he promised all his influence to amend them. The public conscience, said Mr. Gregory, was being aroused. Now how much better for the party, for the reputation, the fair name of the city if these things could be corrected quietly, and nobody indicted or tried! Between sensible and humane men, wasn't that the obvious way? After the election, suit could be brought to recover the money. But Mr. Greenhalge appeared to be one of those hopeless individuals without a spark of party loyalty; he merely continued to smile, and to suggest that the district attorney prosecute. Mr. Gregory temporized, and presently left the city on a vacation. A day or two after his second visit to the district attorney's office Mr. Greenhalge had a call from the city auditor and the purchasing agent, who talked about their families,—which was very painful. It was also intimated to Mr. Greenhalge by others who accosted him that he was just the man for mayor. He smiled, and modestly belittled his qualifications....

Suddenly, one fine morning, a part of the evidence Krebs had gathered appeared in the columns of the Mail and State, a new and enterprising newspaper for which the growth and prosperity of our city were responsible; the sort of "revelations" that stirred to amazement and wrath innocent citizens of nearly every city in our country: politics and "graft" infesting our entire educational system, teachers and janitors levied upon, prices that took the breath away paid to favoured firms for supplies, specifications so worded that reasonable bids were barred. The respectable firm of Ellery and Knowles was involved. In spite of our horror, we were Americans and saw the humour of the situation, and laughed at the caricature in the Mail and State representing a scholar holding up a pencil and a legend under it, "No, it's not gold, but it ought to be."

Here I must enter into a little secret history. Any affair that threatened the integrity of Mr. Jason's organization was of serious moment to the gentlemen of the financial world who found that organization invaluable and who were also concerned about the fair name of their community; a conference in the Boyne Club decided that the city officials were being persecuted, and entitled therefore to "the very best of counsel,"—in this instance, Mr. Hugh Paret. It was also thought wise by Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Gorse, and Mr. Grierson, and by Mr. Paret himself that he should not appear in the matter; an aspiring young attorney, Mr. Arbuthnot, was retained to conduct the case in public. Thus capital came to the assistance of Mr. Jason, a fund was raised, and I was given carte blanche to defend the miserable city auditor and purchasing agent, both of whom elicited my sympathy; for they were stout men, and rapidly losing weight. Our first care was to create a delay in the trial of the case in order to give the public excitement a chance to die down. For the public is proverbially unable to fix its attention for long on one object, continually demanding the distraction that our newspapers make it their business to supply. Fortunately, a murder was committed in one of our suburbs, creating a mystery that filled the "extras" for some weeks, and this was opportunely followed by the embezzlement of a considerable sum by the cashier of one of our state banks. Public interest was divided between baseball and the tracking of this criminal to New Zealand.

Our resentment was directed, not so much against Commissioner Greenhalge as against Krebs. It is curious how keen is the instinct of men like Grierson, Dickinson, Tallant and Scherer for the really dangerous opponent. Who the deuce was this man Krebs? Well, I could supply them with some information: they doubtless recalled the Galligan, case; and Miller Gorse, who forgot nothing, also remembered his opposition in the legislature to House Bill 709. He had continued to be the obscure legal champion of "oppressed" labour, but how he had managed to keep body and soul together I knew not. I had encountered him occasionally in court corridors or on the street; he did not seem to change much; nor did he appear in our brief and perfunctory conversations to bear any resentment against me for the part I had taken in the Galligan affair. I avoided him when it was possible.... I had to admit that he had done a remarkably good piece of work in collecting Greenhalge's evidence, and how the, erring city officials were to be rescued became a matter of serious concern. Gregory, the district attorney, was in an abject funk; in any case a mediocre lawyer, after the indictment he was no help at all. I had to do all the work, and after we had selected the particular "Railroad" judge before whom the case was to be tried, I talked it over with him. His name was Notting, he understood perfectly what was required of him, and that he was for the moment the chief bulwark on which depended the logical interests of capital and sane government for their defence; also, his re-election was at stake. It was indicated to newspapers (such as the Mail and State) showing a desire to keep up public interest in the affair that their advertising matter might decrease; Mr. Sherrill's great department store, for instance, did not approve of this sort of agitation. Certain stationers, booksellers and other business men had got "cold feet," as Mr. Jason put it, the prospect of bankruptcy suddenly looming ahead of them,—since the Corn National Bank held certain paper....

In short, when the case did come to trial, it "blew up," as one of our ward leaders dynamically expressed it. Several important witnesses were mysteriously lacking, and two or three school-teachers had suddenly decided—to take a trip to Europe. The district attorney was ill, and assigned the prosecution to a mild assistant; while a sceptical jury—composed largely of gentlemen who had the business interests of the community, and of themselves, at heart returned a verdict of "not guilty." This was the signal for severely dignified editorials in Mr. Tallant's and other conservative newspapers, hinting that it might be well in the future for all well-meaning but misguided reformers to think twice before subjecting the city to the cost of such trials, and uselessly attempting to inflame public opinion and upset legitimate business. The Era expressed the opinion that no city in the United States was "more efficiently and economically governed than our own." "Irregularities" might well occur in every large organization; and it would better have become Mr. Greenhalge if, instead of hiring an unknown lawyer thirsting for notoriety to cook up charges, he had called the attention of the proper officials to the matter, etc., etc. The Pilot alone, which relied on sensation for its circulation, kept hammering away for a time with veiled accusations. But our citizens had become weary....

As a topic, however, this effective suppression of reform was referred to with some delicacy by my friends and myself. Our interference had been necessary and therefore justified, but we were not particularly proud of it, and our triumph had a temporarily sobering effect. It was about this time, if I remember correctly, that Mr. Dickinson gave the beautiful stained-glass window to the church....

Months passed. One day, having occasion to go over to the Boyne Iron Works to get information at first hand from certain officials, and having finished my business, I boarded a South Side electric car standing at the terminal. Just before it started Krebs came down the aisle of the car and took the seat in front of me.

"Well," I said, "how are you?" He turned in surprise, and thrust his big, bony hand across the back of the seat. "Come and sit here." He came. "Do you ever get back to Cambridge in these days?" I asked

cordially.

"Not since I graduated from newspaper work in Boston. That's a good many years ago. By the way, our old landlady died this year."

"Do you mean—?" "Granite Face," I was about to say. I had forgotten her name, but that homesick scene when Tom and I stood before our open trunks, when Krebs had paid us a visit, came back to me. "You've kept in touch with her?" I asked, in surprise.

"Well," said Krebs, "she was one of the few friends I had at Cambridge. I had a letter from the daughter last week. She's done very well, and is an instructor in biology in one of the western universities."

I was silent a moment.

"And you,—you never married, did you?" I inquired, somewhat irrelevantly.

His semi-humorous gesture seemed to deny that such a luxury was for him. The conversation dragged a little; I began to feel the curiosity he invariably inspired. What was his life? What were his beliefs? And I was possessed by a certain militancy, a desire to "smoke him out." I did not stop to reflect that mine was in reality a defensive rather than an aggressive attitude.

"Do you live down here, in this part of the city?" I asked.

No, he boarded in Fowler Street. I knew it as in a district given over to the small houses of working-men.

"I suppose you are still a socialist."

"I suppose I am," he admitted, and added, "at any rate, that is as near as you can get to it."

"Isn't it fairly definite?"

"Fairly, if my notions are taken in general as the antithesis of what you fellows believe."

"The abolition of property, for instance."

"The abolition of too much property."

"What do you mean by 'too much'?"

"When it ceases to be real to a man, when it represents more than his need, when it drives him and he becomes a slave to it."

Involuntarily I thought of my new house,—not a soothing reflection.

"But who is going to decree how much property, a man should have?"

"Nobody—everybody. That will gradually tend to work itself out as we become more sensible and better educated, and understand more clearly what is good for us."

I retorted with the stock, common-sense phrase.

"If we had a division to-morrow, within a few years or so the most efficient would contrive to get the bulk of it back in their hands."

"That's so," he admitted. "But we're not going to have a division to-morrow."

"Thank God!" I exclaimed.

He regarded me.

"The 'efficient' will have to die or be educated first. That will take time."

"Educated!"

"Paret, have you ever read any serious books on what you call socialism?" he asked.

I threw out an impatient negative. I was going on to protest that I was not ignorant of the doctrine.

"Oh, what you call socialism is merely what you believe to be the more or less crude and utopian propaganda of an obscure political party. That isn't socialism. Nor is the anomalistic attempt that the

Christian Socialists make to unite modern socialistic philosophy with Christian orthodoxy, socialism."

"What is socialism, then?" I demanded, somewhat defiantly.

"Let's call it education, science," he said smilingly, "economics and government based on human needs and a rational view of religion. It has been taught in German universities, and it will be taught in ours whenever we shall succeed in inducing your friends, by one means or another, not to continue endowing them. Socialism, in the proper sense, is merely the application of modern science to government."

I was puzzled and angry. What he said made sense somehow, but it sounded to me like so much gibberish.

"But Germany is a monarchy," I objected.

"It is a modern, scientific system with monarchy as its superstructure. It is anomalous, but frank. The monarchy is there for all men to see, and some day it will be done away with. We are supposedly a democracy, and our superstructure is plutocratic. Our people feel the burden, but they have not yet discovered what the burden is."

"And when they do?" I asked, a little defiantly.

"When they do," replied Krebs, "they will set about making the plutocrats happy. Now plutocrats are discontented, and never satisfied; the more they get, the more they want, the more they are troubled by what other people have."

I smiled in spite of myself.

"Your interest in—in plutocrats is charitable, then?"

"Why, yes," he said, "my interest in all kinds of people is charitable. However improbable it may seem, I have no reason to dislike or envy people who have more than they know what to do with." And the worst of it was he looked it. He managed somehow simply by sitting there with his strange eyes fixed upon me—in spite of his ridiculous philosophy—to belittle my ambitions, to make of small worth my achievements, to bring home to me the fact that in spite of these I was neither contented nor happy though he kept his humour and his poise, he implied an experience that was far deeper, more tragic and more significant than mine. I was goaded into making an injudicious remark.

"Well, your campaign against Ennerly and Jackson fell through, didn't it?" Ennerly and Jackson were the city officials who had been tried.

"It wasn't a campaign against them," he answered. "And considering the subordinate part I took in it, it could scarcely be called mine."

"Greenhalge turned to you to get the evidence."

"Well, I got it," he said.

"What became of it?"

"You ought to know."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say, Paret," he answered slowly. "You ought to know, if anyone knows."

I considered this a moment, more soberly. I thought I might have counted on my fingers the number of men cognizant of my connection with the case. I decided that he was guessing.

"I think you should explain that," I told him.

"The time may come, when you'll have to explain it."

"Is that a threat?" I demanded.

"A threat?" he repeated. "Not at all."

"But you are accusing me—"

"Of what?" he interrupted suddenly.

He had made it necessary for me to define the nature of his charges.

"Of having had some connection with the affair in question."

"Whatever else I may be, I'm not a fool," he said quietly. "Neither the district attorney's office, nor young Arbuthnot had brains enough to get them out of that scrape. Jason didn't have influence enough with the judiciary, and, as I happen to know, there was a good deal of money spent."

"You may be called upon to prove it," I retorted, rather hotly.

"So I may."

His tone, far from being defiant, had in it a note of sadness. I looked at him. What were his potentialities? Was it not just possible that I should have to revise my idea of him, acknowledge that he might become more formidable than I had thought?

There was an awkward silence.

"You mustn't imagine, Paret, that I have any personal animus against you, or against any of the men with whom you're associated," he went on, after a moment. "I'm sorry you're on that side, that's all,—I told you so once before. I'm not calling you names, I'm not talking about morality and immorality. Immorality, when you come down to it, is often just the opposition to progress that comes from blindness. I don't make the mistake of blaming a few individuals for the evils of modern industrial society, and on the other hand you mustn't blame individuals for the discomforts of what you call the reform movement, for that movement is merely a symptom—a symptom of a disease due to a change in the structure of society. We'll never have any happiness or real prosperity until we cure that disease. I was inclined to blame you once, at the capital that time, because it seemed to me that a man with all the advantages you have had and a mind like yours didn't have much excuse. But I've thought about it since; I realize now that I've had a good many more 'advantages' than you, and to tell you the truth, I don't see how you could have come out anywhere else than where you are,—all your surroundings and training were against it. That doesn't mean that you won't grasp the situation some day—I have an idea you will. It's just an idea. The man who ought to be condemned isn't the man that doesn't understand what's going on, but the man who comes to understand and persists in opposing it." He rose and looked down at me with the queer, disturbing smile I remembered. "I get off at this corner," he added, rather diffidently. "I hope you'll forgive me for being personal. I didn't mean to be, but you rather forced it on me."

"Oh, that's all right," I replied. The car stopped, and he hurried off. I watched his tall figure as it disappeared among the crowd on the sidewalk....

I returned to my office in one of those moods that are the more disagreeable because conflicting. To-day in particular I had been aroused by what Tom used to call Krebs's "crust," and as I sat at my desk warm waves of resentment went through me at the very notion of his telling me that my view was limited and that therefore my professional conduct was to be forgiven! It was he, the fanatic, who saw things in the larger scale! an assumption the more exasperating because at the moment he made it he almost convinced me that he did, and I was unable to achieve for him the measure of contempt I desired, for the incident, the measure of ridicule it deserved. My real animus was due to the fact that he had managed to shake my self-confidence, to take the flavour out of my achievements,—a flavour that was in the course of an hour to be completely restored by one of those interesting coincidences occasionally occurring in life. A young member of my staff entered with a telegram; I tore it open, and sat staring at it a moment before I realized that it brought to me the greatest honour of my career.

The Banker-Personality in New York had summoned me for consultation. To be recognized by him conferred indeed an ennoblement, the Star and Garter, so to speak, of the only great realm in America, that of high finance; and the yellow piece of paper I held in my hand instantly re-magnetized me, renewed my energy, and I hurried home to pack my bag in order to catch the seven o'clock train. I announced the news to Maude.

"I imagine it's because he knows I have made something of a study of the coal roads situation," I added.

"I'm glad, Hugh," she said. "I suppose it's a great compliment."

Never had her inadequacy to appreciate my career been more apparent! I looked at her curiously, to realize once more with peculiar sharpness how far we were apart; but now the resolutions I had made —and never carried out—on that first Christmas in the new home were lacking. Indeed, it was the futility of such resolutions that struck me at this moment. If her manner had been merely one of indifference, it would in a way have been easier to bear; she was simply incapable of grasping the

significance of the event, the meaning to me of the years of unceasing, ambitious effort it crowned.

"Yes, it is something of a recognition," I replied. "Is there anything I can get for you in New York? I don't know how long I shall have to stay—I'll telegraph you when I'm getting back." I kissed her and hurried out to the automobile. As I drove off I saw her still standing in the doorway looking after me.... In the station I had a few minutes to telephone Nancy.

"If you don't see me for a few days it's because I've gone to New York,"
I informed her.

"Something important, I'm sure."

"How did you guess?" I demanded, and heard her laugh.

"Come back soon and tell me about it," she said, and I walked, exhilarated, to the train.... As I sped through the night, staring out of the window into the darkness, I reflected on the man I was going to see. But at that time, although he represented to me the quintessence of achievement and power, I did not by any means grasp the many sided significance of the phenomenon he presented, though I was keenly aware of his influence, and that men spoke of him with bated breath. Presidents came and went, kings and emperors had responsibilities and were subject daily to annoyances, but this man was a law unto himself. He did exactly what he chose, and compelled other men to do it. Wherever commerce reigned,—and where did it not?—he was king and head of its Holy Empire, Pope and Emperor at once. For he had his code of ethics, his religion, and those who rebelled, who failed to conform, he excommunicated; a code something like the map of Europe,—apparently inconsistent in places. What I did not then comprehend was that he was the American Principle personified, the supreme individual assertion of the conviction that government should remain modestly in the background while the efficient acquired the supremacy that was theirs by natural right; nor had I grasped at that time the crowning achievement of a unity that fused Christianity with those acquisitive dispositions said to be inherent in humanity. In him the Lion and the Lamb, the Eagle and the Dove dwelt together in amity and power.

New York, always a congenial place to gentlemen of vitality and means and influential connections, had never appeared to me more sparkling, more inspiring. Winter had relented, spring had not as yet begun. And as I sat in a corner of the dining-room of my hotel looking out on the sunlit avenue I was conscious of partaking of the vigour and confidence of the well-dressed, clear-eyed people who walked or drove past my window with the air of a conquering race. What else was there in the world more worth having than this conquering sense? Religion might offer charms to the weak. Yet here religion itself became sensible, and wore the garb of prosperity. The stonework of the tall church on the corner was all lace; and the very saints in their niches, who had known martyrdom and poverty, seemed to have renounced these as foolish, and to look down complacently on the procession of wealth and power.. Across the street, behind a sheet of glass, was a carrosserie where were displayed the shining yellow and black panels of a closed automobile, the cost of which would have built a farm-house and stocked a barn.

At eleven o'clock, the appointed hour, I was in Wall Street. Sending in my name, I was speedily ushered into a room containing a table, around which were several men; but my eyes were drawn at once to the figure of the great banker who sat, massive and preponderant, at one end, smoking a cigar, and listening in silence to the conversation I had interrupted. He rose courteously and gave me his hand, and a glance that is unforgettable.

"It is good of you to come, Mr. Paret," he said simply, as though his summons had not been a command. "Perhaps you know some of these gentlemen."

One of them was our United States Senator, Theodore Watling. He, as it turned out, had been summoned from Washington. Of course I saw him frequently, having from time to time to go to Washington on various errands connected with legislation. Though spruce and debonnair as ever, in the black morning coat he invariably wore, he appeared older than he had on the day when I had entered his office. He greeted me warmly, as always.

"Hugh, I'm glad to see you here," he said, with a slight emphasis on the last word. My legal career was reaching its logical climax, the climax he had foreseen. And he added, to the banker, that he had brought me up.

"Then he was trained in a good school," remarked that personage, affably.

Mr. Barbour, the president of our Railroad, was present, and nodded to me kindly; also a president of a smaller road. In addition, there were two New York attorneys of great prominence, whom I had met. The banker's own special lieutenant of the law, Mr. Clement T. Grolier, for whom I looked, was absent;

but it was forthwith explained that he was offering, that morning, a resolution of some importance in the Convention of his Church, but that he would be present after lunch.

"I have asked you to come here, Mr. Paret," said the banker, "not only because I know something personally of your legal ability, but because I have been told by Mr. Scherer and Mr. Barbour that you happen to have considerable knowledge of the situation we are discussing, as well as some experience with cases involving that statute somewhat hazy to lay minds, the Sherman anti-trust law."

A smile went around the table. Mr. Watling winked at me; I nodded, but said nothing. The banker was not a man to listen to superfluous words. The keynote of his character was despatch....

The subject of the conference, like many questions bitterly debated and fought over in their time, has in the year I write these words come to be of merely academic interest. Indeed, the very situation we discussed that day has been cited in some of our modern text-books as a classic consequence of that archaic school of economics to which the name of Manchester is attached. Some half dozen or so of the railroads running through the anthracite coal region had pooled their interests,—an extremely profitable proceeding. The public paid. We deemed it quite logical that the public should pay—having been created largely for that purpose; and very naturally we resented the fact that the meddling Person who had got into the White House without asking anybody's leave,—who apparently did not believe in the infallibility of our legal Bible, the Constitution,—should maintain that the anthracite roads had formed a combination in restraint of trade, should lay down the preposterous doctrine—so subversive of the Rights of Man—that railroads should not own coal mines. Congress had passed a law to meet this contention, suit had been brought, and in the lower court the government had won.

As the day wore on our numbers increased, we were joined by other lawyers of renown, not the least of whom was Mr. Grolier himself, fresh from his triumph over religious heresy in his Church Convention. The note of the conference became tinged with exasperation, and certain gentlemen seized the opportunity to relieve their pent-up feelings on the subject of the President and his slavish advisers,—some of whom, before they came under the spell of his sorcery, had once been sound lawyers and sensible men. With the exception of the great Banker himself, who made few comments, Theodore Watling was accorded the most deference; as one of the leaders of that indomitable group of senators who had dared to stand up against popular clamour, his opinions were of great value, and his tactical advice was listened to with respect. I felt more pride than ever in my former chief, who had lost none of his charm. While in no way minimizing the seriousness of the situation, his wisdom was tempered, as always, with humour; he managed, as it were, to neutralize the acid injected into the atmosphere by other gentlemen present; he alone seemed to bear no animus against the Author of our troubles; suave and calm, good natured, he sometimes brought the company into roars of laughter and even succeeded in bringing occasional smiles to the face of the man who had summoned us—when relating some characteristic story of the queer genius whom the fates (undoubtedly as a practical joke) had made the chief magistrate of the United States of America. All geniuses have weaknesses; Mr. Wading had made a study of the President's, and more than once had lured him into an impasse. The case had been appealed to the Supreme Court, and Mr. Wading, with remarkable conciseness and penetration, reviewed the characteristics of each and every member of that tribunal, all of whom he knew intimately. They were, of course, not subject to "advice," as were some of the gentlemen who sat on our state courts; no sane and self-respecting American would presume to "approach" them. Nevertheless they were human, and it were wise to take account, in the conduct of the case, of the probable bias of each individual.

The President, overstepping his constitutional, Newtonian limits, might propose laws, Congress might acquiesce in them, but the Supreme Court, after listening to lawyers like Grolier (and he bowed to the attorney), made them: made them, he might have added, without responsibility to any man in our unique Republic that scorned kings and apotheosized lawyers. A Martian with a sense of humour witnessing a stormy session of Congress would have giggled at the thought of a few tranquil gentlemen in another room of the Capitol waiting to decide what the people's representatives meant—or whether they meant anything....

For the first time since I had known Theodore Watling, however, I saw him in the shadow of another individual; a man who, like a powerful magnet, continually drew our glances. When we spoke, we almost invariably addressed him, his rare words fell like bolts upon the consciousness. There was no apparent rift in that personality.

When, about five o'clock, the conference was ended and we were dismissed, United States Senator, railroad presidents, field-marshals of the law, the great banker fell into an eager conversation with Grolier over the Canon on Divorce, the subject of warm debate in the convention that day. Grolier, it appeared, had led his party against the theological liberals. He believed that law was static, but none knew better its plasticity; that it was infallible, but none so well as he could find a text on either side.

His reputation was not of the popular, newspaper sort, but was known to connoisseurs, editors, financiers, statesmen and judges,—to those, in short, whose business it is to make themselves familiar with the instruments of power. He was the banker's chief legal adviser, the banker's rapier of tempered steel, sheathed from the vulgar view save when it flashed forth on a swift errand.

"I'm glad to be associated with you in this case, Mr. Paret," Mr. Grolier said modestly, as we emerged into the maelstrom of Wall Street. "If you can make it convenient to call at my office in the morning, we'll go over it a little. And I'll see you in a day or two in Washington, Watling. Keep your eye on the bull," he added, with a twinkle, "and don't let him break any more china than you can help. I don't know where we'd be if it weren't for you fellows."

By "you fellows," he meant Mr. Watling's distinguished associates in the Senate….

Mr. Watling and I dined together at a New York club. It was not a dinner of herbs. There was something exceedingly comfortable about that club, where the art of catering to those who had earned the right to be catered to came as near perfection as human things attain. From the great, heavily curtained dining-room the noises of the city had been carefully excluded; the dust of the Avenue, the squalour and smells of the brown stone fronts and laddered tenements of those gloomy districts lying a pistol-shot east and west. We had a vintage champagne, and afterwards a cigar of the club's special importation.

"Well," said Mr. Watling, "mow that you're a member of the royal council, what do you think of the King?"

"I've been thinking a great deal about him," I said, and indeed it was true. He had made, perhaps, his greatest impression when I had shaken his hand in parting. The manner in which he had looked at me then had puzzled me; it was as though he were seeking to divine something in me that had escaped him. "Why doesn't the government take him over?" I exclaimed.

Mr. Watling smiled.

"You mean, instead of his mines and railroads and other properties?"

"Yes. But that's your idea. Don't you remember you said something of the kind the night of the election, years ago? It occurred to me to-day, when I was looking at him."

"Yes," he agreed thoughtfully, "if some American genius could find a way to legalize that power and utilize the men who created it the worst of our problems would be solved. A man with his ability has a right to power, and none would respond more quickly or more splendidly to a call of the government than he. All this fight is waste, Hugh, damned waste of the nation's energy." Mr. Watling seldom swore. "Look at the President! There's a man of remarkable ability, too. And those two oughtn't to be fighting each other. The President's right, in a way. Yes, he is, though I've got to oppose him."

I smiled at this from Theodore Watling, though I admired him the more for it. And suddenly, oddly, I happened to remember what Krebs had said, that our troubles were not due to individuals, but to a disease that had developed in industrial society. If the day should come when such men as the President and the great banker would be working together, was it not possible, too, that the idea of Mr. Watling and the vision of Krebs might coincide? I was struck by a certain seeming similarity in their views; but Mr. Watling interrupted this train of thought by continuing to express his own.

"Well,—they're running right into a gale when they might be sailing with it," he said.

"You think we'll have more trouble?" I asked.

"More and more," he replied. "It'll be worse before it's better I'm afraid." At this moment a club servant announced his cab, and he rose. "Well, good-bye, my son," he said. "I'll hope to see you in Washington soon. And remember there's no one thinks any more of you than I do."

I escorted him to the door, and it was with a real pang I saw him wave to me from his cab as he drove away. My affection for him was never more alive than in this hour when, for the first time in my experience, he had given real evidence of an inner anxiety and lack of confidence in the future.

XXI.

In spite of that unwonted note of pessimism from Mr. Watling, I went home in a day or two flushed with my new honours, and it was impossible not to be conscious of the fact that my aura of prestige was increased —tremendously increased—by the recognition I had received. A certain subtle deference in the attitude of the small minority who owed allegiance to the personage by whom I had been summoned was more satisfying than if I had been acclaimed at the station by thousands of my fellow-citizens who knew nothing of my journey and of its significance, even though it might have a concern for them. To men like Berringer, Grierson and Tallant and our lesser great lights the banker was a semi-mythical figure, and many times on the day of my return I was stopped on the street to satisfy the curiosity of my friends as to my impressions. Had he, for instance, let fall any opinions, prognostications on the political and financial situation? Dickinson and Scherer were the only other men in the city who had the honour of a personal acquaintance with him, and Scherer was away, abroad, gathering furniture and pictures for the house in New York Nancy had predicted, and which he had already begun to build! With Dickinson I lunched in private, in order to give him a detailed account of the conference. By five o'clock I was ringing the door-bell of Nancy's new mansion on Grant Avenue. It was several blocks below my own.

"Well, how does it feel to be sent for by the great sultan?" she asked, as I stood before her fire. "Of course, I have always known that ultimately he couldn't get along without you."

"Even if he has been a little late in realizing it," I retorted.

"Sit down and tell me all about him," she commanded.

"I met him once, when Ham had the yacht at Bar Harbor."

"And how did he strike you?"

"As somewhat wrapped up in himself," said Nancy.

We laughed together.

"Oh, I fell a victim," she went on. "I might have sailed off with him, if he had asked me."

"I'm surprised he didn't ask you."

"I suspect that it was not quite convenient," she said. "Women are secondary considerations to sultans, we're all very well when they haven't anything more serious to occupy them. Of course that's why they fascinate us. What did he want with you, Hugh?"

"He was evidently afraid that the government would win the coal roads suit unless I was retained."

"More laurels!" she sighed. "I suppose I ought to be proud to know you."

"That's exactly what I've been trying to impress on you all these years,"
I declared. "I've laid the laurels at your feet, in vain."

She sat with her head back on the cushions, surveying me.

"Your dress is very becoming," I said irrelevantly.

"I hoped it would meet your approval," she mocked.

"I've been trying to identify the shade. It's elusive—like you."

"Don't be banal.... What is the colour?"

"Poinsetta!"

"Pretty nearly," she agreed, critically.

I took the soft crepe between my fingers.

"Poet!" she smiled. "No, it isn't quite poinsetta. It's nearer the red-orange of a tree I remember one autumn, in the White Mountains, with the setting sun on it. But that wasn't what we were talking about. Laurels! Your laurels."

"My laurels," I repeated. "Such as they are, I fling them into your lap."

"Do you think they increase your value to me, Hugh?"

"I don't know," I said thickly.

She shook her head.

"No, it's you I like—not the laurels."

"But if you care for me—?" I began.

She lifted up her hands and folded them behind the knot of her hair.

"It's extraordinary how little you have changed since we were children, Hugh. You are still sixteen years old, that's why I like you. If you got to be the sultan of sultans yourself, I shouldn't like you any better, or any worse."

"And yet you have just declared that power appeals to you!"

"Power—yes. But a woman—a woman like me—wants to be first, or nothing."

"You are first," I asserted. "You always have been, if you had only realized it."

She gazed up at me dreamily.

"If you had only realized it! If you had only realized that all I wanted of you was to be yourself. It wasn't what you achieved. I didn't want you to be like Ralph or the others."

"Myself? What are you trying to say?"

"Yourself. Yes, that is what I like about you. If you hadn't been in such a hurry—if you hadn't misjudged me so. It was the power in you, the craving, the ideal in you that I cared for—not the fruits of it. The fruits would have come naturally. But you forced them, Hugh, for quicker results."

"What kind of fruits?" I asked.

"Ah," she exclaimed, "how can I tell what they might have been! You have striven and striven, you have done extraordinary things, but have they made you any happier? have you got what you want?"

I stooped down and seized her wrists from behind her head.

"I want you, Nancy," I said. "I have always wanted you. You're more wonderful to-day than you have ever been. I could find myself—with you."

She closed her eyes. A dreamy smile was on her face, and she lay unresisting, very still. In that tremendous moment, for which it seemed I had waited a lifetime, I could have taken her in my arms—and yet I did not. I could not tell why: perhaps it was because she seemed to have passed beyond me—far beyond—in realization. And she was so still!

"We have missed the way, Hugh," she whispered, at last.

"But we can find it again, if we seek it together," I urged.

"Ah, if I only could!" she said. "I could have once. But now I'm afraid—afraid of getting lost." Slowly she straightened up, her hands falling into her lap. I seized them again, I was on my knees in front of her, before the fire, and she, intent, looking down at me, into me, through me it seemed—at something beyond which yet was me.

"Hugh," she asked, "what do you believe? Anything?"

"What do I believe?"

"Yes. I don't mean any cant, cut-and-dried morality. The world is getting beyond that. But have you, in your secret soul, any religion at all? Do you ever think about it? I'm not speaking about anything orthodox, but some religion—even a tiny speck of it, a germ—harmonizing with life, with that power we feel in us we seek to express and continually violate."

"Nancy!" I exclaimed.

"Answer me—answer me truthfully," she said....

I was silent, my thoughts whirling like dust atoms in a storm.

"You have always taken things—taken what you wanted. But they haven't satisfied you, convinced you that that is all of life."

"Do you mean—that we should renounce?" I faltered.

"I don't know what I mean. I am asking, Hugh, asking. Haven't you any clew? Isn't there any voice in you, anywhere, deep down, that can tell me? give me a hint? just a little one?"

I was wracked. My passion had not left me, it seemed to be heightened, and I pressed her hands against her knees. It was incredible that my hands should be there, in hers, feeling her. Her beauty seemed as fresh, as un-wasted as the day, long since, when I despaired of her. And yet and yet against the tumult and beating of this passion striving to throb down thought, thought strove. Though I saw her as a woman, my senses and my spirit commingled and swooned together.

"This is life," I murmured, scarcely knowing what I said.

"Oh, my dear!" she cried, and her voice pierced me with pain, "are we to be lost, overpowered, engulfed, swept down its stream, to come up below drifting—wreckage? Where, then, would be your power? I'm not speaking of myself. Isn't life more than that? Isn't it in us, too,—in you? Think, Hugh. Is there no god, anywhere, but this force we feel, restlessly creating only to destroy? You must answer—you must find out."

I cannot describe the pleading passion in her voice, as though hell and heaven were wrestling in it. The woman I saw, tortured yet uplifted, did not seem to be Nancy, yet it was the woman I loved more than life itself and always had loved.

"I can't think," I answered desperately, "I can only feel—and I can't express what I feel. It's mixed, it's dim, and yet bright and shining—it's you."

"No, it's you," she said vehemently. "You must interpret it." Her voice sank: "Could it be God?" she asked.

"God!" I exclaimed sharply.

Her hands fell away from mine.... The silence was broken only by the crackling of the wood fire as a log turned over and fell. Never before, in all our intercourse that I could remember, had she spoken to me about religion.... With that apparent snap in continuity incomprehensible to the masculine mind-her feminine mood had changed. Elements I had never suspected, in Nancy, awe, even a hint of despair, entered into it, and when my hand found hers again, the very quality of its convulsive pressure seemed to have changed. I knew then that it was her soul I loved most; I had been swept all unwittingly to its very altar.

"I believe it is God," I said. But she continued to gaze at me, her lips parted, her eyes questioning.

"Why is it," she demanded, "that after all these centuries of certainty we should have to start out to find him again? Why is it when something happens like—like this, that we should suddenly be torn with doubts about him, when we have lived the best part of our lives without so much as thinking of him?"

"Why should you have qualms?" I said. "Isn't this enough? and doesn't it promise—all?"

"I don't know. They're not qualms—in the old sense." She smiled down at me a little tearfully. "Hugh, do you remember when we used to go to Sunday-school at Dr. Pound's church, and Mrs. Ewan taught us? I really believed something then—that Moses brought down the ten commandments of God from the mountain, all written out definitely for ever and ever. And I used to think of marriage" (I felt a sharp twinge), "of marriage as something sacred and inviolable,—something ordained by God himself. It ought to be so—oughtn't it? That is the ideal."

"Yes—but aren't you confusing—?" I began.

"I am confusing and confused. I shouldn't be—I shouldn't care if there weren't something in you, in me, in our—friendship, something I can't explain, something that shines still through the fog and the smoke in which we have lived our lives—something which, I think, we saw clearer as children. We have lost it in our hasty groping. Oh, Hugh, I couldn't bear to think that we should never find it! that it doesn't really exist! Because I seem to feel it. But can we find it this way, my dear?" Her hand tightened on mine.

"But if the force drawing us together, that has always drawn us together, is God?" I objected.

"I asked you," she said. "The time must come when you must answer, Hugh.
It may be too late, but you must answer."

"I believe in taking life in my own hands," I said.

"It ought to be life," said Nancy. "It—it might have been life.... It is only when a moment, a moment

like this comes that the quality of what we have lived seems so tarnished, that the atmosphere which we ourselves have helped to make is so sordid. When I think of the intrigues, and divorces, the self-indulgences,—when I think of my own marriage—" her voice caught. "How are we going to better it, Hugh, this way? Am I to get that part of you I love, and are you to get what you crave in me? Can we just seize happiness? Will it not elude us just as much as though we believed firmly in the ten commandments?"

"No," I declared obstinately.

She shook her head.

"What I'm afraid of is that the world isn't made that way—for you—for me. We're permitted to seize those other things because they're just baubles, we've both found out how worthless they are. And the worst of it is they've made me a coward, Hugh. It isn't that I couldn't do without them, I've come to depend on them in another way. It's because they give me a certain protection,—do you see? they've come to stand in the place of the real convictions we've lost. And—well, we've taken the baubles, can we reach out our hands and take—this? Won't we be punished for it, frightfully punished?"

"I don't care if we are," I said, and surprised myself.

"But I care. It's weak, it's cowardly, but it's so. And yet I want to face the situation—I'm trying to get you to face it, to realize how terrible it is."

"I only know that I want you above everything else in the world—I'll take care of you—"

I seized her arms, I drew her down to me.

"Don't!" she cried. "Oh, don't!" and struggled to her feet and stood before me panting. "You must go away now—please, Hugh. I can't bear any more—I want to think."

I released her. She sank into the chair and hid her face in her hands....

As may be imagined, the incident I have just related threw my life into a tangle that would have floored a less persistent optimist and romanticist than myself, yet I became fairly accustomed to treading what the old moralists called the devious paths of sin. In my passion I had not hesitated to lay down the doctrine that the courageous and the strong took what they wanted,—a doctrine of which I had been a consistent disciple in the professional and business realm. A logical buccaneer, superman, "master of life" would promptly have extended this doctrine to the realm of sex. Nancy was the mate for me, and Nancy and I, our development, was all that mattered, especially my development. Let every man and woman look out for his or her development, and in the end the majority of people would be happy. This was going Adam Smith one better. When it came to putting that theory into practice, however, one needed convictions: Nancy had been right when she had implied that convictions were precisely what we lacked; what our world in general lacked. We had desires, yes convictions, no. What we wanted we got not by defying the world, but by conforming to it: we were ready to defy only when our desires overcame the resistance of our synapses, and even then not until we should have exhausted every legal and conventional means.

A superman with a wife and family he had acquired before a great passion has made him a superman is in rather a predicament, especially if he be one who has achieved such superhumanity as he possesses not by challenging laws and conventions, but by getting around them. My wife and family loved me; and paradoxically I still had affection for them, or thought I had. But the superman creed is, "be yourself, realize yourself, no matter how cruel you may have to be in order to do so." One trouble with me was that remnants of the Christian element of pity still clung to me. I would be cruel if I had to, but I hoped I shouldn't have to: something would turn up, something in the nature of an intervening miracle that would make it easy for me. Perhaps Maude would take the initiative and relieve me.... Nancy had appealed for a justifying doctrine, and it was just what I didn't have and couldn't evolve. In the meanwhile it was quite in character that I should accommodate myself to a situation that might well be called anomalous.

This "accommodation" was not unaccompanied by fever. My longing to realize my love for Nancy kept me in a constant state of tension—of "nerves"; for our relationship had merely gone one step farther, we had reached a point where we acknowledged that we loved each other, and paradoxically halted there; Nancy clung to her demand for new sanctions with a tenacity that amazed and puzzled and often irritated me. And yet, when I look back upon it all, I can see that some of the difficulty lay with me: if she had her weakness—which she acknowledged—I had mine—and kept it to myself. It was part of my romantic nature not to want to break her down. Perhaps I loved the ideal better than the woman herself, though that scarcely seems possible.

We saw each other constantly. And though we had instinctively begun to be careful, I imagine there was some talk among our acquaintances. It is to be noted that the gossip never became riotous, for we had always been friends, and Nancy had a saving reputation for coldness. It seemed incredible that Maude had not discovered my secret, but if she knew of it, she gave no sign of her knowledge. Often, as I looked at her, I wished she would. I can think of no more expressive sentence in regard to her than the trite one that she pursued the even tenor of her way; and I found the very perfection of her wifehood exasperating. Our relationship would, I thought, have been more endurable if we had quarrelled. And yet we had grown as far apart, in that big house, as though we had been separated by a continent; I lived in my apartments, she in hers; she consulted me about dinner parties and invitations; for, since we had moved to Grant Avenue, we entertained and went out more than before. It seemed as though she were making every effort consistent with her integrity and self-respect to please me. Outwardly she conformed to the mould; but I had long been aware that inwardly a person had developed. It had not been a spontaneous development, but one in resistance to pressure; and was probably all the stronger for that reason. At times her will revealed itself in astonishing and unexpected flashes, as when once she announced that she was going to change Matthew's school.

"He's old enough to go to boarding-school," I said. "I'll look up a place for him."

"I don't wish him to go to boarding-school yet, Hugh," she said quietly.

"But that's just what he needs," I objected. "He ought to have the rubbing-up against other boys that boarding-school will give him. Matthew is timid, he should have learned to take care of himself. And he will make friendships that will help him in a larger school."

"I don't intend to send him," Maude said.

"But if I think it wise?"

"You ought to have begun to consider such things many years ago. You have always been too—busy to think of the children. You have left them to me. I am doing the best I can with them."

"But a man should have something to say about boys. He understands them."

"You should have thought of that before."

"They haven't been old enough."

"If you had taken your share of responsibility for them, I would listen to you."

"Maude!" I exclaimed reproachfully.

"No, Hugh," she went on, "you have been too busy making money. You have left them to me. It is my task to see that the money they are to inherit doesn't ruin them."

"You talk as though it were a great fortune," I said.

But I did not press the matter. I had a presentiment that to press it might lead to unpleasant results.

It was this sense of not being free, of having gained everything but freedom that was at times galling in the extreme: this sense of living with a woman for whom I had long ceased to care, a woman with a baffling will concealed beneath an unruffled and serene exterior. At moments I looked at her across the table; she did not seem to have aged much: her complexion was as fresh, apparently, as the day when I had first walked with her in the garden at Elkington; her hair the same wonderful colour; perhaps she had grown a little stouter. There could be no doubt about the fact that her chin was firmer, that certain lines had come into her face indicative of what is called character. Beneath her pliability she was now all firmness; the pliability had become a mockery. It cannot be said that I went so far as to hate her for this,—when it was in my mind,—but my feelings were of a strong antipathy. And then again there were rare moments when I was inexplicably drawn to her, not by love and passion; I melted a little in pity, perhaps, when my eyes were opened and I saw the tragedy, yet I am not referring now to such feelings as these. I am speaking of the times when I beheld her as the blameless companion of the years, the mother of my children, the woman I was used to and should—by all canons I had known—have loved....

And there were the children. Days and weeks passed when I scarcely saw them, and then some little incident would happen to give me an unexpected wrench and plunge me into unhappiness. One evening I came home from a long talk with Nancy that had left us both wrought up, and I had entered the library before I heard voices. Maude was seated under the lamp at the end of the big room reading from "Don Quixote"; Matthew and Biddy were at her feet, and Moreton, less attentive, at a little distance was taking apart a mechanical toy. I would have tiptoed out, but Biddy caught sight of me.

"It's father!" she cried, getting up and flying to me.

"Oh, father, do come and listen! The story's so exciting, isn't it, Matthew?"

I looked down into the boy's eyes shining with an expression that suddenly pierced my heart with a poignant memory of myself. Matthew was far away among the mountains and castles of Spain.

"Matthew," demanded his sister, "why did he want to go fighting with all those people?"

"Because he was dotty," supplied Moreton, who had an interesting habit of picking up slang.

"It wasn't at all," cried Matthew, indignantly, interrupting Maude's rebuke of his brother.

"What was it, then?" Moreton demanded.

"You wouldn't understand if I told you," Matthew was retorting, when Maude put her hand on his lips.

"I think that's enough for to-night," she said, as she closed the book. "There are lessons to do—and father wants to read his newspaper in quiet."

This brought a protest from Biddy.

"Just a little more, mother! Can't we go into the schoolroom? We shan't disturb father there."

"I'll read to them—a few minutes," I said.

As I took the volume from her and sat down Maude shot at me a swift look of surprise. Even Matthew glanced at me curiously; and in his glance I had, as it were, a sudden revelation of the boy's perplexity concerning me. He was twelve, rather tall for his age, and the delicate modelling of his face resembled my father's. He had begun to think.. What did he think of me?

Biddy clapped her hands, and began to dance across the carpet.

"Father's going to read to us, father's going to read to us," she cried, finally clambering up on my knee and snuggling against me.

"Where is the place?" I asked.

But Maude had left the room. She had gone swiftly and silently.

"I'll find it," said Moreton.

I began to read, but I scarcely knew what I was reading, my fingers tightening over Biddy's little knee....

Presently Miss Allsop, the governess, came in. She had been sent by Maude. There was wistfulness in Biddy's voice as I kissed her good night.

"Father, if you would only read oftener!" she said, "I like it when you read—better than anyone else."....

Maude and I were alone that night. As we sat in the library after our somewhat formal, perfunctory dinner, I ventured to ask her why she had gone away when I had offered to read.

"I couldn't bear it, Hugh," she answered.

"Why?" I asked, intending to justify myself.

She got up abruptly, and left me. I did not follow her. In my heart I understood why....

Some years had passed since Ralph's prophecy had come true, and Perry and the remaining Blackwoods had been "relieved" of the Boyne Street line. The process need not be gone into in detail, being the time-honoured one employed in the Ribblevale affair of "running down" the line, or perhaps it would be better to say "showing it up." It had not justified its survival in our efficient days, it had held out—thanks to Perry—with absurd and anachronous persistence against the inevitable consolidation. Mr. Tallant's newspaper had published many complaints of the age and scarcity of the cars, etc.; and alarmed holders of securities, in whose vaults they had lain since time immemorial, began to sell.... I saw little of Perry in those days, as I have explained, but one day I met him in the Hambleton Building, and he was white.

"Your friends are doing thus, Hugh," he said.

"Doing what?"

"Undermining the reputation of a company as sound as any in this city, a company that's not overcapitalized, either. And we're giving better service right now than any of your consolidated lines."...

He was in no frame of mind to argue with; the conversation was distinctly unpleasant. I don't remember what I said sething to the effect that he was excited, that his language was extravagant. But after he had walked off and left me I told Dickinson that he ought to be given a chance, and one of our younger financiers, Murphree, went to Perry and pointed out that he had nothing to gain by obstruction; if he were only reasonable, he might come into the new corporation on the same terms with the others.

All that Murphree got for his pains was to be ordered out of the office by Perry, who declared that he was being bribed to desert the other stockholders.

"He utterly failed to see the point of view," Murphree reported in some astonishment to Dickinson.

"What else did he say?" Mr. Dickinson asked.

Murphree hesitated.

"Well—what?" the banker insisted.

"He wasn't quite himself," said Murphree, who was a comparative newcomer in the city and had a respect for the Blackwood name. "He said that that was the custom of thieves: when they were discovered, they offered to divide. He swore that he would get justice in the courts."

Mr. Dickinson smiled....

Thus Perry, through his obstinacy and inability to adapt himself to new conditions, had gradually lost both caste and money. He resigned from the Boyne Club. I was rather sorry for him. Tom naturally took the matter to heart, but he never spoke of it; I found that I was seeing less of him, though we continued to dine there at intervals, and he still came to my house to see the children. Maude continued to see Lucia. For me, the situation would have been more awkward had I been less occupied, had my relationship with Maude been a closer one. Neither did she mention Perry in those days. The income that remained to him being sufficient for him and his family to live on comfortably, he began to devote most of his time to various societies of a semipublic nature until—in the spring of which I write his activities suddenly became concentrated in the organization of a "Citizens Union," whose avowed object was to make a campaign against "graft" and political corruption the following autumn. This announcement and the call for a mass-meeting in Kingdon Hall was received by the newspapers with a good-natured ridicule, and in influential quarters it was generally hinted that this was Mr. Blackwood's method of "getting square" for having been deprived of the Boyne Street line. It was quite characteristic of Ralph Hambleton that he should go, out of curiosity, to the gathering at Kingdon Hall, and drop into my office the next morning.

"Well, Hughie, they're after you," he said with a grin.

"After me? Why not include yourself?"

He sat down and stretched his long legs and his long arms, and smiled as he gaped.

"Oh, they'll never get me," he said. And I knew, as I gazed at him, that they never would.

"What sort of things did they say?" I asked.

"Haven't you read the Pilot and the Mail and State?"

"I just glanced over them. Did they call names?"

"Call names! I should say they did. They got drunk on it, worked themselves up like dervishes. They didn't cuss you personally,—that'll come later, of course. Judd Jason got the heaviest shot, but they said he couldn't exist a minute if it wasn't for the 'respectable' crowd—capitalists, financiers, millionaires and their legal tools. Fact is, they spoke a good deal of truth, first and last, in a fool kind of way."

"Truth!" I exclaimed irritatedly.

Ralph laughed. He was evidently enjoying himself.

"Is any of it news to you, Hughie, old boy?"

"It's an outrage."

"I think it's funny," said Ralph. "We haven't had such a circus for years. Never had. Of course I shouldn't like to see you go behind the bars,—not that. But you fellows can't expect to go on forever skimming off the cream without having somebody squeal sometime. You ought to be reasonable."

"You've skimmed as much cream as anybody else."

"You've skimmed the cream, Hughie,—you and Dickinson and Scherer and Grierson and the rest,—I've only filled my jug. Well, these fellows are going to have a regular roof-raising campaign, take the lid off of everything, dump out the red-light district some of our friends are so fond of."

"Dump it where?" I asked curiously.

"Oh," answered Ralph, "they didn't say. Out into the country, anywhere."

"But that's damned foolishness," I declared.

"Didn't say it wasn't," Ralph admitted. "They talked a lot of that, too, incidentally. They're going to close the saloons and dance halls and make this city sadder than heaven. When they get through, it'll all be over but the inquest."

"What did Perry do?" I asked.

"Well, he opened the meeting,—made a nice, precise, gentlemanly speech. Greenhalge and a few young highbrows and a reformed crook named Harrod did most of the hair-raising. They're going to nominate Greenhalge for mayor; and he told 'em something about that little matter of the school board, and said he would talk more later on. If one of the ablest lawyers in the city hadn't been hired by the respectable crowd and a lot of other queer work done, the treasurer and purchasing agent would be doing time. They seemed to be interested, all right."

I turned over some papers on my desk, just to show Ralph that he hadn't succeeded in disturbing me.

"Who was in the audience? anyone you ever heard of?" I asked.

"Sure thing. Your cousin Robert Breck; and that son-in-law of his—what's his name? And some other representatives of our oldest families,—Alec Pound. He's a reformer now, you know. They put him on the resolutions committee. Sam Ogilvy was there, he'd be classed as respectably conservative. And one of the Ewanses. I could name a few others, if you pressed me. That brother of Fowndes who looks like an up-state minister. A lot of women—Miller Gorse's sister, Mrs. Datchet, who never approved of Miller. Quite a genteel gathering, I give you my word, and all astonished and mad as hell when the speaking was over. Mrs. Datchet said she had been living in a den of iniquity and vice, and didn't know it."

"It must have been amusing," I said.

"It was," said Ralph. "It'll be more amusing later on. Oh, yes, there was another fellow who spoke I forgot to mention—that queer Dick who was in your class, Krebs, got the school board evidence, looked as if he'd come in by freight. He wasn't as popular as the rest, but he's got more sense than all of them put together."

"Why wasn't he popular?"

"Well, he didn't crack up the American people,—said they deserved all they got, that they'd have to learn to think straight and be straight before they could expect a square deal. The truth was, they secretly envied these rich men who were exploiting their city, and just as long as they envied them they hadn't any right to complain of them. He was going into this campaign to tell the truth, but to tell all sides of it, and if they wanted reform, they'd have to reform themselves first. I admired his nerve, I must say."

"He always had that," I remarked. "How did they take it?"

"Well, they didn't like it much, but I think most of them had a respect for him. I know I did. He has a whole lot of assurance, an air of knowing what he's talking about, and apparently he doesn't give a continental whether he's popular or not. Besides, Greenhalge had cracked him up to the skies for the work he'd done for the school board."

"You talk as if he'd converted you," I said.

Ralph laughed as he rose and stretched himself.

"Oh, I'm only the intelligent spectator, you ought to know that by this time, Hughie. But I thought it might interest you, since you'll have to go on the stump and refute it all. That'll be a nice job. So long."

And he departed. Of course I knew that he had been baiting me, his scent for the weaknesses of his friends being absolutely fiendish. I was angry because he had succeeded,—because he knew he had succeeded. All the morning uneasiness possessed me, and I found it difficult to concentrate on the affairs I had in hand. I felt premonitions, which I tried in vain to suppress, that the tide of the philosophy of power and might were starting to ebb: I scented vague calamities ahead, calamities I associated with Krebs; and when I went out to the Club for lunch this sense of uneasiness, instead of being dissipated, was increased. Dickinson was there, and Scherer, who had just got back from Europe; the talk fell on the Citizens Union, which Scherer belittled with an air of consequence and pompousness that struck me disagreeably, and with an eye newly critical I detected in him a certain disintegration, deterioration. Having dismissed the reformers, he began to tell of his experiences abroad, referring in one way or another to the people of consequence who had entertained him.

"Hugh," said Leonard Dickinson to me as we walked to the bank together, "Scherer will never be any good any more. Too much prosperity. And he's begun to have his nails manicured."

After I had left the bank president an uncanny fancy struck me that in Adolf Scherer I had before me a concrete example of the effect of my philosophy on the individual....

Nothing seemed to go right that spring, and yet nothing was absolutely wrong. At times I became irritated, bewildered, out of tune, and unable to understand why. The weather itself was uneasy, tepid, with long spells of hot wind and dust. I no longer seemed to find refuge in my work. I was unhappy at home. After walking for many years in confidence and security along what appeared to be a certain path, I had suddenly come out into a vague country in which it was becoming more and more difficult to recognize landmarks. I did not like to confess this; and yet I heard within me occasional whispers. Could it be that I, Hugh Paret, who had always been so positive, had made a mess of my life? There were moments when the pattern of it appeared to have fallen apart, resolved itself into pieces that refused to fit into each other.

Of course my relationship with Nancy had something to do with this....

One evening late in the spring, after dinner, Maude came into the library.

"Are you busy, Hugh?" she asked.

I put down my newspapers.

"Because," she went on, as she took a chair near the table where I was writing, "I wanted to tell you that I have decided to go to Europe, and take the children."

"To Europe!" I exclaimed. The significance of the announcement failed at once to register in my brain, but I was aware of a shock.

"Yes."

"When?" I asked.

"Right away. The end of this month."

"For the summer?"

"I haven't decided how long I shall stay."

I stared at her in bewilderment. In contrast to the agitation I felt rising within me, she was extraordinarily calm, unbelievably so.

"But where do you intend to go in Europe?"

"I shall go to London for a month or so, and after that to some quiet place in France, probably at the sea, where the children can learn French and German. After that, I have no plans."

"But—you talk as if you might stay indefinitely."

"I haven't decided," she repeated.

"But why—why are you doing this?"

I would have recalled the words as soon as I had spoken them. There was the slightest unsteadiness in her voice as she replied:—"Is it necessary to go into that, Hugh? Wouldn't it be useless as well as a little painful? Surely, going to Europe without one's husband is not an unusual thing in these days. Let it just be understood that I want to go, that the children have arrived at an age when it will do them good."

I got up and began to walk up and down the room, while she watched me with a silent calm which was incomprehensible. In vain I summoned my faculties to meet it.

I had not thought her capable of such initiative.

"I can't see why you want to leave me," I said at last, though with a full sense of the inadequacy of the remark, and a suspicion of its hypocrisy.

"That isn't quite true," she answered. "In the first place, you don't need me. I am not of the slightest use in your life, I haven't been a factor in it for years. You ought never to have married me,—it was all a terrible mistake. I began to realize that after we had been married a few months—even when we were on our wedding trip. But I was too inexperienced—perhaps too weak to acknowledge it to myself. In the last few years I have come to see it plainly. I should have been a fool if I hadn't. I am not your wife in any real sense of the word, I cannot hold you, I cannot even interest you. It's a situation that no woman with self-respect can endure."

"Aren't those rather modern sentiments, for you, Maude?" I said.

She flushed a little, but otherwise retained her remarkable composure.

"I don't care whether they are 'modern' or not, I only know that my position has become impossible."

I walked to the other end of the room, and stood facing the carefully drawn curtains of the windows; fantastically, they seemed to represent the impasse to which my mind had come. Did she intend, ultimately, to get a divorce? I dared not ask her. The word rang horribly in my ears, though unpronounced; and I knew then that I lacked her courage, and the knowledge was part of my agony.

I turned.

"Don't you think you've overdrawn things, Maude exaggerated them? No marriages are perfect. You've let your mind dwell until it has become inflamed on matters which really don't amount to much."

"I was never saner, Hugh," she replied instantly. And indeed I was forced to confess that she looked it. That new Maude I had seen emerging of late years seemed now to have found herself; she was no longer the woman I had married,—yielding, willing to overlook, anxious to please, living in me.

"I don't influence you, or help you in any way. I never have."

"Oh, that's not true," I protested.

But she cut me short, going on inexorably:—"I am merely your housekeeper, and rather a poor one at that, from your point of view. You ignore me. I am not blaming you for it—you are made that way. It's true that you have always supported me in luxury,—that might have been enough for another woman. It isn't enough for me—I, too, have a life to live, a soul to be responsible for. It's not for my sake so much as for the children's that I don't want it to be crushed."

"Crushed!" I repeated.

"Yes. You are stifling it. I say again that I'm not blaming you, Hugh. You are made differently from me. All you care for, really, is your career. You may think that you care, at times, for—other things, but it isn't so."

I took, involuntarily, a deep breath. Would she mention Nancy? Was it in reality Nancy who had brought about this crisis? And did Maude suspect the closeness of that relationship?

Suddenly I found myself begging her not to go; the more astonishing since, if at any time during the past winter this solution had presented itself to me as a possibility, I should eagerly have welcomed it! But should I ever have had the courage to propose a separation? I even wished to delude myself now into believing that what she suggested was in reality not a separation. I preferred to think of it as a trip.... A vision of freedom thrilled me, and yet I was wracked and torn. I had an idea that she was suffering, that the ordeal was a terrible one for her; and at that moment there crowded into my mind, melting me, incident after incident of our past.

"It seems to me that we have got along pretty well together, Maude. I have been negligent—I'll admit

it. But I'll try to do better in the future. And—if you'll wait a month or so, I'll go to Europe with you, and we'll have a good time."

She looked at me sadly,—pityingly, I thought.

"No, Hugh, I've thought it all out. You really don't want me. You only say this because you are sorry for me, because you dislike to have your feelings wrung. You needn't be sorry for me, I shall be much happier away from you."

"Think it over, Maude," I pleaded. "I shall miss you and the children. I haven't paid much attention to them, either, but I am fond of them, and depend upon them, too."

She shook her head.

"It's no use, Hugh. I tell you I've thought it all out. You don't care for the children, you were never meant to have any."

"Aren't you rather severe in your judgments?"

"I don't think so," she answered. "I'm willing to admit my faults, that I am a failure so far as you are concerned. Your ideas of life and mine are far apart."

"I suppose," I exclaimed bitterly, "that you are referring to my professional practices."

A note of weariness crept into her voice. I might have known that she was near the end of her strength.

"No, I don't think it's that," she said dispassionately. "I prefer to put it down, that part of it, to a fundamental difference of ideas. I do not feel qualified to sit in judgment on that part of your life, although I'll admit that many of the things you have done, in common with the men with whom you are associated, have seemed to me unjust and inconsiderate of the rights and feelings of others. You have alienated some of your best friends. If I were to arraign you at all, it would be on the score of heartlessness. But I suppose it isn't your fault, that you haven't any heart."

"That's unfair," I put in.

"I don't wish to be unfair," she replied. "Only, since you ask me, I have to tell you that that is the way it seems to me. I don't want to introduce the question of right and wrong into this, Hugh, I'm not capable of unravelling it; I can't put myself into your life, and see things from your point of view, weigh your problems and difficulties. In the first place, you won't let me. I think I understand you, partly—but only partly. You have kept yourself shut up. But why discuss it? I have made up my mind."

The legal aspect of the matter occurred to me. What right had she to leave me? I might refuse to support her. Yet even as these thoughts came I rejected them; I knew that it was not in me to press this point. And she could always take refuge with her father; without the children, of course. But the very notion sickened me. I could not bear to think of Maude deprived of the children. I had seated myself again at the table. I put my hand to my forehead.

"Don't make it hard, Hugh," I heard her say, gently. "Believe me, it is best. I know. There won't be any talk about it,—right away, at any rate. People will think it natural that I should wish to go abroad for the summer. And later—well, the point of view about such affairs has changed. They are better understood."

She had risen. She was pale, still outwardly composed,—but I had a strange, hideous feeling that she was weeping inwardly.

"Aren't you coming back—ever?" I cried.

She did not answer at once.

"I don't know," she said, "I don't know," and left the room abruptly....

I wanted to follow her, but something withheld me. I got up and walked around the room in a state of mind that was near to agony, taking one of the neglected books out of the shelves, glancing at its meaningless print, and replacing it; I stirred the fire, opened the curtains and gazed out into the street and closed them again. I looked around me, a sudden intensity of hatred seized me for this big, silent, luxurious house; I recalled Maude's presentiment about it. Then, thinking I might still dissuade her, I went slowly up the padded stairway—to find her door locked; and a sense of the finality of her decision came over me. I knew then that I could not alter it even were I to go all the lengths of abjectness. Nor could I, I knew, have brought myself to have feigned a love I did not feel.

What was it I felt? I could not define it. Amazement, for one thing, that Maude with her traditional, Christian view of marriage should have come to such a decision. I went to my room, undressed mechanically and got into bed....

She gave no sign at the breakfast table of having made the decision of the greatest moment in our lives; she conversed as usual, asked about the news, reproved the children for being noisy; and when the children had left the table there were no tears, reminiscences, recriminations. In spite of the slight antagonism and envy of which I was conscious,—that she was thus superbly in command of the situation, that she had developed her pinions and was thus splendidly able to use them,—my admiration for her had never been greater. I made an effort to achieve the frame of mind she suggested: since she took it so calmly, why should I be tortured by the tragedy of it? Perhaps she had ceased to love me, after all! Perhaps she felt nothing but relief. At any rate, I was grateful to her, and I found a certain consolation, a sop to my pride in the reflection that the initiative must have been hers to take. I could not have deserted her.

"When do you think of leaving?" I asked.

"Two weeks from Saturday on the Olympic, if that is convenient for you." Her manner seemed one of friendly solicitude. "You will remain in the house this summer, as usual, I suppose?"

"Yes," I said.

It was a sunny, warm morning, and I went downtown in the motor almost blithely. It was the best solution after all, and I had been a fool to oppose it.... At the office, there was much business awaiting me; yet once in a while, during the day, when the tension relaxed, the recollection of what had happened flowed back into my consciousness. Maude was going!

I had telephoned Nancy, making an appointment for the afternoon. Sometimes—not too frequently—we were in the habit of going out into the country in one of her motors, a sort of landaulet, I believe, in which we were separated from the chauffeur by a glass screen. She was waiting for me when I arrived, at four; and as soon as we had shot clear of the city, "Maude is going away," I told her.

"Going away?" she repeated, struck more by the tone of my voice than by what I had said.

"She announced last night that she was going abroad indefinitely."

I had been more than anxious to see how Nancy would take the news. A flush gradually deepened in her cheeks.

"You mean that she is going to leave you?"

"It looks that way. In fact, she as much as said so."

"Why?" said Nancy.

"Well, she explained it pretty thoroughly. Apparently, it isn't a sudden decision," I replied, trying to choose my words, to speak composedly as I repeated the gist of our conversation. Nancy, with her face averted, listened in silence—a silence that continued some time after I had ceased to speak.

"She didn't—she didn't mention—?" the sentence remained unfinished.

"No," I said quickly, "she didn't. She must know, of course, but I'm sure that didn't enter into it."

Nancy's eyes as they returned to me were wet, and in them was an expression I had never seen before,—of pain, reproach, of questioning. It frightened me.

"Oh, Hugh, how little you know!" she cried.

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"That is what has brought her to this decision—you and I."

"You mean that—that Maude loves me? That she is jealous?" I don't know how I managed to say it.

"No woman likes to think that she is a failure," murmured Nancy.

"Well, but she isn't really," I insisted. "She could have made another man happy—a better man. It was all one of those terrible mistakes our modern life seems to emphasize so."

"She is a woman," Nancy said, with what seemed a touch of vehemence. "It's useless to expect you to

understand.... Do you remember what I said to you about her? How I appealed to you when you married to try to appreciate her?"

"It wasn't that I didn't appreciate her," I interrupted, surprised that Nancy should have recalled this, "she isn't the woman for me, we aren't made for each other. It was my mistake, my fault, I admit, but I don't agree with you at all, that we had anything to do with her decision. It is just the—the culmination of a long period of incompatibility. She has come to realize that she has only one life to live, and she seems happier, more composed, more herself than she has ever been since our marriage. Of course I don't mean to say it isn't painful for her.... But I am sure she isn't well, that it isn't because of our seeing one another," I concluded haltingly.

"She is finer than either of us, Hugh,—far finer."

I did not relish this statement.

"She's fine, I admit. But I can't see how under the circumstances any of us could have acted differently." And Nancy not replying, I continued: "She has made up her mind to go,—I suppose I could prevent it by taking extreme measures,—but what good would it do? Isn't it, after all, the most sensible, the only way out of a situation that has become impossible? Times have changed, Nancy, and you yourself have been the first to admit it. Marriage is no longer what it was, and people are coming to look upon it more sensibly. In order to perpetuate the institution, as it was, segregation, insulation, was the only course. Men segregated their wives, women their husbands,—the only logical method of procedure, but it limited the individual. Our mothers and fathers thought it scandalous if husband or wife paid visits alone. It wasn't done. But our modern life has changed all that. A marriage, to be a marriage, should be proof against disturbing influences, should leave the individuals free; the binding element should be love, not the force of an imposed authority. You seemed to agree to all this."

"Yes, I know," she admitted. "But I cannot think that happiness will ever grow out of unhappiness."

"But Maude will not be unhappy," I insisted. "She will be happier, far happier, now that she has taken the step."

"Oh, I wish I thought so," Nancy exclaimed. "Hugh, you always believe what you want to believe. And the children. How can you bear to part with them?"

I was torn, I had a miserable sense of inadequacy.

"I shall miss them," I said. "I have never really appreciated them. I admit I don't deserve to have them, and I am willing to give them up for you, for Maude..."

We had made one of our favourite drives among the hills on the far side of the Ashuela, and at six were back at Nancy's house. I did not go in, but walked slowly homeward up Grant Avenue. It had been a trying afternoon. I had not expected, indeed, that Nancy would have rejoiced, but her attitude, her silences, betraying, as they did, compunctions, seemed to threaten our future happiness.

XXII.

One evening two or three days later I returned from the office to gaze up at my house, to realize suddenly that it would be impossible for me to live there, in those great, empty rooms, alone; and I told Maude that I would go to the Club—during her absence. I preferred to keep up the fiction that her trip would only be temporary. She forbore from contradicting me, devoting herself efficiently to the task of closing the house, making it seem, somehow, a rite,—the final rite in her capacity as housewife. The drawing-room was shrouded, and the library; the books wrapped neatly in paper; a smell of camphor pervaded the place; the cheerful schoolroom was dismantled; trunks and travelling bags appeared. The solemn butler packed my clothes, and I arranged for a room at the Club in the wing that recently had been added for the accommodation of bachelors and deserted husbands. One of the ironies of those days was that the children began to suggest again possibilities of happiness I had missed—especially Matthew. With all his gentleness, the boy seemed to have a precocious understanding of the verities, and the capacity for suffering which as a child I had possessed. But he had more self-control. Though he looked forward to the prospect of new scenes and experiences with the anticipation natural to his temperament, I thought he betrayed at moments a certain intuition as to what was going on.

"When are you coming over, father?" he asked once. "How soon will your business let you?"

He had been brought up in the belief that my business was a tyrant.

"Oh, soon, Matthew,—sometime soon," I said.

I had a feeling that he understood me, not intellectually, but emotionally. What a companion he might have been!.... Moreton and Biddy moved me less. They were more robust, more normal, less introspective and imaginative; Europe meant nothing to them, but they were frankly delighted and excited at the prospect of going on the ocean, asking dozens of questions about the great ship, impatient to embark.....

"I shan't need all that, Hugh," Maude said, when I handed her a letter of credit. "I—I intend to live quite simply, and my chief expenses will be the children's education. I am going to give them the best, of course."

"Of course," I replied. "But I want you to live over there as you have been accustomed to live here. It's not exactly generosity on my part,—I have enough, and more than enough."

She took the letter.

"Another thing—I'd rather you didn't go to New York with us, Hugh. I know you are busy—"

"Of course I'm going," I started to protest.

"No," she went on, firmly. "I'd rather you didn't. The hotel people will put me on the steamer very comfortably,—and there are other reasons why I do not wish it." I did not insist.... On the afternoon of her departure, when I came uptown, I found her pinning some roses on her jacket.

"Perry and Lucia sent them," she informed me. She maintained the friendly, impersonal manner to the very end; but my soul, as we drove to the train, was full of un-probed wounds. I had had roses put in her compartments in the car; Tom and Susan Peters were there with more roses, and little presents for the children. Their cheerfulness seemed forced, and I wondered whether they suspected that Maude's absence would be prolonged.

"Write us often, and tell us all about it, dear," said Susan, as she sat beside Maude and held her hand; Tom had Biddy on his knee. Maude was pale, but smiling and composed.

"I hope to get a little villa in France, near the sea," she said. "I'll send you a photograph of it, Susan."

"And Chickabiddy, when she comes back, will be rattling off French like a native," exclaimed Tom, giving her a hug.

"I hate French," said Biddy, and she looked at him solemnly. "I wish you were coming along, Uncle Tom."

Bells resounded through the great station. The porter warned us off. I kissed the children one by one, scarcely realizing what I was doing. I kissed Maude. She received my embrace passively.

"Good-bye, Hugh," she said.

I alighted, and stood on the platform as the train pulled out. The children crowded to the windows, but Maude did not appear.... I found myself walking with Tom and Susan past hurrying travellers and porters to the Decatur Street entrance, where my automobile stood waiting.

"I'll take you home, Susan," I said.

"We're ever so much obliged, Hugh," she answered, "but the street-cars go almost to ferry's door. We're dining there."

Her eyes were filled with tears, and she seemed taller, more ungainly than ever—older. A sudden impression of her greatness of heart was borne home to me, and I grasped the value of such rugged friendship as hers—as Tom's.

"We shouldn't know how to behave in an automobile," he said, as though to soften her refusal. And I stood watching their receding figures as they walked out into the street and hailed the huge electric car that came to a stop beyond them. Above its windows was painted "The Ashuela Traction Company," a label reminiscent of my professional activities. Then I heard the chauffeur ask:—"Where do you wish to go, sir?"

"To the Club," I said.

My room was ready, my personal belongings, my clothes had been laid out, my photographs were on the dressing-table. I took up, mechanically, the evening newspaper, but I could not read it; I thought of Maude, of the children, memories flowed in upon me,—a flood not to be dammed.... Presently the club valet knocked at my door. He had a dinner card.

"Will you be dining here, sir?" he inquired.

I went downstairs. Fred Grierson was the only man in the dining-room.

"Hello, Hugh," he said, "come and sit down. I hear your wife's gone abroad."

"Yes," I answered, "she thought she'd try it instead of the South Shore this summer."

Perhaps I imagined that he looked at me queerly. I had made a great deal of money out of my association with Grierson, I had valued very highly being an important member of the group to which he belonged; but to-night, as I watched him eating and drinking greedily, I hated him even as I hated myself. And after dinner, when he started talking with a ridicule that was a thinly disguised bitterness about the Citizens Union and their preparations for a campaign I left him and went to bed.

Before a week had passed my painful emotions had largely subsided, and with my accustomed resiliency I had regained the feeling of self-respect so essential to my happiness. I was free. My only anxiety was for Nancy, who had gone to New York the day after my last talk with her; and it was only by telephoning to her house that I discovered when she was expected to return.... I found her sitting beside one of the open French windows of her salon, gazing across at the wooded hills beyond the Ashuela. She was serious, a little pale; more exquisite, more desirable than ever; but her manner implied the pressure of control, and her voice was not quite steady as she greeted me.

"You've been away a long time," I said.

"The dressmakers," she answered. Her colour rose a little. "I thought they'd never get through."

"But why didn't you drop me a line, let me know when you were coming?" I asked, taking a chair beside her, and laying my hand on hers. She drew it gently away.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"I've been thinking it all over—what we're doing. It doesn't seem right, it seems terribly wrong."

"But I thought we'd gone over all that," I replied, as patiently as I could. "You're putting it on an old-fashioned, moral basis."

"But there must be same basis," she urged. "There are responsibilities, obligations—there must be!—that we can't get away from. I can't help feeling that we ought to stand by our mistakes, and by our bargains; we made a choice—it's cheating, somehow, and if we take this—what we want—we shall be punished for it."

"But I'm willing to be punished, to suffer, as I told you. If you loved me—"

"Hugh!" she exclaimed, and I was silent. "You don't understand," she went on, a little breathlessly, "what I mean by punishment is deterioration. Do you remember once, long ago, when you came to me before I was married, I said we'd both run after false gods, and that we couldn't do without them? Well, and now this has come; it seems so wonderful to me, coming again like that after we had passed it by, after we thought it had gone forever; it's opened up visions for me that I never hoped to see again. It ought to restore us, dear—that's what I'm trying to say—to redeem us, to make us capable of being what we were meant to be. If it doesn't do that, if it isn't doing so, it's the most horrible of travesties, of mockeries. If we gain life only to have it turn into death—slow death; if we go to pieces again, utterly. For now there's hope. The more I think, the more clearly I see that we can't take any step without responsibilities. If we take this, you'll have me, and I'll have you. And if we don't save each other—"

"But we will," I said.

"Ah," she exclaimed, "if we could start new, without any past. I married
Ham with my eyes open."

"You couldn't know that he would become—well, as flagrant as he is. You didn't really know what he was then."

"There's no reason why I shouldn't have anticipated it. I can't claim that I was deceived, that I

thought my marriage was made in heaven. I entered into a contract, and Ham has kept his part of it fairly well. He hasn't interfered with my freedom. That isn't putting it on a high plane, but there is an obligation involved. You yourself, in your law practice, are always insisting upon the sacredness of contract as the very basis of our civilization."

Here indeed would have been a home thrust, had I been vulnerable at the time. So intent was I on overcoming her objections, that I resorted unwittingly to the modern argument I had more than once declared in court to be anathema-the argument of the new reform in reference to the common law and the constitution.

"A contract, no matter how seriously entered into at the time it was made, that later is seen to violate the principles of humanity should be void. And not only this, but you didn't consent that he should disgrace you."

Nancy winced.

"I never told you that he paid my father's debts, I never told anyone," she said, in a low voice.

"Even then," I answered after a moment, "you ought to see that it's too terrible a price to pay for your happiness. And Ham hasn't ever pretended to consider you in any way. It's certain you didn't agree that he should do—what he is doing."

"Suppose I admitted it," she said, "there remain Maude and your children. Their happiness, their future becomes my responsibility as well as yours."

"But I don't love Maude, and Maude doesn't love me. I grant it's my fault, that I did her a wrong in marrying her, but she is right in leaving me. I should be doing her a double wrong. And the children will be happy with her, they will be well brought up. I, too, have thought this out, Nancy," I insisted, "and the fact is that in our respective marriages we have been, each of us, victims of our time, of our education. We were born in a period of transition, we inherited views of life that do not fit conditions to-day. It takes courage to achieve happiness, initiative to emancipate one's self from a morality that begins to hamper and bind. To stay as we are, to refuse to take what is offered us, is to remain between wind and water. I don't mean that we should do anything—hastily. We can afford to take a reasonable time, to be dignified about it. But I have come to the conclusion that the only thing that matters in the world is a love like ours, and its fulfilment. Achievement, success, are empty and meaningless without it. And you do love me—you've admitted it."

"Oh, I don't want to talk about it," she exclaimed, desperately.

"But we have to talk about it," I persisted. "We have to thrash it out, to see it straight, as you yourself have said."

"You speak of convictions, Hugh,—new convictions, in place of the old we have discarded. But what are they? And is there no such thing as conscience—even though it be only an intuition of happiness or unhappiness? I do care for you, I do love you—"

"Then why not let that suffice?" I exclaimed, leaning towards her.

She drew back.

"But I want to respect you, too," she said.

I was shocked, too shocked to answer.

"I want to respect you," she repeated, more gently. "I don't want to think that—that what we feel for each other is—unconsecrated."

"It consecrates itself," I declared.

She shook her head.

"Surely it has its roots in everything that is fine in both of us."

"We both went wrong," said Nancy. "We both sought to wrest power and happiness from the world, to make our own laws. How can we assert that—this is not merely a continuation of it?"

"But can't we work out our beliefs together?" I demanded. "Won't you trust me, trust our love for one another?"

Her breath came and went quickly.

"Oh, you know that I want you, Hugh, as much as you want me, and more. The time may come when I can't resist you."

"Why do you resist me?" I cried, seizing her hands convulsively, and swept by a gust of passion at her confession.

"Try to understand that I am fighting for both of us!" she pleaded—an appeal that wrung me in spite of the pitch to which my feelings had been raised. "Hugh, dear, we must think it out. Don't now."

I let her hands drop....

Beyond the range of hills rising from the far side of the Ashuela was the wide valley in which was situated the Cloverdale Country Club, with its polo field, golf course and tennis courts; and in this same valley some of our wealthy citizens, such as Howard Ogilvy and Leonard Dickinson, had bought "farms," week-end playthings for spring and autumn. Hambleton Durrett had started the fashion. Capriciously, as he did everything else, he had become the owner of several hundred acres of pasture, woodland and orchard, acquired some seventy-five head of blooded stock, and proceeded to house them in model barns and milk by machinery; for several months he had bored everyone in the Boyne Club whom he could entice into conversation on the subject of the records of pedigreed cows, and spent many bibulous nights on the farm in company with those parasites who surrounded him when he was in town. Then another interest had intervened; a feminine one, of course, and his energies were transferred (so we understood) to the reconstruction and furnishing of a little residence in New York, not far from Fifth Avenue. The farm continued under the expert direction of a superintendent who was a graduate of the State Agricultural College, and a select clientele, which could afford to pay the prices, consumed the milk and cream and butter. Quite consistent with their marital relations was the fact that Nancy should have taken a fancy to the place after Ham's interest had waned. Not that she cared for the Guernseys, or Jerseys, or whatever they may have been; she evinced a sudden passion for simplicity,—occasional simplicity, at least,—for a contrast to and escape from a complicated life of luxury. She built another house for the superintendent banished him from the little farmhouse (where Ham had kept two rooms); banished along with the superintendent the stiff plush furniture, the yellow-red carpets, the easels and the melodeon, and decked it out in bright chintzes, with wall-papers to match, dainty muslin curtains, and rag-carpet rugs on the hardwood floors. The pseudo-classic porch over the doorway, which had suggested a cemetery, was removed, and a wide piazza added, furnished with wicker lounging chairs and tables, and shaded with gay awnings.

Here, to the farm, accompanied by a maid, she had been in the habit of retiring from time to time, and here she came in early July. Here, dressed in the simplest linen gowns of pink or blue or white, I found a Nancy magically restored to girlhood,—anew Nancy, betraying only traces of the old, a new Nancy in a new Eden. We had all the setting, all the illusion of that perfect ideal of domesticity, love in a cottage. Nancy and I, who all our lives had spurned simplicity, laughed over the joy we found in it: she made a high art of it, of course; we had our simple dinners, which Mrs. Olsen cooked and served in the open air; sometimes on the porch, sometimes under the great butternut tree spreading its shade over what in a more elaborate country-place, would have been called a lawn,—an uneven plot of grass of ridges and hollows that ran down to the orchard. Nancy's eyes would meet mine across the little table, and often our gaze would wander over the pastures below, lucent green in the level evening light, to the darkening woods beyond, gilt-tipped in the setting sun. There were fields of ripening yellow grain, of lusty young corn that grew almost as we watched it: the warm winds of evening were heavy with the acrid odours of fecundity. Fecundity! In that lay the elusive yet insistent charm of that country; and Nancy's, of course, was the transforming touch that made it paradise. It was thus, in the country, I suggested that we should spend the rest of our existence. What was the use of amassing money, when happiness was to be had so simply?

"How long do you think you could stand it?" she asked, as she handed me a plate of blackberries.

"Forever, with the right woman," I announced.

"How long could the woman stand it?".... She humoured, smilingly, my crystal-gazing into our future, as though she had not the heart to deprive me of the pleasure.

"I simply can't believe in it, Hugh," she said when I pressed her for an answer.

"Why not?"

"I suppose it's because I believe in continuity, I haven't the romantic temperament,—I always see the angel with the flaming sword. It isn't that I want to see him."

"But we shall redeem ourselves," I said. "It won't be curiosity and idleness. We are not just taking this thing, and expecting to give nothing for it in return."

"What can we give that is worth it?" she exclaimed, with one of her revealing flashes.

"We won't take it lightly, but seriously," I told her. "We shall find something to give, and that something will spring naturally out of our love. We'll read together, and think and plan together."

"Oh, Hugh, you are incorrigible," was all she said.

The male tendency in me was forever strained to solve her, to deduce from her conversation and conduct a body of consistent law. The effort was useless. Here was a realm, that of Nancy's soul, in which there was apparently no such thing as relevancy. In the twilight, after dinner, we often walked through the orchard to a grassy bank beside the little stream, where we would sit and watch the dying glow in the sky. After a rain its swollen waters were turbid, opaque yellow-red with the clay of the hills; at other times it ran smoothly, temperately, almost clear between the pasture grasses and wild flowers. Nancy declared that it reminded her of me. We sat there, into the lush, warm nights, and the moon shone down on us, or again through long silences we searched the bewildering, starry chart of the heavens, with the undertones of the night-chorus of the fields in our ears. Sometimes she let my head rest upon her knee; but when, throbbing at her touch, with the life-force pulsing around us, I tried to take her in my arms, to bring her lips to mine, she resisted me with an energy of will and body that I could not overcome, I dared not overcome. She acknowledged her love for me, she permitted me to come to her, she had the air of yielding but never yielded. Why, then, did she allow the words of love to pass? and how draw the line between caresses? I was maddened and disheartened by that elusive resistance in her—apparently so frail a thing!—that neither argument nor importunity could break down. Was there something lacking in me? or was it that I feared to mar or destroy the love she had. This, surely, had not been the fashion of other loves, called unlawful, the classic instances celebrated by the poets of all ages rose to mock me.

"Incurably romantic," she had called me, in calmer moments, when I was able to discuss our affair objectively. And once she declared that I had no sense of tragedy. We read "Macbeth" together, I remember, one rainy Sunday. The modern world, which was our generation, would seem to be cut off from all that preceded it as with a descending knife. It was precisely from "the sense of tragedy" that we had been emancipated: from the "agonized conscience," I should undoubtedly have said, had I been acquainted then with Mr. Santayana's later phrase. Conscience—the old kind of conscience,—and nothing inherent in the deeds themselves, made the tragedy; conscience was superstition, the fear of the wrath of the gods: conscience was the wrath of the gods. Eliminate it, and behold! there were no consequences. The gods themselves, that kind of gods, became as extinct as the deities of the Druids, the Greek fates, the terrible figures of German mythology. Yes, and as the God of Christian orthodoxy.

Had any dire calamities overtaken the modern Macbeths, of whose personal lives we happened to know something? Had not these great ones broken with impunity all the laws of traditional morality? They ground the faces of the poor, played golf and went to church with serene minds, untroubled by criticism; they appropriated, quite freely, other men's money, and some of them other men's wives, and yet they were not haggard with remorse. The gods remained silent. Christian ministers regarded these modern transgressors of ancient laws benignly and accepted their contributions. Here, indeed, were the supermen of the mad German prophet and philosopher come to life, refuting all classic tragedy. It is true that some of these supermen were occasionally swept away by disease, which in ancient days would have been regarded as a retributive scourge, but was in fact nothing but the logical working of the laws of hygiene, the result of overwork. Such, though stated more crudely, were my contentions when desire did not cloud my brain and make me incoherent. And I did not fail to remind Nancy, constantly, that this was the path on which her feet had been set; that to waver now was to perish. She smiled, yet she showed concern.

"But suppose you don't get what you want?" she objected. "What then? Suppose one doesn't become a superman? or a superwoman? What's to happen to one? Is there no god but the superman's god, which is himself? Are there no gods for those who can't be supermen? or for those who may refuse to be supermen?"

To refuse, I maintained, were a weakness of the will.

"But there are other wills," she persisted, "wills over which the superman may conceivably have no control. Suppose, for example, that you don't get me, that my will intervenes, granting it to be conceivable that your future happiness and welfare, as you insist, depend upon your getting me—which I doubt."

"You've no reason to doubt it."

"Well, granting it, then. Suppose the orthodoxies and superstitions succeed in inhibiting me. I may not be a superwoman, but my will, or my conscience, if you choose, may be stronger than yours. If you

don't get what you want, you aren't happy. In other words, you fail. Where are your gods then? The trouble with you, my dear Hugh, is that you have never failed," she went on, "you've never had a good, hard fall, you've always been on the winning side, and you've never had the world against you. No wonder you don't understand the meaning and value of tragedy."

"And you?" I asked.

"No," she agreed, "nor I. Yet I have come to feel, instinctively, that somehow concealed in tragedy is the central fact of life, the true reality, that nothing is to be got by dodging it, as we have dodged it. Your superman, at least the kind of superman you portray, is petrified. Something vital in him, that should be plastic and sensitive, has turned to stone."

"Since when did you begin to feel this?" I inquired uneasily.

"Since—well, since we have been together again, in the last month or two. Something seems to warn me that if we take—what we want, we shan't get it. That's an Irish saying, I know, but it expresses my meaning. I may be little, I may be superstitious, unlike the great women of history who have dared. But it's more than mere playing safe—my instinct, I mean. You see, you are involved. I believe I shouldn't hesitate if only myself were concerned, but you are the uncertain quantity—more uncertain than you have any idea; you think you know yourself, you think you have analyzed yourself, but the truth is, Hugh, you don't know the meaning of struggle against real resistance."

I was about to protest.

"I know that you have conquered in the world of men and affairs," she hurried on, "against resistance, but it isn't the kind of resistance I mean. It doesn't differ essentially from the struggle in the animal kingdom."

I bowed. "Thank you," I said.

She laughed a little.

"Oh, I have worshipped success, too. Perhaps I still do—that isn't the point. An animal conquers his prey, he is in competition, in constant combat with others of his own kind, and perhaps he brings to bear a certain amount of intelligence in the process. Intelligence isn't the point, either. I know what I'm saying is trite, it's banal, it sounds like moralizing, and perhaps it is, but there is so much confusion to-day that I think we are in danger of losing sight of the simpler verities, and that we must suffer for it. Your super-animal, your supreme-stag subdues the other stags, but he never conquers himself, he never feels the need of it, and therefore he never comprehends what we call tragedy."

"I gather your inference," I said, smiling.

"Well," she admitted, "I haven't stated the case with the shade of delicacy it deserves, but I wanted to make my meaning clear. We have raised up a class in America, but we have lost sight, a little—considerably, I think—of the distinguishing human characteristics. The men you were eulogizing are lords of the forest, more or less, and we women, who are of their own kind, what they have made us, surrender ourselves in submission and adoration to the lordly stag in the face of all the sacraments that have been painfully inaugurated by the race for the very purpose of distinguishing us from animals. It is equivalent to saying that there is no moral law; or, if there is, nobody can define it. We deny, inferentially, a human realm as distinguished from the animal, and in the denial it seems to me we are cutting ourselves off from what is essential human development. We are reverting to the animal. I have lost and you have lost—not entirely, perhaps, but still to a considerable extent—the bloom of that fervour, of that idealism, we may call it, that both of us possessed when we were in our teens. We had occasional visions. We didn't know what they meant, or how to set about their accomplishment, but they were not, at least, mere selfish aspirations; they implied, unconsciously no doubt, an element of service, and certainly our ideal of marriage had something fine in it."

"Isn't it for a higher ideal of marriage that we are searching?" I asked.

"If that is so," Nancy objected, "then all the other elements of our lives are sadly out of tune with it. Even the most felicitous union of the sexes demands sacrifice, an adjustment of wills, and these are the very things we balk at; and the trouble with our entire class in this country is that we won't acknowledge any responsibility, there's no sacrifice in our eminence, we have no sense of the whole."

"Where did you get all these ideas?" I demanded.

She laughed.

"Well," she admitted, "I've been thrashing around a little; and I've read some of the moderns, you

know. Do you remember my telling you I didn't agree with them? and now this thing has come on me like a judgment. I've caught their mania for liberty, for self-realization—whatever they call it—but their remedies are vague, they fail to convince me that individuals achieve any quality by just taking what they want, regardless of others."….

I was unable to meet this argument, and the result was that when I was away from her I too began to "thrash around" among the books in a vain search for a radical with a convincing and satisfying philosophy. Thus we fly to literature in crises of the heart! There was no lack of writers who sought to deal—and deal triumphantly with the very situation in which I was immersed. I marked many passages, to read them over to Nancy, who was interested, but who accused me of being willing to embrace any philosophy, ancient or modern, that ran with the stream of my desires. It is worth recording that the truth of this struck home. On my way back to the city I reflected that, in spite of my protests against Maude's going—protests wholly sentimental and impelled by the desire to avoid giving pain on the spot—I had approved of her departure because I didn't want her. On the other hand I had to acknowledge if I hadn't wanted Nancy, or rather, if I had become tired of her, I should have been willing to endorse her scruples…. It was not a comforting thought.

One morning when I was absently opening the mail I found at my office I picked up a letter from Theodore Watling, written from a seaside resort in Maine, the contents of which surprised and touched me, troubled me, and compelled me to face a situation with which I was wholly unprepared to cope. He announced that this was to be his last term in the Senate. He did not name the trouble his physician had discovered, but he had been warned that he must retire from active life. "The specialist whom I saw in New York," he went on, "wished me to resign at once, but when I pointed out to him how unfair this would be to my friends in the state, to my party as a whole—especially in these serious and unsettled times—he agreed that I might with proper care serve out the remainder of my term. I have felt it my duty to write to Barbour and Dickinson and one or two others in order that they might be prepared and that no time may be lost in choosing my successor. It is true that the revolt within the party has never gained much headway in our state, but in these days it is difficult to tell when and where a conflagration may break out, or how far it will go. I have ventured to recommend to them the man who seems to me the best equipped to carry on the work I have been trying to do here—in short, my dear Hugh, yourself. The Senate, as you know, is not a bed of roses just now for those who think as we do; but I have the less hesitancy in making the recommendation because I believe you are not one to shun a fight for the convictions we hold in common, and because you would regard, with me, the election of a senator with the new views as a very real calamity. If sound business men and lawyers should be eliminated from the Senate, I could not contemplate with any peace of mind what might happen to the country. In thus urging you, I know you will believe me when I say that my affection and judgment are equally involved, for it would be a matter of greater pride than I can express to have you follow me here as you have followed me at home. And I beg of you seriously to consider it…. I understand that Maude and the children are abroad. Remember me to them affectionately when you write. If you can find it convenient to come here, to Maine, to discuss the matter, you may be sure of a welcome. In any case, I expect to be in Washington in September for a meeting of our special committee. Sincerely and affectionately yours, Theodore Watling."

It was characteristic of him that the tone of the letter should be uniformly cheerful, that he should say nothing whatever of the blow this must be to his ambitions and hopes; and my agitation at the new and disturbing prospect thus opened up for me was momentarily swept away by feelings of affection and sorrow. A sharp realization came to me of how much I admired and loved this man, and this was followed by a pang at the thought of the disappointment my refusal would give him. Complications I did not wish to examine were then in the back of my mind; and while I still sat holding the letter in my hand the telephone rang, and a message came from Leonard Dickinson begging me to call at the bank at once.

Miller Gorse was there, and Tallant, waving a palm-leaf while sitting under the electric fan. They were all very grave, and they began to talk about the suddenness of Mr. Watling's illness and to speculate upon its nature. Leonard Dickinson was the most moved of the three; but they were all distressed, and showed it—even Tallant, whom I had never credited with any feelings; they spoke about the loss to the state. At length Gorse took a cigar from his pocket and lighted it; the smoke, impelled by the fan, drifted over the panelled partition into the bank.

"I suppose Mr. Watling mentioned to you what he wrote to us," he said.

"Yes," I admitted.

"Well," he asked, "what do you think of it?"

"I attribute it to Mr. Watling's friendship," I replied.

"No," said Gorse, in his businesslike manner, "Watling's right, there's no one else." Considering the number of inhabitants of our state, this remark had its humorous aspect.

"That's true," Dickinson put in, "there's no one else available who understands the situation as you do, Hugh, no one else we can trust as we trust you. I had a wire from Mr. Barbour this morning—he agrees. We'll miss you here, but now that Watling will be gone we'll need you there. And he's right—it's something we've got to decide on right away, and get started on soon, we can't afford to wobble and run any chances of a revolt."

"It isn't everybody the senatorship comes to on a platter—especially at your age," said Tallant.

"To tell you the truth," I answered, addressing Dickinson, "I'm not prepared to talk about it now. I appreciate the honour, but I'm not at all sure I'm the right man. And I've been considerably upset by this news of Mr. Watling."

"Naturally you would be," said the banker, sympathetically, "and we share your feelings. I don't know of any man for whom I have a greater affection than I have for Theodore Wading. We shouldn't have mentioned it now, Hugh, if Watling hadn't started the thing himself, if it weren't important to know where we stand right away. We can't afford to lose the seat. Take your time, but remember you're the man we depend upon."

Gorse nodded. I was aware, all the time Dickinson was speaking, of being surrounded by the strange, disquieting gaze of the counsel for the Railroad....

I went back to my office to spend an uneasy morning. My sorrow for Mr. Watling was genuine, but nevertheless I found myself compelled to consider an honour no man lightly refuses. Had it presented itself at any other time, had it been due to a happier situation than that brought about by the illness of a man whom I loved and admired, I should have thought the prospect dazzling indeed, part and parcel of my amazing luck. But now—now I was in an emotional state that distorted the factors of life, all those things I hitherto had valued; even such a prize as this I weighed in terms of one supreme desire: how would the acceptance of the senatorship affect the accomplishment of this desire? That was the question. I began making rapid calculations: the actual election would take place in the legislature a year from the following January; provided I were able to overcome Nancy's resistance—which I was determined to do—nothing in the way of divorce proceedings could be thought of for more than a year; and I feared delay. On the other hand, if we waited until after I had been duly elected to get my divorce and marry Nancy my chances of reelection would be small. What did I care for the senatorship anyway —if I had her? and I wanted her now, as soon as I could get her. She—a life with her represented new values, new values I did not define, that made all I had striven for in the past of little worth. This was a bauble compared with the companionship of the woman I loved, the woman intended for me, who would give me peace of mind and soul and develop those truer aspirations that had long been thwarted and starved for lack of her. Gradually, as she regained the ascendency over my mind she ordinarily held —and from which she had been temporarily displaced by the arrival of Mr. Watling's letter and the talk in the bank—I became impatient and irritated by the intrusion. But what answer should I give to Dickinson and Gorse? what excuse for declining such an offer? I decided, as may be imagined, to wait, to temporize.

The irony of circumstances—of what might have been—prevented now my laying this trophy at Nancy's feet, for I knew I had only to mention the matter to be certain of losing her.

XXIII.

I had bought a small automobile, which I ran myself, and it was my custom to arrive at the farm every evening about five o'clock. But as I look back upon those days they seem to have lost succession, to be fused together, as it were, into one indeterminable period by the intense pressure of emotion; unsatisfied emotion,—and the state of physical and mental disorganization set up by it is in the retrospect not a little terrifying. The world grew more and more distorted, its affairs were neglected, things upon which I had set high values became as nothing. And even if I could summon back something of the sequence of our intercourse, it would be a mere repetition—growing on my part more irrational and insistent—of what I have already related. There were long, troubled, and futile silences when we sat together on the porch or in the woods and fields; when I wondered whether it were weakness or strength that caused Nancy to hold out against my importunities: the fears she professed

of retribution, the benumbing effects of the conventional years, or the deep-rooted remnants of a Calvinism which—as she proclaimed—had lost definite expression to persist as an intuition. I recall something she said when she turned to me after one of these silences.

"Do you know how I feel sometimes? as though you and I had wandered together into a strange country, and lost our way. We have lost our way, Hugh—it's all so clandestine, so feverish, so unnatural, so unrelated to life, this existence we're leading. I believe it would be better if it were a mere case of physical passion. I can't help it," she went on, when I had exclaimed against this, "we are too—too complicated, you are too complicated. It's because we want the morning stars, don't you see?" She wound her fingers tightly around mine. "We not only want this, but all of life besides—you wouldn't be satisfied with anything less. Oh, I know it. That's your temperament, you were made that way, and I shouldn't be satisfied if you weren't. The time would come when you would blame me I don't mean vulgarly—and I couldn't stand that. If you weren't that way, if that weren't your nature, I mean, I should have given way long ago."

I made some sort of desperate protest.

"No, if I didn't know you so well I believe I should have given in long ago. I'm not thinking of you alone, but of myself, too. I'm afraid I shouldn't be happy, that I should begin to think—and then I couldn't stop. The plain truth, as I've told you over and over again, is that I'm not big enough." She continued smiling at me, a smile on which I could not bear to look. "I was wrong not to have gone away," I heard her say. "I will go away."

I was, at the time, too profoundly discouraged to answer....

One evening after an exhausting talk we sat, inert, on the grass hummock beside the stream. Heavy clouds had gathered in the sky, the light had deepened to amethyst, the valley was still, swooning with expectancy, louder and louder the thunder rolled from behind the distant hills, and presently a veil descended to hide them from our view. Great drops began to fall, unheeded.

"We must go in," said Nancy, at length.

I followed her across the field and through the orchard. From the porch we stood gazing out at the whitening rain that blotted all save the nearer landscape, and the smell of wet, midsummer grasses will always be associated with the poignancy of that moment.... At dinner, between the intervals of silence, our talk was of trivial things. We made a mere pretence of eating, and I remember having my attention arrested by the sight of a strange, pitying expression on the face of Mrs. Olsen, who waited on us. Before that the woman had been to me a mere ministering automaton. But she must have had ideas and opinions, this transported Swedish peasant.... Presently, having cleared the table, she retired.... The twilight deepened to dusk, to darkness. The storm, having spent the intensity of its passion in those first moments of heavy downpour and wind, had relaxed to a gentle rain that pattered on the roof, and from the stream came recurringly the dirge of the frogs. All I could see of Nancy was the dim outline of her head and shoulders: she seemed fantastically to be escaping me, to be fading, to be going; in sudden desperation I dropped on my knees beside her, and I felt her hands straying with a light yet agonized touch, over my head.

"Do you think I haven't suffered, too? that I don't suffer?" I heard her ask.

Some betraying note for which I had hitherto waited in vain must have pierced to my consciousness, yet the quiver of joy and the swift, convulsive movement that followed it seemed one. Her strong, lithe body was straining in my arms, her lips returning my kisses.... Clinging to her hands, I strove to summon my faculties of realization; and I began to speak in broken, endearing sentences.

"It's stronger than we are—stronger than anything else in the world," she said.

"But you're not sorry?" I asked.

"I don't want to think—I don't care," she replied. "I only know that I love you. I wonder if you will ever know how much!"

The moments lengthened into hours, and she gently reminded me that it was late. The lights in the little farmhouses near by had long been extinguished. I pleaded to linger; I wanted her, more of her, all of her with a fierce desire that drowned rational thought, and I feared that something might still come between us, and cheat me of her.

"No, no," she cried, with fear in her voice. "We shall have to think it out very carefully—what we must do. We can't afford to make any mistakes."

"We'll talk it all over to-morrow," I said.

With a last, reluctant embrace I finally left her, walked blindly to where the motor car was standing, and started the engine. I looked back. Outlined in the light of the doorway I saw her figure in what seemed an attitude of supplication....

I drove cityward through the rain, mechanically taking the familiar turns in the road, barely missing a man in a buggy at a four-corners. He shouted after me, but the world to which he belonged didn't exist. I lived again those moments that had followed Nancy's surrender, seeking to recall and fix in my mind every word that had escaped from her lips—the trivial things that to lovers are so fraught with meaning. I lived it all over again, as I say, but the reflection of it, though intensely emotional, differed from the reality in that now I was somewhat able to regard the thing, to regard myself, objectively; to define certain feelings that had flitted in filmy fashion through my consciousness, delicate shadows I recognized at the time as related to sadness. When she had so amazingly yielded, the thought for which my mind had been vaguely groping was that the woman who lay there in my arms, obscured by the darkness, was not Nancy at all! It was as if this one precious woman I had so desperately pursued had, in the capture, lost her identity, had mysteriously become just woman, in all her significance, yes, and helplessness. The particular had merged (inevitably, I might have known) into the general: the temporary had become the lasting, with a chain of consequences vaguely implied that even in my joy gave me pause. For the first time in my life I had a glimpse of what marriage might mean,—marriage in a greater sense than I had ever conceived it, a sort of cosmic sense, implying obligations transcending promises and contracts, calling for greatness of soul of a kind I had not hitherto imagined. Was there in me a grain of doubt of my ability to respond to such a high call? I began to perceive that such a union as we contemplated involved more obligations than one not opposed to traditional views of morality. I fortified myself, however,—if indeed I really needed fortification in a mood prevailingly triumphant and exalted,—with the thought that this love was different, the real thing, the love of maturity steeped in the ideals of youth. Here was a love for which I must be prepared to renounce other things on which I set a high value; prepared, in case the world, for some reason, should not look upon us with kindliness. It was curious that such reflections as these should have been delayed until after the achievement of my absorbing desire, more curious that they should have followed so closely on the heels of it. The affair had shifted suddenly from a basis of adventure, of uncertainty; to one of fact, of commitment; I am exaggerating my concern in order to define it; I was able to persuade myself without much difficulty that these little, cloudy currents in the stream of my joy were due to a natural reaction from the tremendous strain of the past weeks, mere morbid fancies.

When at length I reached my room at the Club I sat looking out at the rain falling on the shining pavements under the arc-lights. Though waves of heat caused by some sudden recollection or impatient longing still ran through my body, a saner joy of anticipation was succeeding emotional tumult, and I reflected that Nancy had been right in insisting that we walk circumspectly in spite of passion. After all, I had outwitted circumstance, I had gained the prize, I could afford to wait a little. We should talk it over to-morrow,—no, to-day. The luminous face of the city hall clock reminded me that midnight was long past....

I awoke with the consciousness of a new joy, suddenly to identify it with Nancy. She was mine! I kept repeating it as I dressed; summoning her, not as she had lain in my arms in the darkness—though the intoxicating sweetness of that pervaded me—but as she had been before the completeness of her surrender, dainty, surrounded by things expressing an elusive, uniquely feminine personality. I could afford to smile at the weather, at the obsidian sky, at the rain still falling persistently; and yet, as I ate my breakfast, I felt a certain impatience to verify what I knew was a certainty, and hurried to the telephone booth. I resented the instrument, its possibilities of betrayal, her voice sounded so matter-of-fact as she bade me good morning and deplored the rain.

"I'll be out as soon as I can get away," I said. "I have a meeting at three, but it should be over at four." And then I added irresistibly: "Nancy, you're not sorry? You—you still—?"

"Yes, don't be foolish," I heard her reply, and this time the telephone did not completely disguise the note for which I strained. I said something more, but the circuit was closed....

I shall not attempt to recount the details of our intercourse during the week that followed. There were moments of stress and strain when it seemed to me that we could not wait, moments that strengthened Nancy's resolution to leave immediately for the East: there were other, calmer periods when the wisdom of her going appealed to me, since our ultimate union would be hastened thereby. We overcame by degrees the distastefulness of the discussion of ways and means.... We spent an unforgettable Sunday among the distant high hills, beside a little lake of our own discovery, its glinting waters sapphire and chrysoprase. A grassy wood road, at the inviting entrance to which we left the automobile, led down through an undergrowth of laurel to a pebbly shore, and there we lunched; there

we lingered through the long summer afternoon, Nancy with her back against a tree, I with my head in her lap gazing up at filmy clouds drifting imperceptibly across the sky, listening to the droning notes of the bees, notes that sometimes rose in a sharp crescendo, and again were suddenly hushed. The smell of the wood-mould mingled with the fainter scents of wild flowers. She had brought along a volume by a modern poet: the verses, as Nancy read them, moved me,—they were filled with a new faith to which my being responded, the faith of the forth-farer; not the faith of the anchor, but of the sail. I repeated some of the lines as indications of a creed to which I had long been trying to convert her, though lacking the expression. She had let the book fall on the grass. I remember how she smiled down at me with the wisdom of the ages in her eyes, seeking my hand with a gesture that was almost maternal.

"You and the poets," she said, "you never grow up. I suppose that's the reason why we love you—and these wonderful visions of freedom you have. Anyway, it's nice to dream, to recreate the world as one would like to have it."

"But that's what you and I are doing," I insisted.

"We think we're doing it—or rather you think so," she replied. "And sometimes, I admit that you almost persuade me to think so. Never quite. What disturbs me," she continued, "is to find you and the poets founding your new freedom on new justifications, discarding the old law only to make a new one, —as though we could ever get away from necessities, escape from disagreeable things, except in dreams. And then, this delusion of believing that we are masters of our own destiny—" She paused and pressed my fingers.

"There you go-back to predestination!" I exclaimed.

"I don't go back to anything, or forward to anything," she exclaimed. "Women are elemental, but I don't expect you to understand it. Laws and codes are foreign to us, philosophies and dreams may dazzle us for the moment, but what we feel underneath and what we yield to are the primal forces, the great necessities; when we refuse joys it's because we know these forces by a sort of instinct, when we're overcome it's with a full knowledge that there's a price. You've talked a great deal, Hugh, about carving out our future. I listened to you, but I resisted you. It wasn't the morality that was taught me as a child that made me resist, it was something deeper than that, more fundamental, something I feel but can't yet perceive, and yet shall perceive some day. It isn't that I'm clinging to the hard and fast rules because I fail to see any others, it isn't that I believe that all people should stick together whether they are happily married or not, but—I must say it even now—I have a feeling I can't define that divorce isn't for us. I'm not talking about right and wrong in the ordinary sense—it's just what I feel. I've ceased to think."

"Nancy!" I reproached her.

"I can't help it—I don't want to be morbid. Do you remember my asking you about God?—the first day this began? and whether you had a god? Well, that's the trouble with us all to-day, we haven't any God, we're wanderers, drifters. And now it's just life that's got hold of us, my dear, and swept us away together. That's our justification—if we needed one—it's been too strong for us." She leaned back against the tree and closed her eyes. "We're like chips in the torrent of it, Hugh."....

It was not until the shadow of the forest had crept far across the lake and the darkening waters were still that we rose reluctantly to put the dishes in the tea basket and start on our homeward journey. The tawny fires of the sunset were dying down behind us, the mist stealing, ghostlike, into the valleys below; in the sky a little moon curled like a freshly cut silver shaving, that presently turned to gold, the white star above it to fire.

Where the valleys widened we came to silent, decorous little towns and villages where yellow-lit windows gleaming through the trees suggested refuge and peace, while we were wanderers in the night. It was Nancy's mood; and now, in the evening's chill, it recurred to me poignantly. In one of these villages we passed a church, its doors flung open; the congregation was singing a familiar hymn. I slowed down the car; I felt her shoulder pressing against my own, and reached out my hand and found hers.

"Are you warm enough?" I asked....

We spoke but little on that drive, we had learned the futility of words to express the greater joys and sorrows, the love that is compounded of these.

It was late when we turned in between the white dates and made our way up the little driveway to the farmhouse. I bade her good night on the steps of the porch.

"You do love me, don't you?" she whispered, clinging to me with a sudden, straining passion. "You will

love me, always no matter what happens?"

"Why, of course, Nancy," I answered.

"I want to hear you say it, 'I love you, I shall love you always.'"

I repeated it fervently....

"No matter what happens?"

"No matter what happens. As if I could help it, Nancy! Why are you so sad to-night?"

"Ah, Hugh, it makes me sad—I can't tell why. It is so great, it is so terrible, and yet it's so sweet and beautiful."

She took my face in her hands and pressed a kiss against my forehead....

The next day was dark. At two o'clock in the afternoon the electric light was still burning over my desk when the telephone rang and I heard Nancy's voice.

"Is that you, Hugh?"

"Yes."

"I have to go East this afternoon."

"Why?" I asked. Her agitation had communicated itself to me. "I thought you weren't going until Thursday. What's the matter?"

"I've just had a telegram," she said. "Ham's been hurt—I don't know how badly—he was thrown from a polo pony this morning at Narragansett, in practice, and they're taking him to Boston to a private hospital. The telegram's from Johnny Shephard. I'll be at the house in town at four."

Filled with forebodings I tried in vain to suppress I dropped the work I was doing and got up and paced the room, pausing now and again to gaze out of the window at the wet roofs and the grey skies. I was aghast at the idea of her going to Ham now even though he were hurt badly hurt; and yet I tried to think it was natural, that it was fine of her to respond to such a call. And she couldn't very well refuse his summons. But it was not the news of her husband's accident that inspired the greater fear, which was quelled and soothed only to rise again when I recalled the note I had heard in her voice, a note eloquent of tragedy—of tragedy she had foreseen. At length, unable to remain where I was any longer, I descended to the street and walked uptown in the rain. The Durrett house was closed, the blinds of its many windows drawn, but Nancy was watching for me and opened the door. So used had I grown to seeing her in the simple linen dresses she had worn in the country, a costume associated with exclusive possession, that the sight of her travelling suit and hat renewed in me an agony of apprehension. The unforeseen event seemed to have transformed her once more. Her veil was drawn up, her face was pale, in her eyes were traces of tears.

"You're going?" I asked, as I took her hands.

"Hugh, I have to go."

She led me through the dark, shrouded drawing room into the little salon where the windows were open on the silent city-garden. I took her in my arms; she did not resist, as I half expected, but clung to me with what seemed desperation.

"I have to go, dear—you won't make it too hard for me! It's only—ordinary decency, and there's no one else to go to him."

She drew me to the sofa, her eyes beseeching me.

"Listen, dear, I want you to see it as I see it. I know that you will, that you do. I should never be able to forgive myself if I stayed away now, I—neither of us could ever be happy about it. You do see, don't you?" she implored.

"Yes," I admitted agitatedly.

Her grasp on my hand tightened.

"I knew you would. But it makes me happier to hear you say it."

We sat for a moment in helpless silence, gazing at one another. Slowly her eyes had filled.

"Have you heard anything more?" I managed to ask.

She drew a telegram from her bag, as though the movement were a relief.

"This is from the doctor in Boston—his name is Magruder. They have got Ham there, it seems. A horse kicked him in the head, after he fell,—he had just recovered consciousness."

I took the telegram. The wordy seemed meaningless, all save those of the last sentence. "The situation is serious, but by no means hopeless." Nancy had not spoken of that. The ignorant cruelty of its convention! The man must have known what Hambleton Durrett was! Nancy read my thoughts, and took the paper from my hand.

"Hugh, dear, if it's hard for you, try to understand that it's terrible for me to think that he has any claim at all. I realize now, as I never did before, how wicked it was in me to marry him. I hate him, I can't bear the thought of going near him."

She fell into wild weeping. I tried to comfort her, who could not comfort myself; I don't remember my inadequate words. We were overwhelmed, obliterated by the sense of calamity.... It was she who checked herself at last by an effort that was almost hysterical.

"I mustn't yield to it!" she said. "It's time to leave and the train goes at six. No, you mustn't come to the station, Hugh—I don't think I could stand it. I'll send you a telegram." She rose. "You must go now—you must."

"You'll come back to me?" I demanded thickly, as I held her.

"Hugh, I am yours, now and always. How can you doubt it?"

At last I released her, when she had begged me again. And I found myself a little later walking past the familiar, empty houses of those streets....

The front pages of the evening newspapers announced the accident to Hambleton Durrett, and added that Mrs. Durrett, who had been lingering in the city, had gone to her husband's bedside. The morning papers contained more of biography and ancestry, but had little to add to the bulletin; and there was no lack of speculation at the Club and elsewhere as to Ham's ability to rally from such a shock. I could not bear to listen to these comments: they were violently distasteful to me. The unforeseen accident and Nancy's sudden departure had thrown my life completely out of gear: I could not attend to business, I dared not go away lest the news from Nancy be delayed. I spent the hours in an exhausting mental state that alternated between hope and fear, a state of unmitigated, intense desire, of balked realization, sometimes heightening into that sheer terror I had felt when I had detected over the telephone that note in her voice that seemed of despair. Had she had a presentiment, all along, that something would occur to separate us? As I went back over the hours we had passed together since she had acknowledged her love, in spite of myself the conviction grew on me that she had never believed in the reality of our future. Indeed, she had expressed her disbelief in words. Had she been looking all along for a sign—a sign of wrath? And would she accept this accident of Ham's as such?

Retrospection left me trembling and almost sick.

It was not until the second morning after her departure that I received a telegram giving the name of her Boston hotel, and saying that there was to be a consultation that day, and as soon as it had taken place she would write. Such consolation as I could gather from it was derived from four words at the end,—she missed me dreadfully. Some tremor of pity for her entered into my consciousness, without mitigating greatly the wildness of my resentment, of my forebodings.

I could bear no longer the city, the Club, the office, the daily contact with my associates and clients. Six hours distant, near Rossiter, was a small resort in the mountains of which I had heard. I telegraphed Nancy to address me there, notified the office, packed my bag, and waited impatiently for midday, when I boarded the train. At seven I reached a little station where a stage was waiting to take me to Callender's Mill.

It was not until morning that I beheld my retreat, when little wisps of vapour were straying over the surface of the lake, and the steep green slopes that rose out of the water on the western side were still in shadow. The hotel, a much overgrown and altered farm-house, stood, surrounded by great trees, in an ancient clearing that sloped gently to the water's edge, where an old-fashioned, octagonal summerhouse overlooked a landing for rowboats. The resort, indeed, was a survival of simpler times....

In spite of the thirty-odd guests, people of very moderate incomes who knew the place and had come here year after year, I was as much alone as if I had been the only sojourner. The place was so remote,

so peaceful in contrast to the city I had left, which had become intolerable. And at night, during hours of wakefulness, the music of the waters falling over the dam was soothing. I used to walk down there and sit on the stones of the ruined mill; or climb to the crests on the far side of the pond to gaze for hours westward where the green billows of the Alleghenies lost themselves in the haze. I had discovered a new country; here, when our trials should be over, I would bring Nancy, and I found distraction in choosing sites for a bungalow. In my soul hope flowered with little watering. Uncertain news was good news. After two days of an impatience all but intolerable, her first letter arrived, I learned that the specialists had not been able to make a diagnosis, and I began to take heart again. At times, she said, Ham was delirious and difficult to manage; at other times he sank into a condition of coma; and again he seemed to know her and Ralph, who had come up from Southampton, where he had been spending the summer. One doctor thought that Ham's remarkable vitality would pull him through, in spite of what his life had been. The shock—as might have been surmised—had affected the brain.... The letters that followed contained no additional news; she did not dwell on the depressing reactions inevitable from the situation in which she found herself—one so much worse than mine; she expressed a continual longing for me; and yet I had trouble to convince myself that they did not lack the note of reassurance for which I strained as I eagerly scanned them—of reassurance that she had no intention of permitting her husband's condition to interfere with that ultimate happiness on which it seemed my existence depended. I tried to account for the absence of this note by reflecting that the letters were of necessity brief, hurriedly scratched off at odd moments; and a natural delicacy would prevent her from referring to our future at such a time. They recorded no change in Ham's condition save that the periods of coma had ceased. The doctors were silent, awaiting the arrival in this country of a certain New York specialist who was abroad. She spent most of her days at the hospital, returning to the hotel at night exhausted: the people she knew in the various resorts around Boston had been most kind, sending her flowers, and calling when in town to inquire. At length came the news that the New York doctor was home again; and coming to Boston. In that letter was a sentence which rang like a cry in my ears: "Oh, Hugh, I think these doctors know now what the trouble is, I think I know. They are only waiting for Dr. Jameson to confirm it."

It was always an effort for me to control my impatience after the first rattling was heard in the morning of the stage that brought the mail, and I avoided the waiting group in front of the honeycombed partition of boxes beside the "office." On the particular morning of which I am now writing the proprietor himself handed me a letter of ominous thickness which I took with me down to the borders of the lake before tearing open the flap. In spite of the calmness and restraint of the first lines, because of them, I felt creeping over me an unnerving sensation I knew for dread....

"Hugh, the New York doctor has been here. It is as I have feared for some weeks, but I couldn't tell you until I was sure. Ham is not exactly insane, but he is childish. Sometimes I think that is even worse. I have had a talk with Dr. Jameson, who has simply confirmed the opinion which the other physicians have gradually been forming. The accident has precipitated a kind of mental degeneration, but his health, otherwise, will not be greatly affected.

"Jameson was kind, but very frank, for which I was grateful. He did not hesitate to say that it would have been better if the accident had been fatal. Ham won't be helpless, physically. Of course he won't be able to play polo, or take much active exercise. If he were to be helpless, I could feel that I might be of some use, at least of more use. He knows his friends. Some of them have been here to see him, and he talks quite rationally with them, with Ralph, with me, only once in a while he says something silly. It seems odd to write that he is not responsible, since he never has been,—his condition is so queer that I am at a loss to describe it. The other morning, before I arrived from the hotel and when the nurse was downstairs, he left the hospital, and we found him several blocks along Commonwealth Avenue, seated on a bench, without a hat—he was annoyed that he had forgotten it, and quite sensible otherwise. We began by taking him out every morning in an automobile. To-day he had a walk with Ralph, and insisted on going into a club here, to which they both belong. Two or three men were there whom they knew, and he talked to them about his fall from the pony and told them just how it happened.

"At such times only a close observer can tell from his manner that everything is not right.

"Ralph, who always could manage him, prevented his taking anything to drink. He depends upon Ralph, and it will be harder for me when he is not with us. His attitude towards me is just about what it has always been. I try to amuse him by reading the newspapers and with games; we have a chess-board. At times he seems grateful, and then he will suddenly grow tired and hard to control. Once or twice I have had to call in Dr. Magruder, who owns the hospital.

"It has been terribly hard for me to write all this, but I had to do it, in order that you might understand the situation completely. Hugh dear, I simply can't leave him. This has been becoming clearer and clearer to me all these weeks, but it breaks my heart to have to write it. I have struggled against it, I have lain awake nights trying to find justification for going to you, but it is stronger than I. I

am afraid of it—I suppose that's the truth. Even in those unforgettable days at the farm I was afraid of it, although I did not know what it was to be. Call it what you like, say that I am weak. I am willing to acknowledge that it is weakness. I wish no credit for it, it gives me no glow, the thought of it makes my heart sick. I'm not big enough I suppose that's the real truth. I once might have been; but I'm not now, —the years of the life I chose have made a coward of me. It's not a question of morals or duty it's simply that I can't take the thing for which my soul craves. It's too late. If I believed in prayer I'd pray that you might pity and forgive me. I really can't expect you to understand what I can't myself explain. Oh, I need pity—and I pity you, my dear. I can only hope that you will not suffer as I shall, that you will find relief away to work out your life. But I will not change my decision, I cannot change it. Don't come on, don't attempt to see me now. I can't stand any more than I am standing, I should lose my mind."

Here the letter was blotted, and some words scratched out. I was unable to reconstruct them.

"Ralph and I," she proceeded irrelevantly, "have got Ham to agree to go to Buzzard's Bay, and we have taken a house near Wareham. Write and tell me that you forgive and pity me. I love you even more, if such a thing is possible, than I have ever loved you. This is my only comfort and compensation, that I have had and have been able to feel such a love, and I know I shall always feel it.—Nancy." The first effect of this letter was a paralyzing one. I was unable to realize or believe the thing that had happened to me, and I sat stupidly holding the sheet in my hand until I heard voices along the path, and then I fled instinctively, like an animal, to hide my injury from any persons I might meet. I wandered down the shore of the lake, striking at length into the woods, seeking some inviolable shelter; nor was I conscious of physical effort until I found myself panting near the crest of the ridge where there was a pasture, which some ancient glacier had strewn with great boulders. Beside one of these I sank. Heralded by the deep tones of bells, two steers appeared above the shoulder of a hill and stood staring at me with bovine curiosity, and fell to grazing again. A fleet of white clouds, like ships pressed with sail, hurried across the sky as though racing for some determined port; and the shadows they cast along the hillsides accentuated the high brightness of the day, emphasized the vivid and hateful beauty of the landscape. My numbness began to be penetrated by shooting pains, and I grasped little by little the fulness of my calamity, until I was in the state of wild rebellion of one whom life for the first time has foiled in a supreme desire. There was no fate about this thing, it was just an absurd accident. The operation of the laws of nature had sent a man to the ground: another combination of circumstances would have killed him, still another, and he would have arisen unhurt. But because of this particular combination my happiness was ruined, and Nancy's! She had not expected me to understand. Well, I didn't understand, I had no pity, in that hour I felt a resentment almost amounting to hate; I could see only unreasoning superstition in the woman I wanted above everything in the world. Women of other days had indeed renounced great loves: the thing was not unheard of. But that this should happen in these times—and to me! It was unthinkable that Nancy of all women shouldn't be emancipated from the thralls of religious inhibition! And if it wasn't "conscience," what was it?

Was it, as she said, weakness, lack of courage to take life when it was offered her?.... I was suddenly filled with the fever of composing arguments to change a decision that appeared to me to be the result of a monstrous caprice and delusion; writing them out, as they occurred to me, in snatches on the backs of envelopes—her envelopes. Then I proceeded to make the draft of a letter, the effort required for composition easing me until the draft was finished; when I started for the hotel, climbing fences, leaping streams, making my way across rock faces and through woods; halting now and then as some reenforcing argument occurred to me to write it into my draft at the proper place until the sheets were interlined and blurred and almost illegible. It was already three o'clock when I reached my room, and the mail left at four. I began to copy and revise my scrawl, glancing from time to time at my watch, which I had laid on the table. Hurriedly washing my face and brushing my hair, I arrived downstairs just as the stage was leaving....

After the letter had gone still other arguments I might have added began to occur to me, and I regretted that I had not softened some of the things I wrote and made others more emphatic. In places argument had degenerated into abject entreaty. Never had my desire been so importunate as now, when I was in continual terror of losing her. Nor could I see how I was to live without her, life lacking a motive being incomprehensible: yet the fire of optimism in me, though died down to ashes, would not be extinguished. At moments it flared up into what almost amounted to a conviction that she could not resist my appeal. I had threatened to go to her, and more than once I started packing....

Three days later I received a brief note in which she managed to convey to me, though tenderly and compassionately, that her decision was unalterable. If I came on, she would refuse to see me. I took the afternoon stage and went back to the city, to plunge into affairs again; but for weeks my torture was so acute that it gives me pain to recall it, to dwell upon it to-day.... And yet, amazing as it may seem, there came a time when hope began to dawn again out of my despair. Perhaps my life had not been utterly shattered, after all: perhaps Ham Durrett would get well: such things happened, and Nancy would no longer have an excuse for continuing to refuse me. Little by little my anger at what I had now become

convinced was her weakness cooled, and—though paradoxically I had continued to love her in spite of the torture for which she was responsible, in spite of the resentment I felt, I melted toward her. True to my habit of reliance on miracles, I tried to reconcile myself to a period of waiting.

Nevertheless I was faintly aware—consequent upon if not as a result of this tremendous experience—of some change within me. It was not only that I felt at times a novel sense of uneasiness at being a prey to accidents, subject to ravages of feeling; the unity of mind that had hitherto enabled me to press forward continuously toward a concrete goal showed signs of breaking up:—the goal had lost its desirability. I seemed oddly to be relapsing into the states of questioning that had characterized my earlier years. Perhaps it would be an exaggeration to say that I actually began to speculate on the possible existence of a realm where the soul might find a refuge from the buffetings of life, from which the philosophy of prosperity was powerless to save it....

XXIV.

It was impossible, of course, that my friends should have failed to perceive the state of disorganization I was in, and some of them at least must have guessed its cause. Dickinson, on his return from Maine, at once begged me to go away. I rather congratulated myself that Tom had chosen these months for a long-delayed vacation in Canada. His passion for fishing still persisted.

In spite of the fact I have noted, that I had lost a certain zest for results, to keep busy seemed to be the only way to relieve my mind of an otherwise intolerable pressure: and I worked sometimes far into the evening. In the background of my thoughts lay the necessity of coming to a decision on the question of the senatorship; several times Dickinson and Gorse had spoken of it, and I was beginning to get letters from influential men in other parts of the state. They seemed to take it for granted that there was no question of my refusing. The time came when I had grown able to consider the matter with a degree of calmness. What struck me first, when I began to debate upon it, was that the senatorship offered a new and possibly higher field for my energies, while at the same time the office would be a logical continuation of a signal legal career. I was now unable to deny that I no longer felt any exhilaration at the prospect of future legal conquests similar to those of the past; but once in the Senate, I might regain something of that intense conviction of fighting for a just and sound cause with which Theodore Wading had once animated me: fighting there, in the Capitol at Washington, would be different; no stigma of personal gain attached to it; it offered a nearer approach to the ideal I had once more begun to seek, held out hopes of a renewal of my unity of mind. Mr. Watling had declared that there was something to fight for; I had even glimpsed that something, but I had to confess that for some years I had not been consciously fighting for it. I needed something to fight for.

There was the necessity, however, of renewing my calculations. If Hambleton Durrett should recover, even during the ensuing year, and if Nancy relented it would not be possible for us to be divorced and married for some time. I still clung tenaciously to the belief that there were no relationships wholly unaffected by worldly triumphs, and as Senator I should have strengthened my position. It did not strike me—even after all my experience—that such a course as I now contemplated had a parallel in the one that I had pursued in regard to her when I was young.

It seemed fitting that Theodore Watling should be the first to know of my decision. I went to Washington to meet him. It pained me to see him looking more worn, but he was still as cheerful, as mentally vigorous as ever, and I perceived that he did not wish to dwell upon his illness. I did venture to expostulate with him on the risk he must be running in serving out his term. We were sitting in the dining room of his house.

"We've only one life to live, Hugh," he answered, smiling at me, "and we might as well get all out of it we can. A few years more or less doesn't make much difference—and I ought to be satisfied. I'd resign now, to please my wife, to please my friends, but we can't trust this governor to appoint a safe man. How little we suspected when we elected him that he'd become infected. You never can tell, in these days, can you?"

It was the note of devotion to his cause that I had come to hear: I felt it renewing me, as I had hoped. The threat of disease, the louder clamourings of the leaders of the mob had not sufficed to dismay him —though he admitted more concern over these. My sympathy and affection were mingled with the admiration he never failed to inspire.

"But you, Hugh," he said concernedly, "you're not looking very well, my son. You must manage to take a good rest before coming here—before the campaign you'll have to go through. We can't afford to have anything happen to you—you're too young."

I wondered whether he had heard anything.... He spoke to me again about the work to be done, the work he looked to me to carry on.

"We'll have to watch for our opportunity," he said, "and when it comes we can handle this new movement not by crushing it, but by guiding it. I've come to the conclusion that there is a true instinct in it, that there are certain things we have done which have been mistakes, and which we can't do any more. But as for this theory that all wisdom resides in the people, it's buncombe. What we have to do is to work out a practical programme."

His confidence in me had not diminished. It helped to restore confidence in myself.

The weather was cool and bracing for September, and as we drove in a motor through the beautiful avenues of the city he pointed out a house for me on one of the circles, one of those distinguished residences, instances of a nascent good taste, that are helping to redeem the polyglot aspect of our national capital. Mr. Watling spoke—rather tactfully, I thought—of Maude and the children, and ventured the surmise that they would be returning in a few months. I interpreted this, indeed, as in rather the nature of a kindly hint that such a procedure would be wise in view of the larger life now dawning for me, but I made no comment.... He even sympathized with Nancy Durrett.

"She did the right thing, Hugh," he said, with the admirable casual manner he possessed of treating subjects which he knew to be delicate. "Nancy's a fine woman. Poor devil!" This in reference to Ham....

Mr. Watling reassured me on the subject of his own trouble, maintaining that he had many years left if he took care. He drove me to the station. I travelled homeward somewhat lifted out of myself by this visit to him; with some feeling of spaciousness derived from Washington itself, with its dignified Presidential Mansion among the trees, its granite shaft drawing the eye upward, with its winged Capitol serene upon the hill. Should we deliver these heirlooms to the mob? Surely Democracy meant more than that!

All this time I had been receiving, at intervals, letters from Maude and the children. Maude's were the letters of a friend, and I found it easy to convince myself that their tone was genuine, that the separation had brought contentment to her; and those independent and self-sufficient elements in her character I admired now rather than deplored. At Etretat, which she found much to her taste, she was living quietly, but making friends with some American and English, and one French family of the same name, Buffon, as the great naturalist. The father was a retired silk manufacturer; they now resided in Paris, and had been very kind in helping her to get an apartment in that city for the winter. She had chosen one on the Avenue Kleber, not far from the Arc. It is interesting, after her arraignment of me, that she should have taken such pains to record their daily life for my benefit in her clear, conscientious handwriting. I beheld Biddy, her dresses tucked above slim little knees, playing in the sand on the beach, her hair flying in the wind and lighted by the sun which gave sparkle to the sea. I saw Maude herself in her beach chair, a book lying in her lap, its pages whipped by the breeze. And there was Moreton, who must be proving something of a handful, since he had fought with the French boys on the beach and thrown a "rock" through the windows of the Buffon family. I remember one of his letters—made perfect after much correcting and scratching,—in which he denounced both France and the French, and appealed to me to come over at once to take him home. Maude had enclosed it without comment. This letter had not been written under duress, as most of his were.

Matthew's letters—he wrote faithfully once a week—I kept in a little pile by themselves and sometimes reread them. I wondered whether it were because of the fact that I was his father—though a most inadequate one—that I thought them somewhat unusual. He had learned French—Maude wrote—with remarkable ease. I was particularly struck in these letters with the boy's power of observation, with his facile use of language, with the vivid simplicity of his descriptions of the life around him, of his experiences at school. The letters were thoughtful—not dashed off in a hurry; they gave evidence in every line of the delicacy of feeling that was, I think, his most appealing quality, and I put them down with the impression strong on me that he, too, longed to return home, but would not say so. There was a certain pathos in this youthful restraint that never failed to touch me, even in those times when I had been most obsessed with love and passion.... The curious effect of these letters was that of knowing more than they expressed. He missed me, he wished to know when I was coming over. And I was sometimes at a loss whether to be grateful to Maude or troubled because she had as yet given him no hint of our separation. What effect would it have on him when it should be revealed to him?.... It was through Matthew I began to apprehend certain elements in Maude I had both failed to note and appreciate; her little mannerisms that jarred, her habits of thought that exasperated, were forgotten, and I was forced to confess that there was something fine in the achievement of this attitude of hers

that was without ill will or resentment, that tacitly acknowledged my continued rights and interest in the children. It puzzled and troubled me.

The Citizens Union began its campaign early that autumn, long before the Hons. Jonathan Parks and Timothy MacGuire—Republican and Democratic candidates for Mayor—thought of going on the stump. For several weeks the meetings were held in the small halls and club rooms of various societies and orders in obscure portions of the city.

The forces of "privilege and corruption" were not much alarmed. Perry Blackwood accused the newspapers of having agreed to a "conspiracy of silence"; but, as Judah B. Tallant remarked, it was the business of the press to give the public what it wanted, and the public as yet hadn't shown much interest in the struggle being waged in its behalf. When the meetings began to fill up it would be time to report them in the columns of the Era. Meanwhile, however, the city had been quietly visited by an enterprising representative of a New York periodical of the new type that developed with the opening years of the century—one making a specialty of passionate "muck-raking." And since the people of America love nothing better than being startled, Yardley's Weekly had acquired a circulation truly fabulous. The emissary of the paper had attended several of the Citizens meetings; interviewed, it seemed, many persons: the result was a revelation to make the blood of politicians, capitalists and corporation lawyers run cold. I remember very well the day it appeared on our news stands, and the heated denunciations it evoked at the Boyne Club. Ralph Hambleton was the only one who took it calmly, who seemed to derive a certain enjoyment from the affair. Had he been a less privileged person, they would have put him in chancery. Leonard Dickinson asserted that Yardley's should be sued for libel.

"There's just one objection to that," said Ralph.

"What?" asked the banker.

"It isn't libel."

"I defy them to prove it," Dickinson snapped. "It's a d—d outrage! There isn't a city or village in the country that hasn't exactly the same conditions. There isn't any other way to run a city—"

"That's what Mr. Krebs says," Ralph replied, "that the people ought to put Judd Jason officially in charge. He tells 'em that Jason is probably a more efficient man than Democracy will be able to evolve in a coon's age, that we ought to take him over, instead of letting the capitalists have him."

"Did Krebs say that?" Dickinson demanded.

"You can't have read the article very thoroughly, Leonard," Ralph commented. "I'm afraid you only picked out the part of it that compliments you. This fellow seems to have been struck by Krebs, says he's a coming man, that he's making original contributions to the people's cause. Quite a tribute. You ought to read it."

Dickinson, who had finished his lunch, got up and left the table after lighting his cigar. Ralph's look followed him amusedly.

"I'm afraid it's time to cash in and be good," he observed.

"We'll get that fellow Krebs yet," said Grierson, wrathfully. Miller Gorse alone made no remarks, but in spite of his silence he emanated an animosity against reform and reformers that seemed to charge the very atmosphere, and would have repressed any man but Ralph....

I sat in my room at the Club that night and reread the article, and if its author could have looked into my soul and observed the emotions he had set up, he would, no doubt, have experienced a grim satisfaction. For I, too, had come in for a share of the comment. Portions of the matter referring to me stuck in my brain like tar, such as the reference to my father, to the honoured traditions of the Parets and the Brecks which I had deliberately repudiated. I had less excuse than many others. The part I had played in various reprehensible transactions such as the Riverside Franchise and the dummy telephone company affair was dwelt upon, and I was dismissed with the laconic comment that I was a graduate of Harvard....

My associates and myself were referred to collectively as a "gang," with the name of our city prefixed; we were linked up with and compared to the gangs of other cities—the terminology used to describe us being that of the police reporter. We "operated," like burglars; we "looted": only, it was intimated in one place, "second-story men" were angels compared to us, who had never seen the inside of a penitentiary. Here we were, all arraigned before the bar of public opinion, the relentless Dickinson, the surfeited Scherer, the rapacious Grierson, the salacious Tallant. I have forgotten what Miller Gorse

was called; nothing so classic as a Minotaur; Judd Jason was a hairy spider who spread his net and lurked in darkness for his victims. Every adjective was called upon to do its duty.... Even Theodore Watling did not escape, but it was intimated that he would be dealt with in another connection in a future number.

The article had a crude and terrifying power, and the pain it aroused, following almost immediately upon the suffering caused by my separation from Nancy, was cumulative in character and effect, seeming actively to reenforce the unwelcome conviction I had been striving to suppress, that the world, which had long seemed so acquiescent in conforming itself to my desires, was turning against me.

Though my hunger for Nancy was still gnawing, I had begun to fear that I should never get her now; and the fact that she would not even write to me seemed to confirm this.

Then there was Matthew—I could not bear to think that he would ever read that article.

In vain I tried that night to belittle to myself its contentions and probable results, to summon up the heart to fight; in vain I sought to reconstruct the point of view, to gain something of that renewed hope and power, of devotion to a cause I had carried away from Washington after my talk with Theodore Watling. He, though stricken, had not wavered in his faith. Why should I?

Whether or not as the result of the article in Yardley's, which had been read more or less widely in the city, the campaign of the Citizens Union gained ground, and people began to fill the little halls to hear Krebs, who was a candidate for district attorney. Evidently he was entertaining and rousing them, for his reputation spread, and some of the larger halls were hired. Dickinson and Gorse became alarmed, and one morning the banker turned up at the Club while I was eating my breakfast.

"Look here, Hugh," he said, "we may as well face the fact that we've got a fight ahead of us,—we'll have to start some sort of a back-fire right away."

"You think Greenhalge has a chance of being elected?" I asked.

"I'm not afraid of Greenhalge, but of this fellow Krebs. We can't afford to have him district attorney, to let a demagogue like him get a start. The men the Republicans and Democrats have nominated are worse than useless. Parks is no good, and neither is MacGuire. If only we could have foreseen this thing we might have had better candidates put up—but there's no use crying over spilt milk. You'll have to go on the stump, Hugh—that's all there is to it. You can answer him, and the newspapers will print your speeches in full. Besides it will help you when it comes to the senatorship."

The mood of extreme dejection that had followed the appearance of the article in Yardley's did not last. I had acquired aggressiveness: an aggressiveness, however, differing in quality from the feeling I once would have had,—for this arose from resentment, not from belief. It was impossible to live in the atmosphere created by the men with whom I associated—especially at such a time—without imbibing something of the emotions animating them,—even though I had been free from these emotions myself. I, too, had begun to be filled with a desire for revenge; and when this desire was upon me I did not have in my mind a pack of reformers, or even the writer of the article in Yardley's. I thought of Hermann Krebs. He was my persecutor; it seemed to me that he always had been....

"Well, I'll make speeches if you like," I said to Dickinson.

"I'm glad," he replied. "We're all agreed, Gorse and the rest of us, that you ought to. We've got to get some ginger into this fight, and a good deal more money, I'm afraid. Jason sends word we'll need more. By the way, Hugh, I wish you'd drop around and talk to Jason and get his idea of how the land lies."

I went, this time in the company of Judah B. Tallant. Naturally we didn't expect to see Mr. Jason perturbed, nor was he. He seemed to be in an odd, rather exultant mood—if he can be imagined as exultant. We were not long in finding out what pleased him—nothing less than the fact that Mr. Krebs had proposed him for mayor!

"D—d if I wouldn't make a good one, too," he said. "D—d if I wouldn't show 'em what a real mayor is!"

"I guess there's no danger of your ever being mayor, Judd," Tallant observed, with a somewhat uneasy jocularity.

"I guess there isn't, Judah," replied the boss, quickly, but with a peculiar violet flash in his eyes. "They won't ever make you mayor, either, if I can help it. And I've a notion I can. I'd rather see Krebs mayor."

"You don't think he meant to propose you seriously," Tallant exclaimed.

"I'm not a d—d fool," said the boss. "But I'll say this, that he half meant it. Krebs has a head-piece on

him, and I tell you if any of this reform dope is worth anything his is. There's some sense in what he's talking, and if all the voters was like him you might get a man like me for mayor. But they're not, and I guess they never will be."

"Sure," said Mr. Jason. "The people are dotty—there ain't one in ten thousand understands what he's driving at when he gets off things like that. They take it on the level."

Tallant reflected.

"By gum, I believe you're right," he said. "You think they will blow up?" he added.

"Krebs is the whole show, I tell you. They wouldn't be anywhere without him. The yaps that listen to him don't understand him, but somehow he gets under their skins. Have you seen him lately?"

"Never saw him," replied Tallant.

"Well, if you had, you'd know he was a sick man."

"Sick!" I exclaimed. "How do you know?"

"It's my business to know things," said Judd Jason, and added to Tallant, "that your reporters don't find out."

"What's the matter with him?" Tallant demanded. A slight exultation in his tone did not escape me.

"You've got me there," said Jason, "but I have it pretty straight. Any one of your reporters will tell you that he looks sick."....

The Era took Mr. Jason's advice and began to publish those portions of Krebs's speeches that were seemingly detrimental to his own cause. Other conservative newspapers followed suit....

Both Tallant and I were surprised to hear these sentiments out of the mouth of Mr. Jason.

"You don't think that crowd's going to win, do you?" asked the owner of the Era, a trifle uneasily.

"Win!" exclaimed the boss contemptuously. "They'll blow up, and you'll never hear of 'em. I'm not saying we won't need a little—powder," he added—which was one of the matters we had come to talk about. He gave us likewise a very accurate idea of the state of the campaign, mentioning certain things that ought to be done. "You ought to print some of Krebs's speeches, Judah, like what he said about me. They're talking it all around that you're afraid to."

"Print things like his proposal to make you mayor!"

The information that I was to enter the lists against Krebs was received with satisfaction and approval by those of our friends who were called in to assist at a council of war in the directors' room of the Corn National Bank. I was flattered by the confidence these men seemed to have in my ability. All were in a state of anger against the reformers; none of them seriously alarmed as to the actual outcome of the campaign,—especially when I had given them the opinion of Mr. Jason. What disturbed them was the possible effect upon the future of the spread of heretical, socialistic doctrines, and it was decided to organize a publicity bureau, independently of the two dominant political parties, to be in charge of a certain New York journalist who made a business of such affairs, who was to be paid a sum commensurate with the emergency. He was to have carte blanche, even in the editorial columns of our newspapers. He was also to flood the city with "literature." We had fought many wars before this, and we planned our campaign precisely as though we were dealing with one of those rebellions in the realm of finance of which I have given an instance. But now the war chest of our opponents was negligible; and we were comforted by the thought that, however disagreeable the affair might be while it lasted, in the long run capital was invincible.

Before setting to work to prepare my speeches it was necessary to make an attempt to familiarize myself with the seemingly unprecedented line of argument Krebs had evolved—apparently as disconcerting to his friends as to his opponents. It occurred to me, since I did not care to attend Krebs's meetings, to ask my confidential stenographer, Miss McCoy, to go to Turner's Hall and take down one of his speeches verbatim. Miss McCoy had never intruded on me her own views, and I took for granted that they coincided with my own.

"I'd like to get an accurate record of what he is saying," I told her.
"Do you mind going?"

"No, I'll be glad to go, Mr. Paret," she said quietly.

"He's doing more harm than we thought," I remarked, after a moment. "I've known him for a good many years. He's clever. He's sowing seeds of discontent, starting trouble that will be very serious unless it is headed off."

Miss McCoy made no comment....

Before noon the next day she brought in the speech, neatly typewritten, and laid it on my desk. Looking up and catching her eye just as she was about to withdraw, I was suddenly impelled to ask:—"Well, what did you think of it?"

She actually flushed, for the first time in my dealings with her betraying a feeling which I am sure she deemed most unprofessional.

"I liked it, Mr. Paret," she replied simply, and I knew that she had understated. It was quite apparent that Krebs had captivated her. I tried not to betray my annoyance.

"Was there a good audience?" I asked.

"Yes," she said.

"How many do you think?"

She hesitated.

"It isn't a very large hall, you know. I should say it would hold about eight hundred people."

"And—it was full?"—I persisted.

"Oh, yes, there were numbers of people standing."

I thought I detected in her tone-although it was not apologetic—a desire to spare my feelings. She hesitated a moment more, and then left the room, closing the door softly behind her...

Presently I took up the pages and began to read. The language was simple and direct, an appeal to common sense, yet the words strangely seemed charged with an emotional power that I found myself resisting. When at length I laid down the sheets I wondered whether it were imagination, or the uncomfortable result of memories of conversations I had had with him.

I was, however, confronted with the task of refuting his arguments: but with exasperating ingenuity, he seemed to have taken the wind out of our sails. It is difficult to answer a man who denies the cardinal principle of American democracy,—that a good mayor or a governor may be made out of a dog-catcher. He called this the Cincinnatus theory: that any American, because he was an American, was fit for any job in the gift of state or city or government, from sheriff to Ambassador to Great Britain. Krebs substituted for this fallacy what may be called the doctrine of potentiality. If we inaugurated and developed a system of democratic education, based on scientific principles, and caught the dog-catcher, young enough, he might become a statesman or thinker or scientist and make his contribution to the welfare and progress of the nation: again, he might not; but he would have had his chance, he would not be in a position to complain.

Here was a doctrine, I immediately perceived, which it would be suicidal to attempt to refute. It ought, indeed, to have been my line. With a growing distaste I began to realize that all there was left for me was to flatter a populace that Krebs, paradoxically, belaboured. Never in the history of American "uplift" had an electorate been in this manner wooed! upbraided for expediency, a proneness to demand immediate results, an unwillingness to think, yes, and an inability to think straight. Such an electorate deserved to be led around by the nose by the Jasons and Dickinsons, the Gorses and the Griersons and the Parets.

Yes, he had mentioned me. That gave me a queer sensation. How is one to handle an opponent who praises one with a delightful irony? We, the Dickinsons, Griersons, Parets, Jasons, etc., had this virtue at least, and it was by no means the least of the virtues,—that we did think. We had a plan, a theory of government, and we carried it out. He was inclined to believe that morality consisted largely, if not wholly, in clear thinking, and not in the precepts of the Sunday-school. That was the trouble with the so-called "reform" campaigns, they were conducted on lines of Sunday-school morality; the people worked themselves up into a sort of revivalist frenzy, an emotional state which, if the truth were told, was thoroughly immoral, unreasonable and hypocritical: like all frenzies, as a matter of course it died down after the campaign was over. Moreover, the American people had shown that they were unwilling to make any sacrifices for the permanent betterment of conditions, and as soon as their incomes began to fall off they turned again to the bosses and capitalists like an abject flock of sheep.

He went on to explain that he wasn't referring now to that part of the electorate known as the labour element, the men who worked with their hands in mills, factories, etc. They had their faults, yet they possessed at least the virtue of solidarity, a willingness to undergo sacrifices in order to advance the standard of conditions; they too had a tenacity of purpose and a plan, such as it was, which the small business men, the clerks lacked....

We must wake up to the fact that we shouldn't get Utopia by turning out Mr. Jason and the highly efficient gentlemen who hired and financed him. It wasn't so simple as that. Utopia was not an achievement after all, but an undertaking, a state of mind, the continued overcoming of resistance by a progressive education and effort. And all this talk of political and financial "wickedness" was rubbish; the wickedness they complained of did not reside merely in individuals it was a social disorder, or rather an order that no longer suited social conditions. If the so-called good citizens would take the trouble to educate themselves, to think instead of allowing their thinking to be done for them they would see that the "evils" which had been published broadcast were merely the symptoms of that disease which had come upon the social body through their collective neglect and indifference. They held up their hands in horror at the spectacle of a commercial, licensed prostitution, they shunned the prostitute and the criminal; but there was none of us, if honest, who would not exclaim when he saw them, "there, but for the Grace of God, go I!" What we still called "sin" was largely the result of lack of opportunity, and the active principle of society as at present organized tended more and more to restrict opportunity. Lack of opportunity, lack of proper nutrition,—these made sinners by the wholesale; made, too, nine-tenths of the inefficient of whom we self-righteously complained. We had a national philosophy that measured prosperity in dollars and cents, included in this measurement the profits of liquor dealers who were responsible for most of our idiots. So long as we set our hearts on that kind of prosperity, so long as we failed to grasp the simple and practical fact that the greatest assets of a nation are healthy and sane and educated, clear-thinking human beings, just so long was prostitution logical, Riverside Franchises, traction deals, Judd Jasons, and the respectable gentlemen who continued to fill their coffers out of the public purse inevitable.

The speaker turned his attention to the "respectable gentlemen" with the full coffers, amongst whom I was by implication included. We had simply succeeded under the rules to which society tacitly agreed. That was our sin. He ventured to say that there were few men in the hall who at the bottom of their hearts did not envy and even honour our success. He, for one, did not deem these "respectable gentlemen" utterly reprehensible; he was sufficiently emancipated to be sorry for us. He suspected that we were not wholly happy in being winners in such a game,—he even believed that we could wish as much as any others to change the game and the prizes. What we represented was valuable energy misdirected and misplaced, and in a reorganized community he would not abolish us, but transform us: transform, at least, the individuals of our type, who were the builders gone wrong under the influence of an outworn philosophy. We might be made to serve the city and the state with the same effectiveness that we had served ourselves.

If the best among the scientists, among the university professors and physicians were willing to labour—and they were—for the advancement of humanity, for the very love of the work and service without disproportionate emoluments, without the accumulation of a wealth difficult to spend, why surely these big business men had been moulded in infancy from no different clay! All were Americans. Instance after instance might be cited of business men and lawyers of ability making sacrifices, giving up their personal affairs in order to take places of honour in the government in which the salary was comparatively small, proving that even these were open to inducements other than merely mercenary ones.

It was unfortunate, he went on, but true, that the vast majority of people of voting age in the United States to-day who thought they had been educated were under the obligation to reeducate themselves. He suggested, whimsically, a vacation school for Congress and all legislative bodies as a starter. Until the fact of the utter inadequacy of the old education were faced, there was little or no hope of solving the problems that harassed us. One thing was certain—that they couldn't be solved by a rule-of-thumb morality. Coincident with the appearance of these new and mighty problems, perhaps in response to them, a new and saner view of life itself was being developed by the world's thinkers, new sciences were being evolved, correlated sciences; a psychology making a truer analysis of human motives, impulses, of human possibilities; an economics and a theory of government that took account of this psychology, and of the vast changes applied science had made in production and distribution. We lived in a new world, which we sought to ignore; and the new education, the new viewpoint was in truth nothing but religion made practical. It had never been thought practical before. The motive that compelled men to work for humanity in science, in medicine, in art—yes, and in business, if we took the right view of it, was the religious motive. The application of religion was to-day extending from the individual to society. No religion that did not fill the needs of both was a true religion.

This meant the development of a new culture, one to be founded on the American tradition of equality

of opportunity. But culture was not a weed that grew overnight; it was a leaven that spread slowly and painfully, first inoculating a few who suffered and often died for it, that it might gradually affect the many. The spread of culture implied the recognition of leadership: democratic leadership, but still leadership. Leadership, and the wisdom it implied, did not reside in the people, but in the leaders who sprang from the people and interpreted their needs and longings.... He went on to discuss a part of the programme of the Citizens Union....

What struck me, as I laid down the typewritten sheets, was the extraordinary resemblance between the philosophies of Hermann Krebs and Theodore Watling. Only—Krebs's philosophy was the bigger, held the greater vision of the two; I had reluctantly and rather bitterly to admit it. The appeal of it had even reached and stirred me, whose task was to refute it! Here indeed was something to fight for—perhaps to die for, as he had said: and as I sat there in my office gazing out of the window I found myself repeating certain phrases he had used—the phrase about leadership, for instance. It was a tremendous conception of Democracy, that of acquiescence to developed leadership made responsible; a conception I was compelled to confess transcended Mr. Watling's, loyal as I was to him.... I began to reflect how novel all this was in a political speech—although what I have quoted was in the nature of a preamble. It was a sermon, an educational sermon. Well, that is what sermons always had been,—and even now pretended to be,—educational and stirring, appealing to the emotions through the intellect. It didn't read like the Socialism he used to preach, it had the ring of religion. He had called it religion.

With an effort of the will I turned from this ironical and dangerous vision of a Hugh Paret who might have been enlisted in an inspiring struggle, of a modern yet unregenerate Saul kicking against the pricks, condemned to go forth breathing fire against a doctrine that made a true appeal; against the man I believed I hated just because he had made this appeal. In the act of summoning my counter-arguments I was interrupted by the entrance of Grierson. He was calling on a matter of business, but began to talk about the extracts from Krebs's speech he had read in the Mail and State.

"What in hell is this fellow driving at, Paret?" he demanded. "It sounds to me like the ranting of a lunatic dervish. If he thinks so much of us, and the way we run the town, what's he squawking about?"

I looked at Grierson, and conceived an intense aversion for him. I wondered how I had ever been able to stand him, to work with him. I saw him in a sudden flash as a cunning, cruel bird of prey, a gorged, drab vulture with beady eyes, a resemblance so extraordinary that I wondered I had never remarked it before. For he had the hooked vulture nose, while the pink baldness of his head was relieved by a few scanty tufts of hair.

"The people seem to like what he's got to say," I observed.

"It beats me," said Grierson. "They don't understand a quarter of it—I've been talking to some of 'em. It's their d—d curiosity, I guess. You know how they'll stand for hours around a street fakir."

"It's more than that," I retorted.

Grierson regarded me piercingly.

"Well, we'll put a crimp in him, all right," he said, with a laugh.

I was in an unenviable state of mind when he left me. I had an impulse to send for Miss McCoy and ask her if she had understood what Krebs was "driving at," but for reasons that must be fairly obvious I refrained. I read over again that part of Krebs's speech which dealt with the immediate programme of the Citizens Union. After paying a tribute to Greenhalge as a man of common sense and dependability who would make a good mayor, he went on to explain the principle of the new charter they hoped ultimately to get, which should put the management of the city in the hands of one man, an expert employed by a commission; an expert whose duty it would be to conduct the affairs of the city on a business basis, precisely as those of any efficient corporation were conducted. This plan had already been adopted, with encouraging results, in several smaller cities of the country. He explained in some detail, with statistics, the waste and inefficiency and dishonesty in various departments under the present system, dwelling particularly upon the deplorable state of affairs in the city hospital.

I need not dwell upon this portion of his remarks. Since then text-books and serious periodicals have dealt with these matters thoroughly. They are now familiar to all thinking Americans.

XXV.

My entrance into the campaign was accompanied by a blare of publicity, and during that fortnight I never picked up a morning or evening newspaper without reading, on the first page, some such headline as "Crowds flock to hear Paret." As a matter of fact, the crowds did flock; but I never quite knew as I looked down from platforms on seas of faces how much of the flocking was spontaneous. Much of it was so, since the struggle had then become sufficiently dramatic to appeal to the larger public imagination that is but occasionally waked; on the other hand, the magic of advertising cannot be underestimated; nor must the existence be ignored of an organized corps of shepherds under the vigilant direction of Mr. Judd Jason, whose duty it was to see that none of our meetings was lacking in numbers and enthusiasm. There was always a demonstrative gathering overflowing the sidewalk in front of the entrance, swaying and cheering in the light of the street lamps, and on the floor within an ample scattering of suspiciously bleary-eyed voters to start the stamping and applauding. In spite of these known facts, the impression of popularity, of repudiation of reform by a large majority of level-headed inhabitants had reassuring and reenforcing effects.

Astute citizens, spectators of the fray—if indeed there were any—might have remarked an unique and significant feature of that campaign: that the usual recriminations between the two great parties were lacking. Mr. Parks, the Republican candidate, did not denounce Mr. MacGuire, the Democratic candidate. Republican and Democratic speakers alike expended their breath in lashing Mr. Krebs and the Citizens Union.

It is difficult to record the fluctuations of my spirit. When I was in the halls, speaking or waiting to speak, I reacted to that phenomenon known as mob psychology, I became self-confident, even exhilarated; and in those earlier speeches I managed, I think, to strike the note for which I strove—the judicial note, suitable to a lawyer of weight and prominence, of deprecation rather than denunciation. I sought to embody and voice a fine and calm sanity at a time when everyone else seemed in danger of losing their heads, and to a large extent achieved it. I had known Mr. Krebs for more than twenty years, and while I did not care to criticise a fellow-member of the bar, I would go so far as to say that he was visionary, that the changes he proposed in government would, if adopted, have grave and far-reaching results: we could not, for instance, support in idleness those who refused to do their share of the work of the world. Mr. Krebs was well-meaning. I refrained from dwelling too long upon him, passing to Mr. Greenhalge, also well-meaning, but a man of mediocre ability who would make a mess of the government of a city which would one day rival New York and Chicago. (Loud cheers.) And I pointed out that Mr. Perry Blackwood had been unable to manage the affairs of the Boyne Street road. Such men, well-intentioned though they might be, were hindrances to progress. This led me naturally to a discussion of the Riverside Franchise and the Traction Consolidation. I was one of those whose honesty and good faith had been arraigned, but I would not stoop to refute the accusations. I dwelt upon the benefits to the city, uniform service, electricity and large comfortable cars instead of rattletrap conveyances, and the development of a large and growing population in the Riverside neighbourhood: the continual extension of lines to suburban districts that enabled hard-worked men to live out of the smoke: I called attention to the system of transfers, the distance a passenger might be conveyed, and conveyed quickly, for the sum of five cents. I spoke of our capitalists as men more sinned against than sinning. Their money was always at the service of enterprises tending to the development of our metropolis.

When I was not in the meetings, however, and especially when in my room at night, I was continually trying to fight off a sense of loneliness that seemed to threaten to overwhelm me. I wanted to be alone, and yet I feared to be. I was aware, in spite of their congratulations on my efforts, of a growing dislike for my associates; and in the appalling emptiness of the moments when my depression was greatest I was forced to the realization that I had no disinterested friend—not one—in whom I could confide. Nancy had failed me; I had scarcely seen Tom Peters that winter, and it was out of the question to go to him. For the third time in my life, and in the greatest crisis of all, I was feeling the need of Something, of some sustaining and impelling Power that must be presented humanly, possessing sympathy and understanding and love.... I think I had a glimpse just a pathetic glimpse—of what the Church might be of human solidarity, comfort and support, of human tolerance, if stripped of the superstition of an ancient science. My tortures weren't of the flesh, but of the mind. My mind was the sheep which had gone astray. Was there no such thing, could there be no such thing as a human association that might at the same time be a divine organism, a fold and a refuge for the lost and divided minds? The source of all this trouble was social....

Then toward the end of that last campaign week, madness suddenly came upon me. I know now how near the breaking point I was, but the immediate cause of my "flying to pieces"—to use a vivid expression—was a speech made by Guptill, one of the Citizens Union candidates for alderman, a young man of a radical type not uncommon in these days, though new to my experience: an educated man in the ultra-radical sense, yet lacking poise and perspective, with a certain brilliance and assurance. He was a journalist, a correspondent of some Eastern newspapers and periodicals. In this speech, which

was reported to me—for it did not get into the newspapers—I was the particular object of his attack. Men of my kind, and not the Judd Jasons (for whom there was some excuse) were the least dispensable tools of the capitalists, the greatest menace to civilization. We were absolutely lacking in principle, we were ready at any time to besmirch our profession by legalizing steals; we fouled our nests with dirty fees. Not all that he said was vituperation, for he knew something of the modern theory of the law that legal radicals had begun to proclaim, and even to teach in some tolerant universities.

The next night, in the middle of a prepared speech I was delivering to a large crowd in Kingdom Hall there had been jeers from a group in a corner at some assertion I made. Guptill's accusations had been festering in my mind. The faces of the people grew blurred as I felt anger boiling, rising within me; suddenly my control gave way, and I launched forth into a denunciation of Greenhalge, Krebs, Guptill and even of Perry Blackwood that must have been without license or bounds. I can recall only fragments of my remarks: Greenhalge wanted to be mayor, and was willing to put the stigma of slander on his native city in order to gain his ambition; Krebs had made a failure of his profession, of everything save in bringing shame on the place of his adoption; and on the single occasion heretofore when he had been before the public, in the School Board fiasco, the officials indicted on his supposed evidence had triumphantly been vindicated—, Guptill was gaining money and notoriety out of his spleen; Perry Blackwood was acting out of spite.... I returned to Krebs, declaring that he would be the boss of the city if that ticket were elected, demanding whether they wished for a boss an agitator itching for power and recognition....

I was conscious at the moment only of a wild relief and joy in letting myself go, feelings heightened by the clapping and cheers with which my characterizations were received. The fact that the cheers were mingled with hisses merely served to drive me on. At length, when I had returned to Krebs, the hisses were redoubled, angering me the more because of the evidence they gave of friends of his in my audiences. Perhaps I had made some of these friends for him! A voice shouted out above the uproar: —"I know about Krebs. He's a d—d sight better man than you." And this started a struggle in a corner of the hall.... I managed, somehow, when the commotion had subsided, to regain my poise, and ended by uttering the conviction that the common sense of the community would repudiate the Citizens Union and all it stood for....

But that night, as I lay awake listening to the street noises and staring at the glint from a street lamp on the brass knob of my bedstead, I knew that I had failed. I had committed the supreme violation of the self that leads inevitably to its final dissolution.... Even the exuberant headlines of the newspapers handed me by the club servant in the morning brought but little relief.

On the Saturday morning before the Tuesday of election there was a conference in the directors' room of the Corn National. The city reeked with smoke and acrid, stale gas, the electric lights were turned on to dispel the November gloom. It was not a cheerful conference, nor a confident one. For the first time in a collective experience the men gathered there were confronted with a situation which they doubted their ability to control, a situation for which there was no precedent. They had to reckon with a new and unsolvable equation in politics and finance,—the independent voter. There was an element of desperation in the discussion. Recriminations passed. Dickinson implied that Gorse with all his knowledge of political affairs ought to have foreseen that something like this was sure to happen, should have managed better the conventions of both great parties. The railroad counsel retorted that it had been as much Dickinson's fault as his. Grierson expressed a regret that I had broken out against the reformers; it had reacted, he said,—and this was just enough to sting me to retaliate that things had been done in the campaign, chiefly through his initiative, that were not only unwise, but might land some of us in the penitentiary if Krebs were elected.

"Well," Grierson exclaimed, "whether he's elected or not, I wouldn't give much now for your chances of getting to the Senate. We can't afford to fly in the face of the dear public."

A tense silence followed this remark. In the street below the rumble of the traffic came to us muffled by the heavy plate-glass windows. I saw Tallant glance at Gorse and Dickinson, and I knew the matter had been decided between themselves, that they had been merely withholding it from me until after election. I was besmirched, for the present at least.

"I think you will do me the justice, gentlemen," I remember saying slowly, with the excessive and rather ridiculous formality of a man who is near the end of his tether, "that the idea of representing you in the Senate was yours, not mine. You begged me to take the appointment against my wishes and my judgment. I had no desire to go to Washington then, I have less to-day. I have come to the conclusion that my usefulness to you is at an end."

I got to my feet. I beheld Miller Gorse sitting impassive, with his encompassing stare, the strongest man of them all. A change of firmaments would not move him. But Dickinson had risen and put his hand on my shoulder. It was the first time I had ever seen him white.

"Hold on, Hugh," he exclaimed, "I guess we're all a little cantankerous today. This confounded campaign has got on our nerves, and we say things we don't mean. You mustn't think we're not grateful for the services you've rendered us. We're all in the same boat, and there isn't a man who's been on our side of this fight who could take a political office at this time. We've got to face that fact, and I know you have the sense to see it, too. I, for one, won't be satisfied until I see you in the Senate. It's where you belong, and you deserve to be there. You understand what the public is, how it blows hot and cold, and in a few years they'll be howling to get us back, if these demagogues win.

"Sure," chimed in Grierson, who was frightened, "that's right, Hugh. I didn't mean anything. Nobody appreciates you more than I do, old man."

Tallant, too, added something, and Berringer,—I've forgotten what. I was tired, too tired to meet their advances halfway. I said that I had a speech to get ready for that night, and other affairs to attend to, and left them grouped together like crestfallen conspirators—all save Miller Gorse, whose pervasive gaze seemed to follow me after I had closed the door.

An elevator took me down to the lobby of the Corn Bank Building. I paused for a moment, aimlessly regarding the streams of humanity hurrying in and out, streaking the white marble floor with the wet filth of the streets. Someone spoke my name. It was Bitter, Judd Jason's "legal" tool, and I permitted myself to be dragged out of the eddies into a quiet corner by the cigar stand.

"Say, I guess we've got Krebs's goat all right, this time," he told me confidentially, in a voice a little above a whisper; "he was busy with the shirt-waist girls last year, you remember, when they were striking. Well, one of 'em, one of the strike leaders, has taken to easy street; she's agreed to send him a letter to-night to come 'round to her room after his meeting, to say that she's sick and wants to see him. He'll go, all right. We'll have some fun, we'll be ready for him. Do you get me? So long. The old man's waiting for me."

It may seem odd that this piece of information did not produce an immediately revolting effect. I knew that similar practices had been tried on Krebs, but this was the first time I had heard of a definite plan, and from a man like Bitter. As I made my way out of the building I had, indeed, a nauseated feeling; Jason's "lawyer" was a dirty little man, smelling of stale cigars, with a blue-black, unshaven face. In spite of the shocking nature of his confidence, he had actually not succeeded in deflecting the current of my thoughts; these were still running over the scene in the directors' room. I had listened to him passively while he had held my buttonhole, and he had detained me but an instant.

When I reached the street I was wondering whether Gorse and Dickinson and the others, Grierson especially, could possibly have entertained the belief that I would turn traitor? I told myself that I had no intention of this. How could I turn traitor? and what would be the object? revenge? The nauseated feeling grew more acute.... Reaching my office, I shut the door, sat down at my desk, summoned my will, and began to jot down random notes for the part of my speech I was to give the newspapers, notes that were mere silly fragments of arguments I had once thought effective. I could no more concentrate on them than I could have written a poem. Gradually, like the smoke that settled down on our city until we lived in darkness at midday, the horror of what Bitter had told me began to pervade my mind, until I was in a state of terror.

Had I, Hugh Paret, fallen to this, that I could stand by consenting to an act which was worse than assassination? Was any cause worth it? Could any cause survive it? But my attempts at reasoning might be likened to the strainings of a wayfarer lost on a mountain side to pick his way in the gathering dusk. I had just that desperate feeling of being lost, and with it went an acute sense of an imminent danger; the ground, no longer firm under my feet, had become a sliding shale sloping toward an unseen precipice. Perhaps, like the wayfarer, my fears were the sharper for the memory of the beauty of the morning on that same mountain, when, filled with vigour, I had gazed on it from the plain below and beheld the sun breaking through the mists....

The necessity of taking some action to avert what I now realized as an infamy pressed upon me, yet in conflict with the pressure of this necessity there persisted that old rebellion, that bitterness which had been growing all these years against the man who, above all others, seemed to me to represent the forces setting at nought my achievements, bringing me to this pass....

I thought of appealing to Leonard Dickinson, who surely, if he knew of it, would not permit this thing to be done; and he was the only man with the possible exception of Miller Gorse who might be able to restrain Judd Jason. But I delayed until after the luncheon hour, when I called up the bank on the telephone, to discover that it was closed. I had forgotten that the day was Saturday. I was prepared to say that I would withdraw from the campaign, warn Krebs myself if this kind of tactics were not suppressed. But I could not get the banker. Then I began to have doubts of Dickinson's power in the

matter. Judd Jason had never been tractable, by any means; he had always maintained a considerable independence of the financial powers, and to-day not only financial control, but the dominance of Jason himself was at stake. He would fight for it to the last ditch, and make use of any means. No, it was of no use to appeal to him. What then? Well, there was a reaction, or an attempt at one. Krebs had not been born yesterday, he had avoided the wiles of the politicians heretofore, he wouldn't be fool enough to be taken in now. I told myself that if I were not in a state bordering on a nervous breakdown, I should laugh at such morbid fears, I steadied myself sufficiently to dictate the extract from my speech that was to be published. I was to make addresses at two halls, alternating with Parks, the mayoralty candidate. At four o'clock I went back to my room in the Club to try to get some rest....

Seddon's Hall, the place of my first meeting, was jammed that Saturday night. I went through my speech automatically, as in a dream, the habit of long years asserting itself. And yet—so I was told afterwards—my delivery was not mechanical, and I actually achieved more emphasis, gave a greater impression of conviction than at any time since the night I had lost my control and violently denounced the reformers. By some astonishing subconscious process I had regained my manner, but the applause came to me as from a distance. Not only was my mind not there; it did not seem to be anywhere. I was dazed, nor did I feel—save once—a fleeting surge of contempt for the mob below me with their silly faces upturned to mine. There may have been intelligent expressions among them, but they failed to catch my eye.

I remember being stopped by Grierson as I was going out of the side entrance. He took my hand and squeezed it, and there was on his face an odd, surprised look.

"That was the best yet, Hugh," he said.

I went on past him. Looking back on that evening now, it would almost seem as though the volition of another possessed me, not my own: seemingly, I had every intention of going on to the National Theatre, in which Parks had just spoken, and as I descended the narrow stairway and emerged on the side street I caught sight of my chauffeur awaiting me by the curb.

"I'm not going to that other meeting," I found myself saying. "I'm pretty tired."

"Shall I drive you back to the Club, sir?" he inquired.

"No—I'll walk back. Wait a moment." I entered the ear, turned on the light and scribbled a hasty note to Andrews, the chairman of the meeting at the National, telling him that I was too tired to speak again that night, and to ask one of the younger men there to take my place. Then I got out of the car and gave the note to the chauffeur.

"You're all right, sir?" he asked, with a note of anxiety in his voice.
He had been with me a long time.

I reassured him. He started the car, and I watched it absently as it gathered speed and turned the corner. I began to walk, slowly at first, then more and more rapidly until I had gained a breathless pace; in ten minutes I was in West Street, standing in front of the Templar's Hall where the meeting of the Citizens Union west in progress. Now that I had arrived there, doubt and uncertainty assailed me. I had come as it were in spite of myself, thrust onward by an impulse I did not understand, which did not seem to be mine. What was I going to do? The proceeding suddenly appeared to me as ridiculous, tinged with the weirdness of somnambulism. I revolted, walked away, got as far as the corner and stood beside a lamp post, pretending to be waiting for a car. The street lights were reflected in perpendicular, wavy-yellow ribbons on the wet asphalt, and I stood staring with foolish intentness at this phenomenon, wondering how a painter would get the effect in oils. Again I was walking back towards the hall, combating the acknowledgment to myself that I had a plan, a plan that I did not for a moment believe I would carry out. I was shivering.

I climbed the steps. The wide vestibule was empty except for two men who stopped a low-toned conversation to look at me. I wondered whether they recognized me; that I might be recognized was an alarming possibility which had not occurred to me.

"Who is speaking?" I asked.

"Mr. Krebs," answered the taller man of the two.

The hum of applause came from behind the swinging doors. I pushed them open cautiously, passing suddenly out of the cold into the reeking, heated atmosphere of a building packed with human beings. The space behind the rear seats was filled with men standing, and those nearest glanced around with annoyance at the interruption of my entrance. I made my way along the wall, finally reaching a side aisle, whence I could get sight of the platform and the speaker.

I heard his words distinctly, but at first lacked the faculty of stringing them together, or rather of extracting their collective sense. The phrases indeed were set ringing through my mind, I found myself repeating them without any reference to their meaning; I had reached the peculiar pitch of excitement that counterfeits abnormal calm, and all sense of strangeness at being there in that meeting had passed away. I began to wonder how I might warn Krebs, and presently decided to send him a note when he should have finished speaking—but I couldn't make up my mind whether to put my name to the note or not. Of course I needn't have entered the hall at all: I might have sent in my note at the side door.

I must have wished to see Krebs, to hear him speak; to observe, perhaps, the effect on the audience. In spite of my inability to take in what he was saying, I was able to regard him objectively,—objectively, in a restricted sense. I noticed that he had grown even thinner; the flesh had fallen away from under his cheek-bones, and there were sharp, deep, almost perpendicular lines on either side of his mouth. He was emaciated, that was the word. Once in a while he thrust his hand through his dry, ashy hair which was of a tone with the paleness of his face. Such was his only gesture.

He spoke quietly, leaning with one elbow against the side of his reading stand. The occasional pulsations of applause were almost immediately hushed, as though the people feared to lose even a word that should fall from his dry lips. What was it he was talking about? I tried to concentrate my attention, with only partial success. He was explaining the new theory of city government that did not attempt to evade, but dealt frankly with the human needs of to-day, and sought to meet those needs in a positive way... What had happened to me, though I did not realize it, was that I had gradually come under the influence of a tragic spell not attributable to the words I heard, existing independently of them, pervading the spacious hall, weaving into unity dissentient minds. And then, with what seemed a retarded rather than sudden awareness, I knew that he had stopped speaking. Once more he ran his hand through his hair, he was seemingly groping for words that would not come. I was pierced by a strange agony—the amazing source of which, seemed to be a smile on the face of Hermann Krebs, an ineffable smile illuminating the place like a flash of light, in which suffering and tragedy, comradeship and loving kindness—all were mingled. He stood for a moment with that smile on his face—swayed, and would have fallen had it not been for the quickness of a man on the platform behind him, and into whose arms he sank.

In an instant people had risen in their seats, men were hurrying down the aisles, while a peculiar human murmur or wail persisted like an undertone beneath the confusion of noises, striking the very note of my own feelings. Above the heads of those about me I saw Krebs being carried off the platform.... The chairman motioned for silence and inquired if there were a physician in the audience, and then all began to talk at once. The man who stood beside me clutched my arm.

"I hope he isn't dead! Say, did you see that smile? My God, I'll never forget it!"

The exclamation poignantly voiced the esteem in which Krebs was held. As I was thrust along out of the hall by the ebb of the crowd still other expressions of this esteem came to me in fragments, expressions of sorrow and dismay, of a loyalty I had not imagined. Mingled with these were occasional remarks of skeptics shaken, in human fashion, by the suggestion of the inevitable end that never fails to sober and terrify humanity.

"I guess he was a bigger man than we thought. There was a lot of sense in what he had to say."

"There sure was," the companion of this speaker answered.

They spoke of him in the past tense. I was seized and obsessed by the fear that I should never see him again, and at the same moment I realized sharply that this was the one thing I wanted—to see him. I pushed through the people, gained the street, and fairly ran down the alley that led to the side entrance of the hall, where a small group was gathered under the light that hung above the doorway. There stood on the step, a little above the others, a young man in a grey flannel shirt, evidently a mechanic. I addressed him.

"What does the doctor say?"

Before replying he surveyed me with surprise and, I think, with instinctive suspicion of my clothes and bearing.

"What can he say?" he retorted.

"You mean—?" I began.

"I mean Mr. Krebs oughtn't never to have gone into this campaign," he answered, relenting a trifle, perhaps at the tone of my voice. "He knew it, too, and some of us fellows tried to stop him. But we couldn't do nothing with him," he added dejectedly.

"What is—the trouble?" I asked.

"They tell me it's his heart. He wouldn't talk about it."

"When I think of what he done for our union!" exclaimed a thick-set man, plainly a steel worker. "He's just wore himself out, fighting that crooked gang." He stared with sudden aggressiveness at me. "Haven't I seen you some-wheres?" he demanded.

A denial was on my lips when the sharp, sinister strokes of a bell were heard coming nearer.

"It's the ambulance," said the man on the step.

Glancing up the alley beyond the figures of two policemen who had arrived and were holding the people back, I saw the hood of the conveyance as it came to a halt, and immediately a hospital doctor and two assistants carrying a stretcher hurried towards us, and we made way for them to enter. After a brief interval, they were heard coming slowly down the steps inside. By the white, cruel light of the arc I saw Krebs lying motionless.... I laid hold of one of the men who had been on the platform. He did not resent the act, he seemed to anticipate my question.

"He's conscious. The doctors expect him to rally when he gets to the hospital."

I walked back to the Club to discover that several inquiries had been made about me. Reporters had been there, Republican Headquarters had telephoned to know if I were ill. Leaving word that I was not to be disturbed under any circumstances, I went to my room, and spent most of the night in distracted thought. When at last morning came I breakfasted early, searching the newspapers for accounts of the occurrence at Templar's Hall; and the fact that these were neither conspicuous nor circumstantial was in the nature of a triumph of self-control on the part of editors and reporters. News, however sensational, had severely to be condensed in the interest of a cause, and at this critical stage of the campaign to make a tragic hero of Hermann Krebs would have been the height of folly. There were a couple of paragraphs giving the gist of his speech, and a statement at the end that he had been taken ill and conveyed to the Presbyterian Hospital....

The hospital itself loomed up before me that Sunday morning as I approached it along Ballantyne Street, a diluted sunshine washing the extended, businesslike facade of grimy, yellow brick. We were proud of that hospital in the city, and many of our foremost citizens had contributed large sums of money to the building, scarcely ten years old. It had been one of Maude's interests. I was ushered into the reception room, where presently came the physician in charge, a Dr. Castle, one of those quiet-mannered, modern young medical men who bear on their persons the very stamp of efficiency, of the dignity of a scientific profession. His greeting implied that he knew all about me, his presence seemed to increase the agitation I tried not to betray, and must have betrayed.

"Can I do anything for you, Mr. Paret?" he asked.

"I have come to inquire about Mr. Krebs, who was brought here last night,
I believe."

I was aware for an instant of his penetrating, professional glance, the only indication of the surprise he must have felt that Hermann Krebs, of all men, should be the object of my solicitude.

"Why, we sent him home this morning. Nineteen twenty six Fowler Street.
He wanted to go, and there was no use in his staying."

"He will recover?" I asked.

The physician shook his head, gazing at me through his glasses.

"He may live a month, Mr. Paret, he may die to-morrow. He ought never to have gone into this campaign, he knew he had this trouble. Hepburn warned him three months ago, and there's no man who knows more about the heart than Hepburn."

"Then there's no hope?" I asked.

"Absolutely none. It's a great pity." He added, after a moment, "Mr.
Krebs was a remarkable man."

"Nineteen twenty-six Fowler Street?" I repeated.

"Yes."

I held out my hand mechanically, and he pressed it, and went with me to the door.

"Nineteen twenty-six Fowler Street," he repeated…

The mean and sordid aspect of Fowler Street emphasized and seemed to typify my despair, the pungent coal smoke stifled my lungs even as it stifled my spirit. Ugly factories, which were little more than sweatshops, wore an empty, menacing, "Sunday" look, and the faint November sunlight glistened on dirty pavements where children were making a semblance of play. Monotonous rows of red houses succeeded one another, some pushed forward, others thrust back behind little plots of stamped earth. Into one of these I turned. It seemed a little cleaner, better kept, less sordid than the others. I pulled the bell, and presently the door was opened by a woman whose arms were bare to the elbow. She wore a blue-checked calico apron that came to her throat, but the apron was clean, and her firm though furrowed face gave evidences of recent housewifely exertions. Her eyes had the strange look of the cheerfulness that is intimately acquainted with sorrow. She did not seem surprised at seeing me.

"I have come to ask about Mr. Krebs," I told her.

"Oh, yes," she said, "there's been so many here this morning already.
It's wonderful how people love him, all kinds of people. No, sir, he
don't seem to be in any pain. Two gentlemen are up there now in his room,
I mean."

She wiped her arms, which still bore traces of soap-suds, and then, with a gesture natural and unashamed, lifted the corner of her apron to her eyes.

"Do you think I could see him—for a moment?" I asked. "I've known him for a long time."

"Why, I don't know," she said, "I guess so. The doctor said he could see some, and he wants to see his friends. That's not strange—he always did. I'll ask. Will you tell me your name?"

I took out a card. She held it without glancing at it, and invited me in.

I waited, unnerved and feverish, pulsing, in the dark and narrow hall beside the flimsy rack where several coats and hats were hung. Once before I had visited Krebs in that lodging-house in Cambridge long ago with something of the same feelings. But now they were greatly intensified. Now he was dying….

The woman was descending.

"He says he wants to see you, sir," she said rather breathlessly, and I followed her. In the semi-darkness of the stairs I passed the three men who had been with Krebs, and when I reached the open door of his room he was alone. I hesitated just a second, swept by the heat wave that follows sudden shyness, embarrassment, a sense of folly it is too late to avert.

Krebs was propped up with pillows.

"Well, this is good of you," he said, and reached out his hand across the spread. I took it, and sat down beside the shiny oak bedstead, in a chair covered with tobacco-colored plush.

"You feel better?" I asked.

"Oh, I feel all right," he answered, with a smile. "It's queer, but I do."

My eye fell upon the long line of sectional book-cases that lined one side of the room. "Why, you've got quite a library here," I observed.

"Yes, I've managed to get together some good books. But there is so much to read nowadays, so much that is really good and new, a man has the hopeless feeling he can never catch up with it all. A thousand writers and students are making contributions today where fifty years ago there was one."

"I've been following your speeches, after a fashion,—I wish I might have been able to read more of them. Your argument interested me. It's new, unlike the ordinary propaganda of—"

"Of agitators," he supplied, with a smile.

"Of agitators," I agreed, and tried to return his smile. "An agitator who appears to suggest the foundations of a constructive programme and who isn't afraid to criticise the man with a vote as well as the capitalist is an unusual phenomenon."

"Oh, when we realize that we've only got a little time left in which to tell what we think to be the truth, it doesn't require a great deal of courage, Paret. I didn't begin to see this thing until a little while ago. I was only a crude, hot-headed revolutionist. God knows I'm crude enough still. But I began to

have a glimmering of what all these new fellows in the universities are driving at." He waved his hand towards the book-cases. "Driving at collectively, I mean. And there are attempts, worthy attempts, to coordinate and synthesize the sciences. What I have been saying is not strictly original. I took it on the stump, that's all. I didn't expect it to have much effect in this campaign, but it was an opportunity to sow a few seeds, to start a sense of personal dissatisfaction in the minds of a few voters. What is it Browning says? It's in Bishop Blougram, I believe. 'When the fight begins within himself, a man's worth something.' It's an intellectual fight, of course."

His words were spoken quietly, but I realized suddenly that the mysterious force which had drawn me to him now, against my will, was an intellectual rather than apparently sentimental one, an intellectual force seeming to comprise within it all other human attractions. And yet I felt a sudden contrition.

"See here, Krebs," I said, "I didn't come here to bother you about these matters, to tire you. I mustn't stay. I'll call in again to see how you are—from time to time."

"But you're not tiring me," he protested, stretching forth a thin, detaining hand. "I don't want to rot, I want to live and think as long as I can. To tell you the truth, Paret, I've been wishing to talk to you—I'm glad you came in."

"You've been wishing to talk to me?" I said.

"Yes, but I didn't expect you'd come in. I hope you won't mind my saying so, under the circumstances, but I've always rather liked you, admired you, even back in the Cambridge days. After that I used to blame you for going out and taking what you wanted, and I had to live a good many years before I began to see that it's better for a man to take what he wants than to take nothing at all. I took what I wanted, every man worth his salt does. There's your great banker friend in New York whom I used to think was the arch-fiend. He took what he wanted, and he took a good deal, but it happened to be good for him. And by piling up his corporations, Ossa on Pelion, he is paving the way for a logical economic evolution. How can a man in our time find out what he does want unless he takes something and gives it a trial?"

"Until he begins to feel that it disagrees with him," I said. "But then," I added involuntarily, "then it may be too late to try something else, and he may not know what to try." This remark of mine might have surprised me had it not been for the feeling—now grown definite—that Krebs had something to give me, something to pass on to me, of all men. Indeed, he had hinted as much, when he acknowledged a wish to talk to me. "What seems so strange," I said, as I looked at him lying back on his pillows, "is your faith that we shall be able to bring order out of all this chaos—your belief in Democracy."

"Democracy's an adventure," he replied, "the great adventure of mankind. I think the trouble in many minds lies in the fact that they persist in regarding it as something to be made safe. All that can be done is to try to make it as safe as possible. But no adventure is safe—life itself is an adventure, and neither is that safe. It's a hazard, as you and I have found out. The moment we try to make life safe we lose all there is in it worth while."

I thought a moment.

"Yes, that's so," I agreed. On the table beside the bed in company with two or three other volumes, lay a Bible. He seemed to notice that my eye fell upon it.

"Do you remember the story of the Prodigal Son?" he asked. "Well, that's the parable of democracy, of self-government in the individual and in society. In order to arrive at salvation, Paret, most of us have to take our journey into a far country."

"A far country!" I exclaimed. The words struck a reminiscent chord.

"We have to leave what seem the safe things, we have to wander and suffer in order to realize that the only true safety lies in development. We have first to cast off the leading strings of authority. It's a delusion that we can insure ourselves by remaining within its walls—we have to risk our lives and our souls. It is discouraging when we look around us to-day, and in a way the pessimists are right when they say we don't see democracy. We see only what may be called the first stage of it; for democracy is still in a far country eating the husks of individualism, materialism. What we see is not true freedom, but freedom run to riot, men struggling for themselves, spending on themselves the fruits of their inheritance; we see a government intent on one object alone—exploitation of this inheritance in order to achieve what it calls prosperity. And God is far away."

"And—we shall turn?" I asked.

"We shall turn or perish. I believe that we shall turn." He fixed his eyes on my face. "What is it," he asked, "that brought you here to me, to-day?"

I was silent.

"The motive, Paret—the motive that sends us all wandering into is divine, is inherited from God himself. And the same motive, after our eyes shall have been opened, after we shall have seen and known the tragedy and misery of life, after we shall have made the mistakes and committed the sins and experienced the emptiness—the same motive will lead us back again. That, too, is an adventure, the greatest adventure of all. Because, when we go back we shall not find the same God—or rather we shall recognize him in ourselves. Autonomy is godliness, knowledge is godliness. We went away cringing, superstitious, we saw everywhere omens and evidences of his wrath in the earth and sea and sky, we burned candles and sacrificed animals in the vain hope of averting scourges and other calamities. But when we come back it will be with a knowledge of his ways, gained at a price,—the price he, too, must have paid—and we shall be able to stand up and look him in the face, and all our childish superstitions and optimisms shall have been burned away."

Some faith indeed had given him strength to renounce those things in life I had held dear, driven him on to fight until his exhausted body failed him, and even now that he was physically helpless sustained him. I did not ask myself, then, the nature of this faith. In its presence it could no more be questioned than the light. It was light; I felt bathed in it. Now it was soft, suffused: but I remembered how the night before in the hall, just before he had fallen, it had flashed forth in a smile and illumined my soul with an ecstasy that yet was anguish....

"We shall get back," I said at length. My remark was not a question—it had escaped from me almost unawares.

"The joy is in the journey," he answered. "The secret is in the search."

"But for me?" I exclaimed.

"We've all been lost, Paret. It would seem as though we have to be."

"And yet you are—saved," I said, hesitating over the word.

"It is true that I am content, even happy," he asserted, "in spite of my wish to live. If there is any secret, it lies, I think, in the struggle for an open mind, in the keeping alive of a desire to know more and more. That desire, strangely enough, hasn't lost its strength. We don't know whether there is a future life, but if there is, I think it must be a continuation of this." He paused. "I told you I was glad you came in—I've been thinking of you, and I saw you in the hall last night. You ask what there is for you—I'll tell you,—the new generation."

"The new generation."

"That's the task of every man and woman who wakes up. I've come to see how little can be done for the great majority of those who have reached our age. It's hard—but it's true. Superstition, sentiment, the habit of wrong thinking or of not thinking at all have struck in too deep, the habit of unreasoning acceptance of authority is too paralyzing. Some may be stung back into life, spurred on to find out what the world really is, but not many. The hope lies in those who are coming after us—we must do for them what wasn't done for us. We really didn't have much of a chance, Paret. What did our instructors at Harvard know about the age that was dawning? what did anybody know? You can educate yourself—or rather reeducate yourself. All this"—and he waved his hand towards his bookshelves—"all this has sprung up since you and I were at Cambridge; if we don't try to become familiar with it, if we fail to grasp the point of view from which it's written, there's little hope for us. Go away from all this and get straightened out, make yourself acquainted with the modern trend in literature and criticism, with modern history, find out what's being done in the field of education, read the modern sciences, especially biology, and psychology and sociology, and try to get a glimpse of the fundamental human needs underlying such phenomena as the labour and woman's movements. God knows I've just begun to get my glimpse, and I've floundered around ever since I left college.... I don't mean to say we can ever see the whole, but we can get a clew, an idea, and pass it on to our children. You have children, haven't you?"

"Yes," I said....

He said nothing—he seemed to be looking out of the window.

"Then the scientific point of view in your opinion hasn't done away with religion?" I asked presently.

"The scientific point of view is the religious point of view," he said earnestly, "because it's the only self-respecting point of view. I can't believe that God intended to make a creature who would not ultimately weigh his beliefs with his reason instead of accepting them blindly. That's immoral, if you like—especially in these days."

"And are there, then, no 'over-beliefs'?" I said, remembering the expression in something I had read.

"That seems to me a relic of the method of ancient science, which was upside down,—a mere confusion with faith. Faith and belief are two different things; faith is the emotion, the steam, if you like, that drives us on in our search for truth. Theories, at a stretch, might be identified with 'over-beliefs' but when it comes to confusing our theories with facts, instead of recognizing them as theories, when it comes to living by 'over-beliefs' that have no basis in reason and observed facts,—that is fatal. It's just the trouble with so much of our electorate to-day—unreasoning acceptance without thought."

"Then," I said, "you admit of no other faculty than reason?"

"I confess that I don't. A great many insights that we seem to get from what we call intuition I think are due to the reason, which is unconsciously at work. If there were another faculty that equalled or transcended reason, it seems to me it would be a very dangerous thing for the world's progress. We'd come to rely on it rather than on ourselves the trouble with the world is that it has been relying on it. Reason is the mind—it leaps to the stars without realizing always how it gets there. It is through reason we get the self-reliance that redeems us."

"But you!" I exclaimed. "You rely on something else besides reason?"

"Yes, it is true," he explained gently, "but that Thing Other-than-Ourselves we feel stirring in us is power, and that power, or the Source of it, seems to have given us our reason for guidance—if it were not so we shouldn't have a semblance of freedom. For there is neither virtue nor development in finding the path if we are guided. We do rely on that power for movement—and in the moments when it is withdrawn we are helpless. Both the power and the reason are God's."

"But the Church," I was moved by some untraced thought to ask, "you believe there is a future for the Church?"

"A church of all those who disseminate truth, foster open-mindedness, serve humanity and radiate faith," he replied—but as though he were speaking to himself, not to me....

A few moments later there was a knock at the door, and the woman of the house entered to say that Dr. Hepburn had arrived. I rose and shook Krebs's hand: sheer inability to express my emotion drove me to commonplaces.

"I'll come in soon again, if I may," I told him.

"Do, Paret," he said, "it's done me good to talk to you—more good than you imagine."

I was unable to answer him, but I glanced back from the doorway to see him smiling after me. On my way down the stairs I bumped into the doctor as he ascended. The dingy brown parlour was filled with men, standing in groups and talking in subdued voices. I hurried into the street, and on the sidewalk stopped face to face with Perry Blackwood.

"Hugh!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

"I came to inquire for Krebs," I answered. "I've seen him."

"You—you've been talking to him?" Perry demanded.

I nodded. He stared at me for a moment with an astonishment to which I was wholly indifferent. He did not seem to know just how to act.

"Well, it was decent of you, Hugh, I must say. How does he seem?"

"Not at all like—like what you'd expect, in his manner."

"No," agreed Perry agitatedly, "no, he wouldn't. My God, we've lost a big man in him."

"I think we have," I said.

He stared at me again, gave me his hand awkwardly, and went into the house. It was not until I had walked the length of the block that I began to realize what a shock my presence there must have been to him, with his head full of the contrast between this visit and my former attitude. Could it be that it

was only the night before I had made a speech against him and his associates? It is interesting that my mind rejected all sense of anomaly and inconsistency. Krebs possessed me; I must have been in reality extremely agitated, but this sense of being possessed seemed a quiet one. An amazing thing had happened—and yet I was not amazed. The Krebs I had seen was the man I had known for many years, the man I had ridiculed, despised and oppressed, but it seemed to me then that he had been my friend and intimate all my life: more than that, I had an odd feeling he had always been a part of me, and that now had begun to take place a merging of personality. Nor could I feel that he was a dying man. He would live on....

I could not as yet sort and appraise, reduce to order the possessions he had wished to turn over to me.

It was noon, and people were walking past me in the watery, diluted sunlight, men in black coats and top hats and women in bizarre, complicated costumes bright with colour. I had reached the more respectable portion of the city, where the churches were emptying. These very people, whom not long ago I would have acknowledged as my own kind, now seemed mildly animated automatons, wax figures. The day was like hundreds of Sundays I had known, the city familiar, yet passing strange. I walked like a ghost through it....

XXVI.

Accompanied by young Dr. Strafford, I went to California. My physical illness had been brief. Dr. Brooke had taken matters in his own hands and ordered an absolute rest, after dwelling at some length on the vicious pace set by modern business and the lack of consideration and knowledge shown by men of affairs for their bodies. There was a limit to the wrack and strain which the human organism could stand. He must of course have suspected the presence of disturbing and disintegrating factors, but he confined himself to telling me that only an exceptional constitution had saved me from a serious illness; he must in a way have comprehended why I did not wish to go abroad, and have my family join me on the Riviera, as Tom Peters proposed. California had been my choice, and Dr. Brooke recommended the climate of Santa Barbara.

High up on the Montecito hills I found a villa beside the gateway of one of the deep canons that furrow the mountain side, and day after day I lay in a chair on the sunny terrace, with a continually recurring amazement at the brilliancy of my surroundings. In the early morning I looked down on a feathery mist hiding the world, a mist presently to be shot with silver and sapphire-blue, dissolved by slow enchantment until there lay revealed the plain and the shimmering ocean with its distant islands trembling in the haze. At sunset my eyes sought the mountains, mountains unreal, like glorified scenery of grand opera, with violet shadows in the wooded canon clefts, and crags of pink tourmaline and ruby against the skies. All day long in the tempered heat flowers blazed around me, insects hummed, lizards darted in and out of the terrace wall, birds flashed among the checkered shadows of the live oaks. That grove of gnarled oaks summoned up before me visions of some classic villa poised above Grecian seas, shining amidst dark foliage, the refuge of forgotten kings. Below me, on the slope, the spaced orange trees were heavy with golden fruit.

After a while, as I grew stronger, I was driven down and allowed to walk on the wide beach that stretched in front of the gay houses facing the sea. Cormorants dived under the long rollers that came crashing in from the Pacific; gulls wheeled and screamed in the soft wind; alert little birds darted here and there with incredible swiftness, leaving tiny footprints across the ribs and furrows of the wet sand. Far to the southward a dark barrier of mountains rose out of the sea. Sometimes I sat with my back against the dunes watching the drag of the outgoing water rolling the pebbles after it, making a gleaming floor for the light to dance.

At first I could not bear to recall the events that had preceded and followed my visit to Krebs that Sunday morning. My illness had begun that night; on the Monday Tom Peters had come to the Club and insisted upon my being taken to his house.... When I had recovered sufficiently there had been rather a pathetic renewal of our friendship. Perry came to see me. Their attitude was one of apprehension not unmixed with wonder; and though they, knew of the existence of a mental crisis, suspected, in all probability, some of the causes of it, they refrained carefully from all comments, contenting themselves with telling me when I was well enough that Krebs had died quite suddenly that Sunday afternoon; that his death—occurring at such a crucial moment—had been sufficient to turn the tide of the election and make Edgar Greenhalge mayor. Thousands who had failed to understand Hermann Krebs, but whom he

had nevertheless stirred and troubled, suddenly awoke to the fact that he had had elements of greatness....

My feelings in those first days at Santa Barbara may be likened, indeed, to those of a man who has passed through a terrible accident that has deprived him of sight or hearing, and which he wishes to forget. What I was most conscious of then was an aching sense of loss—an ache that by degrees became a throbbing pain as life flowed back into me, re-inflaming once more my being with protest and passion, arousing me to revolt against the fate that had overtaken me. I even began at moments to feel a fierce desire to go back and take up again the fight from which I had been so strangely removed—removed by the agency of things still obscure. I might get Nancy yet, beat down her resistance, overcome her, if only I could be near her and see her. But even in the midst of these surges of passion I was conscious of the birth of a new force I did not understand, and which I resented, that had arisen to give battle to my passions and desires. This struggle was not mentally reflected as a debate between right and wrong, as to whether I should or should not be justified in taking Nancy if I could get her: it seemed as though some new and small yet dogged intruder had forced an entrance into me, an insignificant pigmy who did not hesitate to bar the pathway of the reviving giant of my desires. These contests sapped my strength. It seemed as though in my isolation I loved Nancy, I missed her more than ever, and the flavour she gave to life.

Then Hermann Krebs began to press himself on me. I use the word as expressive of those early resentful feelings,—I rather pictured him then as the personification of an hostile element in the universe that had brought about my miseries and accomplished my downfall; I attributed the disagreeable thwarting of my impulses to his agency; I did not wish to think of him, for he stood somehow for a vague future I feared to contemplate. Yet the illusion of his presence, once begun, continued to grow upon me, and I find myself utterly unable to describe that struggle in which he seemed to be fighting as against myself for my confidence; that process whereby he gradually grew as real to me as though he still lived—until I could almost hear his voice and see his smile. At moments I resisted wildly, as though my survival depended on it; at other moments he seemed to bring me peace. One day I recalled as vividly as though it were taking place again that last time I had been with him; I seemed once more to be listening to the calm yet earnest talk ranging over so many topics, politics and government, economics and science and religion. I did not yet grasp the synthesis he had made of them all, but I saw them now all focussed in him elements he had drawn from human lives and human experiences. I think it was then I first felt the quickenings of a new life to be born in travail and pain.... Wearied, yet exalted, I sank down on a stone bench and gazed out at the little island of Santa Cruz afloat on the shimmering sea.

I have mentioned my inability to depict the terrible struggle that went on in my soul. It seems strange that Nietzsche—that most ruthless of philosophers to the romantic mind!—should express it for me. "The genius of the heart, from contact with which every man goes away richer, not 'blessed' and overcome,....but richer himself, fresher to himself than before, opened up, breathed upon and sounded by a thawing wind; more uncertain, perhaps, more delicate, more bruised; but full of hopes which as yet lack names, full of a new will and striving, full of a new unwillingness and counterstriving."....

Such was my experience with Hermann Krebs. How keenly I remember that new unwillingness and counter-striving! In spite of the years it has not wholly died down, even to-day....

Almost coincident with these quickenings of which I have spoken was the consciousness of a hunger stronger than the craving for bread and meat, and I began to meditate on my ignorance, on the utter inadequacy and insufficiency of my early education, on my neglect of the new learning during the years that had passed since I left Harvard. And I remembered Krebs's words—that we must "reeducate ourselves." What did I know? A system of law, inherited from another social order, that was utterly unable to cope with the complexities and miseries and injustices of a modern industrial world. I had spent my days in mastering an inadequate and archaic code—why? in order that I might learn how to evade it? This in itself condemned it. What did I know of life? of the shining universe that surrounded me? What did I know of the insect and the flower, of the laws that moved the planets and made incandescent the suns? of the human body, of the human soul and its instincts? Was this knowledge acquired at such cost of labour and life and love by my fellow-men of so little worth to me that I could ignore it? declare that it had no significance for me? no bearing on my life and conduct? If I were to rise and go forward—and I now felt something like a continued impulse, in spite of relaxations and revolts—I must master this knowledge, it must be my guide, form the basis of my creed. I—who never had had a creed, never felt the need of one! For lack of one I had been rudely jolted out of the frail shell I had thought so secure, and stood, as it were, naked and shivering to the storms, staring at a world that was no function of me, after all. My problem, indeed, was how to become a function of it....

I resolved upon a course of reading, but it was a question what books to get. Krebs could have told me, if he had lived. I even thought once of writing Perry Blackwood to ask him to make a list of the

volumes in Krebs's little library; but I was ashamed to do this.

Dr. Strafford still remained with me. Not many years out of the medical school, he had inspired me with a liking for him and a respect for his profession, and when he informed me one day that he could no longer conscientiously accept the sum I was paying him, I begged him to stay on. He was a big and wholesome young man, companionable, yet quiet and unobtrusive, watchful without appearing to be so, with the innate as well as the cultivated knowledge of psychology characteristic of the best modern physicians. When I grew better I came to feel that he had given his whole mind to the study of my case, though he never betrayed it in his conversation.

"Strafford," I said to him one morning with such an air of unconcern as I could muster, "I've an idea I'd like to read a little science. Could you recommend a work on biology?"

I chose biology because I thought he would know something about it.

"Popular biology, Mr. Paret?"

"Well, not too popular," I smiled. "I think it would do me good to use my mind, to chew on something. Besides, you can help me over the tough places."

He returned that afternoon with two books.

"I've been rather fortunate in getting these," he said. "One is fairly elementary. They had it at the library. And the other—" he paused delicately, "I didn't know whether you might be interested in the latest speculations on the subject."

"Speculations?" I repeated.

"Well, the philosophy of it." He almost achieved a blush under his tan. He held out the second book on the philosophy of the organism. "It's the work of a German scientist who stands rather high. I read it last winter, and it interested me. I got it from a clergyman I know who is spending the winter in Santa Barbara."

"A clergyman!"

Strafford laughed. "An 'advanced' clergyman," he explained. "Oh, a lot of them are reading science now. I think it's pretty decent of them."

I looked at Strafford, who towered six feet three, and it suddenly struck me that he might be one of the forerunners of a type our universities were about to turn out. I wondered what he believed. Of one thing I was sure, that he was not in the medical profession to make money. That was a faith in itself.

I began with the elementary work.

"You'd better borrow a Century Dictionary," I said.

"That's easy," he said, and actually achieved it, with the clergyman's aid.

The absorption in which I fought my way through those books may prove interesting to future generations, who, at Sunday-school age, when the fable of Adam and Eve was painfully being drummed into me (without any mention of its application), will be learning to think straight, acquiring easily in early youth what I failed to learn until after forty. And think of all the trouble and tragedy that will have been averted. It is true that I had read some biology at Cambridge, which I had promptly forgotten; it had not been especially emphasized by my instructors as related to life—certainly not as related to religion: such incidents as that of Adam and Eve occupied the religious field exclusively. I had been compelled to commit to memory, temporarily, the matter in those books; but what I now began to perceive was that the matter was secondary compared to the view point of science—and this had been utterly neglected. As I read, I experienced all the excitement of an old-fashioned romance, but of a romance of such significance as to touch the very springs of existence; and above all I was impressed with the integrity of the scientific method—an integrity commensurate with the dignity of man—that scorned to quibble to make out a case, to affirm something that could not be proved.

Little by little I became familiar with the principles of embryonic evolution, ontogeny, and of biological evolution, phylogeny; realized, for the first time, my own history and that of the ancestors from whom I had developed and descended. I, this marvellously complicated being, torn by desires and despairs, was the result of the union of two microscopic cells. "All living things come from the egg," such had been Harvey's dictum. The result was like the tonic of a cold douche. I began to feel cleansed and purified, as though something sticky-sweet which all my life had clung to me had been washed away. Yet a question arose, an insistent question that forever presses itself on the mind of man; how

could these apparently chemical and mechanical processes, which the author of the book contented himself with recording, account for me? The spermia darts for the egg, and pierces it; personal history begins. But what mysterious shaping force is it that repeats in the individual the history of the race, supervises the orderly division of the cells, by degrees directs the symmetry, sets aside the skeleton and digestive tract and supervises the structure?

I took up the second book, that on the philosophy of the organism, to read in its preface that a much-to-be-honoured British nobleman had established a foundation of lectures in a Scotch University for forwarding the study of a Natural Theology. The term possessed me. Unlike the old theology woven of myths and a fanciful philosophy of the decadent period of Greece, natural theology was founded on science itself, and scientists were among those who sought to develop it. Here was a synthesis that made a powerful appeal, one of the many signs and portents of a new era of which I was dimly becoming cognizant; and now that I looked for signs, I found them everywhere, in my young Doctor, in Krebs, in references in the texts; indications of a new order beginning to make itself felt in a muddled, chaotic human world, which might—which must have a parallel with the order that revealed itself in the egg! Might not both, physical and social, be due to the influence of the same invisible, experimenting, creating Hand?

My thoughts lingered lovingly on this theology so well named "natural," on its conscientiousness, its refusal to affirm what it did not prove, on its lack of dogmatic dictums and infallible revelations; yet it gave me the vision of a new sanction whereby man might order his life, a sanction from which was eliminated fear and superstition and romantic hope, a sanction whose doctrines—unlike those of the sentimental theology—did not fly in the face of human instincts and needs. Nor was it a theology devoid of inspiration and poetry, though poetry might be called its complement. With all that was beautiful and true in the myths dear to mankind it did not conflict, annulling only the vicious dogmatism of literal interpretation. In this connection I remembered something that Krebs had said—in our talk about poetry and art,—that these were emotion, religion expressed by the tools reason had evolved. Music, he had declared, came nearest to the cry of the human soul....

That theology cleared for faith an open road, made of faith a reasonable thing, yet did not rob it of a sense of high adventure; cleansed it of the taints of thrift and selfish concern. In this reaffirmation of vitalism there might be a future, yes, an individual future, yet it was far from the smug conception of salvation. Here was a faith conferred by the freedom of truth; a faith that lost and regained itself in life; it was dynamic in its operation; for, as Lessing said, the searching after truth, and not its possession, gives happiness to man. In the words of an American scientist, taken from his book on Heredity, "The evolutionary idea has forced man to consider the probable future of his own race on earth and to take measures to control that future, a matter he had previously left largely to fate."

Here indeed was another sign of the times, to find in a strictly scientific work a sentence truly religious! As I continued to read these works, I found them suffused with religion, religion of a kind and quality I had not imagined. The birthright of the spirit of man was freedom, freedom to experiment, to determine, to create—to create himself, to create society in the image of God! Spiritual creation the function of cooperative man through the coming ages, the task that was to make him divine. Here indeed was the germ of a new sanction, of a new motive, of a new religion that strangely harmonized with the concepts of the old—once the dynamic power of these was revealed.

I had been thinking of my family—of my family in terms of Matthew—and yet with a growing yearning that embraced them all. I had not informed Maude of my illness, and I had managed to warn Tom Peters not to do so. I had simply written her that after the campaign I had gone for a rest to California; yet in her letters to me, after this information had reached her, I detected a restrained anxiety and affection that troubled me. Sequences of words curiously convey meanings and implications that transcend their literal sense, true thoughts and feelings are difficult to disguise even in written speech. Could it be possible after all that had happened that Maude still loved me? I continually put the thought away from me, but continually it returned to haunt me. Suppose Maude could not help loving me, in spite of my weaknesses and faults, even as I loved Nancy in spite of hers? Love is no logical thing.

It was Matthew I wanted, Matthew of whom I thought, and trivial, long-forgotten incidents of the past kept recurring to me constantly. I still received his weekly letters; but he did not ask why, since I had taken a vacation, I had not come over to them. He represented the medium, the link between Maude and me that no estrangement, no separation could break.

All this new vision of mine was for him, for the coming generation, the soil in which it must be sown, the Americans of the future. And who so well as Matthew, sensitive yet brave, would respond to it? I wished not only to give him what I had begun to grasp, to study with him, to be his companion and friend, but to spare him, if possible, some of my own mistakes and sufferings and punishments. But could I go back? Happy coincidences of desires and convictions had been so characteristic of that other

self I had been struggling to cast off: I had so easily been persuaded, when I had had a chance of getting Nancy, that it was the right thing to do! And now, in my loneliness, was I not growing just as eager to be convinced that it was my duty to go back to the family which in the hour of self-sufficiency I had cast off? I had believed in divorce then—why not now? Well, I still believed in it. I had thought of a union with Nancy as something that would bring about the "self-realization that springs from the gratification of a great passion,"—an appealing phrase I had read somewhere. But, it was at least a favourable symptom that I was willing now to confess that the "self-realization" had been a secondary and sentimental consideration, a rosy, self-created halo to give a moral and religious sanction to my desire. Was I not trying to do that very thing now? It tortured me to think so; I strove to achieve a detached consideration of the problem,—to arrive at length at a thought that seemed illuminating: that the it "wrongness" or "rightness," utility and happiness of all such unions depend upon whether or not they become a part of the woof and warp of the social fabric; in other words, whether the gratification of any particular love by divorce and remarriage does or does not tend to destroy a portion of that fabric. Nancy certainly would have been justified in divorce. It did not seem in the retrospect that I would have been: surely not if, after I had married Nancy, I had developed this view of life that seemed to me to be the true view. I should have been powerless to act upon it. But the chances were I should not have developed it, since it would seem that any salvation for me at least must come precisely through suffering, through not getting what I wanted. Was this equivocating?

My mistake had been in marrying Maude instead of Nancy—a mistake largely due to my saturation with a false idea of life. Would not the attempt to cut loose from the consequences of that mistake in my individual case have been futile? But there was a remedy for it—the remedy Krebs had suggested: I might still prevent my children from making such a mistake, I might help to create in them what I might have been, and thus find a solution for myself. My errors would then assume a value.

But the question tortured me: would Maude wish it? Would it be fair to her if she did not? By my long neglect I had forfeited the right to go. And would she agree with my point of view if she did permit me to stay? I had less concern on this score, a feeling that that development of hers, which once had irritated me, was in the same direction as my own....

I have still strangely to record moments when, in spite of the aspirations I had achieved, of the redeeming vision I had gained, at the thought of returning to her I revolted. At such times recollections came into my mind of those characteristics in her that had seemed most responsible for my alienation.... That demon I had fed so mightily still lived. By what right—he seemed to ask—had I nourished him all these years if now I meant to starve him? Thus sometimes he defied me, took on Protean guises, blustered, insinuated, cajoled, managed to make me believe that to starve him would be to starve myself, to sap all there was of power in me. Let me try and see if I could do it! Again he whispered, to what purpose had I gained my liberty, if now I renounced it? I could not live in fetters, even though the fetters should be self-imposed. I was lonely now, but I would get over that, and life lay before me still.

Fierce and tenacious, steel in the cruelty of his desires, fearful in the havoc he had wrought, could he be subdued? Foiled, he tore and rent me....

One morning I rode up through the shady canon, fragrant with bay, to the open slopes stained smoky-blue by the wild lilac, where the twisted madrona grows. As I sat gazing down on tiny headlands jutting out into a vast ocean my paralyzing indecision came to an end. I turned my horse down the trail again. I had seen at last that life was bigger than I, bigger than Maude, bigger than our individual wishes and desires. I felt as though heavy shackles had been struck from me. As I neared the house I spied my young doctor in the garden path, his hands in his pockets watching a humming-bird poised over the poppies. He greeted me with a look that was not wholly surprise at my early return, that seemed to have in it something of gladness.

"Strafford," I said, "I've made up my mind to go to Europe."

"I have been thinking for some time, Mr. Paret," he replied, "that a sea-voyage is just what you need to set you on your feet."

I started eastward the next morning, arriving in New York in time to catch one of the big liners sailing for Havre. On my way across the continent I decided to send a cable to Maude at Paris, since it were only fair to give her an opportunity to reflect upon the manner in which she would meet the situation. Save for an impatience which at moments I restrained with difficulty, the moods that succeeded one another as I journeyed did not differ greatly from those I had experienced in the past month. I was alternately exalted and depressed; I hoped and doubted and feared; my courage, my confidence rose and fell. And yet I was aware of the nascence within me of an element that gave me a stability I had hitherto lacked: I had made my decision, and I felt the stronger for it.

It was early in March. The annual rush of my countrymen and women for foreign shores had not as yet begun, the huge steamer was far from crowded. The faint throbbing of her engines as she glided out on the North River tide found its echo within me as I leaned on the heavy rail and watched the towers of the city receding in the mist; they became blurred and ghostlike, fantastic in the grey distance, sad, appealing with a strange beauty and power. Once the sight of them, sunlit, standing forth sharply against the high blue of American skies, had stirred in me that passion for wealth and power of which they were so marvellously and uniquely the embodiment. I recalled the bright day of my home-coming with Maude, when she too had felt that passion drawing me away from her, after the briefest of possessions.... Well, I had had it, the power. I had stormed and gained entrance to the citadel itself. I might have lived here in New York, secure, defiant of a veering public opinion that envied while it strove to sting. Why was I flinging it all away? Was this a sudden resolution of mine, forced by events, precipitated by a failure to achieve what of all things on earth I had most desired? or was it the inevitable result of the development of the Hugh Paret of earlier days, who was not meant for that kind of power?

The vibration of the monster ship increased to a strong, electric pulsation, the water hummed along her sides, she felt the swell of the open sea. A fine rain began to fall that hid the land—yes, and the life I was leaving. I made my way across the glistening deck to the saloon where, my newspapers and periodicals neglected, I sat all the morning beside a window gazing out at the limited, vignetted zone of waters around the ship. We were headed for the Old World. The wind rose, the rain became pelting, mingling with the spume of the whitecaps racing madly past: within were warmth and luxury, electric lights, open fires, easy chairs, and men and women reading, conversing as unconcernedly as though the perils of the deep had ceased to be. In all this I found an impelling interest; the naive capacity in me for wonder, so long dormant, had been marvellously opened up once more. I no longer thought of myself as the important man of affairs; and when in the progress of the voyage I was accosted by two or three men I had met and by others who had heard of me it was only to feel amazement at the remoteness I now felt from a world whose realities were stocks and bonds, railroads and corporations and the detested new politics so inimical to the smooth conduct of "business."

It all sounded like a language I had forgotten.

It was not until near the end of the passage that we ran out of the storm. A morning came when I went on deck to survey spaces of a blue and white sea swept by the white March sunlight; to discern at length against the horizon toward which we sped a cloud of the filmiest and most delicate texture and design. Suddenly I divined that the cloud was France! Little by little, as I watched, it took on substance. I made out headlands and cliffs, and then we were coasting beside them. That night I should be in Paris with Maude. My bag was packed, my steamer trunk closed. I strayed about the decks, in and out of the saloons, wondering at the indifference of other passengers who sat reading in steamer-chairs or wrote last letters to be posted at Havre. I was filled with impatience, anticipation, yes, with anxiety concerning the adventure that was now so imminent; with wavering doubts. Had I done the wisest thing after all? I had the familiar experience that often comes just before reunion after absence of recalling intimate and forgotten impressions of those whom I was about to see again the tones of their voices, little gestures....

How would they receive me?

The great ship had slowed down and was entering the harbour, carefully threading her way amongst smaller craft, the passengers lining the rails and gazing at the animated scene, at the quaint and cheerful French city bathed in sunlight.... I had reached the dock and was making my way through the hurrying and shifting groups toward the steamer train when I saw Maude. She was standing a little aside, scanning the faces that passed her.

I remember how she looked at me, expectantly, yet timidly, almost fearfully. I kissed her.

"You've come to meet me!" I exclaimed stupidly. "How are the children?"

"They're very well, Hugh. They wanted to come, too, but I thought it better not."

Her restraint struck me as extraordinary; and while I was thankful for the relief it brought to a situation which might have been awkward, I was conscious of resenting it a little. I was impressed and puzzled. As I walked along the platform beside her she seemed almost a stranger: I had difficulty in realizing that she was my wife, the mother of my children. Her eyes were clear, more serious than I recalled them, and her physical as well as her moral tone seemed to have improved. Her cheeks glowed with health, and she wore a becoming suit of dark blue.

"Did you have a good trip, Hugh?" she asked.

"Splendid," I said, forgetting the storm. We took our seats in an empty compartment. Was she glad to see me? She had come all the way from Paris to meet me! All the embarrassment seemed to be on my side. Was this composure a controlled one or had she indeed attained to the self-sufficiency her manner and presence implied? Such were the questions running through my head.

"You've really liked Paris?" I asked.

"Yes, Hugh, and it's been very good for us all. Of course the boys like America better, but they've learned many things they wouldn't have learned at home; they both speak French, and Biddy too. Even I have improved."

"I'm sure of it," I said.

She flushed.

"And what else have you been doing?"

"Oh, going to galleries. Matthew often goes with me. I think he quite appreciates the pictures. Sometimes I take him to the theatre, too, the Francais. Both boys ride in the Bois with a riding master. It's been rather a restricted life for them, but it won't have hurt them. It's good discipline. We have little excursions in an automobile on fine days to Versailles and other places of interest around Paris, and Matthew and I have learned a lot of history. I have a professor of literature from the Sorbonne come in three times a week to give me lessons."

"I didn't know you cared for literature."

"I didn't know it either." She smiled. "Matthew loves it. Monsieur Despard declares he has quite a gift for language."

Maude had already begun Matthew's education!

"You see a few people?" I inquired.

"A few. And they have been very kind to us. The Buffons, whom I met at Etretat, and some of their friends, mostly educated French people."

The little railway carriage in which we sat rocked with speed as we flew through the French landscape. I caught glimpses of solid, Norman farm buildings, of towers and keeps and delicate steeples, and quaint towns; of bare poplars swaying before the March gusts, of green fields ablaze in the afternoon sun. I took it all in distractedly. Here was Maude beside me, but a Maude I had difficulty in recognizing, whom I did not understand: who talked of a life she had built up for herself and that seemed to satisfy her; one with which I had nothing to do. I could not tell how she regarded my re-intrusion. As she continued to talk, a feeling that was almost desperation grew upon me. I had things to say to her, things that every moment of this sort of intercourse was making more difficult. And I felt, if I did not say them now, that perhaps I never should: that now or never was the appropriate time, and to delay would be to drift into an impossible situation wherein the chance of an understanding would be remote.

There was a pause. How little I had anticipated the courage it would take to do this thing! My blood was hammering.

"Maude," I said abruptly, "I suppose you're wondering why I came over here."

She sat gazing at me, very still, but there came into her eyes a frightened look that almost unnerved me. She seemed to wish to speak, to be unable to. Passively, she let my hand rest on hers.

"I've been thinking a great deal during the last few months," I went on unsteadily. "And I've changed a good many of my ideas—that is, I've got new ones, about things I never thought of before. I want to say, first, that I do not put forth any claim to come back into your life. I know I have forfeited any claim. I've neglected you, and I've neglected the children. Our marriage has been on a false basis from the start, and I've been to blame for it. There is more to be said about the chances for a successful marriage in these days, but I'm not going to dwell on that now, or attempt to shoulder off my shortcomings on my bringing up, on the civilization in which we have lived. You've tried to do your share, and the failure hasn't been your fault. I want to tell you first of all that I recognize your right to live your life from now on, independently of me, if you so desire. You ought to have the children—" I hesitated a moment. It was the hardest thing I had to say. "I've never troubled myself about them, I've never taken on any responsibility in regard to their bringing up."

"Hugh!" she cried.

"Wait—I've got more to tell you, that you ought to know. I shouldn't be here to-day if Nancy Durrett had consented to—to get a divorce and marry me. We had agreed to that when this accident happened to Ham, and she went back to him. I have to tell you that I still love her—I can't say how much, or define my feelings toward her now. I've given up all idea of her. I don't think I'd marry her now, even if I had the chance, and you should decide to live away from me. I don't know. I'm not so sure of myself as I once was. The fact is, Maude, circumstances have been too much for me. I've been beaten. And I'm not at all certain that it wasn't a cowardly thing for me to come back to you at all."

I felt her hand trembling under mine, but I had not the courage to look at her. I heard her call my name again a little cry, the very poignancy of pity and distress. It almost unnerved me.

"I knew that you loved her, Hugh," she said. "It was only—only a little while after you married me that I found it out. I guessed it—women do guess such things—long before you realized it yourself. You ought to have married her instead of me. You would have been happier with her."

I did not answer.

"I, too, have thought a great deal," she went on, after a moment. "I began earlier than you, I had to." I looked up suddenly and saw her smiling at me, faintly, through her tears. "But I've been thinking more, and learning more since I've been over here. I've come to see that that our failure hasn't been as much your fault as I once thought, as much as you yourself declare. You have done me a wrong, and you've done the children a wrong. Oh, it is frightful to think how little I knew when I married you, but even then I felt instinctively that you didn't love me as I deserved to be loved. And when we came back from Europe I knew that I couldn't satisfy you, I couldn't look upon life as you saw it, no matter how hard I tried. I did try, but it wasn't any use. You'll never know how much I've suffered all these years.

"I have been happier here, away from you, with the children; I've had a chance to be myself. It isn't that I'm—much. It isn't that I don't need guidance and counsel and—sympathy. I've missed those, but you've never given them to me, and I've been learning more and more to do without them. I don't know why marriage should suddenly have become such a mockery and failure in our time, but I know that it is, that ours hasn't been such an exception as I once thought. I've come to believe that divorce is often justified."

"It is justified so far as you are concerned, Maude," I replied. "It is not justified for me. I have forfeited, as I say, any rights over you. I have been the aggressor and transgressor from the start. You have been a good wife and a good mother, you have been faithful, I have had absolutely nothing to complain of."

"Sometimes I think I might have tried harder," she said. "At least I might have understood better. I was stupid. But everything went wrong. And I saw you growing away from me all the time, Hugh, growing away from the friends who were fond of you, as though you were fading in the distance. It wasn't wholly because—because of Nancy that I left you. That gave me an excuse—an excuse for myself. Long before that I realized my helplessness, I knew that whatever I might have done was past doing."

"Yes, I know," I assented.

We sat in silence for a while. The train was skirting an ancient town set on a hill, crowned with a castle and a Gothic church whose windows were afire in the setting sun.

"Maude," I said, "I have not come to plead, to appeal to your pity as against your judgment and reason. I can say this much, that if I do not love you, as the word is generally understood, I have a new respect for you, and a new affection, and I think that these will grow. I have no doubt that there are some fortunate people who achieve the kind of mutual love for which it is human to yearn, whose passion is naturally transmuted into a feeling that may be even finer, but I am inclined to think, even in such a case, that some effort and unselfishness are necessary. At any rate, that has been denied to us, and we can never know it from our own experience. We can only hope that there is such a thing,—yes, and believe in it and work for it."

"Work for it, Hugh?" she repeated.

"For others—for our children. I have been thinking about the children a great deal in the last few months especially about Matthew."

"You always loved him best," she said.

"Yes," I admitted. "I don't know why it should be so. And in spite of it, I have neglected him, neglected them, failed to appreciate them all. I did not deserve them. I have reproached myself, I have suffered

for it, not as much as I deserved. I came to realize that the children were a bond between us, that their existence meant something greater than either of us. But at the same time I recognized that I had lost my right over them, that it was you who had proved yourself worthy.... It was through the children that I came to think differently, to feel differently toward you. I have come to you to ask your forgiveness."

"Oh, Hugh!" she cried.

"Wait," I said.... "I have come to you, through them. I want to say again that I should not be here if I had obtained my desires. Yet there is more to it than that. I think I have reached a stage where I am able to say that I am glad I didn't obtain them. I see now that this coming to you was something I have wanted to do all along, but it was the cowardly thing to do, after I had failed, for it was not as though I had conquered the desires, the desires conquered me. At any rate, I couldn't come to you to encumber you, to be a drag upon you. I felt that I must have something to offer you. I've got a plan, Maude, for my life, for our lives. I don't know whether I can make a success of it, and you are entitled to decline to take the risk. I don't fool myself that it will be all plain sailing, that there won't be difficulties and discouragements. But I'll promise to try."

"What is it?" she asked, in a low voice. "I—I think I know."

"Perhaps you have guessed it. I am willing to try to devote what is left of my life to you and to them. And I need your help. I acknowledge it. Let us try to make more possible for them the life we have missed."

"The life we have missed!" she said.

"Yes. My mistakes, my failures, have brought us to the edge of a precipice. We must prevent, if we can, those mistakes and failures for them. The remedy for unhappy marriages, for all mistaken, selfish and artificial relationships in life is a preventive one. My plan is that we try to educate ourselves together, take advantage of the accruing knowledge that is helping men and women to cope with the problems, to think straight. We can then teach our children to think straight, to avoid the pitfalls into which we have fallen."

I paused. Maude did not reply. Her face was turned away from me, towards the red glow of the setting sun above the hills.

"You have been doing this all along, you have had the vision, the true vision, while I lacked it, Maude. I offer to help you. But if you think it is impossible for us to live together, if you believe my feeling toward you is not enough, if you don't think I can do what I propose, or if you have ceased to care for me—"

She turned to me with a swift movement, her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, Hugh, don't say any more. I can't stand it. How little you know, for all your thinking. I love you, I always have loved you. I grew to be ashamed of it, but I'm not any longer. I haven't any pride any more, and I never want to have it again."

"You're willing to take me as I am,—to try?" I said.

"Yes," she answered, "I'm willing to try." She smiled at me. "And I have more faith than you, Hugh. I think we'll succeed."....

At nine o'clock that night, when we came out through the gates of the big, noisy station, the children were awaiting us. They had changed, they had grown. Biddy kissed me shyly, and stood staring up at me.

"We'll take you out to-morrow and show you how we can ride," said
Moreton.

Matthew smiled. He stood very close to me, with his hand through my arm.

"You're going to stay, father?" he asked.

"I'm going to stay, Matthew," I answered, "until we all go back to
America."....

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