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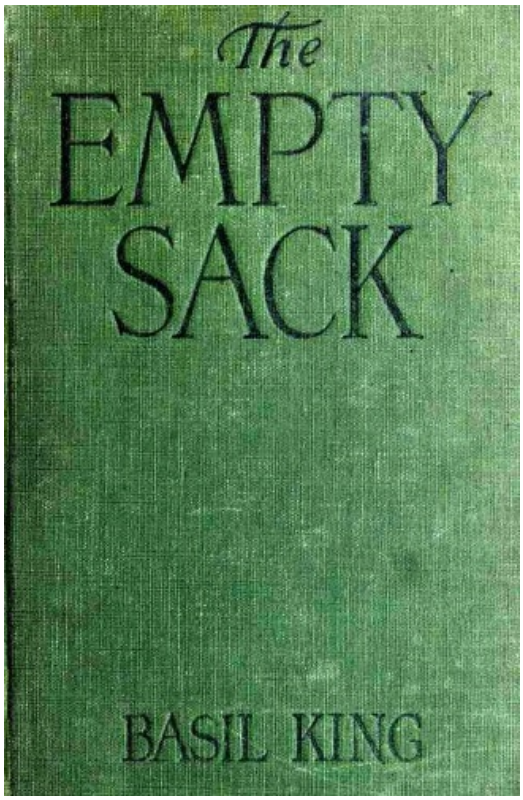

THE EMPTY SACK
BY BASIL KING

AUTHOR OF THE INNER SHRINE, THE WILD OLIVE, ETC.

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THE EMPTY SACK

DEAR OLD MA! STOP CRYING, MA!

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THE EMPTY SACK

CHAPTER I

"Mr. Collingham will see you in his office before you go."

Having thus become the Voice of Fate, Miss Ruddick, shirt-waisted and daintily shod, slipped away between the pens where clerks were preening themselves before leaving their desks for the day.

The old man to whom she had spoken raised his head in the mild surprise of an ox disturbed while grazing. He, too, was leaving his desk for the day, arranging his work with the tidy care of one for whom pens, ink, and ledgers were the vital things of life. Finishing his task, his hands trembled. His smile trembled, too, when a young man in a neighboring pen called out in tones which mingled sarcasm with encouragement:

"Good luck, old top! Goin' to get your raise at last!"

It was what he repeated to himself as he shuffled after Miss Ruddick. He was obliged to repeat it in order to steady his step. He was obliged to steady his step because some fifteen or twenty pairs of eyes from all the pens in the office were following him as he went along. It was the last bit of pride in the man marching up to face a firing squad.

He had reached the glass door on which the word "Exit" could be traced in reversed letters, when a breezy young fellow of twenty startled him by a sudden clap on the shoulder. The boy had not come from a pen, but from the more distant portion of the bank where a line of tellers' cages faced the public.

"Hello, dad! Tell ma I'll be home for supper. Off now for a plunge at the gym."

The boy passed on, leaving behind a vision of gleaming teeth and the echo of gay tones.

Opening a glass door and entering a passageway, the old man stumbled along it till another door, standing open, showed Miss Ruddick, beside her typewriter, assorting her papers before going home. Miss Ruddick was a competent woman of thirty-five. She was in her present position of stenographer-secretary to the head of the banking house because Mr. Bickley, the efficiency expert, for whose opinion Mr. Collingham had a kind of reverence, had selected her for the job. Miss Ruddick cultivated her efficiency as another woman cultivates her voice or another her gift for dancing. Throwing off the weaknesses that spring from affection and softness of heart, she had steeled and oiled herself into a swiftly working, surely judging, and wholly impersonal business automaton. Ten years ago she would have felt sorry for a man in Josiah Follett's predicament. She would have felt sorry for him now had she not learned to her cost that sympathy diminished the accuracy of her work. Now she could turn him off as easily as an executioner the man condemned to death.

As a matter of fact, she knew that ten minutes previously the efficiency expert had been closeted with Mr. Collingham, dealing with this very case. With her own ears she had heard Mr. Bickley say:

"You will do as you think best, Mr. Collingham. Only, I can't help reminding you that once you admit any principle but that of supply and demand, business methods are at an end."

Miss Ruddick knew Mr. Collingham's inner struggle because she had been through it herself; but

she knew, too, that to Mr. Collingham the efficiency expert was much what his physician is to a king. His advice may be distasteful, but it is a command. The most merciful thing now was rapidity of action, as with the application of the guillotine. It was mercy, therefore, to throw open instantly the door of Mr. Collingham's office, so that Josiah was forced to enter.

He stood meekly, feeling, doubtless, as the psalmist felt when all the ends of the world had come upon him. Confusedly he was saying to himself that all the threads of his laborious life, from the time when, as a boy in Canada, he had begun to earn his living at sixteen, till now, when he was sixty-three, had been drawn together at just this point, where he was either to get his raise or else——

The suspense was terrible. As the August Presence into which he had been ushered was engaged in examining the contents of a lower drawer of the flat-topped desk at which It was seated, It was only partly visible. All Josiah could see was the shoulder of a portly form, the edge of a pear-shaped pearl in a plum-colored tie, and a temple of grizzled hair. The clerk moved forward, coming to a halt midway between the door and the desk till the Presence should recognize his approach by raising Its head.

The Presence didn't quite raise Its head. It merely glanced upward in a casual, sidelong way, continuing the inspection of the drawer.

"Well, Follett, I suppose you know what I've got to say?"

Follett betrayed the fact that he did know.

"Is it the same as you said two years ago, sir?"

Thus challenged, the Presence lifted itself, becoming to the full Bradley Collingham, the distinguished banker, philanthropist, and American citizen, so widely and favorably known for his sympathetic personality. The essence of these traits rang in the appealing quality of his tone.

"What do you think, Follett? I told you then that you were not earning your salary. You haven't been earning it since. What can I do?"

"I could work harder, sir. I could stay overtime, when none of the young fellows want to."

"That wouldn't do any good, Follett. It isn't the way we do business."

"I've been five years with you, sir, and all my life between one banking house and another, in this country and Canada. In my humble way I've helped to build the banking business up."

"And you've been paid, haven't you? I really don't see that you've anything to complain of."

There was no severity in this response. It was made only because the necessities of the case required it, as Follett had the justice to perceive.

"I'm not complaining, sir. I only don't see how I'm going to live."

The voice already distressed became more so.

"But that isn't my affair, is it, now? I'm running a business, not a charitable institution. It isn't as if you'd been with us twenty or thirty years. You've shifted about a good deal in your time——"

"I've had to better myself, sir—with a family."

"Quite so. And once you admit any principle but that of supply and demand business methods are at an end. Don't think that this isn't as hard for me as it is for you, Follett, but——"

"If it was as hard for you as it is for me, sir, you'd——"

But, the possibilities here being dangerous, the banker was forced to cut in:

"Besides, you'll get another job. Stairs will write you any kind of recommendation you ask for."

"Recommendations won't do me any good, sir, once I'm fired for old age. That's a worse brand on you than coming out of jail."

The discussion growing painful, the banker rose to put an end to it. Even so, he had something still to say to justify himself.

"It isn't as if I hadn't warned you of this, Follett. You've had two years in which"—it was hard to find the right phrase—"in which to provide for your future."

The clerk was unable to repress a dim, faraway smile.

"Two years in which to provide for my future—on forty-five a week! And me with five mouths to feed, to say nothing of Teddy, who pays his board!"

The banker found an opening.

"I made a place for him—didn't I, now?—as soon as he was released from the navy. He ought to be able to help you."

"He does help, sir, as far as a young fellow can on eighteen a week with his own expenses to take care of. But I've two little girls still at school, and another, my eldest—"

A hint of embarrassment emphasized the banker's words as he began moving forward to show his visitor to the door.

"I understand that she's engaged as an artist's model. That, too, ought to bring you in something."

"I suppose Mr. Robert told you that, sir."

This was inadvertent on Follett's part, and a mistake. Any other distinguished man would have stiffened at the use of the name of a member of his family in a connection like the present one. Bradley Collingham was admirably temperate in saying:

"I don't talk of such matters with my son. I merely understood that your eldest girl was earning something—"

"She poses six hours a week for Mr. Hubert Wray, at a dollar an hour."

"She could probably get more engagements. I hear—I forget who told me—that she's the type these artist people like to put into their pictures."

Finding himself obliged to keep step with his employer, Follett felt as if he was walking to his soul's dead-march. Only the force of the conventions in which everybody lives enabled him to go on making conversation.

"We don't much like the occupation for a daughter of ours, sir; and, besides, there's lots who think that being an artist's model isn't respectable."

"Still, if she can earn good money at it—"

To Collingham's relief, they were at the door, which he opened significantly and without more words. Follett looked into the outer world as represented by Miss Ruddick's office as into an abyss. For the minute it seemed too awful a void to step into. When his watery blue eyes again sought Collingham's face, it was with the dumb question, "Must I?" which the banker himself

could only meet with Mr. Bickley's manfulness.

He, too, spoke only with his eyes: "You must, my poor Follett. There's no help for it. You and I are both caught up into a vast machine. I can't act otherwise than as I'm doing, and I know you don't expect it."

Thus Follett stepped over the threshold and the door closed behind him. So short a time had passed since he had gone the other way that Miss Ruddick was still beside her desk, putting away her papers. Follett didn't look at her, but she looked at him, finding herself compelled to hark back to Mr. Bickley's axioms to check the tears she couldn't allow to rise.

CHAPTER II

Meanwhile there was that going on which would have disturbed both these elderly men had they known anything about it.

Jennie Follett, in a Greek peplum of white-cotton cloth, her amber-colored hair drawn into a loose Greek knot, was on her knees before a plaster cast of Aphrodite, to which she was holding up a garland of tissue-paper flowers.

While there was nothing alarming in this pagan act, the freedom with which two young men laid hands on her little person threw out hints of impropriety.

The pretexts were obvious, and, in the case of one of the young men, were backed by what might have been called professional necessity. One bare arm needed to be raised, the other to be lowered. One sandaled foot was too visible beneath the edge of the peplum, the other not visible enough. Adjustments called for readjustments, and readjustments for revisions of the scheme. What one young man approved of the other disallowed, to a running accompaniment of Miss Follett's laughter.

"Do go away," she implored, when Mr. Bob Collingham, with one hand beneath her elbow and the other at her finger-tips, tilted her arm at what seemed to him its loveliest angle.

"Clear out, Bob," the artist seconded, in half-vexed good humor. "We'll never get the pose with you here."

"You'd never get anything if I went away, because Miss Follett wouldn't work. Would you, Miss Follett?"

The artist having gone in search of something at the far end of the studio, Miss Follett replied to Mr. Collingham alone.

"I don't know what I'd do if you went away; but if you stay I shall go frantic. If you touch me again I shall get up."

"I'm not touching you again," he said, going on to bend her left arm ever so slightly, "because this is the same old time all along. The picture is all I care about."

"But it's Mr. Wray's picture. It isn't yours."

"It will be if I buy it. I said I would if I liked it, and I sha'n't like it unless I get it the way I want it."

"You know you don't mean to buy it."

"I don't mean to let anybody else buy it; you can lay down your life on that."

There was so much earnestness in this declaration that Miss Follett laughed again. It was an easy, silvery laugh, pleasant to the ear, and not out of keeping with the medley of beautiful things round her.

"Jennie's value in a studio is more than that of a model," Wray had recently confided to his friend,

Bob Collingham. "It's as if she extracted the beauty from every bit of tapestry or bronze and turned it into animate life."

"By doing nothing or standing still," Collingham had added, "she can pin your eyes on her as other girls can't by frisking about. And when she moves—"

An exclamation from Wray conveyed the fact that Jennie's motion was beyond what either of these young experts in womanhood could possibly put into words.

But that Jennie knew where to draw a certain kind of line became evident when, either by inadvertence or design, the back of Bob Collingham's hand rubbed along her cheek. With a smile at once kindly and cold she put away his arm and rose. In the few yards she placed between them before she turned again, still with her kind, cold smile, there was rebuke without offense.

Being fair, the young man colored easily. When he colored, the three inches of scar across his temple which he had brought home from the war became a streak of red. It was one of the reasons why Jennie, who was sensitive to the physical, didn't like to look at him. Not to look at him, she pretended to arrange the folds of her peplum, which kept her gaze downward.

But had she looked, she would have seen that he was hurt. His face was of the honest, sympathetic cast that quickly reflects the wounding of the feelings. If men had prototypes in dogs, Bob Collingham's would have been the mastiff or the St. Bernard—big, strong, devoted, slow to wrath, and with an almost comic humiliation at sound of a harsh word. Though there was no harsh word in Jennie's case, Bob was sure he detected a harsh thought. It hurt him the more for the reason that she was a model, while he had advantages of social consideration. Little as he would have been discourteous to a girl of his own station, he would have thought it unworthy of a cad to profit by Jennie's helplessness in a place like a studio.

"I hope you didn't think I was trying to be fresh."

Now that she felt herself secured by distance, she laughed again.

"I didn't think anything at all. I just—just don't like people touching me."

"Not any people?"

"Not any I need speak about to you."

"Why me?"

"Because I hardly know you."

"You could know me better if you wanted to."

"Oh, I could know lots of people better if I wanted to."

"And you don't want to—for what reason?"

"It isn't always a reason. Sometimes it's just an instinct."

"And which is it in my case?"

"In your case, it doesn't have to be discussed. I shouldn't know you, anyhow. We're like creatures in different—what do they call it?—not spheres—elements, isn't it?—We're like creatures in different elements—a bird and a fish—that don't get a point of contact."

"You mayn't *see* the points of contact—"

"And if I don't see them they're not there." She turned toward Wray, who was coming back in

their direction, addressing him in the idiom she heard among young native-born Americans, and which accorded best with her position in the studio. "Oh, Mr. Wray, could you let me off posing any more to-day? This friend guy of yours has got me all on springs."

"Clear out, friend guy. Can't you see you're in the way?"

She continued to take the tone she was trying to make second nature, since it was not first.

"That's something he wouldn't notice if a car was running over him. But please let me go. There's a quarter of an hour left on to-day, but I'll make it up some other time."

She moved down the studio with as much seeming unconcern as if she didn't know that two pairs of eyes were following her. Picking her way between old English chairs with canvases stacked against their legs, past dusty brocade hangings, and beneath an occasional plaster cast lifted on a pedestal, she went out at the model's exit without a glance behind her.

Bob spoke only when she had disappeared.

"Listen, Hubert. I'm going to marry that girl."

Wray stepped back to the front of the easel, flicking in a touch or two on the rough sketch of the Greek girl kneeling before Aphrodite.

"I was afraid you were getting some such bug in your head."

Bob limped to a table on which he had thrown his hat and the stick that helped his lameness.

People at Marillo Park, where the Collinghams lived for most of the year, said that, with the wounds he had got while in the French army in the early days of the war, he had brought back with him a real enhancement of manhood. Having come through Groton and Harvard little better than an uncouth boy, his experience in France had shaped his outlook on life into something like a purpose. It was not very clear as yet, or sharply defined; but he knew that certain preliminary conditions must be met before he could settle down. One of these had to do with Miss Jennie Follett; and what Hubert called "a bug in his head" was, in his own mind, at least, as vital to his development as his braving his family in going to the war.

That had been in the famous year when the American nation was trying to be "neutral in thought." "I'm not neutral in thought," Bob, who had only that summer left Harvard, had declared to his father. "I'm not neutral in any way. Give me my ticket over, dad, and I'll do the rest myself."

He got his ticket over, and fifteen months later, bandaged and crippled, a ticket back. On the return voyage he had as his companion a young American stretcher-man who had helped to carry him off the battlefield, and who, a few weeks later, nervously shattered, had joined him in the hospital. Wray, who, on the outbreak of war, had been painting in Latoul's atelier, had now got what he called "a sickener of Europe," and was glad to hang out his shingle in New York. A New England man of Gallicized ways of thinking, he had means enough to wait for recognition, so long as he kept his expenses within relatively narrow bounds.

With his soft hat plastered provisionally on the back of his head, Bob leaned heavily on his stick.

"I've got to marry some one," he said, as if in self-defense. "I'm that kind. I can't begin fitting my jig saw together till I do it."

Wray kept on painting.

"Why don't you pick out a girl in your own class? Lots of nice ones at Marillo."

"You don't marry girls just because they're nice, old thing. You take the one who's the other half of yourself."

"I don't see that you're the other half of Miss Follett."

"Well, I am."

"Miss Follett herself doesn't think so."

"She'll think so, all right, when I show her that she can't do without me."

"Some job!" Wray grunted, laconically.

"Sure it's some job; but the bigger the job the more you're on your mettle. That's the way we're made."

The artist continued to add small touches to the shadows of the Aphrodite cast as he changed his tactics.

"If you married Miss Follett, wouldn't your family raise hell?"

"They'd raise hell at first, and put a can on it afterward. Families always do."

"And what would Miss Follett feel—before they'd put on the can?"

Bob limped uneasily toward the door.

"Life wouldn't be all slip-and-go-down for her, of course; but that's what I should have to make up to her."

"Oh, you'd make it up to her."

With his hand on the knob, Collingham turned in mild indignation.

"Say, Hubert, what do you think I'm made of? A girl I'm crazy about—"

"Oh, I only wondered how you were going to do it."

"Well, wonder away." A steely glint came into the deep-set, small gray eyes as he added, "That's something I don't have to explain to you beforehand, now do I?"

Left alone, the painter went on painting. As it always does, the house of Art opened its door to the troubles of the artist. Wray neither turned his head as his friend went out nor muttered a farewell. He merely laid on his strokes with an emotional vigor which hardened the surface of the plaster cast into marble. Neither did he turn his head nor utter a greeting when he became aware that Jennie, in her sport suit of tobacco color set off with collar and cuffs of ruby red, was moving toward him among the studio properties. It was easier to work his desire to look at her into this swift, sure wielding of the brush.

In the spirit rather than with the eyes he knew that she had paused within ten or twelve feet of him, that her kind, soft, bantering glance was resting on him as he worked, and that a kind, soft, bantering smile was flickering about her lips. With a deft force, he found the colors and gave this expression to the mouth and eyes of the kneeling girl. It was the work of a second—the merest twist of the fingers.

"I just wanted to say," Jennie explained, after waiting for him to see her, "that I'm sorry to have been so horrid just now, and I'd like to know when I'm to come again."

"You could marry Bob Collingham—if you wanted to."

His efforts had become so passionately living that he couldn't afford to look up at her now, even had he wished to do so. He did not so wish, because he knew, still in the spirit, how she would

take this announcement—without the change of a muscle, without a change of any kind beyond a flame in the amber depths of the irises. It would be a tawny flame, with an indescribable red in it, and he managed, on the instant, to translate it into paint. The girl on her knees was getting a soul as the lumpish white of the plaster cast was taking on the gleam of ancient, long-worshiped stone.

"And would you advise me to do that?"

The voice had the charm of the well-placed mezzo, the enunciation a melodious precision. Born in Halifax, where she had spent her first twelve years, the English tradition of musical speech, which in that old fortified town makes its last tottering stand on the American continent, had been part of her inheritance.

Still working at his highest pitch of tensity, Wray considered his answer.

"I shouldn't advise you to do that—if I thought about myself."

"Then why say anything about it?"

"Because I thought I ought to put you wise."

"What's the good of that, when I don't like him?"

"Girls often marry men they don't like when they have as much money as he'll have."

"Money's an object, of course; but when a fellow—"

"He's not so bad. I like him. Most men do."

"Most men wouldn't have to stand his pawing them about. I like him, too—except for the physical."

"Then you wouldn't marry him?"

"Not unless it was the only way not to starve to death."

"But you'll marry some one."

"Probably; and, probably—so will you."

Her voice was as cool and unflurried as if the words were tossed off without intention.

Both knew that an electric change had come into the mental atmosphere. Of the two, the girl was the less perturbed. Though beneath her feet the floor seemed to heave like the deck of a ship in a storm, she could stand in a jaunty attitude, her hands in her ruby-red pockets, and throw up at its sauciest angle her daintily modeled chin.

With him it was different. He had two main points to consider. In the first place, Bob Collingham had just made an announcement to which he, Wray, was obliged to give some thought. He didn't need to give much to it, because the conclusions were so obvious. Jennie had hit the poor fellow in the eye, and, instead of viewing the case in a common-sense, Gallicized way, he was taking it with crazy American solemnity. There was nothing to it. The Collinghams would never stand for it. It would be a favor to them, as well as to Bob himself, to put the whole thing out of the question.

"So that settles that," he said to himself.

Because as he continued to reflect he worked furiously, Jennie saw in him the being whom the lingo of the hour had taught her to call a caveman. In the motion-picture theaters she generally

frequented, cavemen struggled with vampires in duels of passion and strength. Jennie longed to be loved by one of this race; and a caveman who came to her with violet eyes and a sweeping brown mustache possessed an appeal beyond the prehistoric. In spite of the challenge in her smile and the daring angle at which she held her chin, she waited in violent emotion for what he would say next.

"Oh, I sha'n't marry for years to come," he jerked out, still going on with his work. "Sha'n't be able to afford it. If I didn't have a few, a very few, hundred dollars a year, I couldn't pay you your miserable six a week."

She took this manfully. The head, with its ruby-red toque, to which a tobacco-colored wing gave the dash which was part of Jennie's personality, was perhaps poised a little more audaciously; but there was no other sign outside the wildness of her heart.

"Oh, well; you're only beginning your career as yet. One of these days you'll do a big portrait—"

"But, Jennie, marriage isn't everything."

It was the caveman's plea, the caveman's tone; and though Jennie knew she couldn't respond to it in practice, the depths of her being thrilled.

"No it isn't everything; but for a girl like me it's so much that—"

"Why specially for a girl like you?"

"Because her ring and her marriage lines are about all she's got to show. No woman can hold a man for more than—well, just so long; and when his heart's gone where is she, poor thing, except for the ring and the parson's name?"

"A woman's heart is as free as a man's; and when he goes his way—"

"She's left standing in the same old place. We'd all be better off if we felt as free to wander as the men; but most of us are made so that we don't want to. God! what a life!" she moaned, with a comic grimace to take the pain from the exclamation. "But, tell me, Mr. Wray, what day do you want me to come again?"

He asked, as if casually:

"Why do you say, 'God! what a life'?"

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose because it's the only thing *to* say. Wouldn't you say it if—"

"If what?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Is it anything to do with me?"

"No—not specially. It's everything—beginning with being born."

"I shouldn't think you had any kick against being born—with a face and a figure like yours."

"What good are they to me? My mother used to be—Well, I'm only pretty, and she was a great beauty—but look at her now."

"But you don't have to go the same way."

"All women of our class go the same way. It's awful to spend your whole life toiling and aching and worrying and scraping and paring just on the hither side of starving to death; and yet, if it

was only yourself, you could stand it. But when you see that your father and mother did it before you, and that your children will have to do it after you—"

"Not in this country, Jennie," he put in, sententiously. "This country gives everyone a chance."

She gave another of her comic little moans.

"This country is like every other country. It's a football field. If you're big enough and tough enough, with skin padded and conscience wadded, and legs to kick hard enough—you get a chance—yes—and one man in a hundred thousand is able to make use of it. But if you're just a decent, honest sort, willing to do a decent, honest day's work, your only chance will be to keep at it till you drop."

"Aren't you rather pessimistic?"

She ignored this question to pace up and down with little tossings of the hands which Wray found infinitely graceful.

"Look at my father. He's worked like a convict all his life, just to reach the magnificent top-notch of forty-five a week. We've been praying to God to give him a raise—"

"And perhaps God will."

She snapped her fingers. "Like that he will! God has no use for the prayers of the decent, honest sort. He's on the side of the football tough with the biggest kick in the scrimmage—Ah, what's the use? I'm born, and I've got to make the best of it. Tell me when to come again, and let me go."

Laying aside his brushes and palette, he went close to her. All the poetry in the world seemed to Jennie to vibrate in his tones.

"Making the best of it because you're born is loving and letting yourself be loved, Jennie."

"So it is." She laughed, with a ring of the desperate in her mirth. "You don't have to tell me that."

His voice sank to a whisper.

"Then why not do it?"

"I would like a shot if I had only myself to think about."

"In love, there are only two to think about, Jennie."

She laughed—a hard little laugh, in spite of its silvery tinkle.

"When I love I've got two sisters and a brother, all younger than myself, to bring into the little affair, to say nothing of a nice old dad and a mother that I'm very fond of. I've got to love for them as well as for myself—"

"Then why don't you love Bob Collingham?"

She threw him a reproachful look.

"Don't! Please don't! That's brutal of you! But then, you are brutal, aren't you? I suppose, if you weren't, I shouldn't—"

A little nondescript gesture expressed her thought better than she could have put it into words; and with this tribute to the caveman she slipped away again amid the brocades, pedestals, and old furniture.

CHAPTER III

Marillo Park, N. Y., is more than a park; it is a life. When a social correspondent registers the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bradley Collingham, Miss Edith Collingham, and Mr. Robert Bradley Collingham, Junior, have arrived at Collingham Lodge, Marillo Park, from their camp in the Adirondacks, their farm in Dutchess County, or their apartment in Fifth Avenue, the implications are beyond any that can be set forth in cold print. Cold print will tell you that a man has died, but it can convey no adequate notion of the haven of peace into which presumably he has entered.

Cold print might describe Marillo Park as it might describe Warwick Castle or the Château of Chenonceau, with a catalogue of landscapes and architectural minutiæ. It could tell you of charming houses set in artfully laid-out grounds, of gardens, shrubberies, and tennis courts, of the club, the swimming pool, the riding school, the golf links; but only experience could give you that sense of being beyond contact with outside vulgarity which is Marillo's specialty. Against its high stone wall outside vulgarity breaks as the sea against a cliff; before its beautiful grille gate it swirls like a river at the foot of a lawn with no possibility of overflow. As nearly as may be on earth, the resident of Marillo Park can be barricaded against the sordid, and withdrawn from all things inharmonious with his own high thought.

But every Eden has its serpent, and at Collingham Lodge on that October afternoon this Satan had taken the form of a not very good-looking young man who was pacing the flagged terrace side by side with Miss Edith Collingham. I emphasize the fact that he was not good-looking for the reason that, in his role of Satan, it was an added touch of the diabolic. Tall, thin, and stormy eyed, his knifelike features were streaked with dark shadows which seemed to fall in the wrong places in his face. When it is further said that he was a young professor of political economy in a near-by university, without a penny or much prospect in the world, it will easily be seen how devilish a creature he was to have crept into such a paradise.

He had crept in by means of being occasionally invited by young Sidebottom, whose family had the next estate to Collingham Lodge. Walls and hedges being unknown at Marillo, the lawns melted into one another with no other hint of demarcation than could be sketched by clumps of shrubs or skillfully scattered trees. You could be off the Collingham grounds and on to those of the Sidebottoms without knowing you had crossed a boundary. Between trees and shrubs you could slip from the one place to the other and not be seen from either.

"She might meet him a thousand times and you or I wouldn't know it," Mrs. Collingham had pointed out to her husband when her suspicions were first roused. "All she's got to do is to go round that lilac bush and she might do anything."

True; besides which, the mere chances of that hospitality without which Marillo could not be Marillo would throw together any two young people minded so to come. In such spacious freedom, an ineligible young professor could touch the hem of the garment of a banker's daughter without forcing the issue in any way.

With the conversation between Miss Edith Collingham and Professor Ernest Ayling we have almost nothing to do. It is enough to say that, from the rapidity of the young pair's movements and the animation of their gestures, Mrs. Collingham judged that they were very much in earnest. Looking out from what was known as the terrace drawing-room, she was convinced that no two young people could talk like that without an understanding between them.

She had been led to the terrace drawing-room by the sound of voices and the fact that it was the

end of the house toward the Sidebottoms' premises. Against a background of cannas, dahlias, and gladioli, with maples flinging their flame and crimson up into a golden sky, the two figures passing and repassing the long French windows were little more than silhouettes. Such scraps of their phrases as drifted her way told her that they were up to nothing more criminal than settling the affairs of a distracted universe, but she had no intention that they should settle anything. At the appropriate moment she decided to make her presence felt.

In doing this she was supported by the knowledge that her presence was a presence to be felt impressively. Of her profile, it was mere economy of effort to say that it was like a cameo, aristocratically regular and clear-cut. Her hair, prematurely white, lent itself to the simplest dressing, too classic to be a mode. A figure, of which it would have been vulgar to use the word "plump," carried the most sumptuous costumes with regal suitability. Studied, polished, and perfected, she wore her finish as a mask that concealed the lioness mother which she was.

It was the lioness mother who confronted the young couple as they turned in their promenade. Edith alone came forward. Her professor being given a bow so cold that it was tantamount to a dismissal, as a dismissal was obliged to take it. Within a minute, he was down both the flowered terraces and out of sight behind the lilac bush.

Mrs. Collingham's enunciation had the exquisite precision of the rest of her personality.

"I thought I asked you, dear, not to encourage that impossible young man to come here."

"But I can't stop his coming without encouragement, can I, mother darling?"

Mother darling moved to the edge of the flagged pavement, looking down on the blaze of summer's final fireworks. On each of the two lower terraces fountains played, their back drops falling on the water lillies in the basins. It being the moment for a strong appeal, she sounded the first note without turning round.

"Edith, I wonder if you have the faintest idea of a mother's ambitions for her children?"

Instinct had taken her to the root of the whole difference between the two generations in the family. Instinct took Edith to the same spot in her reply.

"I think I have. But, on the other hand, I wonder if a mother has the faintest idea of her children's ambitions for themselves."

Following an outflanking movement, Mrs. Collingham threw her line a little farther.

"It's curious how, as your father and I approach middle age, we feel that you and Bob are going to disappoint us."

"I'm sure I speak for Bob as well as for myself when I say that we wouldn't disappoint you willingly. It's only that the things we want are so different."

"Ours—your father's and mine—are simple and natural."

"That's the way Bob's and mine seem to us."

She was in a tennis costume carelessly worn and not very fresh. A weatherbeaten Panama pulled down to shade her eyes gave a touch of cowboy picturesqueness to an *ensemble* already picturesque rather than pretty or beautiful. Leaning nonchalantly against the high, carved back of a teakwood chair, the figure had a leopard grace to which the owner seemed indifferent. Indifference, boredom, dissatisfaction focused the expression of the delicate, irregular features to a wistful longing as far as possible from the mother's brisk self-approval. All this was emphasized by a pair of restless, intelligent eyes, of which one was blue and the other brown.

The mother turned round with an air of expostulation.

"I'm sure I can't see what you want to make of your life. You seem to have no ideals, not any more than Bob. You're not pretty, but you're not ugly; and you've a kind of witchiness most pretty girls have to do without. If you'd only dress with some decency and make the best of yourself, you could take as well as any other girl."

"Yes; if the game was worth the candle."

"But surely *some* game is worth the candle."

"Oh, certainly; only, not this one, of taking—in the way you seem to think girls want to take."

"Some girls do."

"Oh, some girls, of course—only, not—not my kind."

"But what *is* your kind? That's what I can't understand."

The girl smiled—a dim, distant, rather wistful smile that merely fluttered on the lips and died like a feeble light.

"And that's what I can't explain to you, mother darling."

"Are we so far apart as that?"

"We're not far apart at all. It's only that I'm myself, while you want me to be a continuation of you."

"I don't want anything but what will make for your happiness."

"My happiness as you see it for me—not as I see it for myself."

"But you're my child, Edith. I can't be without hopes for you."

Another dim, quickly dying smile was the only answer to this as Edith picked up her racket from the teakwood chair and moved toward the house. On a note that would have been plaintive had it not been so restrained, Mrs. Collingham continued:

"Edith darling, I don't think there's been a moment since you were born when I haven't dreamed of a brilliant future for you, and now—"

"But, oh, mother dear, what's the use of a brilliant future, as you call it, when your whole soul is set on something else?"

The lioness mother was roused.

"But it shouldn't be set on something else. That's what I resent. Don't think for a minute that your father and I mean to stand by and see you throw yourself away."

"I didn't know there was any question of my doing that."

"That boy will never be anything better than a university professor—never in this world; and if it comes to our forbidding it, forbid it we shall without hesitation."

The girl's head was flung up. Boredom and indifference passed out of the strange eyes. For an instant the conflict of wills seemed about to break out into mutual challenge. It was Edith who first regained enough mastery of self to say, quietly.

"You surely wouldn't take that responsibility—whatever I did."

The soft answer having warned the mother of the danger of collision, she subsided to an easier, if a more fretful, tone.

"And Bob's such a worry, too. If your father knew about this Follett girl, I think he would go wild."

"But we don't know anything ourselves—beyond the few hints dropped by Hubert Wray which I'm sure he didn't mean."

"Well, I'm worried. It's the war, I suppose. If he'd only settle down to work—"

"He won't settle down till he marries; and if he marries, it will have to be some girl he's in love with."

"If he were to marry a girl of that class—"

"Girl of what class? What's the good word?"

Mrs. Collingham turned on her son, who stood on the threshold of one of the French windows.

"We're talking about men and women marrying outside of their own class, Bob, and I was trying to say how fatal it was."

"Good Lord! mother, do people still think things like that? I thought they'd rung the bells on them even at Marillo. Wasn't it one of the things we fought for in the war—to wipe out the lines of caste?"

"But not to wipe out ideals, Bob. What fathers and mothers have worked to build up their sons fought to maintain."

Max, the police-dog puppy, who had been poking his nose between Bob's legs, now squeezed his vigorous person through the opening and came out on the terrace joyously. Wagging his powerful tail and sniffing about each of the ladies in turn, he seemed to be saying: "Don't you see that I'm here? Now cheer up, everybody, and let's have a good time."

Bob made a feint at seconding this invitation. Going up to his mother, he slipped an arm round her waist and kissed her.

"Old lady, you're years behind the times. What fathers and mothers built turned out to be a rotten old world which they've handed to us to bolster up. We're tackling the job as well as we can, but you must give us a free hand."

Releasing herself from his embrace, she stood with an air of authority.

"If giving you a free hand means looking on at the frustration of our hopes, you'll have to learn, Bob, that your father and mother still have some of the energy that placed you where you are."

"Of course you've placed us where we are, mother dear," Edith agreed, pacifically, "but that's just the point. Because we are where you've placed us, we're crazy to go on to something else. Isn't that the way of life—the perpetual struggle for what we haven't got? Because you and father didn't have a big house and a big position to begin with, you worked till you got them. Bob and I were born to them, and so—"

"It's this way, old lady," Bob broke in. "All your generation had bigness on the brain. It was a kind of disease like the water that swells a baby's head. They used to think it was a specially American disease till they found out it was English, French, German, and every other old thing. The whole lot of you puffed up till the earth hadn't room for you, and you made the war to push one another off."

"I didn't make the war, Bob. I've never been anything but a poor mother, striving and praying for her children."

"Well, you did push one another off—to the tune of ten or twelve millions, mostly the young. Since then, the universal disease of swelled head is being got under control, as they say of epidemics. Only the left-overs catch it still, and Edith and I aren't that. Hardly anyone of our age is. We just don't take the germ. Not that we blame you and your lot, old lady—"

"Thanks, Bob."

"Oh, don't thank me. I'm just telling you."

"And the point of your homily is—"

"That our generation all over the world has got out of Marillo Park. Marillo Park is a back number. It's as out of date as the hat you wore five years ago. You couldn't give it away to the poor, because the poor don't wear that kind of thing, and the rich have gone on to a new fashion. Listen, old lady. The thing I'd hate worst of all for dad and you is to see you left behind, trying to put over the footlights a lot of old gags that the audience swallowed in its time, but which don't get a laugh any more. The actor who tries to do that is pass-ay forever—"

"If you'd keep to English, Bob, I should understand you a little better."

Bob grew excited, laying down the law on the palm of his left hand with the forefinger of the right, while Max, all aquiver, scored the points with his terrific tail.

"I'll not only keep to English, but I'll tell you the line to take if you want to remain the up-to-date, bright-as-a-button old lady you are."

"I should be grateful."

"Then here goes. Take a long breath. Keep your wig on. Put your feet in plaster casts so as not to kick." He summoned his forces to speak strongly. "If Edith was to pick out a man she wanted to marry—and I was to pick out a girl—no matter who—it would be the chic new stuff for father and you—"

But the chic new stuff for father and her was not laid down on the palm of the hand for the reason that a portly shadow was seen to move within the dimness of the drawing-room. At the same time, Max's joy was stifled by the appearance on the terrace of Dauphin, the Irish setter, who was consciously the dog *en tître* of the master of the house. Mrs. Collingham composed herself. Edith picked up a tennis ball from the flags and jumped it on her racket. Bob put a cigarette in his mouth and struck a match. It was the unwritten law of the family not to risk intimate discussion before a tribunal too august.

Once he had reached the terrace, it was plain that Collingham was tired. His shoulders were hunched; his walk had no spring in it.

"I'm all in," he sighed, sinking into the teakwood chair.

"Poor father!"

Edith dropped a hand on his shoulder. He drew it down to his lips and kissed it.

"You'd like your tea, wouldn't you?" The solicitude was his wife's. "We were just going to have it. Bob, do find Gossip and tell him to bring it here."

Bob limped into the house and out again. By the time he had returned, his father was saying:

"Yes; it's been a trying day. Among other things I've had to dismiss old Follett."

"The devil you have!"

The exclamation was so heartfelt as to turn all eyes on the young man.

"Why, Bob dear," his mother asked, craftily, "what difference does it make to you?"

Bob did his best to recapture a position he was not yet ready to abandon.

"It may not make any difference to me, but—but how is he going to live?"

"Is that your responsibility?"

Edith came to her brother's rescue.

"It's some one's responsibility, mother."

"Then let some one shoulder it. Bob doesn't have to saddle himself with it, unless—"

Convinced that, in the presence of his father, his mother wouldn't speak too openly, Bob felt safe in a challenge.

"Yes, mother? Unless—what?"

Mother and son exchanged a long look.

"Unless you go—very far out of your way."

"Well, suppose I did go—very far out of my way?"

"I should have to leave it with your father to deal with that."

"Well, it wouldn't be the first time dad's been philanthropic."

Collingham looked up wearily. He was sitting with one leg thrown across the other, his left hand stroking Dauphin's silky head.

"You can be as philanthropic as you like outside business, Bob," he said, with schooled, hopeless conviction. "Inside, it's no go. Once you admit the principle of treating your employees philanthropically, business methods are at an end."

"I don't think modern economics would agree with you, daddy," Edith objected. "Aren't we beginning to realize that the well-being of employees, even when they're no longer of much use —"

Collingham looked up with a kind of longing in his eyes.

"I wish I could believe that, Edie, but an efficiency expert wouldn't bear you out."

"An efficiency expert doesn't know everything. He studies nothing but the individual private, whereas a political economist knows what's going on all up and down the line."

To Collingham this was like the doctrine of universal salvation to a Calvinist theologian. He would have seized it had he dared, but for daring it was too late. He had trained himself otherwise. On a basis of expert advice and individual efficiency Collingham & Law's had been built up. All he could do was to grasp at the personal.

"Where did you hear that?"

"You can read all about it in Mr. Ayling's last book, *The Economic Value of Good Will*."

As she passed through the French window into the house, her mother turned with a gesture of both outspread hands.

"There! You see! What did I tell you? She has the effrontery to read his books and name him openly."

But too dispirited to take up the gauntlet, Collingham looked, with welcome, toward Gossip, who appeared in the doorway with the tea.

CHAPTER IV

The Folletts came together every evening about six, chiefly by the process known to American cities as commuting. Commuting brought them to Number Eleven Indiana Avenue, Pemberton Heights. Seen from the New York river-front, Pemberton Heights, on top of a great cliff on the New Jersey side of the Hudson, suggests a battlemented parapet. By day, its outline is a fringe against the sky; by night, its clustering lights are like a constellation.

Indiana Avenue is one of those rare spots in the neighborhood of New York where a measure of beauty is still reserved for the relatively poor. The heights are too high for the railways to scale, too inconvenient for factories. The not-very-well-to-do can find shelter there, as the mediæval peoples of the Mediterranean coast found it in the rock towns where the pirates couldn't follow them. It is hardly conceivable that industry will ever climb to this uncomfortable perch, or that much competition will put up rents. Too inaccessible for the social rich, and too isolated for the still more social poor, Pemberton Heights is the refuge of those who don't mind the trouble of getting there for the sake of the compensation.

The compensation is largely in the way of air and panorama. Both have a tendency to take away your breath. You would hardly believe that so much of New York could be visible all at once. The gigantic profile of Manhattan is sketched in here with a single stroke, while the river is thronged like a busy street seen from the top of a tower. City smoke rolls up and ocean mist rolls in while you are looking on. Sunrise, moonrise; moonset, sunset; stars in the heaven and lights along the darkened waterway, afford to the not-very-well-to-do, cooped up all day in kitchens, offices, and factories, a morning and evening glimpse into the ecstatic.

Number Eleven was somewhat withdrawn from all this toward the middle of the plateau. Built at a period when an architect's ambition was chiefly to do something singular, it had a great deal of sloping roof, with windows where you would not expect them. Pemberton Heights being held up bravely to rain and snow, the color of the house was a weatherbeaten brown. Two hydrangea trees, shaped like open umbrellas, and covered now with white blossoms fading to rose, stood one on each side of the front door in the center of two tiny grassplots. There was a piazza, of course, where most of the family leisure was passed, and in the yard behind the house there stood a cherry tree. All up and down the street for the length of about half a mile were similar little houses, each with its piazza and its architectural oddity, homes of the not-very-well-to-do, content with their relative poverty. Among themselves they formed a society as distinct and as active as that of Marillo Park, and out of it they got as much pleasure as the Sidebottoms and Collinghams from their more exclusive forgatherings.

In this soil, the Folletts had taken root with the ease of transplantation of the Anglo-Saxon race. Drawn to Pemberton Heights by the presence there of other Canadians, Josiah had bought the little house for seven thousand dollars. On this he had paid four, raising the other three on a mortgage which it was his ruling desire to pay off. The mild, tenacious optimism of his nature convinced him he should be able to do this, in spite of the danger of being "fired" hanging over him for two years. The fact that, though the months kept passing, that sword didn't fall inspired the belief that it never would. He had grown so sure of this that with regard to the warning issued by Collingham he had never taken his wife into his confidence. For one thing, it was useless to alarm her when it might be without cause, and for another....

But that was the secret tragedy of Josiah's life. He had not made good the promise he gave when Lizzie Scarborough married him, and the falling of the sword would be the final proof of it. It would mean that his whole patient, painstaking life had fitted him for nothing better than the

scrap heap. That he should come to such an end he couldn't believe possible. That after nearly fifty years of uncomplaining drudgery he should be flung aside as useless to man in general and worse than useless to his family was not, he argued, in keeping with the will of God. It was to the will of God he trusted more than to the mercy of Bradley Collingham, though he trusted to them both.

When he married Lizzie in the little town of Lisgar, Nova Scotia, he had been a bank clerk. A bank clerk in Canada is a kind of young nobleman at the beginning of what may be a striking career, after the manner of a fledgling in diplomacy. The banking institutions being few and large, the employees are moved from post to post, much like *attachés* or army officers. As moves bring promotion, the clerk becomes a teller and the teller a cashier and the cashier a branch manager and the branch manager a wealthy man in touch with world-wide issues. It was the kind of progress Josiah expected when he married Lizzie Scarborough, the kind of future they dreamed of and talked about, and which never came.

Josiah lacked something. You couldn't put your finger on the flaw in his energy, but you knew it was there. He was moved about, of course, but with little or no promotion. Other men got that, but he was ignored. Harum-scarum young fellows whose ignorance of bookkeeping was a scandal were lifted over his head, while he and Lizzie stared at each other in perplexity.

Hardest of all for him was that, as years went by, Lizzie herself lost belief in him. More tender with him for his failure, she nevertheless saw that he was not the man she had supposed in the gay young days at Lisgar, and he saw that she saw. She gave up the hope of promotion before he did. The best to which they came to aspire was a "raise."

It was bitter for Lizzie because, as she was fond of saying to herself, and now and then to the children, she had been born a lady. This was no more than the truth. Whatever the meaning given to the word, Lizzie fulfilled it, though her claims were more than moral ones. The Scarboroughs had been great people in Massachusetts before the Revolution. The old Scarborough mansion, still standing in Cambridge, bears witness to the generous scale on which they lived. But they left it as it stood, with its pictures, its silver, its furniture, its stores, rather than break their tie with England. Scorned by the country from which they fled, and ignored by that to which they remained true, their history on Nova-Scotian soil was chiefly one of descent. A few of them prospered; a few reached high positions in the adopted land, but most of them lacked opportunity as well as the will to create it. True, Lizzie's father was a clergyman; but her sisters married poorly, her brothers dropped into any chance jobs that came their way, while she herself got only such fulfillment of her dreams as she found at Pemberton Heights. Even the move to New York which Josiah had made when convinced that the Bank of the Maritime Provinces held no further hope for him had not greatly prospered them. Five years of drifting between one bank and another were followed by five steady years with Collingham & Law; but even that peaceful time was now at an end.

While the Collinghams were drinking tea on the flagged terrace, and Jennie was on the ferryboat, and Teddy dressing and skylarking after his plunge at the gym, and Follett nearing home, Lizzie was on her knees pinning up the draperies she was "making over" for Gussie. Pansy, the daughter of a bulldog and a Boston terrier, whose pansy-face had in it a more than human yearning, stood looking on, with forelegs wide apart.

Gussie was fifteen, pretty, pert, and impatient.

"Everyone'll see that it's the old thing you've been wearing since I dunno when."

Accustomed to this plaint, Lizzie thought it useless to reply.

"I'd rather not have a rag to wear than a thing everyone's sick of the sight of. Momma, why can't I have a new dress, right out and out?"

"My darling, you'll have a new dress when your father gets his raise. It must come before long; but I can't possibly give it you till then."

"I wish you'd stop talking," came from Gladys, who was busy with her lessons in a corner. "How can I study with all this row going on? Momma, what's the meaning of 'coagulation'?"

Coagulation explained, the fitting finished, and a dispute adjusted between the two children, Lizzie began to spread the table for supper, Gussie helping her. Most of the downstairs portion of the house being thrown into one large living room, the dining table stood at the end nearest the kitchen and pantry. It was a pleasure to watch the supple movements of Gussie's figure, and the flittings of her slim-wristed hands as she took the plates and laid them in their places. Most people said she would one day be prettier than Jennie, but as yet that was only promise.

Quite apparent was the fact that the mother had been more beautiful than any of her daughters was ever likely to become. At fifty-odd, it was a beauty that still had youth in it. Worn with the duties of providing for a husband and four children, it retained a quality proud and aloof. In her scouring and cooking and endless domestic round, Lizzie was like an actress dressed and made up for a humble part rather than really living it. The Scarborough tradition, which had first refused to bend to king against people and again to yield to people against king, had survived in this woman fighting for her inner life against failure, poverty, and sordidness.

She was singing at her work when the front door opened and Josiah came in. He stood for a minute in the little entry, surveying the living-room absently, while Pansy pranced about his feet. Gladys was still at her lessons, Gussie laying out the knives and forks.

"Where's your mother?"

Gladys jumped up and ran to him. She was his youngest, his darling, just over twelve. He had always hoped to do better by her than by the older ones.

"Hello, daddy!" With her arms round his neck, she was pulling his face down to hers.

"Where's your mother?" he asked of Gussie, having advanced into the room.

Gussie looked up from her task to inform him that her mother was in the kitchen, but, seeing his gray face and shambling gait, she paused with a fork in her hand.

"You're all right, daddy, aren't you?"

The sound of voices having called Lizzie from her work, she stood on the threshold of the pantry, drying her hands on the corner of her apron. Before he said a word she knew that the calamity which forever threatens those dependent on a weekly wage had fallen on the family.

"Lizzie, I'm fired."

She had never had to take a blow like this, not even when the three who came before Jennie had died in babyhood. This was the worst and hardest thing her imagination could conjure up, because it meant not only the sweeping away of their meager income, but her husband's defeat as a man.

Going to him, she laid her hands on his shoulders and tried to look into the eyes that avoided hers in shame.

"We'll meet it, Jo," she said, quietly. "We've been through other things. I've saved a little money ahead—nearly a hundred dollars. Don't feel badly. I'm glad you're out of Collingham & Law's, where you've said yourself that your desk was in a draught. You'll get another job, with bigger pay, and perhaps"—she sprang to the great glorious hope she was always cherishing—"and perhaps Teddy will earn more money and be a great success."

"*Hel*-lo, ma!"

Teddy himself was swinging down the room, Pansy capering round him with her silvery bark.

Having tossed his cap on the sofa, he caught his mother in a bearish hug. Fresh from his bath, gleaming, ruddy, clear-eyed, stocky rather than short, he was a Herculean cub, the makings of a man, but as yet with no soul beyond play. No one had ever seen him serious. It was a drawback to him at Collingham & Law's, where he skylarked his way through everything. "You must knock the song-and-dance out of that young blood," was Mr. Bickley's report on him, "or he'll never earn his pay."

Before his mother could say anything he was tickling her under the chin with little "clks!" of the tongue, Pansy assisting by springing halfway to his shoulder. The sport ended, he held her out at his strong arm's length, laughing down into her eyes.

"Good old ma!—the best ever! What have you got for supper?"

She told him, as nearly as possible as if nothing else was on her mind. Then she added:

"You've got to know, Teddy darling. They've discharged your father from Collingham & Law's."

Confusedly, Teddy Follett knew he had received a summons, the call to be a man. Hitherto he had been a boy; he had thought himself a boy; he had called himself a boy. Even in the navy he had been with boys who were treated as boys. The pang of agony he felt now was that he was a boy still—with a man's part to play.

He did his best to play it on the instant.

"Oh, is he? Then that's all right. I'll be making more money soon and be able to swing the whole thing."

Gussie was here the discordant element.

"You've got to make it pretty quick, then, and be smarter than you've ever been before."

He turned away from the group in which his mother watched him with adoring eyes while his father stood with gaze cast down like a criminal.

"I'm sorry to put the burden on you at your age, my boy," he said, brokenly, "but perhaps I may get another job, after all, and one that'll pay better."

Teddy didn't hear this, not that he was so far away, but because he was listening to that call which seemed so impossible to respond to. He would *have* to be a man; he would *have* to earn big money, and at present he didn't see how. Fifty bucks a week, he was saying to himself, was hardly enough to run the family, and he had only eighteen!

He was standing with his back to them all, his hands in his pockets, when the front door opened again. Jennie came in all aglow and abloom after her walk from the street cars.

"Well, what's the pose?" she asked, briskly, of Teddy, beginning to take off her jacket. "You ought to be model to a sculptor."

"Jen," he whispered, hoarsely, before she could join the others, "pa's fired."

To take this information in, Jennie paused with her arms still outstretched in the act of taking off her jacket.

"Do you mean they don't want him any more at Collingham & Law's?"

"That's the right number."

"But—but what are we going to do?"

"That's for you and me to say. It's up to us, Jen. Pa'll never get another job, not on your life, unless it's running a lift. We've got to shoulder it—you and me between us."

Jennie passed on into the room and down to the group round the table. The glow had gone out of her cheeks, but she was free from her brother's dismay. To begin with, she was a woman, and he was only a man. All his adventures would have to be dull ones in the line of work whereas hers.... She could hear Wray saying, as he had said only two hours ago, "You could marry Bob Collingham if you wanted to."

She didn't want to—as far as that went; but if the worst were to come to the worst and they should be in need of bread....

"Hello, mother! Hello, daddy!" Jennie was quite self-possessed. "Teddy's been telling me. Too bad, isn't 't? But something will turn up. What is there for supper, Gus?"

Gussie minced round the table, putting on the salt cellars.

"There's pickled humming birds for princesses," she said, witheringly. "After that there'll be honey-dew jam."

"Then I'll go up and take my hat off."

This coolness had the inspiriting effect of an officer's calm on a sinking ship. It was an indication that life could go on as usual; and if life could go on as usual, all wasn't lost.

"And for mercy's sake," Jennie added, turning to leave them, "don't everybody look so glum. Why, if you knew what I could tell you you'd all be ordering champagne."

So they were tided over the dreadful minute, which meant that they found power to go on with the preparations for supper and to sit down to supper itself. There the old man cheered up sufficiently to be able to tell what had passed between him and the head of the firm. He was still doing this when Teddy sprang to his feet, striking the table with a blow that made the dishes jump.

"God damn Bradley Collingham!" he cried, with his mouth full. "I'll do something to get even with him yet—if I have to go to the chair for it."

"Sit down, you great gump—talking like that!" Gussie pulled her brother by the coat till he sank back into his seat. "Momma, you should send him away from the table."

"That's a very wicked thing to say, my boy—" Josiah was beginning.

"Let him talk as he likes," the mother broke in, calmly. "Going to the chair can't be so terrible—if you have a reason."

She went on carving as if she had said nothing strange.

"Well, ma, I call that the limit," Jennie commented.

"Oh no, it isn't," the mother returned, with the new strength which seemed to have come to her within half an hour. "I'm ready to say a good deal more."

She looked adoringly toward Teddy, who after his outburst had returned sheepishly to his plate, while Pansy stood apart from them all, wise, yearning, and yet implacable, a little doggy Fate.

CHAPTER V

No difference of standard in the Collingham household was so obvious as that between Dauphin, the Irish setter, and Max, the police dog. The situation was specially hard on Dauphin. To have owned Collingham Lodge and its occupants during all his conscious life, and then one day to find himself obliged to share this dominion with a stranger had given him in his declining years a pessimistic point of view. It had made him proud, cold, withdrawn, like a crusty old aristocrat forced in among base company. To the best of his ability he ignored the police dog, though it was difficult not to be aware of the presence of a being too exuberant to appreciate disdain.

For Dauphin, the most beastly experience of the day began about four each afternoon, at the minute when the dog-clock told him that his master might be expected home. That was the hour at which from time immemorial he had taken possession of the great front portico where the distant burr of the motor-car first reached him. When the burr became a throb he knew it was passing the oak that marked the Collingham boundary; and, since it had arrived on his own ground, he could run down the driveway to meet it. This had been his exclusive right. To be joined daily now by a frisky, irrepressible pup made him feel like an old man tied to an insupportable young wife from whom his own death will be the sole deliverance. Life to Dauphin had thus become a mingling of impatience and anguish, poorly masked beneath an air of dignity.

And as far as he could judge, his master's wife, of whom he had no great opinion, had begun to share these emotions. Anguish and impatience had become of late the chief elements in the aura she threw out, and by which dogs take their sense of men. It was not that her words or expressions betrayed her. It was only that when she came within his sphere of perception he was aware that she felt the kind of passion the police dog roused in himself.

He was aware of it on this May afternoon, more than six months after she had first learned of Bob's infatuation for the Follett girl, when she came out on the portico to listen for the expected car. She would come out, listen, and go in. Each time she came out, each time she listened, each time she retired, he felt the sweeping to and fro of an imperious will worried or frustrated, though he sat on his haunches and gave no sign. He couldn't give a sign, because Max would misunderstand it. There he was, down on the lawn before the portico, grinning, prancing, joking, calling names—names quite audible in dog intercourse, though a human being couldn't catch them—and the least little movement Dauphin made would be taken as concession. The old setter was sorry. He would have liked showing his master's wife—he didn't consider her his mistress—that he understood her distress; but he was nailed to the doorstep by *force majeure*.

And the woman envied him. He was perfectly aware of that. She assumed that dogs had no social problems. All he had to do, she thought, was to sit and blink at the magnolias, hawthorns, and lilacs pursuing one another into bloom. All he had to think of was the up hill and down dale of the view before him, a haze of blue and green and rose melting to the mauve of hills.

As a matter of fact, this was something like what was passing through her mind. A masterful woman, she was nevertheless reaching that point of self-pity where she envied the untroubled dogs. While she carried the cares of so many others, no one else carried hers. All through the winter she had had Edith and Bob on her mind, and now she had Bradley. On leaving for the bank that morning, he had been so terribly upset that she couldn't rest till knowing how he had got through his day. She was the more worried because of being entirely alone and thus thrown in on herself.

Edith had gone to stay with people in the Berkshires. Of that her mother was glad. She meant for

the present to keep her there. With her queer ideas, she would only make her brother the more difficult to deal with, though she had not been difficult herself. Nearly seven months had passed, and yet her affair with Ayling was exactly where it had been in the previous October. That was the advantage of a girl; you could always tell where she stood. Edith was tenacious, but not defiant. Though capable of engaging herself to this young man, she would hardly marry him in face of her father's opposition.

Bob, on the other hand, was not only head-strong, but unreasonable. He would marry the Follett girl if she would marry him, whatever might be the consequences. She, his mother, had it "out" with him, and he had said so. It was a terrible thing to have their whole domestic happiness hang on the whim of a creature like the Follett girl; but apparently it did.

She had not spoken to Bob till Hubert Wray had surrendered all he had to tell. He had done this through a process of "pumping" of which he himself had hardly been aware. Having ascertained that his New England connections were unexceptional, Junia had been attentive to him through the winter, making him feel that Collingham Lodge was a second home. What he didn't tell to her he told to Edith, and what Edith knew the mother had no great difficulty in finding out. Thus when, on the previous Saturday, Bob was about to leave for a party on Long Island, they had had the plain talk which could no longer be deferred.

They had had it after lunch, seated on a bench overlooking the tennis court. They had come out ostensibly to talk over the sacrifice of the pink-and-white hawthorn in the shade of which they sat in favor of extending the court so that Bob and Edith could both have parties simultaneously. While the new court would be an improvement, they would regret the celestial flowering of the hawthorn whenever, as at present, it was May.

"Not that it would make so very much difference to your father and me," Junia began, in a quavering tone, "if things we're afraid of were to happen."

So the subject was opened up. Bob could only ask, "What things?" and his mother could only tell him.

"It's quite true, old lady," he confessed. "You might as well know it first as last."

Junia had not brought up her children without having learned that, while Edith could be controlled, Bob could only be managed. With Edith, she could say, "I forbid," with Bob, it had to be, "I suffer."

"Of course, dear," she said now, "I'm your mother, and whatever you do I shall try to accept. It will be hard, naturally—it's hard already—but you can count on me."

He took her hand and squeezed it.

"Thanks, old lady."

"Of course I can't answer for your father. You know for yourself how stern and unyielding he is."

"Oh, I'm not so sure about that. It's always seemed to me that he'd give in to a lot of things, if you'd only let him."

This perspicacity being dangerous, she glided to another aspect of her theme.

"What I don't understand is why, if you've been in love with her for seven or eight months, and you mean to marry her, you haven't done it already."

He took two or three puffs at his cigarette before tossing off:

"I'd do it like a shot, if she would."

"And she won't?"

"Not yet."

"And you think she will?"

"I'm sure she will."

"What makes you so certain?"

"Nothing. I just know."

Having had her fears verified, Junia had no object in pushing the inquiry further. Her duty in life was to take events as they touched her family and mold them for the best. When she called it "the best" she meant it as the best. She was not a worldly woman with mere fashionable ends in view. Eager for the good of her children, she was conscientious in pursuit of the things she truly believed to be worthiest.

All through Sunday she took counsel with herself, going to communion at the restful little Marillo church, and putting new intensity into her devotion. She had guests at lunch and went out to dinner, and, though equal to all the social demands, her mind did not relinquish the purpose she had in view. Could she have accomplished it without her husband's aid, she would probably not have taken him into her confidence. It being her special task to deal with the children, the less he knew of their mistakes and escapades the simpler it was for them all.

It may be an illuminating digression here to say that there had been a time, some fifteen years earlier, when Junia had had an experience as difficult as the one she was facing now. Nothing but a trained subconsciousness had carried her through that, and she looked for the same mainstay of the self to come to her aid again. One of the lessons she had learned at that time was the value of quietude, of reserve in "giving herself away." She was not one to whom this restraint came natural; but for the very reason that it was acquired, it had the intenser force.

It was at a time when they had lived in the Marillo house only a little while, and the Bradley of that day was not the portly, domesticated bigwig of the present. He was a tempestuous sea of passions right at the dangerous flood-tide, the middle forties. The first ardor of married life was at an end for both of them; but while, for her, existence was running more and more into one quiet purposeful stream, for him it was raging off in new directions.

Whatever Junia suspected she was too wise to know it as a certainty. Knowing, she argued, would probably weaken her and do nothing to strengthen him. Already she was more intensely a mother than she was a wife, living in the amazing careers she was planning for her children. Edith would marry an English peer, while Bob would take a brilliant place in his own country. Their victories would be her victories, till, in some far-distant, beatified old age, she would be translated to the stars.

And then one afternoon, when the flagged pavement had only recently been laid and they were drinking tea on it, Bradley had said, right out of a clear sky:

"Junia I don't know whether you've suspected it or not, but for some time past I've had a mistress."

That was the instant when she first learned the value of a schooled subconsciousness. It seemed to her that she had been slain; and yet, with a nerve little less than miraculous, she went on with her tasks among the tea things.

"If you've done it so far without telling me, Bradley," she said, at last, with only the slightest tremor in her tone, "why shouldn't you let me remain ignorant?"

"Does that mean that you don't care if I go on?"

"I think you can answer that as well as I. What I don't care for is to be drawn into an affair from which your own good taste—merely to put it on that ground—should be anxious to leave me out."

He looked at her savagely.

"Don't you resent it any more than that?"

"Is that why you're giving me the information—to see how much I resent it?"

"Partly."

"Then I'm afraid you will have your labor for your pains. You'll never see more than you're seeing at this instant."

That stand was a master stroke. It gave her the advantage of being enigmatic. It enabled her to take blows without seeming to have felt them, and to deliver them without betraying the quarter from which the next would come.

Right there and then Bradley had been monstrous enough to suggest that, since she liked Collingham Lodge, she should remain there and let him go away. He would make generous provision for her and the children, and in return expect his divorce.

But she had taken her stand—the enigmatic. She didn't argue; she didn't plead; she didn't reproach him; she didn't treat him to the scene through which weaker women would have put him.

"Bradley, I shall expect you to remain with me," were the only words she used.

And he had remained. Less than two years later, it was she who fixed the sum the other woman was to be paid in order to get rid of her. She was sufficiently in sympathy with her sex to insist on the terms being liberal. "I think she should have fifty thousand dollars," she declared, and fifty thousand dollars the woman received.

So that, if Bradley had lost the first passion of his love for her, he had gained vastly in respect. Hot-tempered, high-handed, impetuous, imperious, as he knew her to be, he saw her curb and compress these qualities till they became a prodigious motor force. If she had not mastered herself, she had mastered the expression of herself till she was an instrument at her own command.

It was as an instrument at her own command that, on the Wednesday morning, before he went to town, she gave her husband as much information as she thought he ought to possess about his son.

"Would you mind sitting down for a minute, Bradley? I've something important to say."

He had come up to her room, as she took her breakfast in bed, after he had had his own downstairs. Wearing a lace dressing jacket and a boudoir cap, she was propped up with pillows, a wicker tray with legs on the coverlet before her. In the canopied Louis Quinze bed of old rich-grained walnut, raised six inches above the floor, she suggested an eighteenth-century French princess, Madame Sophie or Madame Victoire, receiving a courtier at her *levée*.

Luxurious with a note of chastity was the rest of the chintzy room. The pictures on the walls were sacred ones, copies of old Italian masters. A *prie-dieu* in a corner supported a bible and a prayer-book in tooled bindings with a coat of arms. The white-paneled wardrobe room seen through a door ajar was as austere as a well-kept sacristy. Perfumed air came in through the open windows, and thrushes were fluting in the trees.

Reminding her that Tims, the chauffeur, would soon be at the door to take him to the bank, Collingham sank into the armchair nearest to the bed. His thoughts were on the amount in the

proposed issue of Paraguayan bonds the house would be able to carry.

"It's about Bob," she began, in a tone little more than casual. "Did you know he was in a scrape?"

He started, firing off his brief questions rapidly:

"Who? Bob? What kind of scrape? With a girl?"

"Exactly. With a girl who may give us a good deal of trouble unless the thing is stopped."

If Collingham's heart sank it was not wholly because of the scrape with the girl, but because he was afraid of chickens coming home to roost. Though he had never broached the subject with the boy, he had often wondered as to how he met sexual temptation; and now he was to learn.

"Is it anything very wrong?"

"Only in intention." She sipped her coffee before letting him have the full force of it. "He wants to marry her."

He felt some slight relief.

"Oh, then it's not—"

"No; not as far as he's concerned. As to her—well I presume that she's the usual type."

"Did he tell you himself?"

"He told me himself."

"His job at the bank pays him only two thousand dollars a year. Did he say what else he expected to marry on?"

"We didn't discuss that; but I suppose it would be what he expects you to give him."

"And if I don't give him anything?"

"That's what I wanted to know. If you didn't—"

"He'd call it off?"

"No; perhaps not. But she would."

"Have you any special reason for thinking so?"

"None but my knowledge of—of that kind of woman in general." She went on as quietly as if the incident of fifteen years previously had never occurred. "Men are so guileless about women who have—who have love to sell. They're such simpletons. They so easily think these women like them for themselves when all the while they're only gauging the measure of the pocketbook."

Collingham endeavored not to hang his head, but it seemed to go down in spite of him as the placid voice sketched his program for the day.

Junia had heard her husband say that Mr. Huntley, his second in command, was to go to South America in connection with the issue of Paraguayan bonds. Why shouldn't Bob be sent with him? It would add to his experience and make him feel important. After he had left Asuncion, reasons could be found for keeping him at Lima, Rio, or Buenos Aires till the whole thing blew over. Having accepted the suggestion gratefully, Collingham came to the question he had up to now repressed.

"Who's the girl? I suppose you know."

"She's been posing for Hubert Wray. Bob met her at the studio. Her name is—"

Grasping the arms of the chair, he strained forward.

"Not—not Follett's girl?"

"Yes; that *is* the name. You dismissed her father from the bank last year." Her eyes followed him as he stumbled to his feet. "But what difference does it make whether it's she or some one else?"

He couldn't tell her. The fear of the vague nemesis he called "chickens coming home to roost" was too obscure. Listening in a daze to the rest of his instructions, he seized them chiefly because they would ease the line he was to take with Bob.

He was to give him no hint that he, the father, had heard anything of the Follett girl. The South American mission could stand on its own merits as extremely flattering. Whatever reluctance Bob might feel, he would see the opportunity as too important to forego. All Junia begged of her husband was to know nothing of Bob's love affairs. If Bob himself brought the subject up, it would be enough to remain firm on the question of money. Of the rest, Junia was willing to take charge, as she would explain to him when he came home in the afternoon.

These instructions Collingham did his best to carry out. At lunch, in the house's private room at the Bowling Green Club, he approached Mr. Huntley on the subject of being responsible for Bob on the errand to Asuncion, and Mr. Huntley expressed himself as delighted. On returning to the bank, Collingham asked Miss Ruddick to bring the young man to the private office.

"Hello, Bob! How are things going?"

"So, so, dad," Bob admitted, guardedly.

"Sit down. I want to talk to you."

Bob sat down gingerly, warily, scenting something in the wind, much like Max or Dauphin from a person's atmosphere. Whatever his mother had been told on Saturday, his father might have learned by Wednesday. Bob would have been sure of this were it not that his mother often had curious reserves.

For Collingham there was nothing to do but to plunge on the subject of South America, and he plunged. But, in his dread of the roosting chicken, he plunged nervously, with a tendency to redden, to stammer, and otherwise to betray himself. Before he had finished Bob was saying inwardly: "Mother's put him wise to Jennie and I'm to be packed off. Well, we'll see."

"It's thumping good of you and Mr. Huntley, dad," he said, aloud; "and I suppose it would do if I gave you my answer in a day or two."

"That's the girl," the father thought; but he obeyed Junia's injunction as to not being explicit when it came to words.

"You see, it's this way, Bob: It's not exactly an invitation that I'm giving you; it's—it's a decision of the bank of which you're an employee. We take it for granted that you'll go if we want to send you."

"And I take it for granted that you won't send me if I don't want to go."

Not to force the issue, Collingham left the matter there, preferring to consult Junia as to what he should do next. To this end, he drove home earlier than usual.

It added to Dauphin's irritation that Max should hear the motor first. With ears cocked like a

donkey's, how could he help it? There was nothing in the world that Dauphin despised as he despised the police dog's ears. They were forever pointed, alert, inquisitive, ignoble. But there it was! Max was bounding down the driveway, covering yards at a spring, before the setter could drag himself from his haunches. It was Max, too, who, when the motor passed the oak, gave the first yelp of delight.

But it was Dauphin who, as his master descended from the car, entered into his depression. It was he, too, who perceived the conflict of auras when wife and husband met. Waves of unreasoned dread on the one side encountered a force of clear-eyed determination on the other as the weltering sea comes up against the steadfast rocks.

They began talking as they turned to enter the house, continuing the conversation within the great hall, where only the strip of red carpet running its length and up the fine stairway, two or three bits of old carved English oak, and the brass touches on the wrought-iron baluster, relieved the admirable nudity.

"Now come in here," she said, briskly, having heard all that had passed between him and Bob.

He followed her into the library, where she led the way to the desk.

"Read that."

He ran his eye over the lines written in her legible, decorative hand.

> Collingham Lodge,
> Marillo Park.
>
> Dear Miss Follett:
>
> My husband and I would be greatly obliged if you could give us a half hour of your time to talk over matters which may prove as important to you as to us. If you could make it convenient to come here to-morrow, Thursday, afternoon, you would find a very good train at three-twenty-five, and one by which to return at five-forty-seven. I inclose a time-table, and you would be met at Marillo Station.
>
> Yours sincerely,
> Junia Collingham.

He looked at her wonderingly.

"What's the big idea?"

"A very big idea. Don't you see? We can cut the ground right from under his feet without his ever thinking we had anything to do with it. You personally needn't be supposed to know that this nonsense has ever been in the air. It's too late for me, of course, because he and I have already talked of it. But for you—"

He tapped the paper in his hand.

"But this move I don't understand."

"Well, sit down and I'll tell you."

CHAPTER VI

At the minute when Junia Collingham was laying before her husband a plan which would bring comparative wealth to the Follett family, a number of things were happening in and about New York.

First, Lizzie Follett had dropped into a chair to think, an action rare with her. She generally thought as she whisked about her work, but this problem called for concentration. Briefly, it was as to how to cook the supper without heat. The gas-man had just gone away, and the gas for the range had been cut off because she couldn't pay a bill of twenty-nine dollars and sixty-seven cents, or anything on account. This was Wednesday, and she would have no more money till the children got their various pay-envelopes on Saturday.

Though in the back of her mind she blamed herself for an unwise distribution of the week's funds, it was one of those situations in which you blame yourself without seeing how you could have done otherwise. With six to feed, and all the subsidiary expenses of a family to meet, she had twenty-two dollars a week. Of his eighteen, Teddy gave her fifteen, three being needed for car fares and other small necessities. From the six she earned at the studio, Jennie contributed three. Gladys, who was now a cash girl on seven a week, was able to turn in four. Gussie brought nothing to the common fund as yet, for the reason that the three-fifty which Madame Corinne conceded for the privilege of "teaching her the millinery" allowed no margin over what she had to spend.

To Lizzie, during the past six months, life had become an exciting game. How to pay the minimum on every account and yet keep alive her credit had been the calculation with which she rose in the morning and lay down at night. It was a game that could be played successfully for two months, or three months, or four. When it came to six, the heaping-up of unpaid balances made it harder to go on.

It was making it impossible to go on. During the past fortnight she had found her credit stopped at three places in The Square where Pemberton Heights did its shopping. In vain she had tried to transfer her account elsewhere, but Pemberton Heights is no more than a huge village where the status of most families is known. More and more her small amount of cash was needed for cash purposes in order that the family might live.

Lizzie sat down to cast up her assets. She had the small remnants of a ham which could be eaten cold. She had bread and butter. If she could only make tea.... She might have done that in a neighbor's house, but she shrank from exposing a situation which a lucky stroke might change.

At the same moment Josiah was turning away from a wooden bar which shut off an office from the public. He had entered and stood there, meek, unobtrusive, trembling, while none of the young men or young women busy at desks or with one another paid him any attention. When a girl with hair combed over her ears, very bright eyes, and very short skirts, tripped by him accidentally, he managed to stammer out something in which she caught the word "job." The word being significant, and Josiah's appearance more so, she whispered to a gentleman, who left his desk and came forward.

"No; I'm very sorry. We can't do anything for you."

He hadn't waited for the word "job"; he hadn't waited for Josiah to speak at all. He knew the

situation so well that his method was to end it there and then. Josiah turned away meekly as he had entered, and with no sinking of the heart. His heart used to sink; but that was four and five months previously, before he had exhausted his emotions. Now the bitterness of death was past. It had passed day by day and inch by inch, by stages of slow agony, leaving him with a dried soul that couldn't suffer any more.

And also at this minute Teddy was standing in his cage at the bank in a very peculiar situation. At least it struck him as peculiar, because for the first time he perceived its opportunities.

For Teddy, too, six months had been a period of development, just as it is for a green fruit when you pick it and lay it in the sun. It ripens, but it ripens green. When you eat it, it has a green flavor, or a flat flavor, or none at all. Teddy was a fruit to be left on the tree to take its time. He was now twenty-one, with the promptings of sixteen. At his own rate of progress, he would probably have reached twenty by the time he was twenty-two, but thirty at twenty-five.

As it was, he had been called on to be thirty when his growth was just beginning. Not merely the circumstances had made this demand on him, but the dependence, more or less unconscious, of the members of the family. They looked to him to do something big because he was a young man. Having heard of other young men who had been financially heroic, they expected him to be the same. The possibilities, open to a bank clerk of twenty-one had no relation to their hopes. Even his mother, chiefly because of her adoration, seemed to feel that he should spring from eighteen to a hundred dollars a week by the force of inner flame.

She didn't say so, of course. She only revealed her sentiments as Pansy revealed hers, by an inextinguishable look. The father did no more than throw emphasis on the boy's responsibility. Jennie and Gladys never said anything at all, but Gussie was quite frank.

"A great big fellow like you and only making eighteen per! Look at poor momma, working her fingers to the bone. I'd be ashamed if I were you. Why, Fred Inglis orders his clothes at Love's and keeps his own Ford."

It was all there in a nut shell—his inability to rise to the occasion in a land where everyone else who was worth his salt had only to shake the money tree and pick up coin. How Fred Inglis did it Teddy couldn't think, when your value by the week was so definitely fixed and a raise lay so far ahead. If he had developed during the past six months, it was mainly through a carking sense of inefficiency.

Meanwhile, he had to do what Gussie told him—watch his mother work her fingers to the bone. In spite of a tendency to squabble, the Folletts were an affectionate family, and the mother was the center of their love. Teddy didn't stop to analyze what she was to them; he only knew that there was nothing he wouldn't be to her. If he could only have compassed it, she would have had a bar-pin like their neighbor, Mrs. Weatherby; she would have worn the skunk neckpiece for which he had once heard her utter a desire; she would have gone out in his Ford oftener than Fred Inglis's mother in his. These things he would have done for her and more, had he but been the financial Titan all American example called on him to become. Between Gussie's taunts and his own What lack I yet? he was reaching a condition of despair.

And now, on this particular afternoon, when nearly everyone had left the bank and Mr. Brunt, to whom he was specially attached, was working later than usual, there was the fruit of the money tree piled up on the ground. Mr. Brunt had gone to the other end of the main office, and would return presently to stow these piles of bills in the safe. These bills were money. Teddy had never consciously dwelt on that fact before. He had been in this same situation a thousand times, when he had nothing to do but put out his hands and stuff his pockets with food and fuel and gas and the interest on the mortgage, and all the other things of which there was such a lack at home, and had never considered that the needed things were here.

He remembered that as a child in Nova Scotia he would occasionally swipe an apple from a cart-load, knowing that the owner couldn't miss it, and had the same sensation now. Here were the

piles of bills, all arranged in rows according to their values—a pile of hundreds, a pile of fifties, a pile of twenties, and so on down. Mr. Brunt would come back, as he had done at other times, and put them away without counting them. Having counted them already, he would accept this reckoning for the day. He, Teddy, was left there to see that nothing happened to this treasure.

He was never able to tell how it came about, but without seemingly being able to control the action of his hand he had slipped a twenty-dollar bill from the top of the pile into his own pocket. It was an instant's weakness, followed the next instant by repentance. Teddy knew what theft was. He had not, through his father, had so much to do with banks without being fully aware of the sure and pitiless punishment meted out to it. He didn't mean to steal. He was horror-stricken at the act. Quick as a flash his hand went into his pocket again—but Mr. Brunt was back. The thing that could have been done at once had to be deferred.

Looking for a chance to drop the bill to the floor and make restitution by picking it up, it was annoying that Mr. Brunt should give him none. Mr. Brunt seemed possessed by a demon of speed, so quickly had he locked all the piles in the safe, and then locked the cage behind him. Teddy found himself outside with the bill still burning in his pocket.

Even so there were other possibilities. Going to the washroom, he hung on there till Mr. Brunt had gone home. The cage was made of open wire-work. It was a simple thing to slip a bill through one of the interstices. It would be found next morning on the floor and a fresh running-over of accounts would show where it belonged. Mr. Brunt would wonder how he came to be so careless, but with his balance straight he would be satisfied.

But as Teddy reached the cage, there was Doolan, the night watchman. Doolan was an ex-policeman, too old for public office, but equal to sounding an alarm in case the bank was being robbed. He was a friendly soul, and in strolling up to Teddy had no motive beyond asking after the "ould man" and whether or not he had yet found a job. But Teddy suspected that he was being watched. He didn't know but that Doolan might have seen the movement of the hand which snatched the bill from the pile. When he stirred to go homeward, Doolan might clutch him by the neck. It was a strange, new sensation to feel that within a minute, within a few seconds, the law might have its grip on him. Having said good-by to Doolan and turned away, he took the first steps in expectation of a stern command to come back.

It was another strange new sensation to be walking the familiar ways of Broad Street and Wall Street with this strange new consciousness. There were thousands of bright young men and women streaming to electrics, subways, and ferries in the first stages of commuting, and among them he bore a secret mark. Tramping along in the crowd, he felt like a soldier marching with his comrades to the trenches, but knowing himself picked for death. Luckily, his folly was not even now beyond reparation. He would get to the bank early in the morning, discover the cursed bill lying in some artfully chosen corner of the floor, and restore it to Mr. Brunt. All the same, it was a relief to get away from the fear of detection which he felt to be haunting the streets by plunging into the maw of the subway, where his identity was swallowed up.

At this minute, too, in the studio, Hubert Wray was leaning over Jennie Follett's shoulder and placing before her a rough pencil sketch.

"Take it away!" Jennie cried, tearfully. "I don't want to look at it."

"But, Jennie, I only wish you to see how little it involves."

It was a drawing of a nude woman, her hair coiled on the top of her head, sitting very upright in a marble Byzantine chair, her knees pressed together in the manner of the Egyptian cat-goddess. On a level with her face and poised on the tips of her fingers, she held a human skull which she inspected with slanting, mysterious eyes.

Wray continued to keep the sketch before Jennie, hanging over her shoulder. He was so close that she felt his breath on her neck. He could easily have pressed his lips against her amber-

colored hair, and Jennie wished he would. But having long ago made up his mind that she could best be won by a system of starving out, he refrained from doing it. As, however, she persisted in brushing the sketch aside, he straightened himself up.

"Then, Jennie, I'm afraid I can't use you any more—that is, for the present. Since you won't do it, I must get some one who will."

"You could paint another kind of picture," she argued indignantly, "with me with clothes on."

"You don't understand. I'm an artist. An artist doesn't paint the picture he chooses, but the one that's given him to paint."

"No one gave you this to paint. It isn't a commission. It's just your own bad mind."

"I'm not ready to explain what it is. You wouldn't understand. Something comes to you. You've got to obey it. This is the picture I've seen and which I'm obliged to do next. And, besides, it isn't a bad mind, Jennie. The human form is the most—"

"Oh, you don't have to hand me out any hokum about the human form. It's all very well in its place. But you fellows are crazy—the way you stick it up where it doesn't belong. Look at that picture of Sims's you were all so wild about—three women walking in a field, and not a stitch between them. Who'd go out like that? There's no sense in it—"

"It isn't a question of sense, Jennie; it's one of business. If you want to be a model, you must *be* a model and meet the demands of the market."

She wore the cheap linen suit that had been her best last summer, and the corresponding hat; but her beauty being of the type which subordinates externals to itself, she was more than adorable; she was elegant. With tears still rolling down her cheeks, she pointed at the sketch Wray held in his hand as he stood before her at a distance.

"Do you know what my father would do if he thought I was going to be painted like that? He'd turn me out of doors."

Wray tossed the sketch on the table.

"Then, Jennie, there's no use talking of it any more. You're not that kind of a model, and it's that kind of a model I'm looking for."

"I'm the kind of model you were looking for when you put that advertisement in the paper nearly a year ago. I answered it because you said a pretty girl, not a professional—"

"Yes; that was a year ago. That's what I wanted then. But now it's something else. It doesn't follow that because you're satisfied with an egg for breakfast, that an egg will be enough for every meal all the rest of your life."

She looked up reproachfully.

"Yes; all the rest of your life! That's the way you talk. Nothing will ever be enough for you all the rest of your life."

"No, Jennie; nothing—not as far as I see now."

"And yet you expect me to stake everything—"

"You must choose your words there, Jennie. I don't *expect* you to do anything. There may have been a time when I hoped—but that's all over. We won't talk of it. You've made up your mind; I must make up mine. There's nothing between us now but a question of business. I'm looking for a model who does this kind of thing, and it doesn't suit you to serve my turn. Well, that settles it,

doesn't it? Our little account is paid up to date, and so—"

She stumbled to her feet. The only form her resentment took was a trembling of the lip and the streaming of more tears.

"But what can I *do*?"

"Do you mean for a living?"

As she nodded speechlessly, he smiled, with a faint shrug of the shoulders.

"That's not for me to decide, is it, Jennie? Once you've left me—"

"I'm not leaving you. You're driving me away."

"Suppose we said that life was separating us? Wouldn't that express it better? We've—we've liked each other. I've never made any secret of it on my side—have I, Jennie?—though you're so terribly discreet on yours. And yet life—"

"I've only been discreet about one thing."

"But that one thing is the whole business."

"And I wouldn't be discreet about that if there was any other way."

"There's the way I've told you about."

"Yes; and be left high and dry after two or three years, neither one thing nor the other."

"Isn't that looking pretty far ahead?"

"It's not looking farther ahead than a girl has to. It's easy enough to talk. There *you'd* be, able to walk off without a sign on you; whereas I'd have to lie down and die or—or find some one else."

"Well, there'd be that possibility, wouldn't there? They're not so difficult for a pretty girl to find when—"

She stamped her foot.

"I hate you!"

"Oh no, you don't, Jennie. You love me—only, you won't let yourself—"

"And I never will—never—never—never! Not if I was starving in the streets—so help me God!"

She was running toward the model's exit when he called after her.

"Then you leave me to work with another woman, Jennie—another woman sitting in your place—another woman—" When she threw him a despairing glance he snatched the sketch from the table and held it up to her. "Another woman—dressed like that!"

But out on the stairs she paused. Anger was giving place to fear. It was, first of all, a fear of the other woman *dressed like that*, and then it was a fear not less agonizing of the loss of her six a week.

Her six a week was all that stood between Jennie and the not very carefully veiled contempt of the family. In the testing to which the past half year had subjected them all, Jennie had not made very good. Six a week had been her measure. For obscure reasons which none of them could fathom, she had proved incapable of really lucrative work. She had tried to get employment with

other artists who would leave her free for her hours with Wray, but she had failed. She had failed, too, in stores, factories, offices, and dressmaking establishments. Perhaps they saw she was only half hearted in her attempts; perhaps her air of helplessness told against her. "She was too much like a lady," had been one employer's verdict, and possibly that was true. Whatever the reason, she seemed a creature not primarily meant to work, but to be utilized in some other way. The question was as to that way. "You're splendid to love," little Gladys had whispered one day, when Jennie was crying to herself, and much in her recent experience confirmed this opinion. In her applications for something to do, it had more than once been made plain to her that money could be made by other means than by punching a time clock at seven.

But she couldn't retrace her steps and go back to Wray. She thought of it. She had chosen to descend by the stairs instead of by the lift which served the huge studio building, in order to give herself the chance of changing her mind. She went down a few steps and stood still, then a few more steps and stood still. If it had been only a question of the money she might have swallowed her pride and returned to throw herself at his feet.

But there was the other woman—*dressed like that*! He had dared to invoke her. Well, let him invoke her. Let him paint her; let him do anything he liked. She, Jennie, would break her heart over it; but it would be easier to break her heart than go back.

And yet not to go back made her feet like lead as she dragged herself down the interminable steps.

CHAPTER VII

"Shall I ever go in or out of this door again?"

Jennie lingered on the threshold to ask herself this question, and, as she did so, saw Bob Collingham lift his hat.

For the time being she had forgotten him. That is, she had a way of putting him out of her mind except when, as he expressed it to herself, he came bothering her. Bothering her meant asking her to marry him, which he had done perhaps twenty times. Each time she refused him she considered that it was for good. There was a quality in him that raised her ire—a certainty that, pressed by need, she would one day come to him. That, Jennie said to herself, would be the last thing! She wouldn't do it as long as there was any other possibility on earth. In view, however, of the state of things at home and Wray's cold-bloodedness at the studio it had sometimes seemed to her of late as if earth would not afford her any other possibility.

If she welcomed him now, it was chiefly as a distraction from thoughts which, were she to keep dwelling on them, would drive her mad. Her temperament being naturally happy, anguish was the more anguishing for being so unnatural. The mere necessity of having to strive with Bob called forth in her that spirit of sex-wrestling which was not so much second nature in her as it was first.

She greeted him, therefore, with a sick little smile, and allowed him to limp along beside her. The studio building was in a street in the Thirties and east of Lexington Avenue. To take the way by which she usually went, they sauntered toward the sunset.

"You're in trouble, Jennie, aren't you?"

The kindly tone touched her. He was always kind. He was always looking for little things he could do. It was part of the trouble with him from her point of view that he was so watchful and overshadowing. He poured out so much more than her cup was able to receive that he frightened her. All the same, his sympathy, coming at this minute, started her tears afresh.

"Is it things at home?" he persisted, when she didn't respond.

Thinking this enough for him to know, she admitted that it was.

"I've got something in my pocket that would—that would help all that—in the long run."

From anyone else this would have alarmed her. She would have taken it to mean money, money which she would in her own way be expected to repay. As it was she merely turned her swimming eyes toward him in mild curiosity.

"Look!"

Seeing a little white box which could contain nothing but a ring held between his thumb and forefinger on the edge of his waistcoat pocket, she flushed with annoyance.

"I think you'd better go away," she said, coldly, pausing to give him the chance to take his leave.

"And chuck you back upon your trouble?"

The argument was more effective than he knew. Jennie became aware that even this little bit of drama had put home conditions and Wray's cruelty a perceptible distance behind her. It was sheer terror at being thrown on them again that induced her to walk on, tacitly permitting him to stay with her.

"You can't be saved from one kind of trouble by getting into another," she argued, ungraciously. "The fire's not much of a relief from the frying pan."

"It is if it doesn't burn you—if it only warms and comforts you and makes it easier to live."

"This fire would burn me—to death."

"Oh no, it wouldn't; because I'd be there. I'd be the stoker, to see that it was kept in the furnace. The furnace in the house, Jennie, is like the heart in the body—something out of sight, but hot and glowing, and cheering everybody up." If she could have listened to such words from Hubert Wray, she thought, how enraptured she would have been. "Did you ever hear the story of the guy who gave us fire in the first place?" Bob continued, as she walked on and said nothing. "You know we didn't have any fire on earth—at least, that's the tune to which the rig is sung. The gods had fire in heaven, but men had to shiver."

"Why didn't they freeze to death?''

"They did—in a parable way. It wasn't life they lived; it was a great big creeping horror on the edge of nothing. Then this old bird—I forget his name—went up to heaven—"

"How did he do that?"

"The story doesn't tell; but up he went, stole the fire, and brought it down. After that, they were able to open the ball we call 'civilization,' which gives every one a good time."

"Oh, does it? Much you know!"

"I know this much, Jennie—that I could give you a good time if you'd let me."

"You couldn't give me the good time I want."

"But I could make you want the good time I'd give you, which would come to the same thing. I imagine the folks on earth didn't think much of the fire from heaven—beforehand; but once they'd got it, they knew what it meant to them. That's the way you'd feel, Jennie, if you married me. You can't begin to fancy now—" On coming in sight of a line of taxicabs drawn up before a hotel, he broke off to say, "Do you see those taxis, Jennie?"

She replied that she did.

"Well, one of them may mean a great deal to you and me."

"Which one of them?"

"Whichever one we get into."

"Why should we get into it?"

"Because"—he tapped the white box in his waistcoat pocket—"this little thing I've got in here wouldn't do us any good without something else. We should have to go after it together."

Her mystified expression told him that she was in the dark.

"It's something we should have to ask for, and to sign—Robert Bradley Collingham, bachelor, and Jane Scarborough Follett, spinster—I believe that's the way it runs."

"Oh!" The low ejaculation was just enough to show that she understood.

"Why shouldn't we, Jennie? It wouldn't take half an hour to get there and back."

"'Back?'" She was so dazed that she echoed the word more or less unconsciously.

They came in sight of a low brown tower at which he pointed with his stick. "Do you see that church? Well, that church has got a parson—quite a decent sort for a parson—"

"How do you know?"

"Because I talked to him—about half an hour ago. I said that if he was going to be at home, we might look in on him toward the end of the afternoon."

"You had no right to say anything of the kind."

"I know I hadn't, but I took a chance. Won't you take a chance, too, Jennie? It would mean the beginning of the end of all your troubles. In the long run, if not in the short run, I could take them off your hands."

That she should be dead to this argument was not in human nature. Her basic conception of a man was of one who would relieve her of her burdens. Helplessness was a large part of her appeal. That marriage meant being taken care of imparted, according to her thinking, its chief common sense to the institution. She shrank from marrying *just* to be taken care of; but if there was no other way, and if in this way she could bring to the family the stupendous Collingham connection in lieu of her six a week.... She made up her mind to temporize.

"What makes you in such an awful hurry? We could do it any other day—"

"Did you ever see a sick man who wasn't in an awful hurry to get well?"

"You're not as bad as all that."

"Listen, Jennie," he said, with an ardor enhanced by her hints at relenting; "listen, and I'll tell you what I am. I'm like a chap that's been cut in two, who only lives because he knows the other half will be joined to him again."

"That's all very well; but where's the other half?"

"Here." He touched her lightly on the arm. "You're the other half of me, Jennie; I'm the other half of you."

She laughed ruefully.

"That's news to me."

"I thought it might be. That's why I'm telling you. You don't suppose any other fellow could be to you what I'd be, do you?"

"I don't know what you'd be to me because I've so many other things to think of first."

"What sort of things?"

"What your folks would say, for one."

He replied, with a shade of embarrassment: "They'd say some pretty mean things, to begin with."

"And to end with?"

"They'd give in. They'd have to. Families always do when you only leave them Hobson's choice."

She dropped into the studio idiom.

"That wouldn't be all pie for me, would it?"

"Is anything ever all pie? You've got to work for your living in this old world if you want to eat. I'm ready to work for this, Jennie. I'm ready to move mountains for it, and, by God! I'm going to move them! But do you know why?"

She said, shyly, "I suppose because you like me."

"I don't know whether I do or not. That's not what I think about first." Though they had not yet reached the line of taxicabs, he paused to make an explanation. "Suppose you were inventing a machine and had got it pretty well fitted together, only that you couldn't make it work. And suppose, one day, you found the very part that was missing—the thing that would make it run. You'd know you'd have to have that one thing, wouldn't you? You'd have to have it—or your life wouldn't be worth while."

"I never heard any other man talk like that."

"Listen, Jennie. There are men and men. They'll go into two big bunches. To one kind women are like whisky—some better than others, but all good. If they can't have Mary, Susan'll do, and when they're tired of Susan they'll run after Ann. That's one kind of fellow, and he's in the great majority. They're polygamous by nature, those chaps. I suppose the Lord made them so. Anyhow, as far as I can see—and I've seen pretty far—they can't help themselves." He drew a long breath. "Then there's another kind."

If Jennie listened with attention, it was not because she was interested in him, but in Hubert Wray. Hubert had more than once said things of the same kind. He had declared male constancy to be outside the possibilities of flesh and blood, and, with her preference for cave men, Jennie had agreed with him. That is, she had agreed with him as to everyone but himself. Others could take their pleasure where and as they found it; but she could not conceive of any man loving her, or of herself loving any man, unless it was for life. On the subject of constancy or inconstancy, this was her sole reservation.

"You'll think me an awful chump, Jennie, but I'm that other kind."

She threw him a sidelong glance of some perplexity.

"You mean the kind that—"

"I'm not polygamous," he declared, as one who confessed a criminal tendency. "There it is, laid out flat. I'm—" He hesitated before using the term lest she might not understand it. "There's a word for my kind," he went on, tenderly. "It's monogamous."

She made a little sound of dismay at the strangeness, it almost seemed the indecency, of the syllables.

"Yes; I thought you might never have heard it," he pursued, in the same tender strain, "but it means the opposite of polygamous. A polygamous guy wants to marry all the wives he can make love to. A one-wife chap like me asks for nothing so much as to be true to the girl he loves. I'm that kind, Jennie."

To his amazement, and somewhat to his joy, he saw a tear trickle down her cheek. It was a tear of regret that Hubert couldn't have expressed himself like this, but Bob thought her touched by his appeal. It encouraged him to continue with accentuated warmth.

"You've heard of what they call the battle of the sexes, haven't you?"

She thought she had.

"Well, that's what it comes from chiefly—the crowds of polygamous men and the small number of polygamous women; or else it's the crowds of monogamous women and the small number of monogamous men. Out of every hundred men, about ninety are polygamous, and ten want only one woman for a lifetime. Out of every hundred women, ninety are satisfied to love one man, and the other ten are rovers. Don't you see what a bad fit it makes?"

"Yes; but how do you know I'm not one of the rovers?"

"You couldn't be, Jennie. Even if I thought you might be, I'd be willing to take a chance. And the reason I've spun this rigmarole to you is because, if you don't take me, it'll be ten to one that you'll fall into the hands of one of the gay ninety who'll make your life a hell. I'd hate that. God! how I should hate it! Even if I didn't care anything about you, I should want to marry you, just to save you from some fancy man who'd think no more of breaking your heart than he would of smashing an egg-shell."

As they walked on toward the row of public conveyances, he explained himself further. On Monday next he might sail for South America. But he couldn't do this leaving everything at loose ends between them. If she married him, he could go off with an easy mind, and they could keep their secret till his return. In the meanwhile he would be able to supply her with a little cash, not much, he was afraid, as dad kept so tight a rubber band round the pocketbook. It would, however, be something, and he would know that she could give up her work at the studio without danger of starving to death.

"And you might as well do it first as last, Jennie," he summed up, "because I mean that you shall do it sometime."

"And suppose," she objected, "that you came back from South America in six months' time—and were sorry. Where should I be then?"

He argued that this was impossible. A monogamous man always knew his mate as a monogamous bird knew his. It was instinct that told them both, and instinct never went wrong.

They reached the row of taxis, and, in spite of the queer looks of the passers-by, he took her by the hand.

"Come, Jennie, come!"

But she hung back.

"Oh, Bob, how can I? All of a sudden like this!"

"It might as well be all of a sudden as any other way, since you're my woman and I'm your man."

"But I don't believe it."

"Then I'll prove to you that it's so."

Though he could not do this, she went with him in the end. She was not won; she was not more moved by his suit than she had been at other times; she still shrank from the scar on his brow and the touch of his tremendous hands. But she was afraid of letting him go, of dropping back into the horror of no lover in the studio and no money to bring home. To do this thing would save her from that emptiness, even if it led to something worse. Worse would be easier to bear than returning to nothing but a void; and so slowly, reluctantly, with anguish in her heart, she let herself be helped into the shabby vehicle.

An hour or so later, Teddy reached home. He arrived breathless, because he had run nearly all

the way from the street-car. In the empty spaces of Indiana Avenue he felt himself conspicuous. He knew it was fancy, that no hint of his folly could have come to this quiet suburb, and that his theft could not possibly be discovered as yet, even by those most concerned. But he was not used to a guilty conscience. Already in imagination he saw himself tried, sentenced, and serving a long sentence at Bitterwell, of which he had once seen the grim gray walls.

"God! I'd shoot myself first!" was his comment to himself, as he hurried past the trim grassplots where care-free men in shirt sleeves were watering their bits of lawn.

It was Pansy who first knew that something was amiss. At sound of his hand on the door knob she had come scampering, with little silvery yelps, and had suddenly been checked by the atmosphere he threw out. Pansy knew what wrongdoing was; she knew the pangs of remorse. She had once run away from being shut up in the coalbin, her fate when the family went to the movies, and had been lost for half a day. The agony of being adrift and the joy of seeing Gussie come whistling and calling down the Palisade Walk formed the great central escapade in Pansy's memory. For days afterward, whenever the family spoke of it, she would stand with forepaws planted apart, and head hanging dejectedly, aware that no terms could be scathing enough fully to cover her guilt.

And here was Teddy in the same state of mind. Pansy had learned that the great race could suffer; but she hadn't supposed that it could get into scrapes like herself. All she could do on second thoughts was to creep forward timidly, raise herself on her hind legs, with her paws against his shin, and tell him that whatever the trouble was she had been through it all.

He paid her no attention because, as he looked into the living room, Gladys was seated at a table, crying, her hands covering her face. At the same time Gussie was peacocking up and down the room, saying things to her little sister that were apparently not comforting. Now that Gussie, at Madame Corinne's request, had "put up" her hair, her great beauty was apparent. Her face had not the guileless purity of Jennie's, but it had more intellectual vigor and much more fire.

Gladys was Teddy's pet, as she was her father's. Of the three girls, she was the plain one, a little red-haired, snub-nosed thing, with some resemblance to Pansy, and a heart of gold. Teddy went over and laid his hand on her fiery crown.

"Say, poor little kiddie, what's the matter?"

"It's my feet," Gladys moaned.

"And she thinks that learning the millinery at three-fifty per is all jazz and cat-step," Gussie declared, grandly. "Well, let her try it and see. She's welcome. My soul and body! Corinne would blow her across the river when she got into a temper. I say that if you're a cash girl you've got to take the drawbacks of a cash girl, and what's the use of kicking? If you're on your feet, you're on your feet. Rub 'em with oil and buck up. That's what I say."

"It's all very well for you to talk, spit-cat," Gladys retorted. "All you've got to do is to play with ribbons as if you were dressing a doll. If you had to run like Pansy every time some stuck-up thing calls, '*Ca-ash!*'—"

Gussie undulated her person and her outstretched arms in sheer joy of the dancing step as she strutted up and down.

"That's right, old girl. Blame it on me. I'm always the one that's in the wrong in this house. If Master Teddy lets a glass fall and breaks it, as he did last night, I pushed it out of his hand on purpose, though I'm in the next room. All the same, I say, 'Buck up,' and I don't care who says different. Sniffing won't cure your feet or give you a brother like Fred Inglis who can pay for a woman to do all the heavy work, and his mother hardly lifting a hand."

Teddy passed on to the kitchen to see if his mother was there.

She was seated at a table with a ham bone before her, and from it was paring the last rags of the meat. He tried to take his old-time tone of gayety.

"Hello, ma! At it again? What are you giving us for supper? Something good, I'll bet."

Lizzie went on working without lifting her eyes. She didn't even smile. Teddy sensed something new in the way of care, as Pansy had sensed it in him. He stood at a little distance, waiting for the look that had never failed to welcome him, but which this time didn't come.

"What's the matter, ma? Has anything gone wrong?"

Putting down the ham, Lizzie raised her eyes, though with no light in them.

"It's nothing so very wrong, dear, but I haven't told your sisters because it's no use to worry them if—"

"What is it, ma? Out with it."

She told him. If it was necessary to go without a hot meal between Wednesday and Saturday, of course it could be done; but even on Saturday the gas people would demand fifteen dollars on account before the gas would be turned on again. There were just two possibilities: The father might come home with the news that he had found a job, or Teddy might have—she didn't believe it, but he had talked of saving for a new suit of clothes—Teddy might have fifteen dollars laid away.

He turned his back and walked out of the kitchen. He did it so significantly that it seemed to the mother there could be only one meaning to the act. He had saved the money and resented being robbed of it. She knew he was something of a coxcomb, and had always been proud that he could look so neat. He had only two suits, a common one and a best one, but even the common one was as brushed and pressed and stylish as if he had a valet. Nevertheless, his great activity and his love of rough-and-tumble skylarking made him hard on clothes in the sense of wear, and the common one was growing shiny at the seams and thin where there was most attrition. A new suit was an urgent necessity; so that if he had a few dollars put away toward getting it, it would be no wonder if it hurt him to be asked to give them up.

But Teddy had no few dollars put away. When the fund for the new suit could be counted otherwise than in pennies, some special need had always swept it into the family treasury. Teddy had let it go without a sigh. He would have let it go without a sigh to-day, only that he had nothing saved. Being naturally of a loving, care-taking disposition, it meant more to him that Gussie or Gladys should have a new pair of shoes than that he should be able to emulate Fred Inglis in ordering a suit at Love's.

Having left the kitchen, he did not go farther than the living room, where, Gussie having taken herself upstairs, Gladys was drying her eyes. He merely walked to the end of the room, his hands in his pockets, as he stared above one of the hydrangea trees into Indiana Avenue. The windows being open, the voices of playing children mingled with the even-song of birds. To Teddy, there was mockery in these cheerful sounds. There was mockery in the westering May sunshine, mockery in the groups of girls, bareheaded and arm in arm, as they strolled toward Palisade Walk; mockery in the ruddy-faced men who watered their shrubs and grass; mockery in the aproned women who came to windows or doors in the intervals of preparing supper. It all spoke of a homey comfort and content, with no bluff behind it. In the Follett house all was bluff—and misery.

Somehow, for reasons he couldn't fathom, the cutting off of the gas from the range seemed the last humiliation. In the matter of food, if one thing was too dear, you could eat another. So it was in the whole round of essentials in living. You could get a substitute or you could go without. But for heat there was no substitute, and you couldn't go without it. It ranked with clothes and shelter as a necessity even among savages. And yet here they were, a civilized family, living in a civilized house, in a suburb of New York, deprived of what even Micmacs could have at will. It

was one of the happenings that could never have been foreseen as possibilities.

His hands being in his pockets, Teddy fingered the twenty-dollar bill. He did this unconsciously, merely because it was there. It did occur to him to wish it was his own; but his wishes went no farther.

They had gone no farther when he swung on his heel to go back to the kitchen. He must tell his mother that he didn't have fifteen dollars put away. He hadn't done so at once merely because his emotions had been too strong for him.

He pulled his burly figure down the length of the room as one who has to drag himself along. If he had only been Fred Inglis, he would have handed his mother a sheaf of bills with instructions to buy all she wanted. Why couldn't he, Teddy Follett, do the same? He was, as Gussie phrased it, a great big fellow of twenty-one—and his value was only eighteen per. He had proved that to his own satisfaction, for in secretly trying to unearth a better place he had been offered less than he got at Collingham & Law's.

What were the shackles that bound him? Were they of his own creation, or were they forced on him by the world outside? He was as industrious as his father had been, and, except for a tendency to do his work with a broad grin, just as wholehearted. If good intentions had commercial value, both father and son should have been rated high; but here was his father a bit of old junk, while he himself, having reached man's estate, having served his country, having tacitly offered himself to the limit of his strength, was rewarded with a wage on which he could hardly live, to say nothing of helping others live.

Madly, wildly, these thoughts churned in his mind as he lurched down the room toward the kitchen, while Pansy watched him with a look into which she was putting all her soul.

He knew what he would say. He would say: "Ma, it's no go. I haven't a red cent. We've got to eat cold and wash cold till Saturday, anyhow. We'll not look farther ahead than that. When Saturday comes, we'll see."

But, on the threshold of the kitchen, he saw something which brought a new sensation. In free fights while in the navy he had thought he had seen red; but he had never seen red like this. He had never supposed it possible that this torrent of wrath, tenderness, and pity should rise within himself, a fountain spouting at the same time both sweet water and bitter.

His mother was seated at the table, crying. The ham bone was before her, the rags of meat on the plate, and the knife on top of them. But she, like Gladys a few minutes previously, had covered her face with her hands, while her shoulders rocked.

In all his twenty-one years Teddy had never seen his mother cry. He had cried; the girls had cried; his father had very nearly cried; but his mother never. The strong spirit had grieved in strong ways, but not in this way. Now it seemed as if all the griefs she had laid up since the days when she was Lizzie Scarborough had heaped themselves to the point at which these strange, harsh, unnatural tears were their only assuagement.

Teddy was down on his knees beside her, his arm flung round her neck.

"Ma! Good old ma! Dear old ma! Don't cry! For God's sake don't cry! Stop *crying*, ma!" he shouted, in an imploring passion as strange, harsh, and unnatural as her own. "Here's the money I had saved for my new clothes. Take it and go and pay something on the gas bill. There! There! Stop! For God's sake! For your little boy's sake! I love you, ma. Only stop! There! That's better! Calm down, ma! Everything will be all right, and I'll—I'll get the new clothes by and by."

But in his heart he was saying, "To hell with Collingham & Law's!" as he laid the bill before her.

CHAPTER VIII

Jennie cried herself to sleep that Wednesday night, and, in the morning, cried herself awake. She was in no doubt as to the motive of her tears; she was sorry for having put a gulf between her and the man she loved by marrying one she didn't care for.

Why she didn't care for him was beyond her power of analysis. He was good and kind and tender; he was rocklike and steady and strong. In a forceful way he was almost handsome, and some day he would be rich. But there was the fact that, her heart being given to the one man, her nerves shuddered at the other. The explanation she used to give, that the lividness of the scar on his forehead frightened her, was no longer tenable, since the mark tended to fade out. The other infirmity, his limp, was also less conspicuous, for, though he would never walk as if his foot had not been crushed, he walked as well as many other men. It wasn't these peculiarities; it wasn't any one thing in itself; it was simply that she didn't love him and never would.

Whereas, she did love another man. She loved his violet eyes, his brown mustache, his flashing teeth, his selfishness, his cruelty. She loved his system of starving her out, his habit of keeping her in anguish. Too much reasonableness was hard for her to assimilate, like too much water to a portulaca.

And Bob had been so reasonable. He had tried to explain himself. He had used words that scared, that shocked her. Polygamous! Monogamous! The very sounds suggested anatomy or impropriety.

Nevertheless, she could have pardoned this language as an eccentricity if, in the dimness of the parson's hall, he hadn't taken her in his arms and kissed her. This possibility was something she forgot when she followed him up the rectory's brownstone steps. For the inadvertence she blamed herself the more, since, throughout the winter, she had never once lost sight of it. Whenever he had proposed to her, the advantages of marrying so much money had been offset by her terror at his "pawing her about." With no high-flown ideas as to virtue, Jennie would have fought like a wildcat for her virginity of mind and body till ready of her own free will to give them up. And here she had sold herself to Bob Collingham, a man whose touch made her shrink.

"I can't live with you!" she had cried, as she tore herself from his embrace.

And poor Bob had been reasonable again.

"Of course not, Jennie darling—not yet. When I come back—"

She hadn't let him finish. She had dashed through the door and down the steps, so that he had some ado to keep up with her.... Even then, if he had only dragged her away and been a cave man....

And the evening at home had been one of the oddest she had ever spent under her father's roof. Everyone was so queer—or else she was queer herself. Gussie and Gladys, reconciled after their squabble, had both been in high spirits, and Teddy almost hysterical. He gave imitations of the men with whom he worked most closely at the bank, of Fred Inglis, of Mrs. Inglis, of Dolly, Addie, and Sadie Inglis, which made everyone feel that a great actor was being lost to the stage; but on top of these exhibitions he would fall into spells of profound reverie. The father had been apathetic, but he was always apathetic now; the mother, on the other hand, more serene than usual. More than usual, too, her eyes applauded Teddy's high spirits with a quiet, adoring smile.

Altogether, the supper had been a merry one, and yet, to Jennie's thinking, merry with a mysterious note in the merriment—a note which perhaps only Pansy's intuitions could have really understood.

But sitting on the edge of her bed in the morning, she saw a ray of hope. There was divorce. Marriage wasn't the irreparable thing which their family traditions assumed it to be. As a tolerably diligent reader of the personal items in the papers, Jennie had more than once read of divorces granted to young couples who had parted at the church door. Naturally, she shrank from the fuss it would involve, but better the fuss than....

Having got up, for the reason that she couldn't stay in bed, she dressed slowly, because none of the family was as yet astir. She would surprise her mother by lighting the gas range and making the coffee before anyone came down. Thus it happened that she saw the postman crossing the street with a letter in his hand. Though letters were not rare in the family, they were rare enough to make the arrival of one an incident. She went to the door to take it from the postman's hand. Seeing it addressed to Miss Follett and bearing the postmark "Marillo," her knees trembled under her.

Having read what Mrs. Collingham had written, Jennie's first thought was that her early rising enabled her to keep this missive secret. What it could portend was beyond her surmise. It was not unfriendly, but neither was it cordial. It took the guarded tone, she thought, of a woman who meant to see her face to face before being willing to commit herself. As success on meeting people face to face had mostly been Jennie's portion, she was not so much afraid of the test as of what it might bring afterward.

What it might bring afterward was the recognition of her marriage and her translation into a rich family. This would mean the end of her father's and mother's material cares, Teddy's advancement at the bank, and brilliant careers for Gussie and Gladys in New York social life. Jennie could think of at least half a dozen picture plays in which the sacrifice of some lovely, virtuous girl had done as much as this for her relatives.

So, all that day, sacrifice was much in her mind. Against a vague background of grandeur, it had the same emotional effect as of passion sung to the accompaniment of a great orchestra. To see herself with a limousine at her command, and the family established in a modest villa somewhere near Marillo Park, if not quite within it, enabled her mentally to face another embrace from Bob in the spirit of an early—Christian maiden thinking of the lions awaiting her in the arena. It would be terrible—but it could be met.

The vision of the limousine at her command seemed to have come partly true as a trim chauffeur stepped up to her in the station at Marillo, touching his cap and asking if he spoke to Miss Follett. He touched his cap again when he closed the door on her, and the car tooled away along a road which bore the same relation to the roads with which Jennie was familiar as a glorified spirit to a living man.

The park was not so much a park as it was a country. It had hills, valleys, landscapes, lakes, and what seemed to Jennie immense estates for which there was plenty of room. There were houses as big as hotels and much more beautiful. Trees, flowers, lawns, terraces, fountains, tennis courts, dogs, horses, and motor cars were as silver in the building of the Temple of Jerusalem—nothing accounted of. Jennie had seen high life as lived by the motion-picture heroine, but she had not believed that even wealth could buy such a Garden of Eden as this. Expecting to reach Collingham Lodge a few minutes after passing the grille, she had gone on and on, over roads that branched, and then branched, and then branched again, like the veinings of a leaf.

After descending at the white-columned portico, she went up the steps in a state bordering on trance. She knew what to do much as Elijah, having come by the chariot of fire to another plane of life, must have known what to do when required to get out and go onward. Since a man in livery opened a door of wrought-iron tracery over glass, she had no choice but to pass through.

It is possible that Max, by his supersenses, knew that she belonged to his master, for, springing

toward her, he nosed her hand. It was, as she put it to herself, the only human touch in the first stages of her welcome. Thenceforward, during all the forty or fifty minutes of her stay, he kept close to her, either on foot or crouched beside her chair, till a curious thing happened when she regained the car.

I have said in the first stages of her welcome, for as soon as she entered the hall she heard a cheery voice.

"Oh, so it's you, Miss Follett! So glad you've come. It's really too bad to bring you so far—only, it seemed to me we might be cozier here than if I went up to town."

Adown the golden space which seemed to Jennie much too majestic for anyone's private dwelling, a brisk figure moved, with hand outstretched. A few seconds later Jennie was looking into eyes such as she didn't suppose existed in human faces. Beauty, dignity, poise, white hair dressed to perfection, and clothes such as Jennie had never seen off the stage—and rarely on it—were all subordinated to a hearty, kindly, womanly greeting before which they sank out of sight. Overpowered as she was by the material costliness of all she saw, the girl was well-nigh crushed by this unaffected affability. Like the Queen of Sheba at the court of Solomon, to be Scriptural again, there was no more spirit left in her.

Mrs. Collingham went on talking as, side by side, they walked slowly up the strip of red carpet into the cool recesses of the house.

"I hope you didn't find the train too stuffy. It's too bad they won't give us a parlor car on the locals. For the last three or four years we only have a parlor car on what they call the 'husbands' trains'—one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and, my dear, they make us pay for it as if —"

A toss of the hands proved to Jennie that Mrs. Collingham knew the difference between cheap and dear, which again took her by surprise.

They passed through the terrace drawing-room, which Jennie couldn't notice because she trod on air, and came out to the flagged pavement. Even here, Mrs. Collingham didn't pause, but, leading the way to the end of it, she went round a corner to the northern and more private side of the house, which looked into a little wood.

"Mr. Collingham's at home—just driven down—but I'm not going to have him here. Men are such a nuisance when women talk about intimate things, don't you think? They make such mountains of molehills. It's just as when you have a cry. They think your heart must be breaking, and never seem to understand that it gives you some relief."

Jennie was still more astounded. That the mistress of Collingham Lodge, a great figure in Marillo Park, and therefore high up in the peerage of the United States, could have the same feelings as herself seemed the touch of nature that makes the whole world kin to a degree she had put beyond the limits of the human heart.

They came to a construction like a giant birdcage—a room out of doors, yet sheltered from noisome insects like their own screened piazza, furnished with an outdoor-indoor luxury.

"We don't have many mosquitoes at Marillo," Mrs. Collingham explained, as she led the way in, "but in spring they can be troublesome. So we'll have our tea here. Gossip will bring it presently. Where will you sit? I think you'll like that chair. There! What about a cushion? Oh, I'm sure you don't need it at your age, but, still, one likes to be comfortable. No, Max; stay out. Well, if you must come in, come in. He seems to like you," she chatted on. "He's Bob's dog, and I suppose he takes to Bob's friends."

Rendered speechless by this frank reference to the man who was the bond between them, there was, fortunately, no immediate need for Jennie to speak, since Gossip appeared in the doorway pushing the tea equipage. It was a little table on wheels, and on it Jennie noticed, in a general

way, every magnificent detail—the silver tray, the silver kettle, the silver teapot, the silver tongs, the silver spoons. "And all of them solid," she said to herself, awesomely. She regretted that she wouldn't be at liberty to recount these marvels at home. At home, they thought her merely at the studio, while she had been borne away through the air as by a witch on a broomstick.

Jennie would have said that Mrs. Collingham had hardly looked at her, but then, she reflected, every woman knew how little *looking* you had to do to grasp the details of another woman's personality. You took them all in at a glance, as if you brought seven or eight senses into play. Each time her hostess, now settled behind the tea table, lifted her fine eyes, Jennie was sure they "got" her, like a camera.

"You pose, don't you?" The words came out in a casual, friendly tone, as she busied herself with the spirit lamp. "That must be so interesting. I often wonder, when I'm in the big galleries, what the immortal women would have said had they known how their features would go down through the ages. Take Dorotea Nachtigal, for instance, the original of Holbein's 'Meyer Madonna' in Darmstadt—the most wonderful of all the Madonnas, I always say—and how queer I suppose she would have felt if she'd known that we should be adoring her when she's no more than a handful of dust. Or the model who posed for the Madonna di San Sisto! Or the young things who sat to Greuze! Did you ever think of them?"

Jennie saw how Bob could have come by words like "polygamous" and "monogamous." People at Marillo Park spoke a language of their own—"English with frills on it," was the way she put it to herself. From the intonation, she was able to frame her answer in the negative, while, once more, the superb eyes, which were oddly like Bob's little steely ones, were lifted on her with a smile.

"You know, I should think people would be crazy to paint you. How do you like your tea? Sugar? Cream? One lump? Two lumps?" Having flung out answers at random, Jennie leaned forward to take her cup, while the kindly voice ran on: "Just as you sit there you're a picture. Funny I should have given you a tan-colored cushion, because it tones in exactly."

Jennie explained that the various shades of brown and some of the deeper ones of red were among her favorites.

"Because they go so well with your hair," her hostess said, comprehendingly, and studying her now more frankly. "My dear, you've got the most lovely hair! It isn't auburn; it isn't coppery; it isn't red. It's—what is it? Oh, I see! It's amber—it's the extraordinary shade Romney gets into some of his portraits of Lady Hamilton. You see it in the one in the Frick gallery, if I remember rightly. You must look the next time you're there."

Jennie tried to stammer that she would, only that her syllables ran into one another and became incoherent.

"But Romney couldn't paint *you*," Mrs. Collingham declared, enthusiastically, putting her cup to her lips. "He's too Georgian. You're the twentieth century. You're the perfect spirit of the age—restless, rebellious, wistful, and delicate all at once. Girls nowadays remind me of exquisite fragile things like the spire of the Sainte Chapelle, only built of steel. You've got the steel look—all slender and unbendable. It's curious that—the way women look like the ages in which they're born. You've only to go through a portrait collection to see that it's so. Take the Stuart women, for instance—the Vandyke and Lely women—great saucer-eyed things, with sensual lips and breasts. And then the Holbein women, so terribly got up in their stiff Sunday clothes, which they must have hurried to put into their cedar chests the minute they got home from mass. But they belong to their time, don't you think?"

Jennie could only say she did think, vowing in her heart that the next day would see her going round the Metropolitan Museum with a catalogue.

"But you! Hubert Wray says he's done a wonderful study of you, and I'm crazy to see it. The only thing I don't like from his description is that he's got you in a Greek dress and attitude, and *I* think, now that I've seen you, that the day after to-morrow is your style. What do you say

yourself?"

"I don't know about the day after to-morrow; I'm so busy with to-day."

Mrs. Collingham took this with a pleasant little laugh.

"You clever thing! You won't give yourself away." She mused a few seconds, a smile on her lips, and then said, with a sudden lifting of the eyes, "What do you think of Bob?"

The girl could only stammer:

"Think of him—in what way?"

"Do you think he looks like me?"

In this rapid, unexpected shifting of the ground, Jennie was like a giddy person trying to keep her head.

"Well, yes—in a way; only—"

Mrs. Collingham laughed again.

"I see that, too. He does. I can't deny it. Often when I look at him, I see myself, only—you'll laugh, I know—only myself as I'd be reflected in the back of a silver spoon. That's the trouble with Bob—he's so unformed. You must have noticed it. I suppose it's the war; and yet I don't know. He's always been like that—a dear fellow, but no more than half grown. I dare say that by the time he's fifty he'll be something like a man."

As there seemed to be no absolute need for a response to this, Jennie waited for more. It came, after another little spell of musing.

"He's talked to me so much about you all through the winter. That's why I asked you to come down. Mr. Collingham and I feel so tremendously indebted to you for the way you've acted."

Jennie could only repeat feebly, "The way I've acted?"

"I mean the way you've understood him. Almost any other girl—yes, girls right here in Marillo Park—would have taken him at his word." Jennie's lips were parted, but unable to frame a question. Mrs. Collingham eyed the spirit lamp. "All the same, that doesn't excuse *him*. Even a fellow who isn't half grown should have more sense than to make love to every girl he spends an hour with. One of these days, some girl will catch him, and then he'll be sorry. That's why we've been so thankful for the kind of influence you've had over him, and why my husband and I thought we'd like to do something—well, something a little audacious."

Jennie was twisting her fingers and untwisting them, but luckily her hostess, by keeping her eyes on the spirit lamp, didn't notice this sign of nervousness. Once more she spoke, with a musing half smile.

"We—we see a good deal of some one else who keeps talking about you; and—you won't mind, will you?—of course we've drawn our conclusions. We couldn't help that—could we?—when they were staring us in the face."

"Do you mean Mr. Wray?" Jennie asked, with the point-blank helplessness of one who doesn't know how to hedge.

"Oh, I didn't use the name, now did I? And, as I've said, what we've seen we've seen, and we couldn't help it. But, of course, if it hadn't been for Bob, we shouldn't have seen so quickly."

"But he doesn't know?" Jennie cried, more as query than as affirmation.

"No; I suppose he doesn't. I only mean that as you refused Bob so many times—he told me that—we naturally thought there must be some one else, and when everything pointed that way and Hubert talked of you so much—" She kept this line of reasoning suspended while once more she shifted her ground suddenly. "I wonder if you've ever realized how hard it is to show your gratitude toward people to whom you truly and deeply feel grateful?"

Jennie mumbled something to the effect that she had never been in that situation.

"Well, it *is* a situation. People are so queer and proud and *difficile*. I suppose it's we older people who run up oftenest against that; but if Mr. Collingham and I could only do for people the things we *might* do, and which they won't let us do—"

Once more the idea was suspended to give Jennie time to take in the fact that a good thing was coming her way; but all she could manage was to stare with frightened, fascinated eyes and no power of thought.

"Do you know, my dear," the artless voice ran on, "now that I'm face to face with you, I'm really afraid? I told my husband that, if he'd leave us alone together, I shouldn't be—and, after all, I am." She leaned forward confidentially. "How frank would you let me be? How much would you be willing for me to say?"

But before the girl could invent a reply the voice kept up its even, caressing measure.

"*I* know how things are with you—at least, I think I do. I've been young, my dear. I know what it is to be in love. You're coloring, but you needn't do it—not with me. You're very *much* in love, aren't you?"

Jennie bowed her head to hide her tears. She hadn't meant to admit how much in love she was, but this sympathy unnerved her.

"You do love Hubert, don't you?"

"Yes, but—"

"And that's why you told Bob you couldn't marry him?"

"That's one of the reasons, but—"

"One of the reasons will do, my dear. You don't know how much I feel with you and for you. I could tell you a little story about myself when I was your age—but, then, old love tales are like dried flowers, they've lost their scent and color. Mr. Collingham and I are very fond of Hubert, and, of course, he doesn't make enough to marry on as things are now. He has a little something, I suppose, and, with the work he's doing, the future is secure. You'll find, one day, that he'll be painting you as Andrea del Sarto painted Lucrezia, and Rembrandt Saskia—their wives, you know—"

"Oh, but, Mrs. Collingham—"

"There, there, my dear! I'm not going to say anything more about that. I know Hubert and what he wants, and so my husband and I thought that if we could show our gratitude to you and make things easier for him—"

"Oh, but you couldn't!"

"We couldn't unless you helped us. That goes without saying, of course. But we hoped you would. You see, when people have so much—not that we're so tremendously rich, but when they have enough—and when they know as we do what struggle is—and there's been anyone whom they admire as we admire you, after all you've done for Bob—we thought that if we could give you a little present—a wedding present it would be—only just a little in anticipation—we thought five

thousand dollars—"

She ceased suddenly because Jennie appeared as one transfixed. She sat erect; but the life seemed to have gone out of her.

Mrs. Collingham was prepared for this; she had discounted it in advance. "She's playing for more," she said to herself. Luckily, she had named her minimum only, and had arranged with her husband for a maximum. The maximum was all the same to her so long as she saved Bob. Having given Jennie credit for seeing through the game all along—such girls were quick and astute—she had expected that the first figure of the "present" would meet with just this reception.

But Jennie was saying to herself, "Oh, if this kind offer had only come yesterday!" Five thousand dollars was a sum of which she could not see the spending limitations. It meant all of which the family had need and that she herself had ever coveted. With five thousand dollars, she could not only have put her father on his feet, but have come before Hubert as an heiress.

"If you don't think it enough," Mrs. Collingham said, at last, with a shade of coldness in her tone, "I should be willing to make it seven—or ten. Perhaps we'd better say ten at once, and end the discussion. My husband's willing to make it ten, but I don't think he'd give more. Our son is very dear to us"—the realities seeped through in spite of her attempts at comedy—"and, oh, Miss Follett, if you'll only help us to keep him for ourselves as you've helped us already—"

Jennie staggered to her feet. Her arms hung lax at her sides. Ten thousand dollars! The sum was fabulous! It would have meant all cares lifted from the home—and Hubert! She was hardly aware of speaking as she said:

"Oh, Mrs. Collingham, I can't take your money. I wish I could. My God! how I wish I could! But—but—"

"But, for goodness' sake, child, why can't you?"

"Because—oh, because—I'm married to Bob already."

CHAPTER IX

It was one of those occasions when the auditory nerve seems to connect imperfectly with the brain. Mrs. Collingham placed her cup on the table and leaned forward, puzzled, tense.

"What did you say? Sit down. Tell me that again."

Jennie collapsed against the tan cushion of the chair, and repeated her confession. Her hostess's brows knitted painfully.

"But I don't understand. When did you marry him?"

The girl explained that it had been on the previous afternoon.

"But—but—you said just now that you were in love with some one else."

"So I am—only—only, Bob made me."

"Made you what?"

"Made me go and get a license and marry him. He said"—her lips and tongue were so parched that it was hard to form the words—"he said he was going away in a few days to South America, and that he couldn't go unless he knew I was his wife. I begged him to let me off, but he—he wouldn't. Oh, Mrs. Collingham, what am I to do?"

The appeal helped Junia to rally her stricken powers. It enabled her to say inwardly: "I must act through this girl herself. If I estrange her, I may lose my son." A flash of the lioness wrath with which she trembled might lead to an irretrievably false step. So she made her tone kindly, sympathetic, almost affectionate.

"And Bob—does he know that—that you care for some one else?"

"He never asked me."

"But don't you think you should have told him?"

"That's not so very easy when—"

"But there was some sort of understanding between you and Hubert, wasn't there?"

Jennie's only answer to this was to clasp her hands and say,

"Oh, Mrs. Collingham, how do people get divorces?"

This being more than Junia had hoped for, she tried to use the opening to the best of her ability.

"They—they do something that—that makes the other person want to be free." Trying to explain this further, she ran the risk of citing a case perhaps too close to the point. "For instance, if my husband wanted to be free, he'd do something that would make me willing to divorce him."

"And would you?"

"You see, I'm taking the case of *his* wanting to be free. In that situation, *he's* the one who would do the thing. If I wanted to be free, I suppose—I suppose I should do it."

"So that if I wanted to be free, it would be up to me to do the thing rather than up to Bob."

A moral issue being here at stake, Junia was obliged, in the expressive American phrase, "to sidestep," though she supposed that the suggestion in the air was of no more than Jennie had done already. As an artist's model, it would be part of her professional occupation.

"I'm not giving you advice, my dear; I'm only trying to answer your question. I'm so sorry for you that I'd do anything I could to help you unravel the tangle."

"Then you think there are ways of unraveling it?"

"Oh, certainly, if you were willing to—"

"To what, Mrs. Collingham. There's almost nothing I wouldn't do—to get us all out—when you've been so kind to me."

Having a conscience of her own, Junia continued to "sidestep."

"My dear, I can't tell you what to do. I'm not sure that I know—very well. You see, it's your trouble, and you must get out of it. I'll help you. I *will* do that. In every way I can I'll make it easy for you. But I couldn't advise—or—or put anything in your way that might be considered as—as temptation."

But conscientious scruples were not in Jennie's line. When eager to reach a point, she went to it straight.

"If Bob came back from South America and found I was living with Hubert, wouldn't he have to divorce me then?"

Junia rose in the agitation of one unused to plain talk, and shocked by it.

"Jennie—your name *is* Jennie, isn't it?—I must go and speak to Mr. Collingham. You'll stay here—won't you?—till I come back. I may have something then rather important to say."

The girl sat still, looking up adoringly.

"Are you going to tell him?"

"No; I think not. But there's something I want to ask him. I don't think that either you or I had better say anything to anyone. What do you think?"

Jennie shook her head.

"I don't want to. I wish nobody would ever have to know."

"I wish Hubert didn't have to know. Perhaps he won't; and yet—Let us think." She dropped into a chair nearer to Jennie than the one behind the tea table. "One thing I *must* ask you. What happened after you and Bob went through that ceremony yesterday afternoon?"

"Nothing happened. He motored back to his friends on Long Island and I took the ferry and went home. He said he'd see me on Saturday to say good-by."

"Where?"

"Oh, I don't know. In Central Park, I expect. He's asked me to meet him there once or twice already."

"But I wouldn't go anywhere else with him if I were you—not into a house, or anything."

"I won't if he doesn't make me."

"I'd be firm about that. You see, if you did—well, I'm sure you understand—it might—it might make it harder for you to find your way out to where you'd be happy again. Are you sure you see what I mean?"

"I've had that out with him. He'd said that nothing would happen till he got back from South America."

Relieved by this simple statement, Junia went on.

"And if I were you, I wouldn't say a word to anybody—not even to your own father and mother. Your mother is living, isn't she? Don't even tell Bob that you've seen me. Don't tell anyone anything. Let it be your secret and mine. I want you to feel that I'm your friend and anxious to help you out of the muddle in which you've tied up your happiness. At first, when you told me, I thought more of Hubert; but now that we've talked I'm thinking of you, too, and how much I should like to see you—" A dim smile conveyed the rest of the thought while she rose again. "Now I'll go. Don't be alarmed if I'm a little long. Max will take care of you."

Left to herself, Jennie's emotions came in waves of conflicting calculation. Had she only been in love with Bob, and not with Hubert, all this graciousness would have lapped her round in silk and softness. Nothing would have been denied her from a limousine to pearls. There would have been the villa for the family, with Gussie and Gladys turned into "buds."

But, as an offset to it, there would be the renunciation. Somehow, since cutting herself away from Hubert by the ceremony with Bob, he seemed nearer to her than before. Things she had supposed to be out of the question now presented themselves as more in the line of those that could be done. Within twenty-four hours she had lived much; she had ripened much. Now that she had had this talk with Mrs. Collingham, Hubert became more definitely an alternative. She could choose him and let this wealth and beauty go, or she could choose the wealth and beauty and let him....

But at the thought of turning her back on him something seemed to choke her. To choose what money could buy instead of this great love was treachery to all she knew as sublime. She clutched herself over the heart. It was as if she were going to die. Max was so startled that he sprang upon her with his mighty paws in the roughness of young consternation.

On the other hand, home conditions were well-nigh imperative. Love and Hubert were all very well, but they were part of the world of romance. The family, with their concrete needs, were actuality. Jennie thought of each one of them in turn, but of Teddy most of all. Among those of her own generation, he was her favorite. If she became openly Mrs. Robert Bradley Collingham, Junior, of Marillo Park, Teddy would go far. He might have a place like Mr. Brunt's. Only the other day her father had said of Mr. Brunt, "There's one who don't have any trouble in pickling down his ten a week." To see Teddy pickling down his ten a week, which would be more than five hundred dollars in a year, Jennie was ready to submit to almost anything—even Bob's hands on her person. She might get used to them, and, if she didn't, why, the daily sacrifice would be not without its reward.

She had reached something like this decision when Mrs. Collingham came back. Watching her from the minute when she rounded the corner of the flagged pavement, Jennie noted a rapid change in her expression. At first it was terrible—that of a queen in wrath. As she approached the bird cage, however, it cleared so quickly that by the time she reached the threshold it was almost tender.

"That's because she likes me," Jennie said to herself. She was accustomed to being liked, though especially by men. "I think it will cheer her up if I say right off that I've come to stay with her."

To make this announcement she had risen to her feet, with lips already parted; but Mrs. Collingham forestalled her.

"Sit down again, my dear. I want to talk to you some more. I must tell you about Mr. Collingham." She herself sank into the chair near Jennie which she had already occupied. She panted as after a difficult experience. "Oh dear! It's been so trying! You don't know him, do you? Well, he's a good man—kind and just in his way—but oh, so stern and relentless! If he knew what Bob had done in going through that mad thing with you, he'd turn the boy adrift."

Having reseated herself already, Jennie now closed her lips. She had forgotten Mr. Collingham. Coming to stay was meeting a new obstacle.

"It's only fair to you to make you understand what kind of man my husband is. Of course, he's a strong man, otherwise he wouldn't have accomplished all he has. My son, my daughter, I myself—we're but puppets on his string. His word has to be law to us. And with Bob the way he is—wanting to marry every girl he meets—and forgetting her next day—his father has no patience. You don't know how hard it is for me, my dear, always to have to stand between them."

As she paused to dab her eyes, Jennie saw the limousine, the villa, with Teddy's chance of pickling down ten a week, fading out like a picture in the movies.

"I wouldn't dare to tell him of the great wrong Bob has done to you. He'd disinherit him on the spot. If Bob were to insist on having this escapade—you wouldn't really call it a marriage, would you?—but if he were to insist on its being made public, why, there'd be an end of his relations with his father. My husband would neither give him a cent nor leave him a cent. I must say that Bob would deserve it; but, Jennie, I'm thinking of you. You'd have forsaken the man you loved, married a man you didn't care for, and got nothing in the world to show for it. That's where you'd have to suffer, and I can see well enough that you're suffering already."

There was every reason now that Jennie's tears should begin to flow. Flow they did while her companion watched.

"And yet, as you'll see, Mr. Collingham is not an unkind man. When I explained to him that we might be more indebted to you than I had thought at first, he said—"

With a look of anticipation, Jennie stopped crying suddenly, though the tears already shed were glistening on her cheek.

The point was now to find phraseology at once clear enough and delicate enough to suggest a course and yet not shock the sensibilities.

"You see, my dear, it's this way. One has to keep one's ideals, hasn't one? That goes without saying. Once we let our ideals go"—she flung her hands outward—"well, what's the use of living? My own life hasn't been as happy as you might think; and if it hadn't been for my ideals—"

Jennie broke in because she couldn't help it.

"Mr. Wray is ideal for a man, don't you think, Mrs. Collingham?"

It was the lead Junia needed.

"He's perfect, Jennie, in his way; and, oh, how I wish you were as free as forty-eight hours ago! You could be, of course, if—But I mustn't advise you, must I? I don't know how to. I'm just as lost as you are. Only, if you could find a way to cast the burden of the whole thing on Bob—"

"Do you mean to make him get the divorce?"

"In that case, we should want to feel that you had something to fall back upon. And so my husband thought that perhaps twenty-five thousand dollars—"

Jennie gave a great gasp. Her head began to swim. Not villas and limousines rose before her, but cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces.

"Poor daddy," she thought, "wouldn't have to hunt for a job any more, and momma'd have nothing to do for the rest of her life but sit in a chair and rock."

Yet that was only part of the vision. The rest did not go so easily into words. She had only to hurry to the studio, fling herself into the arms she was longing to feel clasped round her—and become fabulously rich.

That would be if Bob took the opening she offered him. If he didn't—

"But suppose Bob won't?" she asked, in terror lest he should not.

"I've thought of that, too," came the prompt answer. "He will, of course. But suppose he didn't. Well, we're not hagglers, my dear. We're only simple people trying to do right, just as you're trying to do right yourself. If Bob is only in a position in which he *can* undo his wrong, whether he undoes it or not, you shall have your twenty-five thousand just the same."

"Could I have it as early as—as next week?"

"If the conditions are fulfilled, certainly."

Jennie was anxious to free herself from the charge of cupidity.

"The reason I say next week is that my father is worried about the interest on the mortgage and the taxes. He didn't pay the interest last time, and the taxes are two months overdue. If he can't find the money by next week—"

"You yourself can be in a position to take all the worry off his hands—once the conditions are fulfilled."

Little more was said after this. There was little more to say. The necessities of the case being once understood, Junia steered her guest back to the car which waited at the door.

But into the leave-taking Max threw an odd note of hostility. As if he resented some baseness toward his master, he pressed his flank against Jennie with such force as almost to knock her down, and when she sprang away from him into the car he growled after her.

CHAPTER X

"So you can do it and get away with it." This was Teddy's reflection as he left the bank on that Thursday afternoon. He had spent an infernal day, but it was over, and over safely. Of the missing twenty dollars he had neither heard a word nor caught a sign of anxiety. Mr. Brunt had been methodical and taciturn as usual. Always keeping a gulf between Teddy and himself, it was neither more nor less a gulf to-day than it was on other days. As to whether he missed twenty dollars or whether he did not, Teddy could form no idea.

In the middle of the morning there had been a terrifying incident.

"See that guy over there?" Lobley, one of his colleagues, had asked him.

He saw the guy over there—a crafty, clean-shaven Celt—and said so.

"That's Flynn, the detective who copped Nicholson, the teller at the Wyndham National."

"O my God! I'm pinched!" Teddy exclaimed to himself. "If I had a gun or a dose of poison, he'd never get me alive."

But Flynn only chatted with Jackman, one of the house detectives, laughed, cashed a check at a wicket, and left the bank.

Teddy breathed again, wondering if he had given anything away to Lobley. Was it possible that Lobley could have heard of the twenty dollars and been set to try him out? No; he didn't believe so. Lobley had merely pointed out Flynn as a notable character, and gone about his business.

"I shall never forget that mug," Teddy thought, as he summoned his *sang-froid* to go on with his work. "The mug of a guy without guts," he added, further to define the pitiless set of Flynn's features. "I sure would kill myself before I let him touch me."

There was no other alarm that day; there was only the incessant fear, the incessant watchfulness that made him shrink from every eye that glanced his way, and which, when office hours were over, sent him scuttling to the subway like a rabbit to its hole.

At supper, his father brought up again the subject of the taxes and the interest on the mortgage. The latter would be due at the end of the following week, and the former was long overdue. With the added interest on both, he owed two hundred and sixty-odd dollars, of which he had borrowed from old friends a hundred and fifteen. Between the sum due and that in hand, there was a gap which he didn't see how to fill.

"We'll get it somehow, daddy," Jennie said, encouragingly. "Don't begin worrying."

"No; Ted'll rob the bank," Gussie laughed, flippantly.

Teddy was on his feet, shaking his fist across the table.

"See here, Miss Gus; that's just about—"

Gussie laughed up at him, still more flippantly.

"You haven't robbed it already, have you? Momma, do make him behave."

"Children, don't squabble, please! Teddy darling, Gussie was only poking a little fun. Sit down and have some more hash. It's made with beets in it, just the way you like it. I was reading," she continued, to divert the minds of the company, "of that teller at the Wyndham National—"

"Nicholson," Josiah put in. "I used to know him when I was at the Hudson River Trust. Sharp-eyed little ferret face, he was. Twenty-three thousand, extending over a period of five years. Often had lunch with him at the same counter. Blueberry pie was a favorite of his."

"Twenty-three thousand, extending over a period of five years!" Teddy repeated that to himself. He wondered that it hadn't struck him when he heard the fellows at the bank discussing the arrest. One of them had claimed "inside dope" as to how Nicholson had covered up his tracks, and explained the process. Teddy hadn't listened to that, because the magnitude of the theft had excluded its bearing on his own.

But there it was forcing itself on his attention, like Pansy's cold nose pressed at that minute against his hand. You could have five years' leeway, and never be suspected. He pumped his father for further details as to Nicholson's life, learning that he had owned his home at Leffingwell Manor, where he had been a member of the golf club and a church goer.

At his own fears Teddy smiled inwardly. Twenty dollars, which would certainly be paid back in the course of a few weeks! Already he had saved seventy cents toward the restoration, just by going without his lunch, with a few economies in car fares. If he could pawn his best suit of clothes, he would have the whole sum within a fortnight. The suit had been bought for twenty-six dollars, and would certainly bring in ten. It would be a matter of dodging his mother and getting it out of the closet in her room, where she kept it in order to regulate his use of it.

As supper went on, it was little Gladys who brought up the question which some one older might have asked.

"What would happen, daddy, if you couldn't pay the interest and the taxes?"

"They could sell us out of house and home."

But this possibility being more than a week off, the statement brought no fears with it. Like all people who at the best of times are dependent on a weekly wage, the Folletts had the mental attitude best described as "from hand to mouth." That is, once the dinner was secure, there was no will to worry as to where the supper was to come from. It was fundamentally a question of outlook. People used to being provided for naturally looked ahead; but where your most extended view could take you no more than from one meal to another your powers of forecast grew limited. Doubtless the provision was merciful, for, in the case of the Folletts, even the parents felt the futility of dreading a calamity more than a week away.

Of all the six, Jennie was the only one with a power of making comparisons and drawing contrasts. She had had, that day, a glimpse of a world as different from her own as paradise from earth. It was no use saying that it was different only in degree; it was different also in kind. It was different in values, in textures, in amplitudes. It was another thing, not another aspect of the same thing. Junia Collingham might be a human being like herself; but in all that was of practical account, she was as widely separated from Jennie Follett as a New Yorker from a Central African.

That was as far as Jennie got. Her mind was not given to deduction or her spirit to asking questions. Not having a God in particular, she had nothing to act as a great touchstone, to praise or to blame. Some human beings had everything; others had next to nothing. The Folletts were among "the others." Jennie didn't know how or why. She didn't ask to know. Knowing would perhaps be worse than not knowing, since it might stir rebellion where there was now only lassitude and resignation. But there was the fact. The Collinghams could throw her twenty-five thousand dollars as she threw a titbit to Pansy, while her father might be sold out of house and home for lack of a hundred and fifty.

Jennie mused, but she did no more. Life was too big a mystery to grapple with. If she tried it, it made her unhappy. It made her unhappy that Max should have been friendly at first, and then growled at her so resentfully. She wondered if dogs had a scent for moral and emotional atmospheres. She couldn't express this last in words, but she did it very well by thought. She often had thoughts for which she had no words, so that her inner life was broader than that which she showed outside. It was one of the things she had noticed about Mrs. Collingham—that she had words for everything. It was like her possession of the house, the gardens, the beautiful things. They gave her spaciousness. Her spirit moved with a larger swing. She could think, feel, express herself strongly, vividly, commandingly, while they, the Folletts, had to creep and sneak timidly along the back lanes of life.

"That's why I'm doing it," she reasoned with herself, "because I'm in the back lanes of life. I can creep and sneak along, and I can't do anything else. It was all very well for him to jostle me with his lean, iron flank and to growl; but he didn't know what twenty-five thousand would mean to me."

Along the line of these musings, Teddy said, suddenly:

"Saw young Coll to-day. Came up and spoke to me. Not half a bad sort when you get to know him."

Jennie felt a little faint, but no one noticed it, because Gussie threw back the ball.

"Tell him to come up and speak to me. Any afternoon at half past five, when I leave Corinne's."

"Say, Gus," Gladys giggled; "wouldn't you like a guy with all that wad waitin' for you every day when Corinne shuts down the lid? My! The ice-cream sodas he could blow you to!"

Lizzie was pained. It seemed to her that the process of Americanization which her children were undergoing lay chiefly in the degradation of their speech.

"Gladys darling, can't you find proper words to—"

"Oh, momma dear," Gladys complained, "do put a can on all that. If you're a cash girl, you've got to talk English, or the other girls'll whizzy you round the lot."

"Young Coll is going to South America," Teddy informed the party. "Sails with Huntley on Monday. Gosh! Wouldn't I like to be going, too! Say, dad, why do some fellows come into the world with the way all smoothed for them and their bread buttered in advance?"

"Because," Gussie declared, loftily, "they're clever and can get ahead, like Fred Inglis. I'll bet that if *his* father wanted his taxes and the interest on a mortgage, he wouldn't have to raise the wind among his old friends. Fred'd be Johnny-on-the-spot with the greenbacks."

Teddy could only gulp, hang his head over his plate, and choke himself with hash, as he muttered to his soul; "God! I'll shoot that Fred Inglis if I ever get a gun."

And just as if she knew that Teddy needed comforting, Pansy sprang upon his knees, pushing her face up along his breast till she could lick his chin.

Twenty-four hours later Max was vexing his soul with the difficulty of transcending planes. There was so much of which he could have warned his master, now that he had got him back from Long Island; but there was neither speech nor language, neither symbol nor sign, to make human beings understand anything but the most primitive needs and concepts. Obedience! Disobedience! Hunger! Thirst! Sorrow! Joy! These sentiments could be put over from the dog plane to the human plane, but without shadings, subtleties, or any of the marvels of untuitive knowledge by which dogs could enlighten men if men had open faculties. To another dog, he could have flashed his information in an instant; whereas human beings could only seize ideas

when they were beaten into them with verbal clubs.

Edith and Bob voted Max a nuisance because, in his agony of impotence, he pranced restlessly about the bedroom, lashing his tail in one tempo and pointing his ears in another. Edith had come down from the Berkshires on hearing by wire that Bob was to leave next Monday for South America. She was seated now on the bed, her back against the footboard.

"What I don't quite see," she was saying, "is how you can be so sure."

Bob looked at her as he stood taking the studs from the soft-bosomed evening shirt in his hand to transfer them to the clean one lying on the bed.

"How can you be so sure about Ayling?"

"Well, that's a little different. Ernest speaks our language; he has our ways. Dad and mother make a fuss because he hasn't a lot of money; but that means no more than if he didn't wear a certain kind of hat. He's our sort, just the same."

"And I'm her sort. I can't explain it to you, Edie, but she needs me."

"How do you know she needs you? Has she ever admitted it?"

"I haven't asked her to admit it. I can see."

"Yes, that's all very fine, but—did it ever strike you, when Hubert's been talking about her, that—"

Bob made an inarticulate sound of scorn as he inserted the cuff links into a cuff.

"Oh, Hubert's a top-hole chap, all right; but my Lord!—Jennie wouldn't look across the street at him."

"But he might look across the street at Jennie; and with you so far away—"

He smiled, with something like a wink.

"Don't you fret about that. She's the kind of little woman to be true. You can't mistake 'em."

"We've known a good many men who have mistaken them."

"You haven't known my kind to make that sort of tumble. Love can be blind; but instinct can't be. Edie, I believe so much in that girl that, if she was to play me false—But there—good Lord!—she couldn't; so why talk about it any more? See here," he added. "If you're going to change your dress, you'll have to scuttle—and I must get into my waiter's togs."

Meanwhile Dauphin's struggles were of another order. It was the hour of the day which he was accustomed to spend with Collingham, and to spend it undisturbed. In this lovely spring weather they strolled about the gardens, peeped into the hotbeds, dropped in aimlessly at the stable or the garage, exchanged odds and ends of observation with the men working around the place. After this, they returned to the house, where, upstairs, in a comfortably, masculine bedroom, the man made changes in his outer fur, while the setter, less concerned about trifles, stretched himself out on the floor and blinked. It was a restful time, suited to a mind which after the stormier years was growing more and more content with material prosperity, and to a heart that was always content with its master's contentment.

But, of late, poor Dauphin had been painfully buffeted by waves of agitation. They emanated from his master, like circlets round a stone thrown into a pool. When his master's wife came into the scene the conflict of forces was terrible. She was not straight with her lord. She was using him,

hoodwinking him. Dauphin would have sprung at her throat had it not been for the knowledge that, were he to do so, he would be beaten and kicked by the object of his defense. No; you couldn't deal with human beings sensibly. The wise thing to do was to stretch on the floor and pretend to snooze while they fought their own fight.

They didn't precisely fight their own fight just now. Collingham merely accepted terms. He was picking up his evening jacket from the bed on which his valet had laid it out. Junia, dressed exactly to the mean between too little and too much suited for a family dinner, had crossed the threshold of his room, where she stood adjusting a fall of lace.

"As I told you yesterday after she went away, she's just what you'd expect from such a girl, certainly no better and possibly a little worse. She's a mousey little thing, with a veneer of modesty; but 'mercenary' isn't the word. It's just a question of money, Bradley; and if you'll leave it to me to deal with—"

"Leave it to you to deal with—to the tune of twenty-five thousand dollars," he said, morosely, pulling his coat into shape round his shoulders as he looked into the long glass.

"Well, that's only half what it might have been. I thought at one time that we might have to make it fifty thousand—"

He was not sure, but he thought she finished with the word "again." If so it was uttered too softly for him to be obliged to take note of it, so that he merely picked up a hairbrush and put another touch to his hair.

She was now at work on the great string of pearls which, to keep them alive, she wore even in domestic privacy. Her object was to get the famous Roehampton pearl, from the late Lady Roehampton's collection, which had been the seal of her reconciliation with Bradley fifteen years earlier—to get this jewel right in the center of her person, to make the string symmetric.

"My point in bringing it up now," she said, speaking into her chin as her eyes inspected the long oval of the necklet, "is to remind you that you don't know anything. You haven't seen Bob for nearly a week, and after Monday you won't see him for two or three months at least. Don't let him suspect that you've anything on your mind. As a matter of fact, you haven't, except what I tell you—and I may not tell you everything."

"And that may be what I complain of."

"You can't complain of it when I give you the results—now can you? You don't complain of Mr. Bickley, or ask him for all the reasons he has for saying this or that. You leave him a free hand, and are ruled by him—you've often said it—even when your own preference would be to do something else, as it was in the case of this man Follett. Now I only claim to be the Mr. Bickley of the family."

That he had rights as father Collingham was aware, though he was shy of putting them forward. Having left them so much in abeyance, it would have been as ridiculous to emphasize them now as to dispute Bickley as efficiency expert at the bank. Moreover, the uneasiness which seizes on a man when his chickens come home to roost inclined him still further to passivity. If Bob was "knocking about town," as he seemed to be, he might know about his father what Junia did not—or presumably did not—that the woman who received the fifty thousand dollars had had her successors, and that even now the line was not extinct. While he knew of amusing incidents of fathers and sons meeting on this ground, any such *contretemps* in his own case would have shocked him profoundly. Junia might go beyond her powers in prescribing his course, and yet, for a multitude of reasons too subtle for him to phrase, it seemed wise to follow what Junia prescribed.

So the family dined and spent the evening together as tourists walk across the Solfatara crater. The ground was hot beneath their tread, and here and there a whiff of sulphuric vapor poured through a fissure in the crust; but only Max and Dauphin sensed the volcanic fire.

Later in the evening, Junia knelt at her *prie-dieu* with the armorial books of devotion.

"And, O heavenly Father," she added, to her usual prayer, "have mercy upon that poor erring girl and help her to repent. Grant that my son may extricate himself from the toils in which he is entangled. Enable my daughter to see that her duty lies in the station of life to which thou hast been pleased to call her. Give my husband the wisdom to seek advice and to follow it. Lead me with thy counsel so that I may do what is best for all my dear ones, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Amen."

Having thus poured out her heart, she rose feeling stronger and more comforted.

CHAPTER XI

It should be said for Jennie Follett that, in the matter of her course toward Bob Collingham, she had few of those convictions of sin and righteousness which restrain a proportion of mankind. As with the other members of her family, her conduct followed certain lines "because she couldn't help it." That is as far as her analysis would have carried her, though analysis didn't give her much concern. Having so much to do to get food and clothes, the higher laws were outside her sphere of interest. Her chief law was Necessity, and it covered so much ground that there was little place for any other law.

It may be well to state here that the Folletts belonged to that vast American contingent who have practically no religion. They had had a religion in Canada, where they had attended the church of a local god who seemed to hold no sway over the United States. They never found that church in the suburbs of New York, or, if they found it nominally, it didn't, in their opinion, "seem the same." There were no local suasions and compulsions to bring them to its doors, and so, after a few spasmodic efforts to re-establish the connection, they gave up the attempt.

Perhaps this failure was due to the fact that, in the depths of her strong, proud heart, Lizzie didn't believe in God. Josiah did—or, at least, he had believed in him up to the time of being thrown upon the scrap heap. But Lizzie's faith in God had died with the dying of her faith in man. She had never said so, because she kept her deeper thoughts to herself; but along these lines her influence on her children had been negative.

So Jennie had missed those counsels to do right which sometimes form a part of domestic education. With so little latitude for doing anything, there was not—apart from the grosser vices—much latitude in the Follett family even for doing wrong. They did what they "couldn't help" doing, and there was an end of it. A kind of inborn rectitude kept them from offenses of which the public would have taken note, but behind it there was little in the way of principle.

Jennie went to her farewell meeting with Bob untroubled by qualms of conscience. Even if scruples had worried her, they would have been allayed by the knowledge, imparted by Bob's own mother, that he had done her a great injury. He made the same kind of love to every girl he had known for an hour, and forgot her the next day. "One of these days," the mother had said, "some girl would catch him, and then he would be sorry." A girl hadn't caught him in this case, but he had caught a girl, and didn't know what to do with her. Having compelled her to go through a form of marriage—it was no more than a form—he was sailing off to the ends of the world, leaving her not so much as the protection of his name. She owed him nothing; and only the goodness of his angel mother was making up for what he owed to her.

And, on his side, Bob was so carried away by his romance as to have no conception of Jennie's attitude toward him. Seeing himself as a knight riding to the relief of a damsel in distress, it did not occur to him that the damsel could have a preference as to her deliverer. It was a matter of course that, from the window of the tower in which she was a prisoner, she would drop into his arms.

In other words, Bob had his own view of the advantages of being a Collingham. They were great advantages, since they gave him the opportunity of being generous. He was in love with Jennie largely because she was an exquisite object on which to spend himself. She was a gem, not in the rough, and yet in need of polishing, and though his own refinement was not so very great, he could throw refinement in her way.

That is to say, love for Bob was very much a matter of giving himself out. Girls who could have brought him everything—and they were not scarce at Marillo Park—didn't interest him. They left no place for the selflessness which was the basis of his character. He couldn't precisely be called kind, since kindness implies some deliberation of the will. As the impulse of a fountain is to pour itself out, so Bob's impulse was to give, while Jennie was a crystal chalice wide open to receive.

"I want you to have everything in the world, Jennie darling," he declared, bending above her as lovingly as a bench in the park would permit. "I can't give it to you right off the bat, worse luck, but sooner or later I'll be able to dope you out every little wish. Good Lord! How I'll enjoy it."

"What do you mean by sooner or later?" Jennie asked, with eyes downcast.

"When I get the family broken to the bit. I can't tell you in dates or time. They'll be hard in the mouth at first; and mother pulls like the devil."

At this false witness, Jennie was revolted. No one knew better than herself the bigness of that maternal heart which, as early as next week, would give liberal proof of its sincerity, when Bob's promises would still be in the air.

Bob had the afternoon at his disposal. The park offered itself as a delicious trysting place, because it was the month of May. In a nook where lilac and syringa overshadowed them and water glinted between lawns and glades, they sat discreetly side by side, and she permitted him to hold her hand.

He went on to sketch his plans for the immediate future. His most trying lack was that of ready cash. The parental system had always been generous as to things, but penurious in money. In the matter of things, he would be as extravagant as he reasonably liked, so long as the bills were sent to dad. Before he went to work at the bank, his allowance in money wouldn't have kept him in cigarettes. Even now, he was only on the weekly pay roll for thirty-eight dollars and sixty-six cents per, handed him in a pay envelope. Food, lodging, clothes, saddle horses, motor cars—all these were thrown in extra; but in actual coin he didn't handle more than his two thousand dollars a year, like any other clerk.

Jennie could see, therefore, that, to begin with, their position would be difficult, though only to begin with. He could send her a little money while he was away, but it wouldn't be very much.

"I don't want you to send me any," she said, hastily.

"You forget that I'm your husband, dear. If I didn't, you could bring an action for divorce on the ground of nonsupport."

This idea being new to Jennie, she had it explained to her, rejecting it as a resource because it was unromantic.

"And so, to be on the safe side against that," he laughed, "I've got this for you now."

Slipping an envelope from his pocket, he forced it into the hand he was holding.

"It's only a hundred dollars—" he was beginning to explain.

She snatched her hand away as if she had been stung.

"Oh, Bob, I can't!"

That situation amused him. It was one more proof of the naïve honesty of the little girl. He knew how hard up she was, how hard up all the family must be, and yet money didn't tempt her.

"You're a funny little kid," he laughed, drawing her as near to him as the park laws would permit. "You'd think I didn't have a right to take care of you."

But Jennie was feeling that if she took this money she would be bound to him by principles more acute than the promises she had made before the parson.

"No, Bob, I can't. Please don't make me—*please*!"

But in the end he forced it on her, and she stowed it away in her little bag. By that time, too, she had reviewed the family situation. With a hundred dollars in her possession they could less easily be sold out of house and home at the end of the following week. That calamity, at least, could be dodged, whatever other misfortune might overtake herself. She might decide that to be sold out of house and home would be easier than to bind herself further to Bob by using his money; but, still, she would have the choice. As to the twenty-five thousand, there was always the possibility that it might not come in time. She had not yet seen Hubert; she couldn't see him till Bob had sailed. When she did, the other woman might be in her place and her heart would have to break in spite of everything. Better it should break with a hundred dollars in her pocket than that she should be helpless to stay the family disaster.

But when Bob sailed on the Monday she was free to make the great test. Notwithstanding his definite farewells on the Saturday, he had tried to see her again on the Sunday, but the necessity for secrecy made it possible for her to put him off. For one thing, she couldn't go through a second time such a good-by as that of Saturday. Bob had been too much overcome. As unexpectedly to himself as to her, he had broken down. Braving all publicity, he had suddenly seized her hand, pressed it to his lips, and as he bent over it she could feel his tears against her fingers. He hadn't exactly cried; he had only breathed hard, with two great sobs.

"My God! how I love you, Jennie!" she had heard him muttering. "How I love you! How I love you! How can I do without you all the time till I come back?" When he raised his head he laughed sheepishly, though the tears were still on his cheeks. "Forget it, little girl," he begged, unsteadily, wiping his cheeks and blowing his nose. "I just worship you, and that's all there is about it. It breaks me all up to go away and leave you; but the time will pass, and, if I can help it, I shall never go away from you again."

Defying the park laws once more, he had kissed her and kissed her. She had let him do it because she was so unnerved. Besides, she was sorry for him, and would have been sorrier still if she hadn't known that by to-morrow he would have forgotten her. That was always the way with fellows who took things so hard. The true love was too stern and strong to show emotion.

Nevertheless, she had had an unhappy Sunday thinking of those two sobs. It was not until after ten o'clock on Monday morning that she was able to turn again to the compulsion of the man she loved. At ten, Bob sailed, and that episode in Jennie's life was probably behind her. By the time he came back, he would be in love with a girl of his own class and eager to seize the freedom she, Jennie, would be in a position to deliver him. At last the way was clear. She had only to go to her lover and tell him she was there.

She went that afternoon. Her plan was simple. She would say that if he had not yet found a model for the girl in the Byzantine chair, she was ready to do the work. The rest would come as a matter of course.

Now that she was face to face with the task, her heart was oddly apathetic. "I might be out to buy postage stamps," she said to herself, while crossing the ferry.

None the less, she wished she didn't have to look at this water down which Bob had sailed only four or five hours previously. Off toward the south, in the haze of the warm May afternoon, there was a giant steamer lying as if becalmed. It might be his. There was one still farther out to sea. That, too, might be his. Far down on the horizon, just passing out of sight, there was a little black spot with a pennon of black smoke. That could very easily be his. She watched it. It might be carrying him away to where he would forget her. Perhaps he had forgotten her already. His mother had said—and his mother must know him—that he made love to girls one day and forgot them on the next, and it was already two days since Saturday. Very well! Let him forget! Only, it didn't seem as if those kisses and those tears were quite in keeping with a heart which treated

love so easily.

She was glad when the ferryboat bumped softly against its pier and she could get away from the great stream of which the very smells and sounds would now begin to make her think of him. She wished there was another means of returning home. She wished he had gone by train. She wished....

At the door of the studio building she was seized with a great terror. She began to understand what it was she had come to do. She had come to give herself up. She was to say, in fact, "Here I am—take me." And he would take her—if he hadn't already taken some one else. The betrayal of a husband who was hardly a husband was no longer in her mind. She was appalled at this yielding of herself.

Yet she did everything as she had been accustomed to do it and entered the studio by the door she generally used.

At first she thought there was no one there. Certainly the other woman was not there, and that was so far a relief. Slowly, cautiously, she made her way between the brocades, old furniture, and pedestals. Then she saw Hubert and Hubert saw her.

She stood very much as a deer stands when surprised in the bracken—head erect, eyes curious. Till he gave her a sign she made no movement to go farther. And for a minute he gave her no sign. He only remained seated and looked. He looked, with a sketch and pencil in his hand. He had been occupied in touching something up.

But she couldn't mistake it. It was the girl in the Byzantine chair. Her heart, which seemed to swell to thrice its size, thumped painfully.

Then, at last, a smile broke over his face, lifting his mustache and mounting to his violet eyes. He didn't speak; he didn't move. He only looked, hushed, enraptured, as the hunter at the startled deer.

CHAPTER XII

Feeling that an explanation of her presence in the studio should come from herself, Jennie faltered:

"I—I only looked in to say that if you hadn't found a model for—for the picture you wanted to paint, I might—I might be able to pose."

Though she hadn't advanced and he hadn't moved, the extraordinary light in his eyes made her heart thump more wildly.

"You'd do it"—he held up the sketch—"dressed like that?"

She remembered his own phrase, "If I'm to be that kind of a model I must *be* that kind of a model—and do what's expected."

The process of starving out being so far successful, Wray felt it well to push it a little more. He rose with an air of distress.

"I wish you could have told me this last week, Jennie. As it is—"

"You've got some one else?"

"Not definitely. I've tried out three—two of them no good, though the third might—"

"Might do as well as me?"

"Perhaps better in some ways. I mean," he added hastily, as she seemed about to go, "that she's a real professional model, and for this kind of job, of course, a professional would be—let us say, more at her ease."

So many good things had, during the past few days, swum into Jennie's vision, only to swim out again, that she had grown almost used to this fading of her hopes. Nevertheless, the bliss of loving Hubert and getting twenty-five thousand dollars for it had seemed tolerably sure. To lose it now would be hard; but harder still, for the moment, at least, was this tone of detachment, of indifference. That another woman should, in some ways, do better than herself was worse than the last indignity. Her lip trembled. She was about to turn away with that collapse of the figure which marks the woman who has lost all hope.

He hurried up to her, laying his hand on her arm in a way that made a thrill run through her frame.

"Wait a minute, Jennie! I'd like to talk it over. If you want me to try you out—"

"What does that mean—try me out?"

"Oh, simply that you'd take the pose, so that I could see how nearly you'd come up to what I want."

"And then if I didn't—"

He smiled. "Oh, but you will—at least I think so."

"When would you do it?"

"Oh, right now. As soon as you like. I've got the time."

She looked at him inquiringly, but there was nothing in his eyes to answer the question she was asking.

"Oh, very well," she said, dully, and once more turned toward the little door.

She had taken a step or two when he said, suddenly,

"Jennie, what made you come back?"

She paused, turned again, and pulled herself together. It was necessary to take the old bantering tone. After all, she could fence in her way as well as anybody else.

"Oh, I don't know," she threw off carelessly. "I thought I might as well."

"Might as well what?"

"Oh, go in for the whole thing. As you say yourself, if you're to be that kind of a model—"

"And was that all?"

"'All?' It was a good deal, I should say."

"It was a good deal, yes—but I asked if it was all."

"Well, ask away, my boy. I don't have to answer you or go to jail, now do I?"

Extraordinary the relief of falling back on studio badinage! It took her off the Collingham stilts, away from the high-wrought Collingham emotions. She began to see what the trouble was with Bob. His touch wasn't light enough. He was too purposeful. He seemed to think you must mean something all the time. Mrs. Collingham, too, seemed to think so. It was not in Bob's language so much as in his cast of mind; but it was in his mother's cast of mind, and in her language, too.

Jennie thought of this as she stood before the pier-glass in the little dressing-room, first taking off her jacket, and then unpinning her hat. She would have to do her hair on the top of her head like the girl in Hubert's sketch. "And that's all the clothes I shall need to put on," she tried to say flippantly. She tried to say it flippantly, because that, too, would be along the line that people took who weren't Collinghams.

People who weren't Collinghams! That meant all the people in Indiana Avenue, all the people in Pemberton Heights, the vast majority of the people in the United States, not to speak of any other country. Jennie had a good many acquaintances, and the family, taken as a whole, had more; but she couldn't think of anyone in their class who took life as more than a skimming on the surface. Outside the bounden duties which they couldn't avoid they chiefly liked being silly.

She thought of that, too, loosening her hair and letting it fall in amber wavelets over her shoulders and down her back. Mrs. Collingham had said that it was lovely hair, but she hadn't really seen it. There was so much of it that, when she piled it up like the girl in the sketch, it almost overweighted her delicate little face.

No; whatever you could say about people like the Collinghams, you couldn't say they were silly. They had motives, opinions, points of view. They had minds, and they used them. They might not use them well, but to use them at all was better than to let them grow atrophied.

Jennie, as has been said, had no words to express these thoughts, but, like Pansy, she could do without a vocabulary. She felt; she vibrated. She, too, had a mind, though she was afraid of putting it to work. Lingering over the piling of her hair, she wondered if the use or nonuse of the mind marked the real line between people like the Collinghams and people like the Folletts. Was that why the country was divided into highbrows and lowbrows—those who made the best of what they had, and those who disqualified themselves for all the stronger purposes? Since her peep at Marillo Park, she saw that something admitted one to such a haven, and something kept one out. There was money, of course, and position; but back of both position and money wasn't it the case that there was mind?

She threw off her blouse and lingered again to examine her arms and bust. She lingered on purpose, putting off the extraordinary thing she had to do to the latest possible minute.

At Collingham Lodge, she had caught glimpses of books, papers, and magazines. Even in the bird cage they were lying on the table and chairs. The Folletts hardly ever read a book. The only work of the kind she could remember the family ever to have bought was one called *Ancient Rome Restored*, which her mother had subscribed for in monthly parts when an agent brought a sample to the house. It was at a time when Lizzie was afraid that her children—they were children still—would grow up without cultivation. *Ancient Rome Restored*, being abundantly illustrated, called out in the young Folletts the almost extinct Scarborough tradition. Having no other important picture book to look at, they pored over the glories of the Forum, of Hadrian's Villa, of the Baths of Caracalla, till an odd, incipient love of classic beauty began to stir in them. But there their cultivation ended. In the papers they studied only the murders, burglaries, and comic cuts. In the way of general entertainment, the movies formed their sole relaxation, but unless the play was silly they complained. Anything that asked for thought they kicked against, and Pemberton Heights kicked with them. Was that why there was a Pemberton Heights and a Marillo Park? Did the power of thought control the difference between them? Was it that where there was little or no power of thought, there was little or nothing of anything else?

She unhooked her skirt and let it slip down to a circular heap about her feet. She wondered if the girl who would, in some ways, do better than herself were as lithely built as she. Mrs. Collingham had likened her to—oh, what was it? It was a spire. It sounded like a chapel. She had tossed it off as something that everybody knew about. So she had tossed off other names, taking it for granted that Jennie would have them at her fingers' ends.

The more she pondered the more sure of it she became—that she and her kind were poor and helpless chiefly because they wouldn't take the trouble to be otherwise. Not to stray from the childish, the sentimental, and the obvious gave them the relief she found in returning to the lingo she had always used with Wray.

She had used it with Bob, too—only, with Bob she had used it differently. Perhaps it was he who had used it differently. Between her and Wray, it had never been more than the medium of chaff, except on those occasions when it had become the vehicle of a half-acknowledged passion. Bob had tried to say something with it, even when slangy or colloquial. He had treated her as if she was worth talking to. He had tried to make her feel that she could talk on better themes than any they ever broached.

Poor Bob—sailing away to the south, thinking that where he left her there he would find her! Little he knew! If he could only see her now! If he could only dream of what she would be doing in ten minutes' time! If he only....

Something made her shudder. She felt cold. Perhaps the wind had changed outside, as it often did in May. She stooped, picked up her skirt, and mechanically hooked it round her. Still feeling chilled, she crossed her arms and hugged herself. A minute or two later she had put on her blouse and her jacket. She meant to take them off again as soon as she stopped shivering. Already Hubert would be cursing her delay.

She thought of the light in his eyes when she told him that, after all, she had come to pose. The memory of it made her heart jump again, with a great, single throb. It was the cave man's light.

She never saw it in Bob's, and never would. Bob's eyes were twinkling and kind. She didn't suppose she would ever see such kind eyes in anyone else. If kindness were what she wanted....

Beginning to feel warmer, she noticed how grotesque her hair was with her spring sport suit. She had stuck through it a great skewer, with a handle of artificial jade, which she had used with some other costume. But the high crown of hair was so little in keeping with the rest of her that she pulled out the skewer and the other pins, again letting the glinting cataract tumble down.

Why had Bob never asked her if she loved him? Hubert had done it a hundred, perhaps a thousand times. Bob had seemed to think that his loving her covered all possible conditions. What he had to give her was always the theme of his enthusiasm, as if she were a beggar who could give nothing in return. With Hubert, it was what he was to get from her. She was the richly dowered one who could offer or withhold. He would take all—and give nothing.

Well, let him! It was what she wanted—to be drained dry. If she was to give herself up, she would give herself up. When Hubert had done with her, he would chuck her on the scrap heap like her father. That was the way she loved him. That was the way to be loved. Cave men didn't watch lest you should get damp feet, or have their lives insured for you. Their love was passion, a fire that burned you up and left you a white bit of ash.

And yet to be burned up and left a white bit of ash was something for which she was not yet prepared. She didn't say this to herself. All of a sudden she was terrified. Whatever instinct governed her went into the nimbleness of her fingers as she began flattening her hair so as to put on her hat. She didn't know why she was doing this. She didn't even know that she wanted to get away. It was just a wild impulse to be back as the everyday Jennie Follett. The girl in the Byzantine chair was out of the question—for to-day. To-morrow, perhaps!—probably—quite surely! But for to-day she must still belong for a few more hours to herself. Hubert might come thumping any minute on the door, and if he found her dressed for the street....

And just then he did come thumping on the door.

"Jennie, for God's sake, what's the matter? Are you dead?"

She gasped. It would have been a relief if she could have fainted. All she could do was to thrust the last pin into her hat and go to the door and open it.

Hubert stood aghast.

"Well, by all the holy cats—!"

"I'm not well, Mr. Wray," she pleaded, with sudden inspiration.

"Ah, go on, Jennie! You were well enough twenty minutes ago."

"Yes; but since then I've been feeling chilled."

He strode into the dressing-room, which he was not supposed to do.

"Chilled—hell! Why, this hole's as hot as blazes."

"It isn't that. I think it's a germ-cold I'm taking."

"See here, Jennie," he said, sternly. "You're going to funk it. All right! It doesn't make much difference to me. The other girl—it's Emma Brasshead—you know!—she was the middle one in Sims's three nudes—perfectly stunning hips—"

"I'll be here to-morrow—right on the dot."

He wheeled away as far as the space of the dressing-room would permit.

"Oh, well, Jennie, I don't know that it would be of much use, after all. Emma's the type, you see. You'd be too—"

"You can't tell that till—till you've tried me out."

"I can try you out right through your clothes. What's a man a painter for?"

"If you can do that, why did you want me to—"

He turned sharply.

"Jennie, you're not straight with me."

"Oh, but I am! I'm as straight with you as—as you are with me. But I can't help being sick."

"You can't help being Jennie," he muttered, brokenly, "the girl I worship and who worships me. Jennie! Jennie! Jennie!"

"Oh, don't, Hubert; don't!" she begged. "To-morrow! I'll come to-morrow, and then—"

But he smothered these protests.

"You wildcat! You adorable tigress!"

"Yes, Hubert—but to-morrow—"

"No, no!"

His kisses, his brutalities, were agony to her, and yet they were bliss. She didn't know why she fought them off, or what instinct led her to defend herself, or how she found herself out on the stairs.

She went down slowly. She was not angry; she was only excited and a little amused. Sex fury was less romantic than she had supposed; but as an exhibition of the human being at his most animal, it was "some curtain raiser." If she had to go through it again....

But as she jogged toward the ferry in the street car, this mood passed off. She grew sick with a sense of failure. Love and twenty-five thousand dollars were at stake, and she had funked the game. She was not a sport; she wondered if she were a woman. If she couldn't play up better than this, she would have Bob back on her hands again and be shamed forever before Mrs. Collingham, who had been so good to her. Moreover, if she continued to play fast and loose with Wray he would certainly return to Miss Brasshead.

She dreaded reaching the ferry and having to go on the boat. The river was now haunted by Bob, like the sea by a phantom ship. While crossing, she sat with her eyes closed so as to shut out this memory by not looking at the water.

Arrived on the New Jersey side, she was so much earlier than she usually returned, and so dispirited, that she decided to walk home, threading the way through sordid streets till she climbed the more cleanly ascent to the Heights. The Heights has a common as well as a square, and Jennie's way took her through the great shady grassplot, where men were lounging on benches, nurses wheeling their babies, and boys playing baseball. Round the common are the civic monuments of Pemberton Heights, the bank, the post-office, the hospital, the engine house, and the public library. Jennie looked at this last as if she had never seen it before.

As a matter of fact, she never had seen it before. She had looked at it more times than she could count, but with the eyes only. She knew what it was. She had actually watched the coquettish red-brick building, with its glass dome and white Grecian portico rising at the command of the great philanthropist whose name the building bore; but she had never been conscious of its

purpose as related to herself. Now, for the first time, it occurred to her that here was a place where a reader could find books.

With no very clear idea in mind, she stepped within. The interior was hushed, rather awesome, yet sunny and sweetly solemn like the temple of some cheerful god. Finding herself confronted by a kindly, bookish little lady seated at a table behind a wooden barrier, it was obviously Jennie's duty to address her.

"I wonder if—if I could borrow a book."

She was informed that she could borrow three books at a time, as soon as certain inquiries as to her identity and residence were carried out, and this would take a few days. But in a few days, Jennie knew that her desire to read might be dead, and said so. The object of the library being to encourage young people to read rather than to be too particular about their addresses, the kindly little lady, after some consultation with a kindly little gentleman, filled out Jennie's card.

"What sort of book were you thinking of? A novel?"

Jennie said, "Yes," if it was a good one.

"This is one of the best," the little lady went on, pushing forward a volume that happened to be lying at her hand, "if you'd care to take it."

It was *The Egoist*, by George Meredith, and Jennie accepted it as something foreordained.

"You could have two more books if you wanted them—now that you're here."

Jennie made a plunge.

"Have you anything about—about spires?"

The lady smiled gently.

"About church spires?"

The girl thought it was—chapel spires—especially French ones.

The kindly little gentleman, being accustomed to this kind of search, was called into counsel.

In the end she selected a work on the old churches of Paris, which she thought might give her the information she desired.

"And now a third book?"

Here she was on safer ground. The English name had caught her ear with more precision than the foreign ones.

"Have you got anything about a Lady Hamilton?"

"You mean Romney's Lady Hamilton?"

Again there was an echo from Jennie's memory. Romney was the man who couldn't paint *her* because he was too Georgian. She began to see how Mrs. Collingham could play with names as she might with tennis balls. Since there was everything else at Marillo Park, there must also be a public library.

Arrived at home, she secreted her volumes under her bed. She could read at night, and by scraps in the daytime. If Ted or Gussie were to learn that she was trying to inform her mind, they would guy her with as little mercy as if they caught her in that still more offensive crime, the

improvement of her speech.

CHAPTER XIII

That Bob Collingham was at ease in his conscience as to sailing to South America and leaving behind him an unacknowledged wife will hardly be supposed; but the true situation did not present itself to him till after he and Jennie had said their good-bys. He had tried to see her again on the following day to take counsel as to the immediate publication of their marriage, and only her refusal to meet him had frustrated that intention. But the more he pondered the more the thing he had done seemed little to his credit. On the morning of the day on which he sailed, he rose with the resolve to tell the whole truth to his father.

Had he known the facts, that Jennie had actually been to Collingham Lodge, that his mother knew of the marriage, that his father, without knowing of the marriage, was aware of his infatuation, he would have made a clean breast of it. But the habit of domestic life being strong, it seemed impossible to spring the confession in the middle of a peaceful breakfast. His mother had come down to the table for this parting meal and was already half in tears; his father concealed a genuine emotion behind the morning paper; Edith said she wondered what would happen to them all before they met again. The possibilities evoked were so significant that the mother said, sharply:

"I hope it may be God's will that we shall meet exactly as we are—a united family."

"We could still be a united family," Edith ventured, "and not meet exactly as we are."

"Edith—please!" her mother had begged, and Bob felt it out of the question to add to her distress.

Edith having driven to the dock with his father and himself, there was only the slightest opportunity for a private word between the father and the son. That came at a minute when Edith was talking to Mr. and Mrs. Huntley on the deck of the *Demerara*.

"Dad," Bob asked, awkwardly and abruptly, "do you feel quite at ease in your mind as to old man Follett?"

Passengers and their friends were pushing and jostling. Collingham was obliged to brace himself against the rod running along the line of cabins before he could reply.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I don't."

"You don't with regard to my stand—or with regard to your own?"

The boy looked his father in the eyes.

"With regard to yours, dad."

"That's very kind of you, Bob; but may I suggest that you'll have all you can do in repenting of your own sins without trying, in addition, to repent of mine?"

Nevertheless, when the minute came the parting was affectionate. Neither father nor son was satisfied with a handshake. Throwing their arms about each other, they kissed as in the days when Bob was a little boy.

Perhaps it was the warmth of this farewell that induced the father, on arriving at the bank, to ask Miss Ruddick to invite Mr. Bickley to the private office in case he should look round that afternoon. Mr. Bickley did look round that afternoon and was accordingly ushered in.

He was a delicately built man whose appearance produced that effect of accuracy you get from a steel trap. Constructed to do a certain kind of work, it can do that work and no other. Two minutes after Bickley had looked at a man, he knew both his weak points and his aptitudes, and could tell to a nicety the job it was best to put him to. Forehead, nose, jaw, lips, eyes, and ears were to him as the letters of the alphabet. More than once he had transferred a teller to the accounting department, or made an accountant a detective by his reading of facial lines.

Having put his man in an armchair and given him one of the Havanas he kept for social intercourse, Collingham waited for the mellow moment when the cigar was smoked to half its length.

"Do you know, Bickley," he said then, "I've never been quite at ease in my mind about the way we shelved that old fellow, Follett. It seems to me we showed—well, let us call it a want of consideration."

Bickley's eyes measured what was left of his cigar as he held it out before him horizontally.

"Consideration for whom, Mr. Collingham?"

"For the old man himself."

"Oh, I didn't know but what you were going to say for your stockholders." Before the banker could parry this thrust, the expert went on: "I looked in yesterday at the court room where they were trotting out that fellow Nicholson of the Wyndham National. If they'd ever asked me, I could have told them long ago that they'd lose money by him in the end."

"Oh, but Follett isn't in that box."

"He is, if you drop money by him. I'm speaking not of the ways you drop money by a man, but only of the fact that you drop it. Your business, I suppose, Mr. Collingham, is to make money for your shareholders and yourself. It's to help out that, I take it, that you send for me and go by my advice."

"Then you'd class Follett and Nicholson together?"

"I don't class them at all. Whether a man steals the bank's money or you give it to him as a gift isn't to the point. My job is over when I tell you that he gets what he doesn't earn. The rest, Mr. Collingham, is up to you—or the district attorney, as the case may be."

"I'm afraid I don't see it that way."

"It's your affair, Mr. Collingham, not mine. I only venture to remind you that we've had this little tussle over almost every man we've ever bounced. It does great credit to your kindness of heart, and if you want to go on supporting Follett and his family for the rest of your life—"

Collingham winced at this hint that his kindness of heart was greater than his business capacity. It was a point at which he always felt himself vulnerable.

"Speaking of Follett's family," he said, gliding away from the main topic, "we've got that boy of his here. How is he getting on?"

"Ah, there you have a horse of another color. My first report on him was not so favorable; but now that we've knocked the high jinks out of him—"

"Oh, we've done that, have we?"

"He's on the way to become a valuable boy. Good worker, cheery, likable. If he can get over his one defect, he'll be worth hanging on to."

"And his one defect is—"

"Liable to get excited and lose his head. Type to see red in a fight, and do something dangerous."

Unaware of the effort which his former employer's good will was vainly putting forth on his behalf, Josiah arrived in front of his pair of grassplots in Indiana Avenue. It was a trim little place, meeting all the wishes for a roof above his head which his soul had ever formed. He stood and looked at it, thinking of the days when little Gladys used to play "house" beneath one of the umbrella-shaped hydrangea bushes.

That was not so long ago—only six or eight years. It was nine since he had bought Number Eleven, paying out three thousand dollars that had come to him from a matured twenty years' endowment policy, together with another thousand Lizzie had inherited from an aunt. They had thought it a good investment because, if the worst ever came to the worst—and they didn't know what they meant by that—they would always have a home. Now the home was in danger because he couldn't raise a hundred and forty-seven dollars and sixty-three cents. He had been everywhere trying to borrow more, and he had failed. He had got to the point where his acquaintances in the different offices were putting him down as an "old bum." To Josiah, knowing all the shades of meaning in the term, it was a dreadful name as applied to himself; and he had heard it that very afternoon. An old friend, who had promised to lend him five of the hundred and fifteen already raised, had said on seeing him approach:

"Here comes that old bum again."

Josiah had turned about there and then. Giving up trying any more to raise the hundred and forty-seven, he had wandered home. He, Josiah Follett, an old bum!

Having hidden her three volumes under the bed, Jennie looked out and saw him. He didn't look specially dejected, yet she knew he was. She knew it by the way he stared at the hydrangea bush, or by the fact that he had renounced his search for another job so early in the afternoon. Like herself, he seemed thrown on his own resources for company, finding little or nothing there. She ran down to meet him. She would do that rare thing in the Follett family, take him for a walk.

He turned with her obediently. It was a relief to him not to be obliged to go in at once and tell Lizzie he had no good news. Lizzie was still his great referee, as he was hers. The children were still the children, not to be taken into confidence till there was nothing else to be done.

But this afternoon life, for the first time, looked different. It was as if, unaided, he couldn't carry the burden any more. There were younger shoulders than his, and perhaps it was time now to call on them to share the task.

"I'm an old man, Jennie," he said, as they began to move slowly toward Palisade Walk. "I haven't felt old till lately; but now—now I'm all in. I don't suppose I'll ever get a chance to do a day's work again."

When she rallied him on this, he told her the story of his day, omitting the "old bum" incident. He must spare his children that, even if he couldn't have been spared himself.

This tale, delivered without emphasis, was more terrible to Jennie than all the pangs of conscience. Had she but been true to the promises made to Mrs. Collingham, she could have said, "Father dear, you'll never have to worry any more." Two hours earlier, twenty-five thousand dollars had been within her grasp, and she had let it go. "All that money," she sighed to herself, "*and love*!"

But since it would be within her grasp to-morrow, a new thought came to her. The hundred

dollars she would ultimately return to Bob need not be in exactly the same bills. There was no reason why she should not use this amount and restore it from the wealth to come. Bob couldn't possibly tell the difference between the paper that made up one sum of a hundred dollars and the paper that made up another. She would have preferred to hand it back without touching it, but, in view of the family need, fastidiousness was out of place.

As they emerged into Palisade Walk and the vast panorama lay below them, she slipped her arm through his.

"Daddy," she said, caressingly, "what should you say if you saw me with a hundred dollars?"

To Josiah, it was the kind of question children ask when their imaginations go off on flights. It would have been the same thing had she said a thousand or a million. Nevertheless, he replied, more gravely than she had expected:

"What should I say, my dear? I should say you couldn't have come by it honestly."

"Oh, but if I could?"

"It's no use talking about that, my dear, because I know you couldn't. If you had a hundred dollars, some man would have given it to you, and no man would give it to you unless—"

He didn't finish the sentence, because she hurried on ahead. He reached her only when she stood still, looking down on the river, to spring the question prepared on second thoughts.

"But, daddy, if I had a hundred dollars, you'd use it for the taxes—wouldn't you?—even if I hadn't got it honestly."

A spasm crossed his face. He laid his hand on her shoulder roughly. She could think of nothing but the stern father of a wayward girl as she had seen him pictured in the movies. She hadn't supposed that such dramatic parents existed off the screen.

"Jennie, you haven't got a hundred dollars! Tell me you haven't! Don't let me think that the worst thing of all has overtaken us."

Amazed as she was, her feminine quick-wittedness came to her aid.

"Oh, you funny daddy!" she laughed, drawing his hand from her shoulder and again slipping it through her arm. "You're not a bit good at making pretend."

"Excuse me, my dear," he said, humbly, as they strolled on once more. "I'm a little nervous. I don't suppose I'll ever get a chance to do a day's work again."

Jennie, too, was a little nervous, though she did her best to hide the fact. She had not expected him to take this tragically moral point of view. It made so many new complications as to her twenty-five thousand that she didn't know where she stood. Her mother might agree with him. Teddy and the girls might agree with her. To act in opposition to them all was outside her sphere of contemplation.

Indiana Avenue was indeed not so primitive but that the subject of ladies who chose their own way was frequently under discussion, and Jennie had never heard much condemnation of this liberty except where the associations were considered "low." Where, on the contrary, the situation was on a large financial scale and carried with a lordly hand, opinion, while not approving, was in a measure deferential. It was no secret that Mrs. Inglis had a sister, mysteriously known as "Mrs. Deramore," whose career had been of the most romantic; and whenever her limousine drove up to the Inglis door, as it did perhaps twice a year, all the women crowded to the windows to see the fair occupant get in and out. On one occasion Jennie had heard her mother say to their next-door neighbor, Mrs. Weatherby, "After all, with the kind of world we've got to-day, why shouldn't she?"

Jennie had not thought of herself as a second Mrs. Deramore. She had hardly thought of herself at all. The combination of Hubert, love, and the family deliverance from penury had precluded speculation as to what she might become. She made no attempt to call up this vision even now. The irony of a situation in which she had a small fortune tucked away in the glove-and-handkerchief box in her top bureau drawer, and yet was helpless to make use of it, was enough for her to deal with.

Palisade Walk is protected by a row of small, irregular, upright boulders like the dragon's teeth. At a spot where a low flat stone forms a seat between two granite cones Jennie sat down sidewise to the river, to think her situation out. Josiah, too, came to a standstill, leaning on the stick which lifelong British habit put into his hands whenever he went out-of-doors, and gazing at a scene whose very mightiness smote him through and through with a sense of his futility.

It was a view of New York which few New Yorkers know to exist, and which those who know it to exist mainly ignore. Rio from the Pão d'Assucar, Montreal from Mount Royal, Quebec from the St. Lawrence, San Francisco from the Golden Gate, are all of the earth, earthy. Manhattan as viewed from the Hudson's western bank is like the city which rose when Apollo sang, or that beheld in the Apocalypse of John.

From the dragon's teeth, the precipice broke in terraces and shelves hung with ash, sumach, and stunted oak. Wherever there was a hand's breadth of soil, a dandelion or a violet, a buttercup or a lady-fern, nestled in the keeping of the cliff as a bird's nest on a branch. Creepers and vines threw their tangles of tassels down to where the chimneys clustering along the river's brink blackened them with smoke. Small water-worn docks, sheltering nameless craft, battered, ancient, and grotesque, crept in and out among factories and coal yards, linking up with one another in a line of some twenty miles. Straight as the cut of a knife, the river clove its tremendous gash from Adirondacks to Atlantic—a leaden, shimmering, storied streak, too deep within its bed to catch the westering sunlight. The westering sunlight itself was silvered in the perpetual misty haze hanging over the island like an aureole, through which the city glimmered in mile after mile of gable and spire, of dome and cube, silent, suspended, heavenly.

There is nothing in the world like this cloud-built vision garlanded along the sky. No sound breaks from it, no sign of our earth-born life. The steel-blue-gray of a gull's wing swooping above the water is gross as compared with its texture. The violet and the lady-fern are not so delicate as the substance of its palaces. It might be dream; it might be mirage; it might be the city which came down from God as a bride adorned for her husband. Beginning too far away for the eye to reach, and ending where the gaze can no longer follow, it is immense and yet aërial, a towered, battlemented, mighty thing, yet spun of the ether between the worlds.

Though Jennie and her father had looked at this mystic wraith of a city so often that they hardly noticed it any more, they were never free from its ecstatic influence. That is, it moved them to aspirations without suggesting the objective to which they should aspire. Caught in the web of daily circumstance, entangled, enmeshed, helplessly captive amid hand-to-mouth necessities, their thoughts were rarely at liberty to wander from the definite calculation as to how to live. They didn't so wander even now. Even now, lifted up as they were among spiritual splendors, food, clothes, gas, taxes, and the mortgage were the things most heavily on their minds; but something else stirred in them with a sluggish will to live.

"Jennie, do you believe in God?"

For a minute Jennie gazed sidewise at the celestial city in the air and made no answer. Josiah himself hardly knew why he had asked the question unless it was because of vague new fears as to Jennie's associations. Of these he knew almost as little as the parent bird of its offspring's doings when the young have taken flight. This was the custom of the family, the custom of the country. But he had never been free from misgivings that Jennie's calling of artist's model was "not respectable," and now this mention of a hundred dollars, even though it were but in jest, roused some little-used sense of paternal responsibility.

"I don't know that I do," Jennie said, at last. She added, after another minute's thought, "What's

the good of God, anyhow?"

"People say he can take you to heaven when you die, or send you to the other place."

"I'm not worrying about what will happen when I die; I've got all I can attend to here. Can God help me about that?"

It was the test question of Josiah's inner life. His faith stood or fell by it. He would have been glad to tell his child that she could be aided in her earthly problems, but, unlike Job, hadn't he himself served God for naught?

"He don't seem able to do that, my dear," he sighed, as if the confession of unbelief forced its way out in spite of himself.

"Well, then"—Jennie rose, wearily—"what's the use? If God can put me off till I die, I suppose I can put him off in the same way, can't I? Do you believe in him, yourself, daddy?"

"I used to."

And that was all he could say.

As the sun sank farther into the west, the celestial city which had hitherto been of a luminous white was shot with rose and saffron. Within its heart lay Broadway, Fifth Avenue, Wall Street, and the Bowery, shops, churches, brothels, and banks, all passions, hungers, yearnings, and ambitions, all national tendencies worthy and detestable, all human instincts holy and unclean, all loveliness, all lust, all charity, all cupidity, all secret and suppressed desire, all shameless exposure on the housetops, all sorrow, all sin, all that the soul of man conceives of evil and good —and yet, with no more than these few miles of perspective and this easy play of light translated into beauty, uplifting, unearthly, and ineffable.

For a minute longer Jennie and her father looking on the vision as it melted from glory to glory in this pageantry of sky. Then, with arms linked as before, they turned their backs on it.

CHAPTER XIV

For the next twenty-four hours Jennie did her best to suspend the operation of thought. Thought got her nowhere. It led her into so many blind alleys that it made her head ache. She had once heard a returned traveler describe his efforts to get out of the labyrinth at Hampton Court, and felt herself now in the same situation. Each way seemed easy till she followed it and found herself balked by a hedge.

But the fact that her head ached gave her an excuse for going to her room and locking herself in. She could thus pull her books from beneath the bed without fear of detection. The points as to which she needed enlightenment being spires and Lady Hamilton, she went at her task with the avidity of a starving person at sight of food.

As to spires, she was quickly appeased, for her volume on the old churches of Paris had the Sainte-Chapelle as its frontispiece. Now that she had seen the name in print, she was sure of it. Because of being so little taxed, her memory was the more retentive. Every sound that had fallen from Mrs. Collingham's lips was stamped on her mind like a footprint hardened into rock on a bit of untracked soil. Within half an hour, she had learned the outlines of the history of the Sainte-Chapelle, and, with some fluttering of timid vanity, had grasped the comparison of its strong and exquisite grace with her own personality.

But, after all, the Sainte-Chapelle was a thing of stone, whereas Lady Hamilton—she loved, the name—must have been of flesh and blood. Here, too, there was a frontispiece, the very Dian of the Frick Gallery to which Mrs. Collingham had referred. Unfortunately, the illustrations were in black and white, so that she could get no adequate idea as to the complexion or the color of the hair. The face, however, with its bewitching softness, its heavenly archnesses, bore some resemblance to her own.

It was a shock to learn that the possessor of so much beauty, the bearer of so melodious a title, had begun life as Emma Lyon, a servant girl, but, after all, she reflected, the circumstance only created analogies with herself. There were more analogies still. Emma Lyon had been an artist's model. In an artist's studio she had made the acquaintance of men of lofty station, just as she herself had met Bob. She had loved and been loved. Romney was perhaps her Hubert Wray. Her career had been exciting and dramatic—the friend of a queen, the more-than-wife of one of the great men of the age. The tragic, miserable death didn't frighten Jennie, since misery and tragedy always stalked on the edge of her experience. She fell asleep amid vast, vague concepts of queens and heroes beset with loves and problems not unlike Jennie Follett's.

All through the next day she stilled the working of thought by application to *The Egoist*. She took to it as to a drug. In the intervals of her household duties, or whenever her mind became active over her affairs, she ran to her room to begin again, "Comedy is a game played to throw reflections upon social life, and it deals with human nature in the drawing-room of civilized men and women, where we have no dust of the struggling outer world, no mire, no violent clashes, to make the correctness of the representation convincing." She got little farther, since, for her purpose, this was far enough. She was drugged already, as by dentist's gas. The more she read the more she felt herself wandering sleepily through realms of dream, where words, as she understood them, had ceased to have significance.

So, by sheer force of will, she brought herself to that moment in the afternoon when she stood at the studio door. She hadn't thought; she hadn't, in her own phrase, *imagined*. She had allowed herself no instant in which to count the cost or to shrink from paying it. Hubert, love, and the

family deliverance from poverty would be hers before nightfall, and she meant not to look beyond. She opened the door softly.

Before showing herself, she stopped and listened. There was not a sound. It was often so if Hubert was painting, and the silence only assured her that if he was there, as he probably was, he was waiting for her alone. He was waiting for her alone with that look in his eyes, that maddened animal look which she had seen yesterday, so bestial and yet so compelling! Still more softly she moved forward among the studio odds and ends.

Then she saw—and stopped.

In the Byzantine chair, a nude woman, seated in the manner of the Egyptian cat-goddess, was holding up a skull. Though the woman looked the other way, Jennie could see her as a lovely creature, straight, strong, triumphant, and unashamed. Hubert was painting, busily, eagerly. He raised his eyes, saw Jennie as she cowered, took no notice of her at all, and went on with his work. It passed all that she had ever imagined of cruelty that, as she turned to make her way out again, he should glance up once more—and let her go.

Hubert—and the woman *dressed like that*! The woman *dressed like that*—in this intimacy with Hubert! She herself shut out—cast out—sent to the devil! Some one else in her place, when she might so easily have kept it!

Jennie's suffering was in the dry and stony stage at which it hardly seemed suffering at all. Yes, it did; she knew it was suffering—only, she couldn't feel. She could think lucidly and yet put the whole situation away from her for the reason that it would keep. Anguish would keep; tears would keep. She could postpone everything, since she had all the rest of her life to give to its contemplation. Just for the present, the memory of the woman in the chair with *Hubert looking at her* was so scorching to the mind that she could do nothing but snatch her faculties away from it.

Coming to Fifth Avenue and seeing an electric bus stop near the curb, she climbed into it. It was the old story of not knowing where to go or what to do once her simple round of habits had been upset. Snuggled close to a window, she could at least be jolted along without effort of her own while she still fought off the consciousness of the frightful thing that had happened. It was not merely Hubert and the woman; it was everything. So much was included that she couldn't bear to think of this ruin to her beautiful house of cards.

Such wealth and beauty in the shop windows! Such streams of people in their new spring clothes! She had heard it said that every heart had its bitterness, but she didn't think that that could be possible. If everyone had a heartache like hers, or even the memory of such a heartache, it would make too monstrous a world, too deplorable a human race. After all, there must be *some* sense in the presence of mankind on earth, and if all were kicked about and bruised, there would be none. She preferred to think that the people on the pavements and in the limousines were as happy as they looked, and that she alone was selected for bewilderment and pain.

She wondered where she was going. There was a ferry far up on the Riverside Drive which would take her across to New Jersey, and thence, by a combination of trolley-cars, she could work her way southward to Pemberton Heights. This would consume an hour and more, and so eat up part of the afternoon. What she would do when she arrived home with her dreams all shattered God alone knew. If she could only have seen her friend, Mrs. Collingham, clinging to that kind hand as she poured out her heart....

Just then a huge building came into sight on the left, and with it a new impulse. She had often meant to visit it, though the day never seemed to come. Gussie had once gone to the Metropolitan Museum in company with Sadie Inglis, since when she had been in the habit of saying that she had as good as taken a trip abroad. Jennie didn't want a trip abroad; she wanted soothing, comforting, affection. She wanted another drop of that experienced, womanly sympathy, instinct with kindliness and knowledge of the world which she had tasted for the first and only time on that blissful afternoon at Collingham Lodge.

JENNIE, YOU HAVEN'T GOT A HUNDRED DOLLARS! TELL ME YOU HAVEN'T!

It was to get nearer to Collingham Lodge that she left the bus to drag herself up the long flight of steps and into the vast, cool hall. There were others going in, chiefly the Slavs and Italians for whom she felt a legitimate Anglo-Saxon contempt, so that she had nothing to do but to follow them. Thus she found herself at the top of another long flight of steps, gazing about her in an awe that soon became an intoxicating sense of beauty.

It was Jennie's first approach to beauty on this scale of immensity and variety. It was her first draught of Art. Her childhood's poring over *Ancient Rome Restored* had given her a feeling for line and economy, but she had never dreamed that color, substance, and texture could be used with this daring, profuse creativeness. Having no ability to seize details, she drifted helplessly up and down aisles of splendor and gleam. Here there were gold and silver, here was tapestry, here crystal, here enamel. The pictures were endless, endless. She could no more deal with them than with a sunset. Life came to the Scarborough tradition in her as it does to a frozen limb, with distress and yet with an element of ecstasy. A soul that had passed to a higher plane of existence, whom there was no one to welcome and guide, might have ventured timidly into the celestial land as Jennie among these lovely things outside her comprehension.

She came to herself, as it were, on hearing a man's voice say, in a kind of tone and idiom with which she was familiar:

"Have you looked at this Cellini now? That's the only authentic bit of Cellini in the United States. There's six or seven other pieces in different museums that people says is Cellini, but there's always a hitch in the proof."

Turning, she saw a stocky man in custodian's uniform who was addressing a group of Italians, two bareheaded women, three children between ten and fifteen, and a man. All were interested. All studied the gold shell with its dragon-shaped handle in purplish enamel. They commented, criticized, appraised, even the children pointing out excellencies to one another. When they had drifted away, Jennie turned to the kindly Irishman, who, by dint of living with beauty, had grasped its spirit, and put a hesitating question. She asked him to repeat the name of the gold-smith, pronouncing it after him till she registered it on her mind as she had that of Lady Hamilton.

"Sure, there was an artist for you," the custodian went on. "The breed is dead and gone. Hot-timpered fellow, though. Had more mistresses and killed more men than you could count. Should read about him in a book he wrote himself." He looked at Jennie from the corner of an eye, accustomed to "size up" an individual here and there among the thousands who floated daily through his little domain, apparently finding in her something that merited further favors. "Are you wise to this Memling?" he asked, leading the way to a corner of the wall where hung a small portrait. "There's only two other men in the wor-rld that could have painted that head, and that's Holbein and Rembrandt. Memling himself never did it but just that wance."

Jennie looked, registering Memling's name. It was the head of an elderly man; so living, kindly, and humorous that she loved him. When she turned to her guide he stood with a smile of curiosity, like that of a mother showing her baby to a friend.

"What d'ye say to that now?"

Jennie said what she could—that it was marvelous, but that she didn't know anything about art. Since he was so kind, she ventured, however, on another question. Did the museum contain a portrait of Lady Hamilton?

He pursed up his nose. Not a good one. Not a Romney. There was one in gallery twenty-four, but it was by John Opie, of whom he had no high opinion. In comparison with Romney, he thought Opie big and coarse, but, since there was nothing better to be seen, Jennie might choose to glance at this second-rate specimen.

"And I'll tell you another thing," he went on, confidentially. "You're not used to looking at pictures and such like, are you, now?"

Jennie said she was not.

"Well, then, go to gallery twenty-four. Find your Opie, which you'll see hanging over one of the doors—and don't look at anything else. You'll have seen all you can absor-rb in wan day. Come back to-morrer, or anny other toime, and come straight to me. You'll find me here, and I'll tell you what to look at next. But don't take more to-day than you can enjoy."

He walked with her till she reached the boundary of his realm.

"You look like a gur-rl that'd have an eye and a taste for beauty. You don't find them often among Americans, and when you do it's a god-send. Poles, Jews, Russians, yes. When the French and Italian officers was in New York, their eyes 'd fairly eat the museum up. But Americans—they don't know and they don't want to know—not wan in a hundred thousand. Well, good-day to you and good luck. I'm always here, and I'm just the wan to tell you which is the things to pick out."

But by the time she discovered her Lady Hamilton she had only the courage to note listlessly that the hair *was* somewhat the color of her own—not chestnut, not russet, not copper, not red-gold, but perhaps a combination of them all. She had reached her limitations unexpectedly. The tide she had dammed had burst its barriers and rushed in on her. She sank to a chair in the middle of the almost empty room, her eyes blinded by sudden tears.

Hubert was still with that woman! The woman was perhaps resting now and they were talking! She would be so much at her ease that she would talk without taking the trouble to throw her wrap round her. Hubert, too, would be at ease, preferring her without her wrap rather than with it. In vain she reminded herself that the situation was one to which an artist was accustomed. She hadn't been in a studio for a year without learning that much, though she got no comfort from it now. No comfort was possible with the vision of this naked magnificence seared on her memory. Hubert had let her come without a welcome, and go without a protest. He was probably glad when she went so that he might be alone with this wanton who didn't know shame.

In the end, she saw but one course before her. She would make the best of Bob. To do so would mean that Bob would be disinherited by his ogre of a father, but with Mrs. Collingham's aid a

counteracting influence might be found. Moreover, she could thus return home, confess herself Bob's wife, and offer the hundred dollars to her father as cash lawfully her own. Life would be simplified in this way, even though happiness were dead.

She was the last of the commuting family to reach the house that evening, and on crossing the threshold was greeted with a sense of cheer. It did not mean much to her at first, for, with the optimism of a hand-to-mouth existence, a sense of cheer was the last thing the family ever abandoned. She herself cast all outward air of trouble away from her on opening the door, because it was in the tradition.

Her father was seated quietly smoking his pipe, which he had not done for the past week or more. Gussie held the middle of the floor, her arms extended in a serpentine wave, humming a dance tune and practicing the step. To mark the rhythm, Gladys was clapping her hands with a slow, tom-tom beat. Pansy alone stood apart, blinking and unresponsive, as if for reasons of her own she considered this mirth ill-timed.

"Look, Jen!" Gladys giggled, as her eldest sister passed down the room. "This is the new thing at the Washington. Gus has got it so you wouldn't know her from Samarine herself."

Jennie went on to the kitchen, where, as she expected, her mother was getting the supper, and did her best to be nonchalant.

"Hello, momma! What's the good word? What makes everyone so gay?"

Lizzie looked up, a cover in one hand and a spoon in the other. Her face was so radiant that Jennie was still more mystified.

"Oh, Jennie darling, your father has the money! He can make the payment to-morrow, and everything will come right."

So Jennie's plans recoiled upon herself. She had meant to tell her mother here and now that for four days past she had been Bob Collingham's wife, and had a hundred dollars in her top bureau drawer. Her mother was to tell her father, and her father Teddy and the girls. But now—well, what would be the use? By keeping her secret she might put off inevitable fate a little longer.

"Who lent it?" Jennie asked, after she had chosen her line of action.

"Nobody; that's the wonderful part of it. It's a hundred and fifty dollars Teddy has earned."

"'Earned!' How?"

"Selling bonds for a man he knows. He doesn't want anything said about it, because it's what he calls 'on the side.' If the house knew of it—that he was working in off times for some one else—he might lose his job. But, oh, Jennie, isn't it wonderful?"

Jennie thought it wonderful for other reasons than Teddy's glory and the peace of the family mind. It was less easy to renounce Hubert than it had been an hour or two earlier. If he snapped his fingers she had said to herself, while crossing the ferry, she would run to him like a dog, in spite of everything; and if she did it, she would want to be free from the complications that must ensue if she were to proclaim herself Bob's wife.

Having assented to her mother's praise of Teddy, she went back through the living room and on upstairs to take off her hat and coat. Near the top of the stairs, the door of the bathroom opened suddenly and Teddy appeared in his shirt sleeves. There being nothing unusual in that, she was about to say, "Hello, Ted!" and ascend the few remaining steps to her room.

But seeing her moving upward in the dim hall light, Teddy started back within the bathroom, and, with a movement he couldn't control, slammed the door noisily. The action was so odd that she called out to him:

"It's only me, goose! What's the matter with you? Have you got the jumps?"

The door opened and Teddy reappeared, grinning sheepishly.

"I—I didn't have my coat on," was the only explanation he could find.

"Dear, dear!" Jennie threw over her shoulder, as she passed into her own room. "We've got terribly modest all of a sudden, haven't we?"

But weeks later she recalled this lame excuse.

CHAPTER XV

During the next few days, Wray snapped his fingers twice, and on each occasion Jennie ran to him like a dog, as she had foreseen she would.

The first time was in response to a telegram. The telegram said, simply:

> Studio Thursday, 3 P.M.

There was no signature, but Jennie knew what it meant. By one o'clock she was dressing feverishly; by two, she had said good-by to her mother and was on her way. She was not thinking of her twenty-five thousand dollars now, or of any offering up of herself. Her one objective was to drive that woman from the Byzantine chair so that Hubert shouldn't look at her again.

But she had not got out of Indiana Avenue on her way to the trolley car when something happened which had never happened in her life before. She received another telegram, the second in one day. The messenger boy, who was a neighbor's son, had hailed her from across the street.

"Hello, Jennie! Are you Miss Jane Scarborough Follett? That's a name and a half, ain't it?"

Her first thought was that Hubert was wiring to put her off because he wanted the other woman, after all. Her second, that he had already addressed her as "Miss Jennie Follett," and she doubted if he knew her full baptismal name. Only in one connection had it been used of late, and that recollection made her tremble.

This message, too, was unsigned, and, being so, it puzzled her:

> Always close to you in spirit and loving you.

That wasn't like Hubert—and Bob was on the sea.

She walked slowly, reading it again and again, till her eyes caught the address in a corner—Havana. She remembered then that the *Demerara* was to touch at that port, and understood. Crushing the telegraphic slip into the bottom of her handbag, she made her way to the square and took her place in the car.

As she jolted down the face of the cliff she wished that this message hadn't come till after her return from the studio. Then it wouldn't have mattered. It would have been too late to matter. Not that it mattered now—only, that the way in which Bob expressed himself made her feel uneasy. "Always close to you in spirit." She didn't want him to be close to her in any way, but in spirit least of all. Latterly, she had heard Mrs. Weatherby, a convert to some school of New Thought, discourse on the unreality of separations and the bridging power of spirit, and while these ideas made no appeal to her, they endued Bob's telegram with a ghostly creepiness. If he was close to her in spirit on an errand like the present one....

So she turned back from the very studio door. She couldn't go in. She couldn't so much as put her hand on the knob. Knowing that Hubert was within a few yards of her, eager to be hers as she was to be his, she crept guiltily down the stairs.

She cried all night from humiliation and repentance. It was as if Bob had laid a spell on her.

Unless she could break it, her life would be ruined.

But the opportunity to break it came no later than the very next day. Chancing to look out into Indiana Avenue, she saw Hubert scanning Number Eleven from the other side of the street. He must indeed want to see her, since he had taken this journey into the unknown.

Picking up a sunshade, she went out and spoke to him. He refused to come in, but begged her to take a little walk.

"Jennie, what's your game?" he asked, roughly, as they sauntered down the avenue toward the edge of the cliff. "Why don't you come to the studio when I ask you? What are you afraid of?"

"I did come—the other day—but—"

"Why didn't you stay? I thought you would. Brasshead wouldn't have minded it, and you could have seen how the thing is done."

"What's the good of seeing how it's done when—when you've got some one else?"

"But, good Lord! Jennie, this is not the only picture of the kind I shall ever paint! Even if I go on using Emma for this, I shall want you for another one—and I'm not sure that I shall go on using Emma. Do you see?"

She was so perturbed that she launched on a question without knowing what she meant to ask.

"Isn't she—"

"Oh, she's all right as far as the figure goes. Features coarse. Not a bit what I'm trying to get. Have to keep toning down and modifying to give her the spiritual look that you've got, Jennie, to throw away. I keep thinking of you all the time I'm doing it. Look here, if you'll come to-morrow, I'll pay Brasshead off and you shall have the job."

By the time they reached Palisade Walk the business was settled on a business basis. Not once did he depart from the professional side of the affair, and not once did she allude to the scene in her dressing-room. But what was understood was understood, not less certainly for its being by passionate mental vibration, without a word, or a glance, or a pressure of the hand.

But the next day, as Jennie was leaving the house to keep her appointment, Josiah, who had gone out as usual to look for work, had dragged himself home and fainted at the door.

"I'm all in," he mumbled, on his return to consciousness. "I don't suppose I shall ever get a chance to do a day's work again."

Jennie was so much alarmed that she forgot to telephone her inability to go to the studio till after her father had been put to bed and the doctor had come and gone.

"Oh, it's all right," Hubert had said, listlessly. "I didn't expect you. I knew that if it wasn't one excuse, it would be another—"

"But I *will* come," Jennie had interrupted, tearfully.

"Do just as you like about that. Emma's here, and, as you're so uncertain, I've decided to go on and finish the picture without making a change."

He put up the receiver on saying this, so that Jennie was left all in the air with her love and her distress.

When Teddy appeared that evening, it was she who told him of their father's breakdown.

"The doctor says it's worry," she explained, "and lack of nutrition. He says he must stay in bed a week, and we've got to feed him up and not let him worry again."

Teddy's face grew longer and longer.

"Then we'll have to have more money."

"You poor Ted, yes; but then you're making money on the side, aren't you?"

Reminding himself, as he did a hundred times a day, that Nicholson had had five years in which to get away with it, Teddy passed on upstairs to his father's bedside.

"It's all right, dad," he tried to smile. "Don't you worry. I'm here. I'll take care of ma and the girls. You just make your mind easy and give yourself up to getting well."

Jennie's attendance at the studio was thus put out of the question for many days, and in the meantime she had a letter posted at Havana. Fearing that it would come and attract attention in the family, she watched the postman, getting it one morning before breakfast. Bob wrote:

> There is a love so big and strong and sure that separations mean nothing to it, because it fills the world. That's my kind of love, Jennie darling. You can't get out of it—I can't get out of it—even if we would. At this very minute I'm sailing and sailing; but I'm not being carried farther away from you. The love in which you and I are now leading our lives is wider than the great big circle made by the horizon. Don't forget that, dear. I'm always with you. Love doesn't recognize distance. Love isn't physical or geographical. It's force, power, influence. I love you so much that I know I can keep you safe even though I'm on the other side of the world. I can't fend troubles away from you, worse luck, but I can carry you through them. I know that till I come back you'll be having a hard time; but my love will hang round you like an enchanted cloak, and nothing will really get at you. You're always wearing that cloak, Jennie; you always walk with it about you.

While Jennie was reading this, Edith Collingham, at breakfast at Marillo Park, was springing a question on her father. She sprang it at breakfast because it was the only time she was sure of seeing him alone.

"Father, how far are children obliged to marry or not to marry in deference to their parents' wishes, and how far have fathers and mothers the right to interfere?"

Dauphin, who was on his haunches near his master's knee, removed himself to a midway position between the two ends of the table, as if he felt that in the struggle he perceived to be coming he couldn't throw his influence with either side. Through the open window Max could be seen in perpetual motion on the lawn, yet pausing every two minutes to look wistfully down the avenue in the hope of some loved approach.

Without answering at once, Collingham tapped an egg with a spoon. The broaching of so personal a question between one of his children and himself was something new. It had been an established rule in the household that, however free the intercourse between the boy and the girl and their mother, the approach to their father was always indirect. Junia had made it her lifelong part to explain the children to their father and the father to his children, but rarely to give them a chance of explaining themselves to each other. Collingham had acquiesced in this for the reason that the duties of a parent were not those for which he felt himself, in his own phrase, specially "cut out."

The duties for which he did feel himself cut out were those that had to do with the investment of money. On this ground, he spoke with authority; he was original, intuitive, inspired. When it came to a flair for the stock which was selling to-day at fifty and which to-morrow would be worth five hundred, he belonged to the *illuminati*. This being the highest use of intelligence known to

man, he felt it his duty to specialize in it to the exclusion of everything else.

As already hinted, there were two Collinghams. There was the natural man, a kindly, generous fellow who would never have made a big position in the world; and there was the other Collingham, standardized to the accepted, forceful, American-business-man pattern, and who, now that he was sixty-odd, was the Collingham who mainly had the upper hand.

Mainly, but not completely. The natural Collingham often made timid attempts to speak and had to be stifled. He was being stifled while the standardized Collingham tapped his egg. It was the pupil of Junia, Bickley, and the business world who finally sought to gain time by asking a counter-question.

"What do you want to know for?"

Edith was prepared for this.

"Because I may make a marriage that you and mother wouldn't like; and I think it possible that Bob may do the same."

Whatever the natural Collingham might have said to this, the man who had been evolved from him could have but one response.

"People who act on their own responsibility should be prepared to go the whole hog."

Edith sipped her coffee while she worked out the significance of this.

"Does that mean that you wouldn't give us any money?"

"Rather that, being so extremely independent, you wouldn't ask for it."

"Oh, ask for it—no; and yet—"

"And yet you think I ought to hand it out."

"I was thinking rather of a kind of *noblesse oblige*—"

"In which all the *noblesse* must be mine."

"Not exactly that. In which perhaps the *noblesse* should be *ours*. Even if I should marry a poor man, I can't help being a Collingham, a member of a family with large ideas and a large way of living."

"Yes; but, you see, you'd be giving them up."

"You can't give up what's been bred into you. And in my case I should be bringing the man—you must let me say it, dad—I should be bringing the man I—I *love*—so little—"

"He's probably counting on a great deal. Poor men who marry rich men's daughters generally do."

"I was going to say that while he'd be giving me so much, all I could offer him would be money; and if I didn't bring that—"

"Well? Go on."

"If I didn't bring that, I should feel so humiliated before him—"

He affected an ignorance which was not a fact.

"Who *is* this paragon, anyhow?"

"I thought mother might have told you. It's Mr. Ayling."

"Oh, that teacher fellow!"

"He's more than that, dad. He's a professor in one of our greatest universities. He's a writer beginning to be recognized as having ideas. He has a position of his own—"

"Yes; but only an intellectual one."

She raised her eyebrows.

"'Only'?"

He straightened himself and prepared for business.

"Look here, Edith, don't kid yourself. An intellectual position in this country is no position at all. The American people have no use for the intellectual, and they've made that plain."

She could hardly express her amazement.

"Why, dad! There's no country in the world where people go in more for education, where there are more men who go to colleges—"

"Yes—to fit them for making money, not to turn them into highbrows. You must have a spade to dig a garden, but it's the garden you're proud of, not the spade."

"And the very President of the country—"

"Is what you call an intellectual man; but that's a bit of chance. He's not President because he was a college professor, but because he was a politician. If he hadn't been a politician—something that the country values—he'd still be rotting in some two-by-three university. Listen, Edith!" He emphasized his point by the movement of his forefinger. "We've a rule in business which is the test of everything. So long as you stick to it you can't go wrong in your estimates. *The value of a thing is as much money as it will bring.* You know the value of the intellectual in American eyes the minute you think of what the American people is willing to pay for it. You say your intellectual man has a position of his own. Well, you can see how big the position is by what he earns. He doesn't earn enough decently to support a wife, and so long as the American people have anything to say to it, he never will. You can box the whole compass of fellows who live by their wits—teachers, writers, journalists, artists, musicians, clergymen, and the whole tribe of them. We don't want them in this country, except as you want a spade and a hoe in your tool-house. When they try to get in, we starve them out; and, Collingham as you are, once you've married this fellow you'll go with your gang." He pushed back his chair and rose. "That's all I've got to say. Think it over." As he passed out through the French window to the terrace beyond he snapped his fingers. "Dauphin, come along!"

But, perhaps for the first time in his life, Dauphin didn't immediately follow him. Instead, he went first to Edith, laying his long nozzle in her lap.

For five or ten minutes, as Collingham smoked his morning cigar while visiting the stables, the garage, and the kitchen garden, the natural man tried to raise his voice.

"Why didn't you say, 'Marry your man, Edith, my child, and I'll give you ten thousand a year?' Poor little girl," this first Collingham went on, "she's so frank and true and high spirited! You've made her unhappy when you could so easily have made her glad."

"You said what any other American father in your position would have said," the pupil of Bickley and Junia argued, on the other side. "True, you've made her unhappy, but young people often

have to be made unhappy in order that the foolish dictates of the heart may be repressed. There are millions of people all over the world whose lives would have been spoiled if such early emotional impulses hadn't been thwarted."

And, after all, it was true that the intellectual was not respected. The public pretended that it was, but when it came to the test of social and financial reward—the only rewards there were—the pretense was apparent. There were no intellectual people at Marillo Park; there were none whom he, Collingham, knew in business. There were men with brains; but to distinguish them from the intellectual they were described as brainy. Edith as the wife of an intellectual man would be self-destroyed; and it was his duty as her father to stop, if he could, that self-destruction.

By the time he had reached the point in his morning ritual which brought him to Junia's bedside, he was standardized again, even though it was with a bleeding heart. He could more easily suffer a bleeding heart than he could the fear of not being an efficient man of business.

"What use have you had for the twenty-five thousand I've paid in your account?" he asked, before he kissed her good-by.

She concealed her anxiety that so many days had passed without a sign from Jennie under an air of nonchalance.

"No use as yet, but I expect to have. I shall let you know when the time comes."

But no sign could come from Jennie, for the reason that her father died in mid-July, and during the intervening weeks she was tied to his bedroom. As the eldest daughter and the only one at home, all her other functions were absorbed in those of nurse. Luckily, there was money in the house, for Teddy had been successful in his efforts "on the side," and Bob continued to transmit small sums to herself, which she added to the hundred dollars in the top bureau drawer. Bob, Hubert, Collingham Lodge, her ambition, and her love became unreal and remote as she watched the setting of the sun to which her being had been turned. In the eyes of others, Josiah might be feeble and a failure, but to Teddy and his sisters he was their father, the pivot of their lives, the nearest thing to a supreme being they had known.

Lizzie's grief was different. Her heart didn't ache because he was dying. Life having become what it was, he was better dead. If she could have died herself, she would have gone to her rest gladly, had it not been for the children. For their sake, she remained sweet, calm, active, brewing and baking, sweeping and cleaning, sitting up at night with Josiah while they were asleep, and hiding the fact that instead of a heart she felt nothing within her but a stone.

Her grief was not for Josiah; it was for the futility of the best things human beings could bring to life. Honesty, industry, thrift, devotion, ambition, and romance had been the qualifications with which Josiah Follett and Lizzie Scarborough had faced the world; and this was the best the world could do with them. "It isn't as if we ever faltered or refused or turned aside," she mused to herself, as she hurried from one task to another. "We've been absolutely faithful. We've had pluck in the face of every discouragement and eaten ashes as if it were bread, and, in the end, we come to this. It makes no difference that we didn't deserve it; we get it just the same."

Josiah's wanderings as his mind grew feebler turned forever round one central theme: A job! a job! To be allowed to work! To have a chance to earn a living! It was his kingdom of heaven, his forgiveness of sins, his paradise of God. In the middle of night he would open his eyes and say:

"I've got a job, Lizzie. Fifty a week!"

"Yes, yes," Lizzie would say, drawing the sheet about his shoulders. "Yes, yes; you'll go to town in the morning. Now turn over, dear, and go to sleep again."

These excitements were generally in the small hours of the morning. By day, he was less cheerful.

"I'm all in, Jennie darling," he would say then. "I don't suppose I'll ever get a chance to do a day's work again."

But one hot afternoon in the middle of July he woke from a long sleep with a look that startled her. Jennie had never seen the approach of death, but, now that she did, she knew it could be nothing else. He had simply rolled over on his back, staring upward with eyes that had become curiously glassy and sightless. Jennie ran to the head of the stairs.

"Momma! Momma! Come quick!"

He said nothing till Lizzie had reached the bedside. Though he didn't move his head or look toward her, he seemed to know that she was there.

"Here's mother, Lizzie." He raised his hands, while a look of glad surprise stole over his face. "There's a country," he stammered on, brokenly, "no, it isn't a country—it's like a town—they're working—they've got work for me—and—and they're never—they're never—fired."

The hands fell, but the look of glad surprise was only shut out of sight by the coffin lid.

Teddy paid for the lot in the cemetery, as well as the other expenses of the funeral, within a week of his father's death. "Now I'm through," he said to himself, with a long sigh of relief.

"You darling Ted," was Jennie's commendation. "You must have given momma five hundred dollars at least. Now I hope you'll be able to save a little for yourself."

At the bank, Teddy's younger colleagues were sympathetic, Lobley especially doing him kindly little turns. He asked him to supper one evening at a restaurant, where they talked of marksmanship, at which Teddy had been proficient in the navy. He was out of practice now, he said, to which Lobley had replied that it was a pity. He, Lobley, had an automatic pistol illegally at home, and if Teddy would like to borrow it he could soon bring himself back to his old form. Teddy did so like, and went back to Pemberton Heights with the thing secreted on his person. It went with him to the bank next day—and every day.

For Teddy had begun to notice symptoms to which one less keenly suspicious would be blind. Nothing was ever said of money missing, and no hint thrown out that he himself was not trusted as before. He had nothing to go on except that Mr. Brunt became more taciturn than ever, and once or twice he thought he was being watched. The eyes of Jackman, the principal house detective, wandered often toward him, and twice he, Teddy, had seen Jackman in conference with Flynn.

"They'll never get me alive," was his inner consolation, though immediate suicide suggested itself as an alternative, and flight, disappearance, an absolute blotting out was a third expedient.

Yet nothing was sure; nothing was even remotely sure. By becoming too jumpy he might easily give himself away. Nicholson had had five years. In two years, in one, Teddy meant to be square with the bank again.

But one afternoon, as he emerged into Broad Street on his way home, Jackman and Flynn were talking together on the opposite pavement. The boy jumped back, though not before he saw Jackman make a sign to Flynn which said as plainly as words, "There he is now."

To Teddy, it was the end of the world. All the past, all the future, merged into this single second of terror. He looked across at them; they looked across at him. There was a degree of confession in the very way in which his blanched face stared at them through the intervening crowds.

Jackman's lips formed half a dozen syllables, emphasized by a nod and a lifting of the brows.

"That's the guy all righty," were the words Teddy practically heard.

Like a startled wild thing, he had but one impulse—to run. Actual running in Broad Street at that hour of the day being out of the question, he dived into the procession mounting toward Wall Street, ducking, dodging, pushing, almost knocking people down, and mad with fear. "They'll never get me alive," he was saying to himself; but how in that crowd to find space in which to turn the pistol to his heart already puzzled him.

At the corner of Wall Street he summoned courage to look over his shoulder. They might not be after him. If not, it would prove a false alarm, such as he had had before. But there they were—Jackman scrambling laboriously up the other side of Broad Street, and Flynn crossing it, picking his way among the vans and motor cars.

Like a frightened rabbit, Teddy scurried on again, meaning to gain Nassau Street and somehow double on his tracks.

CHAPTER XVI

But Teddy did not double on his tracks in Nassau Street, for the reason that, in again looking over his shoulder, he saw that Flynn had taken one side of that thoroughfare and Jackman the other. They were burly men, who moved heavily, while he, in spite of his stocky build, glided in and out among the pedestrians with the agility of a squirrel. He was putting distance between himself and them, and five minutes' leeway would be enough for him. All he needed was the space and privacy in which to shoot himself.

At the corner of John Street he turned to the left and made toward Broadway. They would expect him to do this, his chief hope being that among the homing swarms they would already have lost sight of him. His mind was not working. He was not looking ahead, even over the few minutes he had still to live. All his instincts were fused into the fear of the hand of the law on his person. It was like Jennie's terror of the hand of a man she didn't love—a frenzy for physical sanctity stronger than the fear of death.

At the same time, he couldn't run the risk of being more noticeable than the majority of people going his way. As he pushed and dodged, a young man whom he had jostled called out, in ironic good humor, "Say, is the cop after you?" at which Teddy almost lost his head. He expected a crowd to gather, and three or four men to hold him by the arms till Jackman and Flynn came up. But nothing happened. The protesting young man was lost in the scramble, and he, Teddy, found himself in Broadway.

Paying no heed to the jam of street cars, lorries, private cars, and motor trucks, he dashed into the interlaced streams of traffic. He dashed—and was held up. He dashed again—and was held up a second time. He was held up a third time, a fourth, and a fifth. With every spurt of two or three feet, cries warned him and curses startled him. "Say, sonny, your ma must have lost you," came from a jocose chauffeur beside whose machine Teddy had been brought to a halt. "I'd damn well like to run over you," shouted the driver of a van who had narrowly escaped doing it. Teddy wished he had. If he could only be sure of being killed, it might have been the easiest way out.

Reaching the opposite pavement, he had time to see that Jackman had crossed lower down and more easily than he, and was lumbering toward him from the downtown direction. Jackman could have shouted to the passers-by to lay hold of Teddy, only that, from a distance and among such numbers, he couldn't indicate his victim. Being younger than Flynn and of lighter build, he could move in his own way almost with Teddy's rapidity. The boy didn't dare to run, because the action would have marked him out, but he started again on his snakelike gliding between pedestrians. He must gain some doorway, some cellar, some hole of any sort, in which to draw his pistol. He would have drawn it there and then, only that a hundred hands would have seized him.

All at once he saw the open portal of a great mercantile building, leading to a vast interior with which he was familiar. There were several exits and many floors. Once he had turned in here, he could cross the scent. In he went, with scores who were doing likewise, passing scores who were coming out. His first intention was to avoid the conspicuous exit toward Dey Street and make for the less obvious one into Fulton Street; but in doing that, he passed a line of some twenty lifts, of which one was about to close its door. He slipped into it like a hare into its warren. The door clanged; the lift moved upward with an oily speed. Among his companions he was hot, flurried, breathless, and yet not more so than any other young clerk who had been doing an errand against time.

There were nearly thirty floors, and he got off at the twenty-third. He chose the twenty-third so

as not to get off too soon, and yet not call attention to himself by remaining in the lift when most of its occupants had left it. The floor was spacious and almost empty. A few people were waiting for a lift to take them down; a few were going in and out of offices, but otherwise he had the place to himself.

Mechanically he walked to a window and looked out. He seemed to be up in the sky, with only the tops of a few giant cubes on a level with himself. "Skyscrapers" they were called, and skyscrapers they seemed up here even more than down below. The tip of the great city, the stretches of the bay, the green slopes of Staten Island, and the far-off colossal woman with a torch were all within his vision, with the oblique strip that was Broadway, a tiny, ugly gash in which bacteria were squirming, deep down and cutting across the foreground.

Except for the dull roar that came up and the clang of an occasional footstep along the hallways, it was so still and pleasant that the need to shoot himself seemed for the minute less insistent. It would have to be done sooner or later, but when it comes to suicide, even a few minutes' respite is something. He could have done the thing right there and then by the window, where the few people within hearing would have run to him at sound of the shot. If the shot didn't kill him, they would keep him from firing another. Publicity, distasteful in itself, might lead to ineffectuality.

He must find a lavatory, and so began walking up and down the corridors, looking at doors discreetly placed in corners. When he came to his objective, it was locked. Again it was reprieve. The same door would be on other floors, but he was not ready for the moment to forsake his shelter. It was true that at any minute Flynn and Jackman might emerge from the lift, but there were nearly thirty chances that if they had followed him so closely they would not select this landing. Even more were the chances that they had not seen him slip into the building at all.

Fevered and thirsty, he stooped to drink at the fountain crowning the head of a little bronze woman with a pair of dolphins on her shoulders. She seemed to be of Maya type, and a uniformed guardian had once told him that a great modern sculptor had molded her. With a difference in dolphins, she was repeated on every floor, forever diademed in water.

Teddy's mind had so far suspended operation as to his immediate plight that he went back to the morning, seven or eight months previously, when an errand from Mr. Brunt had brought him into the great ground-floor atrium, revealing the Basilica Julia or the Basilica Emilia of *Ancient Rome Restored* right there in lower Broadway. Simplicity, immensity, the awesome beauty of mere form! The wide spaces, the mighty columns, the tempered white light of majestic Roman windows! The absence of striving for effect! The peace, the restfulness, the cheerfulness, when striving for effect are abandoned, dwarfing the magnitude of crowds and reducing their ebbings and flowing to mere vanity! Like Jennie with her emotions, like Pansy with her intuitions, Teddy had no words for these impressions; but the Scarborough tradition, nursed on *Ancient Rome Restored*, vibrated to their music.

"And here I am, trapped like a rat in a hole!"

So he came back to it. He wondered if he were awake. Was it possible that ten or fifteen minutes could have transformed him from a hard-working, home-loving boy into a fugitive who had no choice left but to shoot himself? As for facing the disgrace, he did not consider it. To stand before his mother charged with theft, even if it was on her behalf, was not to be thought of. He couldn't do it, and there was an end to it. Still less could he go through the other incidentals, handcuffs, a cell, the court, the sentence, Bitterwell, and the lifetime that would come after his release. He could put the pistol to his heart and, if necessary, he could burn in hell—if there was a hell; but he couldn't do the other thing.

And yet to put the pistol to his heart and burn in hell formed a lamentable choice on their side.

"I'm not a thief," he protested, inwardly. "I took the money—how could I help it, with dad sick and ma at the end of everything?—but *I'm not a thief*."

He was sure of that. It became a formula, not perhaps of comfort, but of justification. Had he

been a thief, he told himself, he could have faced the music; but it was precisely because he had taken money while preserving his inner probity that he refused to be judged by the standards of men. Once more he couldn't express it in this way to himself; but it was the conclusion to which his instincts leaped. Only one tribunal could discern between the good and evil in his case; so he was resolved to go before it.

In a quiet corner he began to cry. He was only a boy, with a boy's facility of emotion, especially of distress. He cried at the thought of his mother and the girls, with no one to fend for them, and no Teddy coming home in the evenings. It was true that, apart from his filchings, he had been able to fend for them only to the extent of eighteen per, but there was always a chance of better days ahead. Even at the worst of times, they had a good deal of fun among themselves, and now....

Now his mother would be in the kitchen, beginning to get supper, and each of the girls would be making her way back to Indiana Avenue. Pansy's dog clock would tell her when to watch for them, and the loving little creature would be eying the door, ready to welcome each of them in turn. If she had a preference, it was for himself, and the feeling of her gentle paws against his shin was connected with the tenderest things he knew.

No; it wasn't possible. He couldn't be skyed on that twenty-third floor, unable to come down, unable to go home. It *must* be a nightmare. Such things didn't happen. He was Teddy Follett, a good boy at heart, with an honorable record in the navy. He had never meant to steal, but what could he do? The money was there, to be stacked in the vaults of Collingham & Law's, not to be touched for months, very likely, and the home needs imperative. He couldn't see his father and mother turned out of house and home because they couldn't pay their taxes. It was not in common sense. Nothing was in common sense. That he should be dragged into court, that his mother should break her heart, that shame should be showered on his sisters was ridiculous. Somewhere in the universe there was a great big principle that was on his side, though he didn't know what it was.

What he did know was that crying was unmanly. Sopping up his tears and trying not to think, he jumped into the first lift that stopped and got out at floor eleven. There he went straight to the lavatory, which he now knew how to place, and once more found the door locked.

Though again it was reprieve, it was reprieve almost unwelcome. The first passing lift was going upward, and so he ascended to floor seventeen. Here again the lavatory was locked, as it was on floors nineteen and twenty-five, both of which he tried. He began to understand that they were locked according to a principle, and that for those seeking privacy in which to shoot themselves they offered no resource.

Moreover, offices were closing and the great building emptying itself rapidly. The rush was all to the lifts going downward. He, too, must go downward. To be found skulking in corridors where he had no business would expose him to suspicion. After nearly an hour spent above he descended to the atrium, where Flynn and Jackman might be watching the cages disgorge, knowing that in time he must appear from one of them.

But he walked out without interference. A far hint of twilight was deepening the atmosphere round the heads of the great columns, and the waning sunshine spoke of workers seeking rest. Streams of men and women, mostly young, were setting toward each of the exits, to Broadway, to Fulton Street, to Dey Street; and he had only to drop into one of them. He chose that toward Dey Street, finding himself in the open air, in full exercise of his liberty.

Once more it was hard to believe that there was a difference between this day and other days. It would have been so natural to go to the gym for a plunge or a turn with the foils, and then home to supper. He discussed with himself the possibility of a last night with the family, recoiling only from the fact that it was precisely there that they would look for him. Much reading of criminal annals had printed that detail on his brain—the poor wretch torn from the warm shelter of his home, with his wife's arms round him and the baby sleeping in the cradle. There was no wife or baby in this case; but to have the thing happen to himself, with his mother and the girls vainly trying to stay the course of the law, would be worse than going to the chair.

He was in the uptown subway, with no outward difference between himself and the scores of other young men scanning the evening papers. Because he didn't know what else to do, he got out at Chambers Street. He got out at Chambers Street because there was a ferry there which would take him over to New Jersey. He went over to New Jersey because it was his habit at this hour of the day, and to follow his habit somehow preserved his sanity. To be on the same side of the river as his home was a faint, futile consolation.

And while on the ferryboat a new idea came to him. In the Erie station he should find a telephone booth from which he could ring up his mother and inform her that he was not to be home that night. Though it would do no good in the end, it would at least save her from immediate alarm. Flynn and Jackman were unknown by face to the family, and if they rang at the door in search of him they would probably not tell their tale. Before he reached the other side he had concocted a story of which his only fear was as to his ability to tell it on the wire without breaking down.

It was a bit of good luck to be answered by Gladys, whom he could "bluff" more easily than the rest of them.

"Hello, Gladys! This is Ted. Tell ma I'm in Paterson and shall not get home to-night or to-morrow night."

He could hear Gladys calling into the interior of the house:

"Well, *what* do you know about that? Ted's at Paterson and not coming home to-night or to-morrow night." Into the receiver she said, "But, Ted, what'll they say at the bank?"

"I may not go back to the bank. This is a new job. You remember the fellow I was working for on the side? Well, he's put me into this, and perhaps I'm going to make money."

"Oh, Ted," Gladys called, delightedly, "how many plunks?"

"It—it isn't a salary," he stammered. "I—I may be in the firm. To-morrow I may have to go to Philadelphia. Tell ma not to worry—and not to miss me. I'll try to call up from Philadelphia, but if I can't—Well, anyhow, give my love to ma and everybody, and if I'm not home the day after to-morrow, don't think anything about it."

He put up the receiver before Gladys could ask any more questions, and felt ready to cry again. In order not to do that, he walked out of the station into the street, where the presence of the crowds compelled him to self-control. Having nothing to do and nowhere to go, he walked on and on, getting some relief from his desolation by the mere fact of movement.

So he walked and walked and walked, headed vaguely toward the outskirts of the town. There were vast marshes there into which he could stray and be lost. The rank grasses in this early August season were almost as high as his shoulders, so that he could lie down and be beyond all human ken. His body might not be found for weeks, might never be found at all. Teddy Follett would simply disappear, his fate remaining a mystery.

Toward seven o'clock, the shabby suburbs began to show their primrose-colored lights—a twinkle here, a twinkle there, stringing out in longer streets to scattered bits of garland. Teddy felt hungry. Counting his money and finding that he had two dollars and thirty-one cents, he was sorry not to be able to transmit the two dollars to his mother.

Growing more and more hungry, and knowing he must keep up his nerve, he spied a little bread-and-pastry shop just where the houses were thinning out and the marshes invading the town, as the ocean invaded the marshes. On entering, he asked for two tongue sandwiches and half a dozen doughnuts. The woman who wrapped up the sandwiches and dropped the doughnuts into a paper bag was an English-speaking foreigner of the Scandinavian type, blond, dumpy, with a row of bad teeth and piercing blue eyes. As she performed her task, she seemed not to take her eyes from off him, though her smile was kind, and she called his attention to the fact that she was giving him seven doughnuts for his six.

"You don't lif rount here?" she asked, in counting out the change for his dollar.

"No; just going up the road."

"Well, call again," she said, politely, as he took his parcels and went out.

Having eaten his two sandwiches, he felt better, in the sense of being stronger and more able to face the thing that had to be done. He was not quite out on the marshes, the long, flat road cutting straight across them to the nearest little town. The lights were rarer, but still there were lights, their saffron growing more and more luminous as the colors of the sunset paled out. An occasional motor passed him, but never a man on foot.

He could have turned in anywhere, and perhaps for that reason he put off doing so. It would be easier, he argued, to shoot himself after dark. It was not dark as yet—only the long August gloaming. Moreover, the tramping was a relief, soothing his nerves and working off some of his horror. He wished he could go on with it, on and on, into the unknown, where he would be beyond recognition. But that was just where the trouble was. For the fugitive from justice recognition always lay in wait. He had often heard his father say that in the banking business you could get away with a thing for years and years, and yet recognition would spring on you when least expected. As for himself, recognition could meet him in any little town in New Jersey. They would have his picture in the paper by to-morrow—and, besides, what was the use?

The dark was undeniably falling when he noticed on the right a lonely shack with nothing but the marsh all round it. Coming nearly abreast of it, he detected a rough path toward it through the grass. He had no need of a path, no need of a shack, but, the path and the shack being there, they offered something to make for. Since he was obliged to turn aside, he might as well do it now.

So aside he turned. The path was hardly a path, and had apparently not been used that year. Wading through the dank grasses which caught him about the feet, he could hear small living things hopping away from his tread, or a marsh bird rise with a frightened whir of wings. Water gushed into his shoes, but that, he declared, wouldn't matter, as he would so soon be out of the reach of catching cold.

The building proved to be all that fire had left of a shanty knocked together long ago, probably for laborers working on the road. The walls were standing, and it was not quite roofless. There was no door, and the window was no more than a hole, but as he ventured within he found the flooring sound. At least, it bore his weight, and, what was more amazing still, he tripped over a rough bench which the fire had spared and the former occupants had not thought worth the carting away.

It was the very thing. Shooting oneself was something to be performed with ritual. You lay down, stretched yourself out, and did it with a hint of decency.

Teddy groped his way. First he drew the pistol from his hip pocket, laying it carefully on the floor and within reach of his hand. Next he sat down for a minute, but, fearing he would begin to think, lifted his feet to the bench, lowered his back, and straightened himself to his full, flat length. Putting down his hand, he found he could touch the pistol easily, and therefore let it lie. He let it lie only because he had not yet decided where to fire—at his heart or into his temple.

Outside the hut there was a hoarse, sleepy croak, then another, and another, and another. The dangers of light being past, the frogs were waking to their evening chant. Teddy had always loved this dreamy, monotonous lullaby, reminiscent of spring twilights and approaching holidays. He was glad now that it would be the last sound to greet his ears on earth. Since he had to go, it would croon to him softly, cradle him gently, letting the night of the soul come down on him consolingly. He was not frightened; he was only tired—oddly tired, considering where he was. It would be easier to fall asleep than do anything else, listening to the co-ax, co-ax, co-ax, with which the darkness round was filled.

And right at that minute, Flynn, with low chuckles of laughter, was telling Mrs. Flynn of the extraordinary adventure of the afternoon.

"We didn't have nothin' on the young guy at all till we seen him look over at us scared-like, and he tuck to his heels."

It was a cozy scene—Flynn, in his shirt sleeves and slippers, smoking his pipe in the dining-room of a Harlem apartment, while his wife, a plump, pretty woman, was putting away the spoons and forks in the drawer of the yellow-oak sideboard. The noisy Flynn children being packed off to bed, the father could unbend and become confidential.

"It's about three weeks now since Jackman put me wise to money leakin' from Collingham & Law's, and we couldn't tell where the hole was. First we'd size up one fella, and then another; but we'd say it couldn't be him or him. We looked over this young Follett with the rest, but only with the rest, and found but wan thing ag'in' him."

"Didn't he lose his father a short while back?"

"Yes; and that was what made us think of him. Old Follett was fired from the bank eight or nine months ago, and yet the family had gone on livin' very much as they always done."

"That'd be to their credit, wouldn't it?" Mrs. Flynn suggested, kindly.

"It'd be to some one's credit; and the thing we wanted to know was if it was to Collingham & Law's. But we hadn't a thing on him. We found out he'd paid for the old man's funeral, and the grave, and all that; but whether old Follett had left a little wad or whether the young guy'd found it lyin' around loose, we couldn't make out at all. And then this afternoon, as Jackman and me was talkin' it over on the other side o' Broad Street, who should come out but me little lord! Well, wan look give the whole show away. The third degree couldn't ha' been neater. The very eyes of him when he seen us on the other side o' the street says, 'My God! they've got me!' So off he goes—and off we goes—up Broad Street—into Wall Street—across to Nassau Street—up Nassau Street—round the corner into John Street—up to Broadway—over Broadway—and then we lost him. But we've done the trick. To-morrow, when he comes to the bank, we'll have him on the grill. Sooner or later he'd ha' been on the grill, anyhow."

"But suppose he doesn't come?"

"That'll be a worse give-away than ever."

She turned from the drawer, asking of the Follett family and learning whatever he had to tell.

"And you say he's a fine boy of about twenty-one."

"That'd about be his age. Yes, a fine, upstanding lad—and very pop'lar with Jackman he's always been."

She waited a minute before saying, "Oh, Peter, I wish you'd let him off."

"Ah, now, Tessie," he expostulated, "there you go again! If you had your way, there'd be no law at all."

"Well, I wish there wasn't."

He laughed with a jolly guffaw.

"If there was no law, and no one to break it, where'd your trip to the beach be this summer, and the new Ford car I'm goin' to get for the boys? Anyhow, even if we do get him with the goods on him, which we're pretty sure o' doin' now, he'll be recommended to mercy on account of his youth, and p'raps be let off with two years."

"Yes—and what'll he be when he comes out?"

Getting up, he pulled her to him, with his arm across her shoulder.

"Ah, now, Tessie, don't be lookin' so far ahead. That's you all over."

And he kissed her.

Gladys, that evening, kissed her mother, in the hope of kissing away her foreboding. Lizzie had not been satisfied with Teddy's story on the telephone.

"I don't understand why he didn't ask to speak to me," she kept repeating.

"Oh, momma," Gussie explained to her, "don't you see? It was a long-distance call. Three minutes is all he was allowed, and of course he didn't want to pay double. Here's his chance to make money that we've all been praying for since the year one; and you pull a long face over it. Cheer up, momma, *do*! Smile! Smile more! There! That's better. Ted said himself that you were not to miss him."

So Lizzie did her best to smile, only saying in her heart, "I don't understand his not speaking to *me*."

CHAPTER XVII

Teddy woke to a brilliant August sunshine, and that calling of marsh birds which is not song. He woke with a start and with terror. He was still on the bench, though turned over on his side, and with the pistol in view. He needed a minute to get his wits together, to piece out the meaning of the blackened walls, the sagging floor, and the sunlight streaming through the rent in the roof. A hole that had once been a door and another that had once been a window let the summer wind play over his hot face, bringing a soft refreshment.

Dragging himself to a sitting posture, his first sensation was one of relief. "I'm alive!" He hadn't done the thing he had planned last night! Merciful sleep had nailed him to the bench, keeping him motionless, unconscious. The pistol had lain within reach of his hand, and was there still; it could do duty still, but for the moment he was alive. Had he ever asked God for help or thanked Him when it came, he would have gone down on his knees and done it now; but the habit was foreign to the Follett family. He could only thank the purposeless Chance, which is the god most of us know best.

But he was glad. Twelve hours previously he had not supposed it possible ever to be glad again. It *had* been a nightmare, he reasoned now, or, if not a nightmare, it had been thought out of focus. He hadn't seen straight and normally. It was as if he had been drunk or mildly insane. He recalled experiences during naval nights ashore, at Brest or Bordeaux or Hampton Roads, when, after a glass or two of something, his mind had taken on this fevered twist in which all life had gone red.

Bickley had read this from the lines of his profile. "Forehead slightly concave; mouth and chin distinctly convex; tends to act before he thinks." The other traits had been satisfactory, indicating pluck, patience, fidelity, and cheerfulness of outlook.

The cheerfulness of outlook asserted itself now. Since he was alive on a glorious summer morning, the two great assets of a man, himself and the outside world, were still at his command. Nevertheless, he didn't blink the facts.

"I'm not a thief—but I took the money. They're after me, and they mustn't get me. I'll shoot myself first; but I don't have to shoot myself—yet."

He would not have to shoot himself so long as he was safe, and safety might take many turns. The abandoned, half-burnt sty in which he had found refuge was a fortress in its very loneliness. Close to the road, close to Jersey City, not very far from Pemberton Heights, it had probably no visitor but a toad or a bird or a truant boy from twelvemonth to twelvemonth.

His chief danger was that of being seen. The door and the window were both on the side toward the road. By avoiding the one and ducking under the other, he could move, but he could move very little. That little, however, would stretch his muscles and relieve the intolerable idleness.

The idleness, he knew, would be irksome. By looking at his watch, which had not run down, he found it was six o'clock. The six o'clock stir was also in the air. Motors had begun to dash along the road, and market garden teams were lumbering toward the big town. He was hungry again, but with his seven doughnuts still in the bag he couldn't starve to death.

By getting on the floor he found a peephole just above the level of the grass through which he could see without detection. This must be his spying place. Unlikely as it was that anyone would

track him to this lair, he must be carefully on the lookout. What he should do if threatened with a visitor was not very clear to him. There being no exit except by the door, and the door being toward the road from which a visitor would naturally approach, there was no escape on that side. Escape being out of the question, there would only remain—the other thing. The other thing was always the great possibility. He hadn't abandoned the thought of it; he had only postponed the necessity. He would live as long as he could; and yet the necessity of the other thing would probably arise. If it arose, he hoped he should get through it by that tendency which he recognized in himself as clearly as Mr. Bickley had read it from his profile—to act before he thought.

With this as a possibility, he got down to his peephole, put the pistol near him on the floor, and began on his doughnuts. For breakfast, he allowed himself three, keeping the rest for his midday needs. When darkness fell he would steal out and buy more. He could do this as long as his money held out, and before it was spent something would probably have happened. What that something would be he did not forecast. He was in a fix where forecasting wasn't possible. The minute was the only thing, and a thing that had grown precious.

Even the family had somehow become subordinate to that. In the strangeness of his night, he seemed to have traveled away from them. A man clinging to a spar on the ocean might have had this sense of remoteness from his dear ones safe on shore. Since they were safe on shore, that would be the main thing. Since his mother and sisters could come and go in Indiana Avenue, he could wish them nothing more. That was the all-essential, and they had it. Want, anxiety, grief, "and no Teddy coming home in the evenings," were trifles as compared with this priceless blessing of security.

So he settled down amid filth and slime and the debris of charred wood to watch and wait and cling to his life till he could cling to it no longer.

Later that morning, Mrs. Collingham motored from Marillo to see Hubert Wray's much-discussed picture, "Life and Death," in a famous dealer's gallery in Fifth Avenue. It had hung there a week, and though the season was dead, it was being talked about. Among the few in New York who care for the art of painting, the picture had "caught on." The important critics had honored it with articles, in which one wrote black and another white with an equal authority. The important middlemen had come in to look at it, saying to one another, "Here's a fellow who'll go far—*en voilà un qui va faire son chemin*." The important connoisseurs had made a point of viewing it, with their customary fear of expressing admiration for the work of a native son. From the few who knew, the interest was spreading to the many who didn't know but were anxious to appear as if they did.

Junia's introduction to the picture had caused her some chagrin. She had not ranked Hubert among the important family acquaintances, and when he came down to Collingham Lodge, for a night or two, as occasionally he did, she presented him to only the more negligible neighbors. "A young man Bob met in France," was all the explanation he required.

But in dining out recently she had been led in to dinner by a man of unusual enlightenment, with whose flair and discernment she liked to keep abreast. To do this she was accustomed to fall back on such scraps of reviews or art notes as drifted to her through the papers, bringing them out with that knack of "putting her best goods in the window" which was part of her social equipment. Books and the theater being too light for her attention, she was fond of displaying in music and painting the *expertise* of a patroness. She could not only talk of Boldini and Cezanne, of Paul Dukas and Vincent d'Indy, but could throw off the names of younger men just coming into view as if eagerly following their development.

Her neighbor's comments on the new picture, "Life and Death," at the Kahler Gallery were of value to her chiefly because they were up to date and told her what to say. "A reaction against the cubists and post-impressionists in favor of an art rich in color, suggestion, and significance," was a useful phrase and one easy to remember. But not having caught the painter's name, she felt it something of a shock when, with the impressiveness of one whose notice confers recognition, her escort went on to remark: "I'm going to look up this young Hubert Wray and ask

him down to Marillo. You and Bradley will be interested in meeting him."

Junia's chagrin was inward, of course, and arose from the fact of having had a budding celebrity like a tame cat about the house, not merely without suspecting it, but without keeping in touch with the thing he was creating. At the same time, she couldn't have been the woman she was had it not been for the faculty of tuning herself up to any necessary key.

Her smile was of the kind that grants no superiority even to a man of unusual enlightenment.

"You can't imagine how interested I am in hearing your opinion of the dear boy's work, and so I've been letting you run on. He happens to be a very intimate friend of ours—he comes down to stay with us every few weeks—and I've been watching his development so keenly. I really do think that with this picture he'll arrive; and to have a man like you agree with me delights me beyond words."

It was also the excuse she needed for calling Hubert up. More than two months had passed since her meeting with Jennie, and the twenty-five thousand dollars was still lying to her credit at the bank. She was not unaware of a reason for this, in that Bradley had told her of old Follett's death, and even a "bad girl" like Jennie must be allowed some leeway for grief. But Follett had been nearly two weeks in his grave, and still the application for the twenty-five thousand didn't come. Unless a pretext could be found for keeping Bob in South America, he would soon be on his way homeward, and she, Junia, was growing anxious. To be face to face with Hubert would give her the opportunity she was looking for.

He met her at the street entrance to the Kahler Gallery, conducting her through the main exposition of canvases to a little shrine in the rear. It was truly a shrine, hung in black velvet, and with no lighting but that which fell indirectly on the vivid, vital thing just sprung into consciousness of life, like Aphrodite risen from the sea foam. But, just sprung into consciousness of life, she had been called on at once to contemplate death, eying it with a mysterious spiritual courage. The living gleam of flesh, the marble of the throne, and the skull's charnel ugliness stood out against a blue-green atmosphere, like that of some other plane.

Junia was startled, not by the power and beauty of this apparition, but by something else.

"You've—you've changed her," she said, with awed breathlessness, after gazing for three or four minutes in silence.

"You mean the model?"

She nodded a "Yes," without taking her eyes from the extraordinary vision.

"You've seen her?" he asked, in mild surprise.

"Just once."

"The figure is exact," he explained, "but I did have to make changes in the features. It wouldn't have done, otherwise."

"No, of course not."

More minutes passed in silent contemplation, when she said:

"I thought there was more of the gleam of the red in amber in the hair. This hair is a brown with a little red in it."

"I got it as nearly as I could," he felt it enough to say. "The shade and sheen and silkiness of hair are always difficult."

After more minutes of hushed gazing, Junia made a venture. She spoke in that insinuating,

sympathetic tone which in moments of tensity a woman can sometimes take toward a man.

"You're in love with her—aren't you?"

He jerked his head in the direction of the nude woman.

"With her? That model? Why, no! What made you think so?"

Junia was disconcerted.

"Oh, only—only the hints that have seeped through when you didn't think you were giving anything away."

He said, with some firmness:

"I never meant to give that away—or to hint that it was—that it was love—a *rouleuse* of the studios, whom any fellow can pick up."

Junia felt like a person roaming aimlessly through sand who suddenly stumbles on gold. There was more here than, for the moment, she could estimate. All she could see were possibilities; but there was one other point as to which she needed to be sure. It was conceivable that the thing might have been painted long ago, before Bob's departure for South America, in which case it would lose at least some of its value for her purpose.

"When did you do this, Hubert?"

"Oh, just within the last few weeks."

This was enough. With her usual swiftness of decision, she had her plans in mind.

"What are you asking?"

He named his price. It was a large one, but her balance at the bank was large. It could be put to this use as well as to another.

"I'll take it," she said, after a minute's consideration, "if you could let me have it within a few days."

Not to betray the eagerness he felt, he said that it would give him publicity to keep it on view as long as possible.

"It will be almost as much publicity to have it on view at Marillo."

And in the end he agreed that this was so.

He walked back to the studio as if wings on his feet were lifting him above the pavement. It was the seal on his success. "Sold to a private collector" would be a bomb to throw among the dealers, who had been taking their time and dickering. It was more than the seal on this one success; it was a harbinger of the next success. And with this thing behind him, the next success was calling to him to begin.

He already knew what he should begin on. It was to be called, "Eve Tempting the Serpent." He was not yet sure how he should treat the idea, but a lethargic semihuman reptile was to be roused to the concept of evil by a woman's beauty and abandonment. The thing would be daring; but it couldn't be too daring, or it would bring down on him the recrudescent blue-law spirit already so vigorous through the country. He couldn't afford a tussle with that until he was better established.

But he had made some sketches, and had written to Jennie that he should like to talk the matter

over on that very afternoon. She had written in reply that, at last, she would be free to come. For the first few days after the funeral she had been either too grief stricken or too busy; but now the claims of life were asserting themselves again and she was trying to respond to them. He must not expect her to be gay; but she would grow more cheerful in time.

So he went back to the studio to lunch and to wait for her coming. Till she had ceased coming he hadn't known how much the daily expectation of seeing her had meant to him. The very occasions on which she had, as he expressed it, played him false had brought an excitement which he would have been emotionally poorer for having missed. He could not go through the experience often; he could, perhaps, not go through it again. But for that test he was apparently not to be called upon. She was coming. She knew what she was coming for. The very fact that she had written meant surrender.

And that, indeed, was what Jennie had been saying to herself all through the morning. Now that there had been this interval, she knew that her latitude for saying "Yes" and acting "No" was at an end. If she went at all, she must go all the way. To go once more and draw back once more would not be playing the game. She was clear in her mind that the day would be decisive. As to her decision, she was not so sure.

That is, she was not sure of its wisdom, though sure what she would do. She would do what she had meant to do more than two months earlier. There was no reason why she shouldn't, and the same set of reasons why she should. Not only were the money and release imperative, but Hubert meant more to her than ever. His sympathy through her sorrow had touched her by its very novelty. He had written, sent flowers, and kept himself in the background. Bob would have done more and moved her less, for the reason that doing all and giving all were in his nature. The rare thing being the most precious thing, she treasured the perfunctory phrases in Hubert's scrawl of condolence above all the outpourings of Bob's heart.

Nevertheless, she treasured them with misgivings. The consciousness of being married had acquired some strength from watching the effect of her father's death on her mother. She had known, ever since growing up, that her father and mother had been unequally mated. It was not wholly a question of practical failure or success—it was rather that the balance of moral support had been so shifted between them that the mother had nothing to sustain her. "Poor momma," had been Jennie's way of putting it, "has to take the burden of everything. She's got us on her shoulders, and poppa, too." And yet, with Josiah's death, some prop of Lizzie's inner life seemed to have been snatched away. She was not weaker, perhaps, but she was more detached, and stranger. To her children, to her neighbors, she had always been strange, always detached, but now the aloofness had become more significant. With Josiah alone she had lived in that communion of things shared which leads to understanding. Now that he was gone, something had gone with him, leaving Lizzie like an empty house.

Jennie was thrown back on what Bob had repeated so often: "You're the other half of me; I'm the other half of you." Whether it came through some impulse of affinity, or whether it was the chance of conscientiously living together, Jennie wasn't sure; but it began to seem as if in the mere fact of marriage there was a naturally unifying principle. To go against it was, in a measure, to go against the forces of the universe; and though she had only been nominally married to Bob, she was preparing to go against it. Had she been a rebel at heart, it would have been easier; but she was docile, loving, eager to be loved, with nothing more daring in her soul than the wish to live at peace with the world she saw round her.

Bob's letters were disturbing, too. In the way of a happy future, he took everything for granted. He reasoned as if, now that they had gone through a certain form together and signed it with a parson's name, she had no more liberty of will than a woman in a harem. Little as she was rebellious, she rebelled against that, preferring an element of chance in her love to a love in which there was no choice. Bob wrote as if her love was of no importance, as if he could love enough for two—did, in fact, love enough for two—so that the whole need of loving was taken off her hands.

I feel, as if my love was the air and you were a plant to grow in it. It's the

sunshine to which your leaves and blossoms will only have to turn.

"That's all very well for him," she said, falling back with a grimace on the language Gussie brought home with her from vaudeville shows, "but I ain't no blooming plant."

Hubert's love, she thought at other times, was like a rare and precious cordial, of which a few drops carefully doled out ran like fire through the veins. Bob's was a rushing torrent which, without saying with your leave or by your leave, carried you away. She preferred the cordial, of which you could take up the glass and put it down according as you wanted less or more; but, on the other hand, when there was a flood which, without asking your permission, poured all over you, what were you to do? She knew what she meant to do; but it was the difficulty of doing it and facing that terrific tide which made her stand aghast. If Bob would only let her alone....

But, then, Bob couldn't let her alone. He himself would have argued that you might as well ask a man to let a hand or a foot alone while it is aching. At the minute when Jennie was thinking these thoughts as she flitted about the house, he was seated at an open hotel window on the Santa Thereza hill above Rio de Janeiro, looking down on an iridescent city creeping round the foam-fringed edges of a turquoise sea, and saying to himself: "I'm watching over you, Jennie. I'm here, but my love is there and fills all the space between us. I came away and left you exposed to all sorts of trouble. I shouldn't have done that; I'm sorry now I did. I thought that if we were married the rest would take care of itself; but I see now it couldn't. You're having a harder time than I ever supposed you'd have, and you're having it all alone; but my love is with you, Jennie, and the worst can't happen while it protects you. Dangers will threaten you, but you'll go to meet them with my love closing you in, and something will ward them off."

"I wish he'd stop thinking about me like that."

Jennie's reference, while she stood at the mirror putting the last touches to her costume, was to this same thought as expressed in the letters she received from South America. Its appeal to her imagination was such as to create an atmosphere wrapping her about as a halo wraps a saint. She couldn't get away from it. In going to meet Hubert, as she would do in a few minutes, it would go with her, an embarrassing witness of the sin against itself.

For the minute, the action of her mind was twofold. She was making this protest as to Bob and was also giving minute attention to her dress. Not only was it her first appearance in public since her father's funeral but it was a moment at which the victim must be neatly decked for the altar. Having no money to spend on "mourning," she had put deft touches of black on a last year's white summer suit, to which a black hat thrown together by Gussie, with the black shoes and stockings already in her possession, added their mute witness that she was grieving for a relative. Having, moreover, the native *chic* which counts for most in the art of dressing, she was one more instance of the girl of the humbler walks in life who, by some secret of her own, confounds the product of the Rue de la Paix.

She was to leave for the studio as soon as her mother got up from her early-afternoon rest. The early-afternoon rest had become a necessity for Lizzie ever since the day when Josiah had been laid away.

"You'll call me if Teddy rings," she had stipulated, before lying down, and Jennie had promised faithfully.

As to Teddy's message, nominally sent from Paterson, Lizzie had betrayed a skepticism which the three girls found disconcerting. She said nothing, but it was precisely the saying nothing that puzzled them. When they themselves grew expansive over the things they would buy with the money Teddy was going to make, the mother's faint smile was alarming. It was alarming chiefly because it combined with other things to produce that effect of strangeness they had all noticed in her since their father died. Though they couldn't define it for themselves, it was as if she had renounced any further effort to make life fulfill itself. She was like a man on a sinking ship, who, after casting about as to how he may save himself, knows there is no choice left but to go down, and so becomes resigned. Having thrown up her hands, Lizzie was waiting for the waters to close

over her. Jennie was thus uneasy about her mother, as she was uneasy about Bob, uneasy about Hubert, and, most of all, uneasy about herself.

By the time she was ready she heard Lizzie stirring in her bedroom. It was the signal agreed upon. She was free to go, which meant that she was free to turn her back on all her more or less sheltered past and strike out toward a terrifying future. She felt as she had always supposed she would feel on leaving her home on her wedding day; and she would do as she had decided she would do in that event. She would go without making a fuss, without anything to record that the going was different from other goings, or that the return would be different from other returns. She would make her departure casual, without consciousness, without admitted intentions. She merely called to her mother, therefore, through the closed door, that she was on her way, and her mother had called out in response, "Very well." This leave-taking making things easier—all Jennie had to do was to gulp back a sob.

CHAPTER XVIII

But as Jennie opened the door to let herself out, two men were standing on the cement sidewalk in front of the grassplots, examining the house. They were big, heavily built men, who, although in plain clothes, suggested the guardianship of law. It came to Jennie instantly that their examination of the house was peculiar; and of that peculiarity she divined with equal promptness the significance. The men declared afterward that in her manner of standing on the step and waiting till they spoke to her there was the same kind of "give-away" as when her brother had eyed them across Broad Street.

The older and heavier of the two advanced up the walk between the grassplots.

"This is the Follett house, ain't it, miss?"

Jennie replied that it was.

"And you're Miss Follett?"

She assented again.

"Is your brother in?"

"N-no; he's not in town."

The big man turned toward his taller and slighter colleague, whatever he had to say being communicated by a look. Having expressed this thought, he veered round again toward Jennie, speaking politely.

"Maybe we could have a word with you, private-like."

"Won't you step in?"

Presently they were all three seated in the living room, the big man continuing as spokesman.

"Ah, now, about your brother, Miss Follett; you're sure he isn't anywheres around?"

The inference from the tone was that somehow Jennie was secreting him.

"He isn't to my knowledge. He called up last evening to say that he wouldn't be home to-day, and perhaps not to-morrow."

The two men being seated within range of each other's eyes, some new understanding was flashed silently.

"Did he, then? And where would he have called up from?"

"From Paterson."

"From Paterson, was it? And what made you think it was from Paterson?"

"He said so."

"And that was all you had to go by?"

"That was all."

"Well, well, now! He said so, did he? And he didn't come home last night?"

Jennie shook her head.

For a third time Flynn's eyes telegraphed something to Jackman's, and Jackman's responded. What they said to each other Jennie didn't try to surmise, for the reason that she was listening to a call. It was the call that Teddy had heard on the night when his father had brought home the news that he was "fired"—the call to assume responsibilities. Her father had gone; her mother was collapsing; Teddy had broken beneath the strain. "And now it's up to me." Mentally, she spoke the words almost before she was conscious of the thought. "And that settles it." These words, too, she spoke mentally, but in them the reference was different. The vision of love and twenty-five thousand dollars, of bliss for herself and relief for the family, which had waxed and waned so often, now faded out forever behind a mass of storm-clouds. But of all this she gave no sign as she waited for the burly man to speak again.

"And when your brother called up from Paterson—let us say it was Paterson—didn't you ask him no questions at all?"

"He didn't speak to me. I wasn't at home. It was to my little sister. I understood that he rang off before she could ask him anything."

"Oh, he did, did he?" The telegraphy between the two men was renewed. "And didn't he say nothin' about what had tuck him to a place like Paterson?"

"I think he said it was business."

"'Business,' was it? Ah, well, now! And what sort of business would that be?"

"I don't know."

"And would you tell me now if you did know?"

Jennie looked at him with clear, limpid eyes.

"I'm not sure that I would. I don't know what right you have to ask me questions as it is."

"This right." Turning back the lapel of his coat, he displayed a badge. "We don't want to frighten you, Miss Follett, my friend and me, we don't; but if you know anything about the boy, it'll be easier in the long run both for him and for you—"

"What do you want him for?"

Lizzie's voice was so deep that it startled. On the threshold of the little entry she stood, tall, black robed, almost unearthly. At the same time Pansy, who had also come downstairs, crept toward Flynn with a low, vicious growl. Both men stumbled to their feet, awed by something in Lizzie which was more than the majesty of grief.

"Ah, now, we're sorry to disturb you, ma'am, my friend and me. We know you've had trouble, and we wouldn't be for wantin' to bring more into a house where there's enough of it already. But when things is duty, they can't be put by just because they're unpleasant—"

"Has my son been taking money from Collingham & Law's?"

The spectral voice gave force to the directness of the question. Abandoning the hint of professional bullying he had taken toward Jennie, Flynn, with Pansy's teeth not six inches from

his calf, went a pace or two toward the figure in the entry.

"Has he been takin' money, that boy of yours? Well now, and have you any reason to think so, ma'am?"

"None—apart from what I hoped."

"Momma!"

Jennie sprang to her mother, grasping her by the arm. While Jackman stood like an iron figure in the background, Flynn, always with Pansy's teeth keeping some six inches from his calf, advanced still another pace or two.

"Ah, now, that's a quare thing, ma'am, for the mother of a lad to say—that she hoped he was takin' money."

"Oh, don't mind her," Jennie pleaded. "She hasn't been just—just *right*—ever since my father died."

"I didn't think of it at first," Lizzie stated, in a lifeless voice. "I believed what he told us, that he was making money on the side. It was only latterly that I began to suspect that he wasn't; and now I hope he took it from the bank."

"But, good God! ma'am, why? Don't you know he'll be caught—and what he'll get for it?"

"Oh, he'd get that just the same, if you mean suffering and punishment and a life of misery. All I want is that he should be the first to strike. Since he's got to go down before brute power—"

"Brute power of law and order, ma'am, if you'll allow me to remind you."

She uttered a little joyless laugh.

"Law and order! You'll excuse me for laughing, won't you? I've heard so much of them—"

"And you're likely to hear a lot more, if this is the way o' things."

"Oh, I expect to. They'll do me to death, as they'll do you, and as they do everyone else. Law and order are the golden images set up for us to bow down to and worship as gods; and we get the reward that's always dealt out to those who believe in falsehood."

Flynn appealed to both Jennie and Jackman.

"I never heard no one talk like that, whether dotty or sane."

"If it was real law and order," Lizzie continued, with the same passionless intonation, "that would be another thing. But it isn't. It's faked law and order. It's a plaster on a sore, meant to hide the ugly thing and not to heal it. It's to keep bad bad by pretending that it's good—"

"Ah, but bad as it is, ma'am," Flynn began to reason, "it's better than stealin'—now, isn't it?"

But Lizzie seemed ready for him here.

"I think I've read in your Bible that the commandment, 'Thou shalt not steal,' was given to a people among whom it was a principle that everyone should be provided for. If it happened that anyone was not provided for, there was another commandment given as to him, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.' He was to be free to take what he needed."

Flynn shook his head.

"That may be in the Bible, ma'am; but it wouldn't stand in a court o' law."

"Of course it wouldn't; only, the court of law is nothing to me."

"It can make itself something to you, ma'am, if you don't mind my sayin' so."

"Oh no, it can't! It can try me and sentence me and lock me up; but that's no worse than law and order are doing to me and mine every hour of the day."

"Oh, momma," Jennie pleaded, clinging to her mother's arm, "please stop—*please*!"

"I'm only warning him, darling. Law and order will bring him to grief as it does everyone else. How many did it kill in the war? Something like twelve millions, wasn't it, and could anyone ever reckon up the number of aching hearts it's left alive?"

"Yes, momma; but that kind of talk doesn't do Teddy any good."

"It does if we make it plain that he was only acting within his rights. These people think that by passing a law they impose a moral duty. What nonsense! I want my son to be brave enough to strike at such a theory as that. It's true that they'll strike back at him, and that they have the power to crush him—only, in the long run he'll be the victor."

Flynn looked at Jennie in sympathetic apology.

"All right now, Miss Follett. I guess my friend and me'll be goin' along—"

"You'll do just as you like about that," Lizzie interposed, with dignity; "but if you see my son before I do, tell him not to be sorry for what he's done, and above all not to think that I blame him. 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.' When you do, the eighth commandment doesn't apply any longer."

Jennie followed her visitors to the doorstep. After her mother's reckless talk, they seemed like friends, as, indeed, at bottom of their kindly hearts they could easily have been. They brought no ill will to their job—only a conviction that if Teddy Follett was a thief, they must "get him."

"Does—does Mr. Collingham know that all this is going on?"

She asked her question in trepidation, lest these men, trained to ferret out whatever was most hidden, should be able to read her secret. It was Jackman who shouldered the duty of answering. He seemed more laconic than his colleague, and more literate.

"We don't trouble Mr. Collingham with trifles. If it was a big thing—"

So Jennie was left with that consolation—that it was not *a big thing*. How big it was she could only guess at, but, whatever the magnitude, she had no doubt at all but that it was "up to her." She got some inspiration from the little word "up." There was a lift in it that made her courageous.

Nevertheless, when she returned to the living room, finding her mother seated, erect and stately, in an armchair, with Pansy gazing at her with eyes of quenchless, infinite devotion, Jennie knew a qualm of fear.

"Oh, momma, wouldn't it be awful if Teddy had to go to jail?"

"It would be awful or not, just as you took it. If you thought he went to jail as a thief, it *would* be awful, but if you saw him only as the martyr of a system, you'd be proud to know he was there."

"Oh, but, momma, what's the good of saying things like that?"

"What's the good of letting them throw you down, a quivering bundle of flesh, before a Juggernaut, and just being meekly thankful? That's what your father and I have always done, and, now that the wheels have passed over him, I see the folly of keeping silent. I may not do any good by speaking, but at least I speak. When they muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, it isn't much wonder if the famished beast goes mad. Did you ever see a mad ox, Jennie? Well, it's a terrible sight—the most patient and laborious drudge among animals, goaded to a desperation in which he's conscious of nothing but his wrongs and his strength. They generally kill him. It's all they can do with him—but, of course, they can do that."

"So that it doesn't do the ox much good to go mad, does it?"

"Oh yes; because he gets out of it. That's the only relief for us, Jennie darling—to get out of it. I begin to understand how mothers can so often kill themselves and their children. They don't want to leave anyone they love to endure the sufferings this world inflicts."

From these ravings Jennie was summoned by the tinkle of the telephone bell.

"Teddy!" cried the mother, starting to her feet.

"No; it's Mr. Wray. I knew he'd ring me if I didn't turn up."

The instrument was in the entry, and Jennie felt curiously calm and competent as she went toward it. All decisions being taken out of her hands, she no longer had to doubt and calculate. The renunciations, too, were made for her. She was not required to look back, only to go on.

In answer to the question, "Is this Mrs. Follett's house?" she replied, as if the occasion were an ordinary one:

"Yes, Mr. Wray. I'm sorry I can't come to the studio."

"Oh! so it's you! You can't come—what? Then you needn't come any more."

"Yes; that's what I thought. I see now that—that I can't."

"Well, of all—" He broke off in his expostulation to say: "Jennie, for God's sake, what's the matter with you? What are you afraid of?"

"I'm not afraid of anything, Mr. Wray; but there's a good deal the matter which I can't explain on the telephone."

"Do you want me to come over there?"

"No; you couldn't do any good."

"Is it money?"

"No." She remembered the accumulation of untouched bills and checks in her glove-and-handkerchief box upstairs. "I've got plenty of money. There's nothing you could do, thank you."

There was a pause before he said:

"Then it's all off? Is that what you mean?"

"Isn't it what you meant yourself only a minute ago?"

"Oh, well, you needn't stake your life on that."

She began to feel faint. It cost her more to stand there talking than she had supposed it would when she took up the receiver.

"I'm afraid I must—must stake my life on that. I—I can't stay now. I can't come any more to see you, either. I've—I've given up posing. G—good-by."

She heard him beginning to protest from the other end.

"No, Jennie! Wait! For God's sake!"

But her putting-up of the receiver cut them off from each other.

"So that's all over," she said to herself, turning again into the living room.

But she said it strongly, as Lizzie had many a time said similar things on witnessing the death of hopes, with desolation in the heart, perhaps, but no wish to cry.

Meanwhile, Flynn and Jackman, trudging toward the car station in the square, were discussing this strange case.

"That was a funny line o' talk about the ox treadin' out the corn. I never heard nothin' like that in our church."

But Jackman, being a Methodist and a student of the Bible before coming to New York and giving himself to detective work, was able to explain.

"That's in the Old Testament, to begin with; but Paul takes it up and says that, though it was meant, in the first place, to apply to the animals, its real application is to man. 'That he that ploweth may plow in hope, and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope'—that's the way it runs. That everyone should get a generous living wage and not be cheated of it in the end is the way you might put it into our kind of talk."

"Is it now? And it do seem fair—don't it?—for all the old woman yonder is so daft. And would that Paul be the same *Saint* Paul as we've got in our church?"

"Oh, the very same."

"Would he now? And you a Protestant! That's one thing I've often wondered—why there had to be so many religions and everyone wasn't a Catholic. It'd be just as easy, and cost us less. Ah, well! It's a quare world, and that poor woman's had a powerful dose o' trouble. I don't wonder she's got wheels in her head. Do you? Maybe you and me'd have them if we'd gone through the same." Having thus worked up to his appeal, he plunged into it. "I know wan little woman 'd be glad if I was to come home to-night and tell her we'd called the thing off. That's my Tessie. It's amazin' how she's set her heart on my not trackin' down this boy."

"Not to track him down would be to compound a felony," Jackman replied, severely.

"Ah, well! So it would, now. You sure have got the right dope there, Jackman, and that I'll tell Tessie. I'll say I'd be compounding a felony, and them words 'll scare her good."

So Flynn, too, resigned himself, putting on once more the mask of craft and implacability that was part of his stock in trade, and which Jackman rarely took off.

And all that day Teddy lay crouched in his lair with his eye glued more or less faithfully to the peephole. Except from hunger, he had suffered but little, and the minutes had been too exciting to seem long in going by. It was negative excitement, springing from what didn't happen; but because something might happen, and happen at any instant, it was excitement. From morning to midday, and from midday on into the afternoon, cars, carts, and pedestrians traveled in and out of Jersey City, each spelling possible danger. Now and then a man or a vehicle had paused in the road within calling distance of the shanty. For two minutes, for five, or for ten at a time, Teddy lay there wondering as to their intentions and trying to make up his mind as to his own course.

Whether to shoot himself or make a bolt for it, or if he shot himself whether it should be through the temple or the heart, were points as to which he was still undecided. He would get inspiration, he told himself, when the time came. He had often heard that in crises of peril the brain worked quicker than in moments of tranquillity; and perhaps, after all, a crisis of peril might not lie before him.

In a measure, he was growing used to his situation as an outlaw; he was growing used to the separation from the family. It was not that he loved them less, but that he had moved on and left them behind. He could think of them now without the longing to cry he had felt yesterday, while the desperation of his plight centered his thought more and more upon himself. If he didn't have to shoot himself, he planned, in as far as plans were possible, to sneak away into the unknown and become a tramp. He couldn't do it yet, because the roads were probably being watched for him; but by and by, when the hunt had become less keen....

Seven doughnuts swallowed without a drop of water being far from the nourishment to which he was accustomed, he waited with painful eagerness for nightfall. When the primrose-colored lights up and down the road and along the ragged fringe of the town were deepening to orange, he crept forth cautiously. Even while half hidden by the sedgy grasses, he felt horribly exposed, and when he emerged into the open highway, the eyes of all the police in New York seemed to spy him through the twilight. Nevertheless, he tramped back toward the dwellings of men, doing his best to hide his face when motor lights flashed over him too vividly.

Unable to think of anything better than to return to the friendly woman who had given him seven doughnuts for his six, he found her behind her counter, in company with a wispy little girl.

"Ah, good-evening. Zo you'f come ba-ack. You fount my zandwiches naice."

Teddy replied that he had, ordering six, with a dozen of her doughnuts. Her manner was so affable that he failed to notice her piercing eyes fixed upon him, nor did he realize how much a young man's aspect can betray after twenty-four hours without water to wash in, as well as without hairbrush or razor. He thought of himself as presenting the same neat appearance as on the previous evening; but the woman saw him otherwise.

"I wonder if I could have a glass of water?" he asked, his throat almost too parched to let the words come out.

"But sairtainly." She turned to the child, whispering in a foreign language, but using more words than the command to fetch a glass of water would require.

When the child came back, Teddy swallowed the water in one long gulp. The woman asked him if he would like another glass, to which he replied that he would. More instructions followed, and while the woman tied up the sandwiches the little girl came back with the second glass. This Teddy drank more slowly, not noticing as he did so that the little girl slipped away.

Nor did he notice as he left the shop and turned westward into the gloaming, that the child was returning from what seemed like a hasty visit to a neighbor's house across the street. Still less did he perceive, when the comforting loneliness of the marshes began once more to close round him, that a big, husky figure was stalking him. It had come out of one of the tenements over the way from the pastry shop, apparently at a summons from the wispy little girl. Like the men whom Jennie had seen eying the house in the afternoon, he suggested the guardianship of law, even though he was, so to speak, in undress uniform. His duties for the day being over, he had plainly been taking his ease in slippers, trousers, and shirt. Even now he was bareheaded, pulling on his tunic as he went along.

He didn't go very far, only to a point at which he could see the boy in front of him turn into the unused path that led to the old shack. Whereupon he nodded to himself and turned back to his evening meal.

CHAPTER XIX

Jennie's chief hesitation was as to cashing the checks, not because the teller at the Pemberton National Bank didn't know her, but because he did. To present a demand for money made out to Jane Scarborough Follett, and signed, "R. B. Collingham, Jr.," was embarrassing.

But she had grown since the previous afternoon, and embarrassment sat on her more lightly. Like Teddy marooned on the marshes, she seemed to have moved on, leaving her old self behind. Now she had things to do rather than things to think about. One fact was a relief to her; she was no longer under the necessity of betraying Bob.

So she cashed her checks, and counted her money, finding that she had two hundred and forty-five dollars. She didn't know how much Teddy had taken from the bank; possibly more than this, possibly not so much; but whatever the sum, this would go at least part of the way toward meeting it. If she could meet it altogether, then, she argued, the law couldn't touch him.

On arriving at the bank her first sensation was one of confusion. There seemed to be no one in particular to whom to state her errand. Men were busy in variously labeled cages, and more men beyond them sat at desks within pens. Two or three girls moved about with documents in their hands, and there was a distant click of typewriters. People passed in and out of the bank, occupied with their own affairs, and everyone, clerk and client alike, had apparently a definite end in view. It was like coming up against a blank wall of business, leaving no opening through which to slip in.

The weakest point seemed to be at a counter beneath the illuminated sign, "Statements," where two ladies waited for custom, conversing in the interim. Jennie stood unnoticed while the speaker for the moment finished her narration, bringing it to its conclusion plaintively.

"So when mother called in the doctor, it turned out to be a very bad case of ty-*phoid*. Statement?"

The question at the end being directed toward Jennie, the latter asked if she could see Mr. Collingham. The reply was sharp; the tone quite different from that of the domestic anecdote of which she had just heard a portion.

"Next floor. Take the elevator. Ask for Miss Ruddick." The voice resumed its plaintiveness. "So we had him moved into the corner bedroom, and sent for a trained nurse—"

On getting out of the lift, Jennie found herself in a sort of lobby where applicants for interviews sat with the hangdog look which such postulants generally wear. A brisk little Jewess seated at a desk murmured the name of each newcomer into a telephone, after which there was nothing to do but take a chair and wait upon events. Now and then some one came out from his conference, whereupon a messenger girl, generally of Slavic or Hebraic type, would summon his successor.

It was nearly an hour before Jennie was called to the office of Miss Ruddick, who, with her practiced method of dealing with the importunate, prepared to put her rapidly through her paces and land her again at the lift. This Miss Ruddick did, not so much with the minimum of courtesy as with the maximum of conscientiousness. Her aim was to save Jennie's time as well as her own, in the altruistic spirit of Mr. Bickley's principles.

"How do you do? Are you the daughter of the Mr. Follett who used to be with us here? So sorry for your loss, though it may be a release for him, poor man. We never know, do we? Now what is

it I can do for you?"

Jennie said again that she hoped to see Mr. Collingham.

"I think you'd better tell your errand to me."

"I couldn't. I can only tell it to him."

In saying this she supposed Miss Ruddick would understand the reference to be to Teddy, whose story must by this time be ringing through the bank. In spite of what Jackman had said on the previous afternoon, they couldn't keep so serious a crime secret for more than a matter of hours. But Miss Ruddick only seemed displeased by Jennie's insistence, answering coldly,

"If it's a job you're looking for, the best person to see would be—"

And just then the communicating door opened and Collingham himself came out. He was about to give some order to Miss Ruddick and pass on when Jennie rose in such a way that his eye fell upon her. When a man's eye fell upon Jennie his attention was generally arrested. In this case, it was the more definitely arrested, for the reason that Jennie, timidly and tremblingly, gave signs of having a request to make.

"You wish to speak to me?"

At this condescension Miss Ruddick was amazed, but, the responsibility being taken off her hands, she was already capturing the minutes by being "back on her job," according to her favorite expression. Jennie could hardly speak for awe. She recalled what Mrs. Collingham had said—a hard, stern, ruthless man, who kept her, her son, and her daughter as puppets on his string. If he so treated his own flesh and blood, how would he treat her?

Following him into the private office, she reminded herself that she must keep her head. She had come on a specific business, and to that business she must confine herself. Her other relations with this terrible man she must leave to his son to deal with.

"Your name is—"

His tone was courteous. They were both seated now—he at his desk, she in a small chair at a respectful distance. The question surprised her, for the reason that in her confusion she supposed that her identity was known to him.

"I'm Jennie Follett." His visible start did not make her situation easier. She remembered that Mrs. Collingham had said that if he knew of the tie between herself and Bob he would disinherit him on the spot. Just what was implied by that she didn't understand, but it suggested all that was most dramatic in the movies. To disarm his suspicions in this direction, she hurried on to add, "I came about my brother."

He relaxed slightly, leaning on the desk and examining her closely.

"Oh, your brother!"

"Yes, sir. I don't know how much money he's been taking from the bank—"

Collingham's brows contracted.

"Wait a minute. Has your brother been taking money from the bank?"

At the thought that she might be making a false step, Jennie was appalled.

"Oh, don't you know that yet, sir?"

"Don't I know it yet? I don't know what you're talking about at all."

So the whole thing had to be explained. Two men had appeared on the previous afternoon in Indiana Avenue, accusing Teddy of systematic robbery. Teddy had so far corroborated the charge that he had absented himself from home and work. He had called up once, nominally from Paterson, but the two detectives didn't believe that it was. In any case, she had a little money of her own—her very own—two hundred and forty-five dollars it was—and as far as it would go she had come to make restitution. If it wasn't enough, they would sell the house as soon as they could get it on the market and pay up the balance, if he would only give the order that Teddy shouldn't be sent to jail.

Emboldened by his concentration on her story and herself, she took out the roll of bills from her bag, enlarging on her plea.

"You see, sir, it was this way. After my father had to leave the bank last fall, Teddy had to be our chief support, just on his eighteen a week. My two little sisters left school and went to work; but that didn't bring in much. Then there were the taxes, and the mortgages, and the expenses of my father's funeral, besides six of us having to eat—"

"You were working, too, weren't you?"

"Yes, sir; I was posing. But I only earned six a week."

"Only?"

Based on a memory of his own of something Junia had said—"a mousey little thing with a veneer of modesty, but mercenary isn't the word for her"—there was an implication in this "Only?" which escaped Jennie's simplicity.

"Yes, sir; that was all. Somehow I couldn't get the work. Nobody seemed to want me."

He pointed at her roll of bills.

"Then where did you get the money you're holding in your hand?"

The question was unexpected and confounding. She must either answer it truly or not answer it at all. If she answered it truly, she not only exposed Bob, but she exposed herself to the utmost rigor of his wrath. She didn't care about herself; she didn't care much about Bob; she cared only about Teddy. The utmost rigor of this man's wrath would send him to jail as easily as she could brush a fly through an open window. She could say nothing. She could only look at him helplessly, with lips parted, eyes shimmering, and the hot color flooding her face pitiably.

It was the kind of situation in which no man with the heart of a man could be hard on any little girl; besides which, Collingham looked on this silent confession as providential. It would enable him to reason with Bob, if it ever came to that, and tell him what he, the father, knew at first hand and from his own experience. Otherwise he brought no moral judgment to bear on poor Jennie, and condemned her not at all.

"Just wait a minute," he said, in a kindly tone, getting up as he spoke. "I'll go and straighten the thing out."

Left alone, Jennie had these concluding words to strengthen her. He would straighten the thing out. That meant probably that Teddy wouldn't have to go to jail, and beyond this relief she didn't look. It would be everything. Nothing else would matter. He might be dismissed from the bank; they might starve; but the great thing would be accomplished.

It was a half hour or more before he returned, and when he did he looked worried. "Troubled" would perhaps be a better word, since even Jennie could see that his thoughts were farther away and deeper down than the incidents on the surface. He spoke almost absent-mindedly.

"I find there's been a leakage for some little time past, and they've had difficulty in fixing where the trouble was. Now I'm sorry to say it looks as if it was your brother. There's hardly any doubt about that—"

"You see, sir," she pleaded, "it was so hard for him not to be able to do anything when my father was so ill and my mother worried and the bills piling up—they stopped our credit nearly everywhere—and the tax people—they were the worst of all."

"Yes, yes; I quite understand. And I've told them not to press the matter further. Flynn and Jackman, the two men you saw yesterday, are out for the minute; but when they come in they are to report to me. I don't suppose we can take your brother back; but I'll see what I can do for him elsewhere." He rose to end the interview, so that Jennie rose, too. "You can keep that money," he added, nodding toward her roll of bills. "You were not responsible, and there's no reason at all why you should pay."

When Jennie protested, he merely escorted her to the door, which he held open.

"No, don't thank me," he insisted. "Please! Just make your mind easy as to your brother. The matter shall not go any farther. I don't know what I can do for him as yet—the circumstances make it difficult; but I shall find something."

So, blinded with tears, Jennie made her way toward the lift, calling down on Bob's father as well as on his mother all the blessings she was able to invoke.

Late that afternoon, Teddy, on the floor of his hut, woke with a start from a doze. He hadn't meant to doze, but he had slept little on the preceding night, and was lulled, moreover, by a sense of his security. The day had not been as exciting as the day before. Nothing having happened during all those hours, he was growing convinced that nothing would. In its way, safety was becoming irksome. He began to ask himself whether the spirit of adventure didn't summon him to go forth as a tramp that night.

So he dozed—and so he waked, with a start. The start was possibly due to a consciousness even in his sleep that there were people in the road. He was frightened before he could put his eye again to the peephole. Luckily the pistol was at hand, and *the other thing* might now have to be done.

As a matter of fact it seemed likely. Two burly figures had already left the highway, Flynn tramping along the flicker of path, and Jackman picking his steps through the oozy mud a little to Flynn's right and a little behind him. There was no secrecy about their approach, and apparently no fear.

"They don't suspect that I've got a gun," Teddy commented to himself. "Lobley can't have told them."

They were talking to each other, and, though Teddy could not make out their words, he heard Flynn's gurgle of a laugh. To his fevered imagination, it was a diabolic laugh, suggestive of handcuffs and torture.

The thought of handcuffs frenzied him. Of the sacrilegious touch on his person, the links set the final mark. Rather than submit to them he would shoot anyone, preferably himself. For shooting himself the minute had come, and he decided to do it through the temple. The aim through the heart might miscarry; there was no chance of miscarriage through the brain. All that remained for him now was to know the moment when.

"Don't shoot till you see the whites of their eyes."

Some trick of memory brought the tag back to him. He knew that it applied to the shooting of an enemy, but in this case it suited himself. He couldn't see the whites of their eyes as yet, for

through the grasses and over the slimy ground they advanced but slowly. That gave him the longer to live. He might live for three minutes, possibly for five. Even a minute was something.

But he was ready. He couldn't say that he had no fear, because he was all fear; but for the very reason that he was all fear, he was frozen, numb. Only, the hand that held the pistol shook. He couldn't control it. All the more, then, must he do it through the brain, since he found by experiment that he could steady the muzzle against his temple. He didn't dare so to hold it long, lest that impulse of acting before he thought might deprive him of these last precious seconds of life. So he let the thing rest on the peephole, pointing outward, like a gun on board ship. He found, too, that this steadied his eye. He could squint along the barrel right at the two big figures lumbering through the morass.

"Don't shoot till you see the whites of their eyes."

Flynn looked up, a laugh on his lips at this absurd adventure. The boy saw the whites of his eyes, and, as far as he himself knew, his mind went blank. He always declared that he heard no sound. He only saw Flynn throw up his arms with a kind of stifled shout—stagger—try to regain his lost balance—and go tumbling, face downward, into the long grass. Jackman fell, too, though not so prone but that he could partially raise himself, half supported by his left arm, while, without being able to face toward the road, he waved his right to the motors flashing by.

For Teddy mind-action ceased. He was nothing but mad instinct. He knew he must have fired—must have fired twice—that the hand that was to shoot into his temple had betrayed him. He knew, too, that he couldn't shoot into his temple—that great as was his terror of the handcuffs, his terror of this thing was worse. Flinging the pistol across the floor, his one impulse was to save himself.

As he had foreseen, his mind, once it began to work, worked quickly. He saw that the grass growing up to the door of the shack was tall, and hardly beaten down by his footsteps. Lying flat like a lizard, he wriggled his way into it. The very yielding of the swampy bottom beneath his weight was in his favor. By a sense, such as that which had waked him up, he knew that motors were stopping in the road, that people were leaping out, that Flynn and Jackman were the objects of everyone's concern, and that, in the mystery as to what had happened to them, no one's attention was as yet directed to himself. He made for the back of the shack, writhing his way round the two corners, and heading out toward the center of the marsh. It was needful to do this, since the shanty and its neighborhood would soon be explored, and he must, if possible, be lost in the swampy tracklessness.

Though progress of necessity was slow, he was amazed at the distance he was putting between himself and danger. Oh, if it was only night! If a thundercloud would only come up and darken the sky! But it was the brilliant, pitiless sunshine of an August afternoon, with not a shred of atmosphere to help him. Still he writhed and writhed and writhed his way onward, making the pace of a snake when half of its body is dead. He was no longer Teddy Follett; he was no longer so much as an animal. He was one big agony of mind, which becomes an agony of body; and yet he was eager to live.

He began to think that he might live. He seemed as far away from the peril behind him as the woods thing that gives its hunter the slip in the green depths of the covert. Dogs might be able to track him, but not men alone; and while they were bringing up the bloodhounds he might....

And then he heard a shout that struck through him like paralysis.

"There he is! I see him!"

"Where? Where?"

"That line behind the shack—don't you see?—a little streak right through the grass."

"No; I don't see anything."

"Come along and I'll show you. Come along, boys. We'll get him. He's only going on his belly."

"Yes, and be croaked, like this poor guy! Don't forget that the bird over there can give you a dose of lead."

So Flynn was dead! That was the meaning of that. Teddy had killed a man. Perhaps he had killed two men. He hadn't taken time to think of it before; but now that he did, he lay stricken in every muscle of his frame, his face in the mud, and his fingers dug into the queachy roots of the sedges.

CHAPTER XX

The guests went early. It was a relief to have them go. Not that they differed from other guests to whom Collingham Lodge was accustomed to open its doors, or that the dinner was less fastidiously good than Junia was in the habit of giving. Dinner and guests had both been up to form; and yet it was a relief when the last car glided from beneath the portico.

"Why do you suppose it is?"

Junia had asked this question so often of late that Collingham had ceased to try to answer it. Instead, he lit a cigar and strolled to the open French window. He, too, found it a relief to relax in the company of his family, though less puzzled than Junia at the state of mind.

"Oh, come out!" Edith called from the terrace. "It's heavenly."

It was a soft, warm, velvety night, starlit and voluptuous. The air astir was just enough to carry the scents of roses, honeysuckle, mignonette, and new-mown hay. Except for the dartings of small living things and the occasional peep of a half-awake bird, there was no sound but that of the plash of the fountains on the terraces. Edith went in for a light wrap for her mother; Collingham, his cigar in hand, dropped into the teakwood chair.

"It isn't our dinners only," Junia complained, when, with the wrap about her shoulders, she had settled herself in the wicker armchair she preferred; "it's all dinners. It's just as if people didn't enjoy them any more."

"Well, they don't." Edith half loungingly swung herself in a Gloucester hammock. "What we've got to learn, mother dear, is that entertaining, as we called it, was a pre-war habit which we've outlived in spirit, though we haven't quite come to the point in fact."

"There's something in that," Collingham agreed.

"And yet there's got to be hospitality," Junia reasoned. "You can't just live and die to yourself."

Edith swung lazily.

"Hospitality, yes; but isn't there a difference between that and entertaining?"

"If so, what is it?"

"I'm not sure that I can say. Isn't the one a permanent necessity, and the other merely a custom that can go out of date?"

"Between your custom that can go out of date and your permanent necessity, I don't see that there's much distinction."

"Well, there is, mother dear. It's like this: Entertaining is giving people something they don't particularly want and which you expect them to repay; while hospitality is opening your house to people in need, whether they can repay you or not."

"Oh, if we're going to open our houses to people in need—"

"Well, what?"

"I'm sure I don't know what; nor you, either."

"And that's just it. We're halting between two states of mind. Ever since the war began, mere entertaining bores us; and we're terrified at the idea of genuine hospitality; so there we are. We still give dinners and go to them; but when we do we feel it's something fatuous, which can't help making us dull."

Out of the silence that ensued Collingham said, moodily:

"It's all very fine to talk of opening your house to people in need; but it's not as easy as it looks."

"Is anything ever as easy as it looks, dad? Don't we shirk the social problems that are upsetting the world by declaring them impossible to solve, when a material difficulty only puts us on our mettle?"

He turned this over. All that day he had been calculating his own possible responsibility in Teddy Follett's going wrong, and was thinking of it now. In the end he said:

"All the same you've got to follow the regular trend. If you were in business you'd know. You can't do things differently from other people. You may be as sorry as you like not to be able to help; but if you can't, you can't—and there's an end of it."

"Mr. Ayling in his new book, *Social Problems and the Individual*, says there's a distinction to be drawn between *can't* and *can't*—there's the can't that comes from lack of ability, and the can't that springs from the accepted standard. He says—"

"I don't believe your father is at all interested in that, Edith dear."

"Oh yes; let her go on. I'm not afraid of what Ayling thinks."

But before Edith could resume the attention of all three was called by the tinkle of the telephone bell in the library, which could be approached from the terrace through the drawing-room. With a muttered, "Who's ringing up at this time of night?" Collingham dragged himself in to answer it. The women remained silent, each listening to see if the call was for her.

"Yes?... This is Mr. Collingham.... Who?... Oh, it's you, Mr. Brunt?... Yes?... What did you say?... Killed? Who's killed?... Not Flynn the detective, who comes in and out of the bank?... Indeed! Dear me! Dear me! Where was it?... Who did it?... Not that boy?... Oh, my God!... What happened?... Tell me quickly.... Over beyond Jersey City! Yes? Yes?... And they've got him?... In the Brig? That's the Ellenbrook jail, isn't it?... Jackman, too, did you say?... Wounded, but not killed.... Badly?... Oh, the poor fellow!... In the hospital?... That's right.... Has anyone communicated with his family?... Good! Good!... And Flynn's wife?... Oh, the poor woman!... And the boy's family?... You don't know anything? Then no one has informed his mother?... Not that you know of.... I see.... He's to be brought into court to-morrow morning.... Poor little devil!... Oh, I know he doesn't deserve pity, but—but I can't help it, Brunt. His father was with us so long and —and one thing and another!... No; I'll appear in court myself and see what I can do for him.... Good night, then. I'll see you in the morning."

"What boy can that be?" Junia whispered, as her husband hung the receiver in its place.

"I'm sure I don't know—unless—unless it's the Follett boy."

"Oh, I hope not. It would make such awful complications."

They waited for Collingham to come and tell them his plainly thrilling news, but he remained in the library.

"It *would* make complications," Edith ventured, in a low voice, "if it proved to be young Follett—with Bob in love with his sister."

Junia spoke not so much from impulse as from inspiration.

"He's more than in love with her. He's married to her."

"Mother!"

"Yes; he was married to her a few days before he sailed. I've known it all along."

Edith was breathless.

"Did he tell you?"

"No; she did."

"She? The Follett girl? Why, mother!"

Junia rose. She knew that if her suspicions were correct she would have things to do before she slept.

"Go to bed now, dear; and I'll come to your room and give you the whole story. In the meantime I may have to tell your father."

"You mean to say that he doesn't know?"

"No; not yet. I've been rather hoping that before I told him Bob would—would see his way out of the mess."

"He'll never do that, never in this world—not according to what he's said to me."

"Oh, well, he didn't know everything then that he'll have to know now. But go and say good night to your father; and I'll come up by the time you're in bed."

"Mother, you're amazing!" Edith spoke more in awe than in admiration; but she obeyed orders by going to her father.

She found him still sitting in the chair by the telephone, bowed forward, his elbows on his knees, and his forehead in his hands. When he lifted his haggard eyes toward her she stood still.

"Daddy, what in the world has happened? Who is it that has killed some one? We couldn't help hearing that much."

He raised himself. "Come here."

Going forward, she knelt down beside him, taking his hand and kissing it.

"You poor daddy! You're bothered, aren't you?"

"It's—it's young Follett. He's been stealing money from the bank, and now he's shot one of the detectives who heard he was hiding in a cabin out on the New Jersey marshes. They'd sent out a description of him to the suburban stations. And only to-day I told his sister that I'd call the thing off and give him another chance."

"She came to see you?"

"She came to see me."

"Then you did what you could, didn't you?"

"I did what I could—then." In spite of the emphasis on the final word, he slapped his knee with new conviction. "I've done what I could all through. It's no use saying I haven't, because I have. There's just so much you can do, and you can't do any more. You can't make a business a home for indigent old gentlemen—now, can you?"

He sprang to his feet, leaving her kneeling by the chair.

"No, I don't suppose you can," she assented, rising slowly. "But I do wish you'd talk to Mr. Ayling sometime, daddy. He seems to see all these things from new points of view—"

He was pacing about the room very much like Max in moments of agitation.

"Oh, new points of view! There's only one point of view, I tell you, and that's the one on what we've made the country prosperous."

She smiled wistfully.

"Prosperous for some."

"Well, that's better than prosperous for nobody, isn't it?"

She said good night to him then, for the reason that she herself was so stirred that she needed seclusion in which to think these strange things over. That Bob should have married Jennie Follett was a shock in itself; but that through his wife he should now be involved in this frightful tragedy was something that her mind found it hard to take in. It was the first time that she had ever come so close to the more terrible happenings in life.

Meanwhile, Junia, overhearing what was said, reconstructed her plan of campaign. In common with great generals, she possessed the faculty of rapid revision, as events took place differently from the way she had expected. By the time she heard Edith go upstairs she had foreseen the line of action which the new situation forced on them.

Collingham was still lashing about the library when she appeared on the threshold. Her calmness arrested him. In a measure it soothed him. It was the kind of juncture in which she always knew what to do, and he had confidence in her judgment. When she said, "Sit down, Bradley; I've something to say," he obeyed her quietly, relighting his cigar. As she, too, sat down, Max or Dauphin would have noted in her the aura of authority which a master wears when about to lecture a schoolboy.

"I've something startling to tell you, Bradley; but I want to say beforehand that you mustn't get worked up, because I see a way out."

Taking his cigar from his lips, he looked at her sidewise. His expression said, "What's it going to be now?"

"What I've heard you telling Edith about this young Follett killing a detective concerns us more closely than you may think, because Bob is married to his sister."

He laid his cigar on an ash tray, swung round to the table between them, clasped his fingers, and leaned on his outstretched elbows. His tone was quiet, even casual.

"When did he do that?"

"Just before he sailed."

"Then I'm through with him."

"Oh no, you're not, Bradley! He's your son, whether he's married anyone or not."

"I can't help his being my son; but I can help having anything more to do with him."

"Listen, Bradley. This whole thing is going to be in the papers in the course of two or three days; and you must come through it with honors. It's perfectly simple to do it, and win everyone's respect and sympathy. In addition to that you can get Bob's devoted affection; and you know how much that means to us all."

To Collingham it meant so much that he listened to her attentively, with eager eyes. In Bob's marriage, with its attendant circumstances, they had obviously received a shock. All Marillo Park, as well as the public in general, would know it to be a shock and would be watching to see how they took it. In that case, the best thing was the sporting thing. They must stand right up to the facts and accept them. Everyone knew that the younger generation was peculiar. It was the war, Junia supposed, and yet she didn't know. In any case, it was not the Collinghams alone who were so afflicted, but dotted all over Marillo were families whose young ones were acting strangely. There were the Rumseys, whose twin sons had refused an uncle's legacy amounting to something like three millions, because they held views opposed to the owning of private property. There were the Addingtons, whose son and heir had married a girl twice imprisoned as a Red and was believed to have gone Red in her company. There were the Bendlingers, whose daughter had eloped with a chauffeur, divorced him, and then gone back and married him again. These were Marillo incidents, and in no case had the parents found any course more original than the antiquated one of discarding and disinheritance. And yet you couldn't wash your hands of your flesh and blood like that. They were your flesh and blood whatever they did; and it was idiotic to act as if you could cut the tie between yourself and them. He could see for himself that Rumseys, Addingtons, and Bendlingers had lost rather than gained in general esteem by their melodramatic poses.

Now, the thing for the Collinghams was to accept the situation with a great big generous heart. They were to open their arms to Bob, and back him loyally in the combination of difficulties he had to swing. But he himself must swing them. Junia laid emphasis on that. By direct action they couldn't intervene. They could only make it possible for him to act directly on his own responsibility. He had married a wife whose family was in trouble. They, the Collinghams, would not share that trouble, but they would help him to share it, since he had brought on himself the necessity for doing so.

To accomplish this, Junia suggested sending to Bob a cablegram covering the following five points. The Follett boy was in jail charged with murdering a detective; Bob should publish at once his marriage to this boy's sister; he should return to New York by the first convenient steamer; his father was placing ten thousand dollars to his account, and when that was used would place more; he was also ready, if instructed by Bob, to engage the best counsel in New Jersey to defend the boy.

"That will take care of everything till he gets here," Junia concluded, "and in the meantime, we can't do better, it seems to me, than go up, as we always do at this time of year, to our camp in the Adirondacks. This house can be kept open for Bob when he arrives, and Gull can stay with one of the motors to run him in and out of town."

"And what are we to do about the girl?"

"Nothing. That isn't for us to take up. We must leave it to Bob. If he ever brings her to us as his wife—But, then, he never may."

"What makes you think so?"

Her superb eyes covered him with their fine, audacious, womanly regard.

"I'd tell you, Bradley, if—if I didn't think there are things that had better not go into words, even between you and me. Whatever Bob discovers will be his own affair. You and I had best know as

little as possible. We can back Bob up, and that's all we can do. Everything else he will have to work out for himself. By the time he's done that he'll be a grown-up man. It's possible he's needed something of the sort to develop him."

So Collingham telephoned his cablegram to Bob, and went to bed comforted. Next morning, on arriving at the bank, he found Junia's counsels supported by the best opinion among his co-workers. That is, he changed his mind as to going to the court in Ellenbrook for the first hearing of the Follett boy, or otherwise expressing himself toward the Follett family. He had given Bob the means of doing whatever needed to be done, and Bob had the cable at his disposition. To go to the court, or to express sympathy in any way, would, according to Bickley, be dangerous to discipline. Feeling in the bank was extremely hostile to young Follett, and it was better that it should remain so. The bank employee's cast of mind, so Bickley said, was, not revolutionary or rebellious against acknowledged rights. By sheer force of habit, it was schooled to reverence for life and property. The principle of ownership being holier to it than any tenet of religion, the Follett boy could not be looked upon otherwise than as an enemy of mankind; and this was as it should be.

While Collingham thus weighed the counsels offered him at the bank, Gussie Follett was blindly making her way homeward from Corinne's with a paper so folded in her hand as not to display its headlines. She had gone to her work with comparative cheerfulness, since, on the previous day, Jennie had been assured by no less authority than Mr. Collingham himself that Teddy should not be sent to jail. So long as he was not sent to jail, they would be free from public comment, and, free from public comment, they could "manage somehow." Managing somehow being an art in which they had gained authority, they were not afraid of that, even though it involved parting with the one great asset against calamity, the house.

Gussie's first intimation of bad news came when, on entering the shop, she found the four or five other girls huddled round Corinne. Her appearance made them start as if she was a ghost. Her own heart sank at that, though she hailed this shudder with a laugh.

"Say, girls, is this the big reel in 'The Specter Bride'?"

Corinne, whose real name was Mamie Callaghan, emerged from a miniature forest of upright metal rods crowned with hats at various roguish angles. A dark, wavy-nosed woman of cajoling Irish witchery, she could hardly keep the prank from her voice even at such a time as this.

"So, Gussie, you don't know! Well, some one's got to break it to you, and I guess it'll have to be me."

But it was broken already, even before Corinne had brought forward the paper she was hiding behind her back.

"Teddy!" Gussie cried out. "There's something about him in that thing. Let me see it! Let me see it!"

Corinne let her see it, and the work was done. Gussie couldn't read beyond the headlines with their "Robbery" and "Murder" in Italic capitals, but she grasped enough. The snapshot of Teddy taken in the road, just as he had been dragged, a mass of slime, out of the morass, made her reel backward as if about to fall; but when Eily O'Brien sprang to her support she waved her away gently. She was not going to faint. Her physical strength wouldn't leave her, whatever else was gone.

"I'm—I'm going home," was all she said, crushing the paper against her breast.

"Oh, Gus, lemme go with you!" Eily had begged; but this kindness, too, Gussie put away from her.

She could go alone, and alone she went, with one consuming thought as she sped along.

"Oh, momma! Poor momma! This'll about finish her."

And yet when she entered the living-room her mother was sitting, calm and serene, while Mr. Brunt told the tale of the New Jersey marshes. Jennie, white, tearless, terrified, crept up to Gussie, and the two clung together as their mother said, in her steady voice.

"So I understand that only one of them is dead—the Irish one."

Mr. Brunt assented.

"Yes, Flynn, the Irish one."

"I'm not surprised. I told him when he was here the other day that what he called 'law and order' would bring him to grief, as they bring most of us, though I didn't expect it to be so soon. And my son, you say, is in jail."

"At Ellenbrook."

"They'll try him, I suppose."

"I'm afraid so."

"And then they'll send him to the chair." Mr. Brunt didn't answer. "Oh, you needn't be afraid to speak of it. I know they will. I'm not sorry. Teddy will be sorry, of course—till it's over. But I'd rather he'd suffer a little now and be done with it than go through the hell of years his father and I have had. If there was going to be any chance for him, it would be different; but there's no chance, not the way the world is organized now."

The girls crept forward together.

"Momma darling—"

But Lizzie resumed, calmly:

"Where there's nothing but government by the strong for the strong, people like ourselves must go under. You'll go under, too, Mr. Brunt. You belong to the doomed class. The workingman will soon be getting share and share alike with the capitalist; and the white-collar crowd will be kicked about by both. If we had the pluck to fight as the workingman has fought, we might save something even now; but we haven't, and so there's no hope for us. Law and order have us by the throat, and we must suffer till they strangle us. Well, my boy will soon be out of it—thank God!—and all I ask is to follow him."

When Mr. Brunt got himself to the door, Jennie went with him, as she had done with Flynn and Jackman two days earlier. She did this in the dazed condition of a woman who performs some little act of courtesy during shipwreck, while waiting for the vessel to go down.

"You must excuse my mother, Mr. Brunt. Ever since my father died her mind's been unsettled, and we don't know what to make of her."

But Mr. Brunt's demeanor did not encourage conversation. To do him justice, the mission on which Collingham had sent him had been repugnant for other reasons than the breaking of bad news. His mind being of the cast Bickley had analyzed that morning, Teddy's theft filled him with more horror than his killing of a man. To come so near to crime against the ownership of bank notes inspired him with a physical loathing which even Jennie's loveliness couldn't mitigate. It was as if she herself was tainted by some horrible infection, making it a relief to him to get away from her.

But turning to re-enter the house, she felt again that access of new strength which had come to her repeatedly during the past few days. It was as if resources of her being never taxed before

were now offering themselves for use. What she had to do was in the forefront of her thought rather than what some one else had done. What some one else had done was already in the past. That was made for her and couldn't be helped; whereas her own duties imperatively summoned her to look ahead.

"Teddy will need a suitcase of clean things," was the direct expression of these thoughts before she had recrossed the threshold.

Having said this aloud to Gussie, Gussie's mind could also tackle the minor concrete details to the exclusion of the bigger considerations involved in Teddy's plight. That the honest, loving, skylarking boy whom they had grown up with could be a thief and a murderer was something the intelligence rejected as it rejected dreams. They could, therefore, take the new straw suitcase which had once been a family present to Gussie, and which she had never used, pack it with Teddy's other suit and the necessary linen, as if he were really at Paterson or Philadelphia.

"How shall we get it to him?" Gussie asked, when the work was done.

"I'll take it," Jennie answered, "if you'll stay and look after momma."

"Momma won't need much looking after—the way she is."

"Well, that's one comfort anyhow. With this to go through with I'm glad her mind's not what it used to be."

So, stunned and dry eyed, they caught on to the new conditions by doing little perfunctory things, consoling and helping each other.

CHAPTER XXI

Teddy's first night in a cell was more tolerable than it might have been for the reason that his faculties seemed to have stopped working. As nearly as possible he had become an inanimate thing, to be struck, pulled, hustled, and chucked wherever they chose. Not only had he no volition, but little or no sensation. A dead body or a sack of flour could hardly have been more lost to a sense of rebellion or indignity.

It was not that he didn't suffer, but that suffering had reached the extreme beyond which it makes no further impression. Nothing registered any more—no horror, no brutalities, no curses or kicks. As far as he could take account of himself, the Teddy Follett even of the shack had been left behind in some vanished world, while the thing that had hands and feet was a clod unable to resent the oaths and blows and flingings to and fro which were all it deserved.

Once he had heard that shout, "I see him!" in the road, he had been like an insect paralyzed by terror that doesn't dare to move. He had lain there till they came and got him. It was not fear alone that pinned him to the spot; his bodily strength had given out. For forty-eight hours he had eaten but little and drunk only the two glasses of water in the pastry shop. Though he had slept the first night, the second had been passed in a fevered, intermittent doze. Furthermore, the agony of approaching suicide had drained his natural forces.

So he lay still while the hue and cry of the man hunters quickened and waxed behind him. Escape was out of the question, since, even if he had the strength to drag himself a few yards farther, they would run him down in the end. Resistance, too, would be hopeless, with, as he judged, some twenty or thirty in the posse.

He could feel their fury growing as they slipped and slithered through the grasses. Oaths, obscenities, and laughter accompanied every grotesque accident, as one man fell with the weedy tangle about his feet, or another went knee-deep into the swamp. The very fear of "a dose of lead" intensified their excitement till, as they caught sight of him, a helpless thing with face hidden in the mud, they gave vent to a yell of satisfaction.

They didn't let him rise; they didn't so much as pull him to his feet. They dragged him by his collar, by his hair, by his arms, by his legs, by anything they could seize, kicking, beating, and cursing him. He made no outcry; he didn't speak a word. For aught they knew, he might be drunk or insane or dead. Only once, when a man kicked him in the face, was he powerless to suppress a groan. Otherwise, he was just a sodden lump of flesh as, now head first, now feet first, now with face upward, now with face downward he was tugged and tumbled and hurtled and rolled over the five hundred yards of slime between the spot where they had caught him and the road.

There he had a new experience. He learned what it was not only to be outside the human race, but to be held as its foe. Already, while still far out on the marsh, he had heard the yells: "Kill him! Kill him! Kick the damn skunk to death!" But when actually surrounded by these howling, screaming, outraged citizens, with their teams and motor cars banked in the roadway, he tasted the peculiar astonishment of the man who has always been liked when assailed by a storm of hatred. While the three or four police who by this time had appeared did their best to defend him, men fought with one another to get at him. A well-dressed girl of not more than eighteen reached over the shoulder of one of the police and struck him on the head with her sunshade. An elderly woman squeezed herself near him and spat in his face.

"Ah, say, people," one of the police called out, "give the young guy a chanst. Can't you see he's

only a kid?"

"'Kid' be damned!" came the response. "Say, fellows, here's the telegraph pole! Let's lynch him!"

"Lynch him! Lynch him! String him up!"

"No! Let's make a bonfire and burn him alive!"

"Chuck the cops into the Hackensack, and then we can do as we like."

"Lynch him! Lynch him! Lynch him!"

Teddy didn't care whether they lynched him or not. In as far as he could form a wish he wished they would; but then he was past forming wishes. They could string him up to the telegraph pole or burn him alive just as they felt inclined; for he had traveled beyond fear.

Just then the crowd parted, the police van drove up, and his protectors dragged him to its shelter. Even then there was a new sensation in store for him. The parting of the crowd showed Flynn lying by the roadside, also waiting for the van. He was on his back, his knees drawn up, his mouth dropped open. Waistcoat and shirt had been torn apart, and Teddy saw a red spot.

He started back. Except for the groan when he had been kicked in the face, it was the only time he opened his lips.

"I didn't do that!" he cried, so loud that a jeer broke from the crowd.

A policeman shook him by the arm.

"Say, sonny, you didn't do that?"

Appalled by the sight of the dead man, Teddy could do no more than stupidly shake his head.

"Then who in hell did? Tell us that."

But the boy collapsed, his head sagging, his knees giving way under him. When he returned to consciousness he was lying in the dark, jolting, jolting, jolting, on the floor of the police van.

At the station he was pulled out again. He could stand now, and walk, though not very well. Hands supported him as he stumbled up the steps and into a room where a man in uniform sat behind a desk, while three or four police and half a dozen unexplained hangers-on stood about idly.

"A live one," the policeman who led Teddy called out, jocosely, as they approached the desk.

"Looks like a dead one," the man behind the desk replied, with the same sense of humor. "Looks like he'd been dead and buried and dug up again."

The allusion to Teddy's hatless, mud-caked appearance raised a laugh.

The man behind the desk dipped his pen in the ink bottle and drew up a big ledger.

"Name?"

Teddy could just articulate. "Edward Scarborough Follett."

"Gee, whiz! Guess you'll have to spell it out."

Teddy spelled slowly, as if the letters were new to him. Having done this, he was asked no more questions. Explanations came from the officer who had "run him in" and who produced the

automatic pistol picked up on the floor of the shack. When it was stated in addition that Teddy was charged with shooting and killing Peter Flynn, whom all of them knew and to whom they were bound by ties of professional solidarity, the boy felt the half-friendly indifference with which the spectators had seen him come in change to sullen hostility.

The formulas fulfilled, he was seized more roughly than before, to be half led, half pushed, along a dim hall and down a dimmer flight of steps to a worn, stone-flagged basement pervaded by dankness and a smell of disinfectants. The corridor into which they turned was long and straight and narrow like a knife-cut through a cheese. On the left a blank stone wall was the blanker for its whitewash; on the right, a row of little doors diminished down the vista to the size of pigeonholes. Pressed close to the square foot of grating inset in each door was a human face eager to see who was coming next, while the officer was greeted with howls of rage or whining petitions or strings of ugly words.

They stopped at the first open door, and after one glance within Teddy started back.

"Don't put me in there, for Jesus' sake!"

The cry was involuntary, since he knew he would be put in there in any case.

"Ah, go in wid you!"

A shove sent him over the threshold with such force that he fell on the wooden bunk which was all the dog hole contained, while the door clanged behind him.

All that night he lay in a stupor induced by misery. No one came near him; no food or drink was offered him. Thirst made him slightly delirious, which was a relief. Now and then, when his real consciousness partially returned he muttered, half aloud:

"I didn't do it. My hand might have done it—but that wasn't me."

The crepuscular light of morning was not very different from the darkness of night, but it brought his senses back to him sluggishly. Bruised as he was in body, he was still more bruised in mind, and could render to himself no more than a vague account of what had happened yesterday. When a tin of water and a hunk of bread were mysteriously pushed into the cell, he consumed them like an animal, lying down again on the bunk. Without water for a wash, his face and hair were still caked with the mud which also stiffened his clothing.

"My God! what's that?"

Not having seen him before, the guard who summoned him to court was startled by the apparition that crawled to the threshold of the cell when the door was unlocked. The semblance to a boy was little more exact than that of a snow man to a man.

"Ah! my God! my God! Sure you can't go into court like that. They wouldn't know you was a human bein', let alone a prisoner. Wait a bit, and I'll get you somethin' to wash up in."

There followed a little rough kindliness, scouring and brushing and combing the lad into something less like a monstrosity. Teddy submitted as a child does and with a child's indifference to cleanliness.

So, too, he submitted in court, hardly knowing where he was or the significance of these formalities. Apart from the relief he got from his own reiterations, "I didn't do it, I didn't do it," the proceedings were a blur to him. When he was led out again down more steps, along more corridors, and cast into another stale and disinfected cell, he took it with the same brutish insensibility. He didn't know that the new cell was in that part of the House of Detention known as Murderers' Row, nor did he heed the hoarse questions whispered through the next-door grating, and which he could barely catch as they stole along the wall.

"Say, who'd ye do in? Did he croak right off? My guy didn't croak till three weeks after I give him the lead, and now they can't send me to the chair nohow. In luck, ain't I?"

To Teddy, this uncanny recitation was no more than the other sounds which smote the auditory nerve but hardly penetrated to the brain. They were all abnormal sounds, sprung of abnormal conditions, breaking in on a silence which was otherwise that of the sepulcher. Footsteps clanked—and then all was still; a door banged—and then all was still; a raucous voice shouted out a curse—and then all was still. The stillness was as ghostly as the sound, only that, as far as Teddy was concerned, so little reached his massacred perceptions.

The rattle of keys and the clanging of the door! He looked up from the bunk on the edge of which he was sitting listlessly.

"Lady to see you!"

This guard was young, smart, debonair, with a twinkle in his eye, and the first who didn't treat a comrade's murderer with instinctive animosity. Teddy got up and followed him in the stupefied bewilderment with which he had done everything else that day. Lady to see him! The words seemed to refer to something so far back in his history that he could hardly recall what it was. Once upon a time there had been a mother, a Jennie, a Gussie, and a Gladys; but they were now remote and shadowy.

Along corridors, up steps, and then along more corridors he tramped, till they stopped at an open door—and there he saw Jennie. In a room unspeakably bare and forbidding in spite of a table and half a dozen chairs she waited for him with a smile. He, too, did his best to smile, but his lower lip, swollen with the kick that had caught him in the mouth, made the effort nothing but a rictus.

For this, Jennie had been prepared by the snapshot in the paper. All the while she had been on the way to him she had been saying to herself that she must show no sign of horror or surprise. Even though she would follow the cue of her poor demented mother and pretend that he was in prison as a martyr, she would take no pitying or tragic note. She went forward, therefore, and threw her arms about him with the same offhand, unsentimental pleasure which she would have shown in meeting him after a brief absence at any time.

"You darling Ted! We're so glad to have found you. I thought I'd just run down and bring you some clean clothes."

It was better done than she thought she had the strength for, perhaps because his need was greater than she had supposed possible. Could she have dreamt beforehand that Teddy would ever look like this, she would have screamed from fright. But now that he did, she rose to the fact, seemingly taking it for granted, actually taking it for granted, through some hitherto unsuspected histrionic force. Within a minute of his arrival they were seated near each other, in a curious make-believe that the conditions were not terrible.

With this familiar presence beside him, Teddy's mind resumed functioning, possibly to his regret. Home was close to him again, while the loved faces came back to life.

"How's ma?"

The question was indistinct because, now that it came to making conversation, he found that his tongue was thickened in addition to his swollen lip. Jennie replied that their mother's health was never better.

"I suppose"—he balked a little but forced himself onward—"I suppose she feels pretty bad—over me."

"No, she doesn't. She told me to tell you so." She was determined to speak truthfully in this respect, so that if their mother's dementia could do him any good, he shouldn't fail of it. "She told me to say that you were not to be sorry for anything you'd done, no matter how they punished

you."

"Does she—does she know what I've done?"

She threw it off, as if casually.

"She knows all that's been in the papers; and I don't believe they've left anything out, not judging by the things they've said."

"How's Gussie? How's Gladys?"

Having answered these questions to the best of her ability, Jennie raised the subject of what she could bring him to eat. The guard who had remained in the room informed her that she could bring him anything, at which she promised to return next day. For the minute she was at the end of her forces. If she went on much longer they would snap.

"I'll run away now, Ted," she said, rising. "It's splendid to see you so bucked up. I'll be here again about this time to-morrow, and bring you something nice. Momma's busy already making you a fruit cake." She added, as she held him by the hand, "I suppose you'll have to have a lawyer."

A memory came to him like that of something heard while under an anæsthetic.

"I think the judge said this morning that he'd appoint some one to—to defend me."

"Oh, we'll do better than that," she smiled, cheerily. "I've got some money. We'll have a lawyer of our own."

The journey home was the hardest thing Jennie had ever had to face. Teddy! Teddy! Teddy brought to this! It was all she could say to herself. The bare fact dwarfed all its causes, immediate or remote.

Eager for privacy in which to sob, she was speeding along Indiana Avenue when, happening to glance in the direction of her home, she saw Gladys standing on the sidewalk. Gladys, having at the same minute perceived her, started with a violent bound in her direction. She, too, had a newspaper in her hand, leading Jennie to expect a repetition of Gussie's episode that morning.

It was such a repetition, and it was not. It was, to the extent that Gladys had been informed of Teddy's drama much as her elder sister at Corinne's, though later in the day. At a minute when trade was slack and Gladys ruminantly chewing gum, Miss Hattie Belweather, a cash girl in the gloves, slipped up to her to say:

"Oh, Gladys Follett, if you knew what Sunshine Bright's been saying about you, *you'd* never speak to her again!" Hattie Belweather, who had the blank, innocent expression of a sheep, having paused for the natural inquiry, went on breathlessly. "She says your brother Teddy robbed a bank and killed a man and is in jail over at Ellenbrook and—"

Such foolish calumny Gladys could so far contemn as to say with quiet force:

"You tell Sunshine Bright that the next time I go by the notions I'll stop and break her neck. See?"

Hattie Belweather, having sped away to carry this challenge, Gladys found herself confronted by Miss Flossie Grimm, a saleslady in the stockings, to which department Gladys herself in a minor capacity was also attached. Feeling that the Follett child was ignorant of facts of which she should be in possession, Miss Grimm said, reprovingly:

"You've got a chunk of gall! Look at that!"

That was one of the papers giving the story of Teddy's downfall, so that Gladys, too, was soon making her way homeward. But she was not a cash girl for nothing, while the instincts of the city

gamine endowed her with alertness of mind beyond either of her sisters. She remembered that the paper she had seen was a morning one, and that by this hour those of the afternoon would be on the news stands. They would not only give further details, but might possibly tell her that the whole story was untrue. Somewhere she had heard that among the New York evening papers one was renowned for solemnity and exactitude. Veracity costing a cent more than she usually spent for the evening news, when she spent anything, which was rare, she felt the occasion worth the extravagance.

In these pages, Teddy's case was condensed into so small a paragraph that she had difficulty in finding it; but during the search she lighted on something else. It was something so extraordinary, so unbelievable, so impossible to assimilate, as to thrust even Teddy's situation well into the second place.

After that, all the known methods of locomotion were slow to Gladys in her efforts to reach home; but before she could enter the house she had seen Jennie advancing up the avenue, and so ran back to meet her.

"Oh, Jen! Look!"

It was all she had breath to say, so that Jennie naturally did as she was bidden. But she, too, found the paragraph thrust beneath her eyes extraordinary, unbelievable, and impossible to assimilate, though for other reasons than those that swayed her sister.

> Collingham-Follett. On May 11th, at St. Titus's Rectory, Madison Avenue, by the Rev. Larned Goodbody, Robert Bradley Collingham, Jr., of Marillo Park, N. Y., to Jane Scarborough Follett, of Pemberton Heights, N. J.

Of the many things Jennie didn't comprehend, she comprehended this paragraph least of all. Who had put it in the paper, and what did it mean? She walked on dreamily, Gladys trotting beside her, a living interrogation point.

"Oh, Jen, what's it all about? Are you married to him really?"

Jennie answered as best she knew how.

"Not—not exactly."

But here Gladys was too quick for her.

"If you're married to him at all, it's got to be exactly, hasn't it?"

"I—I did go through—through the ceremony."

"Well then, you've got the law on him," Gladys declared, earnestly. "He'll have to pay you alimony anyhow."

"I—I don't want him to pay me anything."

"Not pay you anything, and him with a wad as big as a haystack? Oh, Jen, you're not going dippy like poor momma, are you?"

Jennie wondered if she was. It seemed to her as if she could stand little more in the line of revolution without her mind giving way.

And yet within a few minutes she received another shock. It came through Gussie, who ran to meet them at the door.

"For mercy's sake, Jen, what's all this about?"

She fluttered a yellow envelope, on which the address was typewritten.

Mrs. Bradley Collingham, Jr.
Care Mrs. Follett
11 Indiana Avenue
Pemberton Heights, N. J.

"I told the boy it didn't belong here—" Gussie was beginning to explain when Gladys interrupted.

"Yes, it does. Read that."

Gussie read and read again.

"Well, of all—" She stopped only because she lacked the words with which to continue.

In the meanwhile Jennie had opened her telegram and read:

> Have asked father to engage best counsel in New York to defend boy. Sailing to-morrow on *Venezuela*, and will take all responsibilities off your hands. Placed two thousand dollars to your account at Pemberton National Bank. See manager. Devoted love. Your husband, Bob.

Jennie let the yellow slip flutter to the entry floor while she stood gazing into the air. Gussie having picked it up, the two younger sisters read it together.

"Some class!" Gladys commented, dryly.

But Gussie could only stare at Jennie awesomely, as if a miracle had transformed her.

CHAPTER XXII

On landing from the *Venezuela*, Bob drove out to Collingham Lodge. He knew that by this time the family were in the Adirondacks, and that with Gull and his wife to look after him he should have the place to himself. Now that he was known to be married he had first thought it possible to bring Jennie there, but had decided that the big empty house might frighten her with its loneliness. A hotel in New York was what she would probably prefer; and with all he had to do for Teddy, it would doubtless be most convenient for himself. He went to his old home, therefore, only as to a base from which to make further arrangements. Having unpacked a few things and eaten a snack of lunch, he would go to see his wife at once.

Though he had not expected to hear from her on landing, and still less to see her at the dock, he was faintly disappointed to receive neither of these forms of greeting. He reminded himself that not her coldness, but her inexperience, would account for this, and so made the more of his anticipations for the afternoon. She had written to him while he was away, short, noncommittal letters, betraying a mind unused to correspondence rather than a heart opposed to it. Lack of habit, he told himself, would for a long time to come make her seem unresponsive when she would only be hesitating and observant.

It was the hot season at Marillo, and those houses which were not closed were somnolent. At Collingham Lodge, Max, with his madly joyful demonstrations, was the only expression of life. Within the house, the shades were down, the furniture befrocked. Nevertheless, it was home, and all the more home after the alien pageantry of the tropics and the south. Having bathed and changed his clothes, he found pleasure in roaming from one dim airless room to another, as if he had been absent for a year.

It was a greater pleasure for the reason that, ever since receiving his father's amazing cablegram, the vague antagonism he had felt for two or three years toward his parents had given place to affection and gratitude. They had seemingly come round after all to acknowledging his right to be himself. The concession gave him a sense of loving them, of loving the things that belonged to them. He strolled into their rooms, looking about on the objects they used, as though in this way he got some contact with their personalities.

As yet, Jennie's family hardly entered the sphere of his conceptions. He knew she had a mother and sisters; he had seen and spoken to Teddy at the bank. But even the knowledge that the boy was in jail for killing a man didn't bring him or them near to him as realities. While there were things he should do for the boy, they would not be done for him, but for Jennie. What concerned her naturally concerned her husband; but otherwise his father and mother came first. For this new generosity on their part, for this opening of the arms, his heart glowed toward them, making them sensibly his own.

He was thinking of this as he stood in his mother's room, gazing round on the chintzy comfort he had all his life regarded with some awe. Not since he had been a little boy had he felt so warmly toward her as now. A note from her at Quarantine had assured him, as she had assured him before he went to South America, that she was his mother and that in all trials he could count on her. Counting on her, he could count on everything, for however difficult his father might prove, she could manage him in the end. It made everything easier for him and for Jennie, turning an anxious outlook on life into a splendid hopefulness.

He was leaving the room to go and see if Mrs. Gull had cooked a chop for him when he noticed, propped against the wall and near the door by which he had come in, what looked like a picture

carelessly covered with a crimson cloth. His mother had long talked of having her portrait done; he wondered if it could be that. He put his hand on it, and felt the frame. It was a picture, and, if a picture, undoubtedly the portrait.

"Let's see what the old lady looks like," were the words that passed through his mind.

With a twitch the cloth was off, and he sprang back. The start was one of surprise. Looking for no more than the exquisite conventionality he knew so well, this vital nudity caught his breath and made his heart leap. It was as if he had actually come on some living pagan loveliness seated in one of the empty rooms. Tannhäuser first beholding the goddess in the secrecy of the Venusberg must have felt something like this amazed tumult of the senses.

Turning from the great bay window in which he had hastily pulled up the shades, his excitement had consciously in it a presentiment of evil. She was so alive, and so much there on purpose!

Then a horror stole over him, like a chill that struck his bones. He crept forward, with a stricken, fascinated stare. *It couldn't be*, he was saying to himself; and yet—and yet—*it was*.

The bearings of this conviction didn't come to him all at once. The fact was as much as he could deal with. She had sat and been painted like this! His impressions were as poignant and confused as if he had seen her struck dead. He couldn't account for it. He couldn't explain the presence of the thing here in his mother's room.

On the lower bar of the frame he saw an inscription plate, getting down on all fours to read it —"Life and Death: by Hubert Wray."

So Hubert had done it; Hubert had seen her in this flinging-off of mystery. Of course!

His thought flashed back to the day when he had first made her acquaintance. Leaning a little forward, she was sitting in this very Byzantine chair, on this very dais, wearing a flowered dress, a flower-wreathed Leghorn hat in her lap. Wray, in a painting smock, was standing with the palette and brushes in his hand, making a sketch of her more or less on the lines of a Reynolds or a Gainsborough. He had dropped him a line telling him he had taken a studio and inviting him to look him up. He hadn't looked him up till a week or two had gone by; but, having once seen this girl, he did so soon again.

Of him she had taken little or no notice. When, later, he forced himself on her attention, she made his approaches difficult. When he asked her to marry him she had at first laughed him off, and then refused him in so many words. But as she generally based her refusal, unconsciously, perhaps, on the social differences between them, he wouldn't take her "No" for an answer. If he could ignore the social differences, it seemed to him that she could, while the advantages to her in marrying a Collingham were evident.

"And all the while this is what the trouble was."

What he meant by *this* was more than the picture, "Life and Death," though how much more he made no attempt to measure. The truth that now emerged for him out of his memory of the winter months was that Wray loved Jennie, that Jennie loved Wray, and that he had been a blind fool never to have seen it. He threw himself on his mother's couch, burying his face in the cushions.

As much as from anything else he suffered from the breakdown of his convictions. He had been so glib on the subject of his instinct. Love could make mistakes, he had said to Edith, but instinct couldn't. He had been the other half of Jennie; Jennie had been the other half of him. She couldn't be unfaithful to him, because he knew she couldn't. His love was protecting her like a magic cloak, while she was.... The awful shame of a man whose foolish stammerings of passion are held up to public ridicule seemed to kill the heart in his body.

And yet, when he staggered to his feet and strode toward the obsessing thing to pull the cloth

over it again, he started back once more. The woman with the skull had changed. She was a coarse creature now, common and sensual. Amazement pinned him to the spot, his hands raised as if at sight of an apparition. Then slowly, insensibly, weirdly, Jennie came back again, though not quite the Jennie he had seen at first. This Jennie retained the traits of the second woman—a Jennie coarsened, common, and sensual, in spite of being exquisite, too.

He walked in and out of the other rooms on the floor, so as to clear his mind of the suggestion. When he came back, he saw the second woman, and the second woman only; but having moved into a new light, he found Jennie there as before. It was like sorcery. Whether the thing had a baleful life, or whether his perceptions were growing crazed, he couldn't tell.

Neither could he tell what he was to do with regard to the plans he had been making. A hotel in New York *now*....

But the immediate duties were evident. Nominally he had come back to befriend the boy, and the boy must be befriended. To do that he must have a knowledge of the facts. Farther than this he had been unable to progress even by the hour, in the early afternoon, when he was limping along Indiana Avenue.

He had telephoned his coming, and Jennie had answered in a dead voice which could hardly be interpreted as a welcome. It was like a guilty voice, he said to himself, though he corrected the thought instantly, to argue in favor of emotion.

He had spent the intervening two or three hours arguing. Jennie was a model, and he must not be surprised if a model's work, however startling to one who was not a model, should seem a matter of course to her. All professions had peculiarities strange to those who didn't belong to them, and the model's perhaps most of all. He couldn't judge; he couldn't condemn. He must try to understand her from her own point of view. Probably her posing in this way seemed the most natural thing in the world to her; and, if so, he must make it seem the same to himself. He couldn't expect her to have the hesitations and circumspections of a girl from Marillo Park. If she was true to her own standards, it was all he had a right to look for.

And yet there was Wray. He had long seen in Hubert a fellow whom no girl could love "and get away with it." These were the words he had used of his friend, and he had considered the detail none of his business. Most men were that way, more or less, and if he himself wasn't, it was not a moral excellence, but a trick of temperament. But that Jennie was in danger from Wray was a thought that never occurred to him. Her innocence and defenselessness, combined with what he had taken to be a kind of studio code of honor, would have been enough to protect her, even had his suspicions been roused, which they never were. He tried to smother those suspicions even now, saying to himself that he had nothing against her except that she had been a model—in all for which a model was ever called upon.

He had that—and the timbre of her voice on the telephone. There was dismay in that voice, and terror. If it wasn't a guilty voice....

But, as a matter of fact, it was a guilty voice. In an overwhelming consciousness of guilt, Jennie had spent the whole of the ten days since the coming of his cablegram. The man who at a distance of four or five thousand miles could know that Teddy was in jail and act so promptly for the good of all might be aware of anything. Having always seemed immense and overshadowing, he became godlike now from his sheer display of power. It was power so great that she could put forth no claim; she could only wait humbly on his will.

As, hidden behind a curtain, she watched for his coming along the avenue, all her thoughts were focused into speculation as to how he would approach her. Would he be sorry for having married her? She could only fear that he would be. She had never mistrusted his mother's reading of his character—that he made love to girls one day and forgot them the next—in addition to which she had involved him in this terrible disgrace. Whatever excuse those who loved Teddy might make for him, the fact remained that to the world he was a bank robber and a murderer. All his kin must share in the condemnation meted out to him, and Bob's first task as a married man must be

that of defending her and hers against public disdain. He might be as brave as a lion in doing that, but, she reasoned, he couldn't like the necessity. He might say he did, and yet she wouldn't be able to believe him. Even if he still cared for her as he had cared when he went away, his marriage to her couldn't possibly be viewed otherwise than as a misfortune; and he might not still care for her.

She saw him as he limped round the corner at the very end of the street. He wore a Panama hat and a white-linen suit. Luckily, Gussie and Gladys had gone back to work and her mother was lying down. She couldn't have borne the suspense had she not been all alone. Even Pansy's searching eyes, as she stood with her little squat legs planted wide apart, trying to understand this new element in the situation, were almost more than Jennie could endure.

Bob advanced slowly, examining the numbers of the houses, many of which were lacking. Seventeen, Fifteen, and Thirteen were, however, over their doors, so that he was duly prepared for Eleven.

"I'll know by the first look in his eyes," she kept saying to herself, "whether he's sorry he married me or not."

As he passed number Thirteen she got up from the arm of the big chair on which she had been perched, and found she could hardly stand. It was all she could do to creep into the entry and open the front door. When he turned into the little cement strip leading up to it, she shrank back into the shadow. He was abreast of the two hydrangea trees before he saw her. When he did so he stood still. It seemed to her that an unreckonable time went by before a smile stole to his lips, and when it did it was wavering, flickering, more poignant than no smile at all.

Her inner comment was: "Yes; he's sorry. Now I know." Pride, another new force in her character, made of her a woman with a will, as she added, "I must help him to get out of it—somehow."

But Pansy, sensing a nimbus of good will as imperceptible to Jennie as the pervasive scent of the summer, lilted down the steps, raised her forepaws against his shin, and gazed up into his face adoringly.

CHAPTER XXIII

It was a help to Bob Collingham that his first glance at Jennie decided his attitude for the near future. Whatever his doubts and questionings, he could add nothing to the trials she had to face. Whatever she had done, whatever the net of circumstances in which she had been caught, he must act as if, as far as he himself was concerned, he was satisfied. Whether she loved him or whether she didn't, or whether her duties as a model had or had not made her indifferent to considerations to which most people were sensitive, were questions that must be postponed.

This conviction, which flashed on him as he saw her shrinking in the entry, was confirmed when he felt her crumpled in his arms, relieved by his presence and yet frightened by the new conditions which it wrought. It was the same dependent but rebellious little Jennie, clinging to him and yet trying to slip away from him. It was as if she begged for a love which the perversity of her tortured little heart wouldn't allow her to accept. Very well then; he must measure it out to her a little at a time, as you fed a sick person or a starving man, till she got used to it. When she was stronger and he more at peace with himself, they could tackle the personal problems between them.

So, when she struggled from his arms, he let her go, following her into the living-room.

"Gussie and Gladys are back at work," she said at once, to explain the fact that none of his new connections were there to greet him, "and momma's lying down. She always lies down at this time of day, ever since daddy died." She dropped into one big shabby armchair, motioning him to another. "And there's something else I must tell you. Ever since—this thing happened to Teddy—she hasn't been—well, not right in her mind."

The stand he had taken became more imperative. A father's death, a mother's collapse, a brother's crime had put her at the head of her little troop of three, to bear everything alone. He had left behind him an inexperienced girl; he had come back to find a woman already accustomed to rising to emergencies. The change was perceptible in the clearer, slightly older cutting of her features, as well as in the greater authority with which she spoke. Where the contours of her profile had been soft and vague, there was now a delicate chiseling; where there had been hesitation in words, there was now the firmness of one obliged to know her mind.

As she sketched her mother's mental state, he sat on the extreme edge of his big chair, straining forward so as to be near her without touching her, his fingers clasped between his knees. She continued to speak nervously, with agitation, and yet lucidly.

"She isn't very bad. She's only what you'd call unsettled. It's not that she does anything, but rather that, after all the years when she's worked so hard, she just sits and does nothing. It's as if she was lost in thinking; and when she comes back she says such terribly strange things."

"What sort of things?"

"For one, that it's no use living any longer—that the world's so bad that the best thing left is to get out of it. She says you can't help the world, or hope to see it improve, because human beings will always reject the principles that would make it any better."

He smiled gently.

"I've heard people talk like that who weren't considered unsettled in their minds."

"Oh, but she doesn't stop there. She tells Teddy he was quite within his rights in taking money from the bank, and when she goes to see him she begs him to be brave and not be sorry for anything he's done."

"And is he sorry?"

"I don't know that you could call it sorry. He's dazed and bewildered. He knows he took the money and that he killed a man; but he thinks he was placed in a position where he couldn't help it."

"And does he say who could have helped it?"

As she looked down at that twisting and untwisting of her fingers which was the chief sign of her effort at self-control, her color rose.

"He says your father could have helped it; but I don't believe he's right."

"No, he isn't right—not as dad himself sees it. I know he's been worried ever since your father left the bank; but he thinks he couldn't help dismissing him. Life isn't very simple for anyone—not for my dad any more than it was for yours. If I could see Teddy—"

"Would you go to see him?"

"Go to see him? Why, that's what I came back for! I'd like to do it this very afternoon, if you'd tell me first how it all came about. You see, I don't know anything, except the two or three bald facts dad mentioned in his cablegram."

It was not easy to tell this story, even to a man whom she knew to be so kind. The fact that he was her husband didn't help her, for the reason that it was because he was her husband that her pride was in revolt. Had he not been her husband, he would have been free to withdraw from this series of catastrophes. Now he could not withdraw. He was tied.

Moreover, the sordid tale of domestic want became the more sordid when given fact by fact. It was the intimate story of her life in contrast to the intimate story of his. The homely family dodges for making both ends meet which had been the mere jest of penury between Gussie, Gladys, and herself became ghastly when exposed to a man who had never known the lack of service and luxury, to say nothing of food and drink, since the minute he was born. She felt as if it emptied her of any little dignity she had ever possessed, as if it denuded her of self-respect. She could more easily have confessed sins to him than the shifts to which they had been put to live.

Nevertheless, she went through with it, brokenly, with great effort, and yet with a kind of dogged will to drain all the dregs of the cup.

"He'll see me as I am," was part of her underlying thought. "He'll know then that I can't go on with this comedy of having married him. Even if I have, we've got to end it somehow."

But on his side the reaction was different. He had never heard this sort of tale before. He had never before been in contact with this phase of poverty. He had known poor men in college, and plenty of chaps who were down on their luck; but the daily pinching and paring of whole families just to have enough to eat and to wear was so new as to astonish him. For the minute it made Jennie less an individual than a type.

"My God!" he was saying inwardly, "do human beings have to live so close to the edge as all that?"

When she had told him of the incident of the cutting off of the gas because they couldn't pay fifteen dollars on account, the turning point of Teddy's tragedy, his exclamation was embarrassing to them both: "Why, I pay twice that for a pair of shoes!" Though she knew he meant it as a protest against the straits to which they had been put, it seemed both to him and to

her to make the gulf between them wider.

"And you were going through all that," he said, when she had finished her recital, "during the months when I was seeing you two and three times a week at the studio. My God! how I wish you could have told me!"

It was the first time that a little smile came quivering to her lips.

"You don't tell things like that—not to anyone outside your family. Besides, it isn't worth while. You get used to them."

"You weren't used to it—when your mother cried—and Teddy forked out the money."

"Not to that very thing—but to things like it. If Teddy hadn't forked out the money, we should have worried through somehow. That's the awful thing about it—that if he hadn't done it we shouldn't have been much worse off than we'd been at other times. A little worse—yes—even a good deal, perhaps; and yet we could have lived through it. I couldn't have told you, because people of our kind don't talk about such things, not even with their neighbors. We just take them for granted."

It was this taking it for granted that impressed him with such a sense of the terrible. It left so little room for living, so limited a swing to do anything but scrape. Scraping was the whole of Jennie's history. He could see it as she talked. She had never in her life had fifty dollars to do with as she chose. Perhaps she had never had five. It was not the lack of the money that overwhelmed him, but of any freedom to move, of any scope in which to grow.

Forgetting his reserves of the morning, he caught her by both hands, holding them imprisoned in her lap.

"But that's all over now, Jennie. You're my wife. You're coming to me—right off—to-day—this very afternoon."

"Oh, Bob, I couldn't!" If he was to be "got out of it," she felt it essential to gain time. "I couldn't leave them. Don't you see? There's no one but me to keep house or—or to decide anything. Momma's given up entirely, and Gussie and Gladys are both so young that I couldn't possibly leave them alone."

"Then we'll have to manage it some other way."

"No; not yet. Let's wait. Let's see."

"Waiting and seeing won't change the fact that we're man and wife and that everyone knows it. It's been in the papers—"

"Yes, but why did you put it in?" It was her turn to seek information. "To me it was like a thunderbolt."

He gave her the contents of his father's cablegram.

"I took it for granted that you must have told him."

"I shouldn't have done that. I did—I did tell your mother, Bob—but then I couldn't help it."

He started back, releasing her hands which he had continued holding.

"What? You've seen the old lady?"

She nodded. "Yes; she sent for me to go out to Marillo Park."

"For Heaven's sake! What made her do that?"

She was aware of her opportunity. If she wanted to "get him out of it," now was her chance. She could tell him part of the truth and keep him dangling—or the whole of it and let him go. "Fairer to him—and easier for me" was the thought on which she based her decision.

"She—she wanted to thank me for—for not having taken you at your word and married you."

"Oh! So you had to tell her that you had. And what did she say to that?"

"She was lovely."

He beamed with pleasure.

"She can be when she takes the notion, just as she can be the other way. She must have liked you."

"I—I think she did."

"You bet she did! She'd let you see it if she didn't. So *that's* what smoothed the way for us! I couldn't make it out. You certainly are a little witch, Jennie!"

"It isn't as smooth as all that." Springing to her feet, she turned her back on him, moving away toward the window. "Oh, Bob, I wish I didn't have to tell you. You're so good and kind, and I've been so"—it came out with a burst of confession, her arms outstretched, her hands spread palms upward—"I've been so awful! When you know—"

"Wait!" He seized her by the shoulders with the force which calms emotion from sheer fright. "Wait, Jennie! I know what you're going to tell me."

"Oh, but you can't."

"It's—it's something about Wray, isn't it?"

She nodded dumbly.

"Then we'll put it off. Do you see? That isn't what I came back for. I came back about Teddy, and we must see that through before we think of ourselves. All that'll keep—"

"It won't keep if we go and live together."

"Then we won't go and live together—not till we see how it's to be done. That's just a detail. In comparison with Teddy, it doesn't matter one way or another. We'll come to it by and by. All we've got to think of now is that there's a boy whose life is hanging by a thread—"

"Yes; but I don't want you to be mixed up in it. I want to—to save you from—from the sacrifice—and—and the disgrace."

He stood back from her with a hard little laugh.

"Good God! Jennie, I wonder if you have the faintest idea of what love is! You can't have. Do you suppose it matters to me what I'm mixed up in so long as it's something that touches you? Listen! Let me explain to you what love is like when it's the kind I feel for you. I"—he braced himself in order to bring out the words forcibly—"I don't care what Wray is to you or what you are to Wray—not yet. I put that away from me till I've gone with you through the things you've got to meet. They'll not be easy for you, but I want to make them as easy as I can. No one can do it but me, because no one cares for you as I do."

"Oh, I know that."

"Then, if you know it, Jennie, don't force anything else on me when I'm doing my best not to think of it. Let me just love you as well as I know how till we do the things that are right in front of us. After that, if there's a reason why I should hand you over to Wray, or to anybody else, you can tell me, and I'll—"

Pansy's scrambling to attention and a sound on the stairs arrested his words as well as Jennie's rising tears.

"Momma's coming down," the girl whispered, hurriedly. "She wants to see you. Don't forget that you're not to mind anything she says."

To Bob, the moment was one of awed surprise, for the commanding, black-robed figure differed from all his preconceptions, as far as he had any, of Jennie's mother. Advancing rapidly into the room, she took his right hand in hers, laying her left on his head as if in benediction.

"So you're my Jennie's husband. I hope you're a good man, for you've found a good woman. Be loving to each other. The time is coming when love is all that will survive. Let me look at you."

He stood off, smiling, while she made her inspection.

"Love is all there is, anyhow, don't you think, Mrs. Follett?"

"Yes; but it gets no chance in this world."

"Or it is the only thing that does get a chance?"

"It may be the only thing that does get a chance, but that chance is small. There's no hope for the world. Don't think there is, because you'll be disappointed. Each time your disappointment is worse than the last, till you end in despair."

It was the strain Jennie felt obliged to interrupt.

"Momma, Mr. Collingham is going to see Teddy. Don't you want him to take a message?"

"Only the message I've given him myself—that it's only a little way over, and that one of two things must happen then. It will either be sleep, in which nothing will matter, or it will be life, in which he'll be free—understood—supported—instead of being beaten and crushed and mangled, as everyone is here. Tell him that."

He felt it his duty to be cheerier.

"On the other hand, we may get him off; or if we can't get him off altogether—"

"What good would that do—your getting him off? You'd be throwing him back again on a world that doesn't want him."

"Oh, but surely the world *does*—"

"Yes; the world does—I'm wrong—it does to the same extent that it wanted his father—to give it every ounce of his strength with a pittance for his pay—to spend and be spent till he's good for nothing more—and then to be thrown aside to starve. It's possible that even now Teddy would be willing to do this if they'd only let him live; but tell him it's not good enough. I've told him, and I don't think he believes me; but you're a man, and perhaps you can make him see it."

"Yes, momma dear, he'll do the best he can—"

"It won't be the best he can if he tries to keep him here. We've passed on, my boy and I. Only our bodies are still on the earth, and that for just a little while. A year from now and we'll both be safe—so safe!—and yet you'd try to keep us in a world where men make a curse of everything."

But Teddy himself was less reconciled than his mother to bidding the world good-by. In proportion as his physical strength returned, the fate that had overtaken him became more and more preposterous. To suppose that he had of his own criminal intention stolen money and killed a man was little short of insane. A man had been killed by a pistol he held in his hand; he had taken money because the need was such that he couldn't help himself; but he, Teddy Follett, was neither a thief nor a murderer in any sense involving the exercise of will. He was sure of that. He declared it to himself again and again and again. It was all that gave him fighting force, compelling him to insist, to assert himself, and to protest in season and out of season against being shut up in a cell.

The cell was seven feet long and four feet wide. Round the foot of the bunk and along the sides there was a space of some twelve inches. At the foot there was the iron-ribbed door with a grating, and along the sides a slimy and viscous stone wall. Besides the bunk, a bucket, and a shelf there was nothing whatever in the way of furnishings. Under the bed he was privileged to keep the suitcase with his wardrobe, and on the shelf whatever his mother and sisters brought him in the way of food. By day, the only light was through the grating to the corridor; by night, a feeble electric bulb was extinguished at half past nine. The Brig being an ancient prison, and Teddy but one of a long, long line of murderers who had lain on this hard bed, vermin infested everything.

While Bob Collingham was on his way to him Teddy was in conversation with the chaplain. For this purpose, the door had been unlocked. The visitor leaned against the door post while the prisoner stood in the narrow space between his bunk and the wall.

It was the Protestant chaplain, a tall, spare, sandy-haired man of some fifty-odd, whose yearning, spiritual face had, through long association with his flock, grown tired and disillusioned. Having sought this post from a genuine sympathy with outcast men, he suffered from their rejection. He was so sure of what would help them, and only one in a hundred ever wanted it. Even that one generally laughed at it when he got out of jail. After eighteen years of self-denying work, the worthy man was sadly pessimistic now as to prospects of reform.

For the minute he was trying to convince Teddy of the righteousness of punishment. He had been drawn to the boy partly because of his youth and good looks, but mainly on account of his callousness to his crime. He seemed to have no conscience, no notion of the difference between right and wrong. "A moral moron" was what he labeled him. The lack of ethical consciousness was the more astonishing because his antecedents had apparently been good.

"You see," he was pointing out, "you can't break the laws by which society protects itself and yet escape the moral and physical results."

But in his long, solitary hours Teddy had been thinking this out.

"Doesn't that depend upon the laws? If the law's wrong—"

"But who's to judge of that?"

"Isn't the citizen to judge of that?"

The parson smiled—his weary, spiritual smile.

"If the citizen was allowed to judge of that—"

"If he wasn't," Teddy broke in, with the impetuosity born of his beginning to think for himself, "if he wasn't, there'd be no such country as the United States. Most of the fireworks in American history are over the fine thing it is to beat the law to it when the law isn't just."

"Ah, but there's a distinction between individual action and great popular movements."

"Great popular movements must be made up of individual actions, mustn't they? If individuals didn't break the laws, each guy on his own account, you wouldn't get any popular movements at all."

The chaplain shifted his ground.

"All the same, there are certain laws that among all peoples and at all times have been considered fundamental. Human society can't permit a man to steal—"

"Then human society shouldn't put a man in a position where he either has to steal or starve to death."

There was a repetition of the thin, ghostly smile.

"Oh, well, no one who's ordinarily honest and industrious ever—"

"Ever starves to death? That's a lie. Excuse me," he added, apologetically, "but that kind of talk just gets my goat. My father practically starved to death—he died from lack of proper nourishment, the doctor said—and there never was a more industrious or an honester man born. He gave everything he had to human society, and when he had no more to give, human society kicked him out. It has the law on its side, too, and because"—he gulped—"I came to his help in the only way I knew how they've chucked me into this black hole."

The chaplain found another kind of opening.

"So, you see, my boy, there's that. If you don't keep the law—"

"They can make you suffer for it," Teddy declared, excitedly. "Of course they can. They've made me suffer—God! how they've made me suffer—more, I believe, than anyone since Jesus Christ! But that's not what we were talking about. You started in to tell me that it's *right* for me to suffer the way they're making me. That's what I kick against, and I'll keep on kicking till they send me to the chair."

"If you could do yourself any good by that—"

But just here the dialogue was interrupted by the appearance of Boole, the dapper, debonair young guard who generally announced Teddy's afternoon visitors.

"Hello, old cuss! Gent to see you."

The chaplain prepared to move on to the neighboring cell. His leave-taking was kindly and with a great pity in it.

"We'll go on with this talk again, my boy. When you're able to get the right point of view—"

What would happen then was drowned in the clanging of the door behind him, as Teddy stepped out into the corridor.

"Who is it? Stenhouse?" he asked, as he walked along with the guard.

He had already dropped into the prisoner's habitual tone of hostile friendliness toward the officials with whom he came most in contact, recognizing the fact that had he met any of these men "on the outside" they would have hobnobbed together with the freemasonry of American young men everywhere. On their sides the keepers, apart from the fact that they considered Teddy "a tough lot," had ceased to show him animosity.

"It's not the lawyer," Boole answered now. "It's a swell guy with a limp. Looks to me as if he might be the gay young banker sport that the papers say is married to your sister."

Teddy felt his heart contracting in a spasm of dread. The one fact he knew of his brother-in-law was that he had sent him Stenhouse, one of the three or four lawyers most famous at the New Jersey bar for saving lives. This detail, too, the boy had learned from Boole.

"You'll not get the cur'nt, with him to defend you, believe *me*. Some bird! If he can't prove you innocent, he'll find a flaw in the law or the indictment or somethin'. Why, they say he once got a guy off, a Pole, the fella was, just on the spellin' of his name."

Having been warned by Stenhouse not to discuss his case with anyone, Teddy was discreetly silent. As a matter of fact, he had too much to think of to be inclined to talk. The circumstance that "young Coll" had become a relative was one of which he was just beginning to seize the importance. His bruised mind had been unable at first to apprehend it. Slowly he was coming to the realized knowledge that he was allied to that Olympian race which the Collinghams represented to the Folletts, and that, at least, some of their power was engaged on his behalf.

It was confusing. Since the might that had struck him down was also coming to his aid, the issue was no longer clear-cut. To have all the right on one side and all the wrong on the other had simplified life. Now, a right that was partly wrong and a wrong that was partly right had been personified, as it were, in this union through which a Collingham had become a Follett, and a Follett a Collingham.

Young Coll was standing where Jennie had stood on the first occasion of Teddy's coming to the visitors' room. He too waited with a smile. The minute he saw the lad appear timidly on the threshold he limped forward with outstretched hand.

"Hello, Teddy!" His embarrassment, being a kindly embarrassment, was without awkwardness. "You didn't know I was going to be your brother the last time you saw me, did you?"

Teddy said nothing. He was not sullen, but neither was he friendly. A Collingham, even though married to his sister, was probably a person to be feared. Teddy's counsel to himself was to be on his guard against "the nigger in the woodpile."

"Perhaps it was my fault that you didn't," Bob went on, with some constraint. "That's the reason why I'm here. I dare say there isn't much I can do for you, old boy, but what little there is I want to do."

Teddy eyed him steadily, still without making a reply. Somehow they found chairs. Boole, having once more summed up the visitor, had retreated toward the guard who sat officially at the far end of the room.

"Looks like a good cuss," was Boole's whispered confidence. "Kind o' soft—like most o' them swell sports that marries working goyls."

Bob was finding himself less and less at his ease. The boy not only came none of the way to meet him, but seemed to hold him as an enemy. By his silence and by the severity of his regard he conveyed the impression that young Coll, and not himself, had done the wrong.

It was an attitude for which Bob was not prepared. Neither was he prepared for the defacement of all that had been glowing in the lad's countenance. Jennie had warned him against expecting the ruddy bright-eyed Teddy of the bank, but he hadn't looked for this air of youth blasted out of youthfulness. It was still youth, but youth marred, terrified, haunted, with a fear beyond that of gibbering old age.

With his lovingness and quickness of pity, Bob sought for a line by which he could catch on to the lad's interest.

"I asked my father to send you the best counsel in New Jersey, and I believe he's picked out Stenhouse."

Teddy regarded him grimly.

"Yes, he did." It seemed as if he meant to say no more, when, with a sardonic grunt, he went on, "Something like a guy who smashes a machine and then gets the best mechanician in the world to come and patch it up."

"Yes—possibly—it may be. Only, there's this to consider—that no one smashes a machine on purpose."

"No, I don't suppose he does. Only, it's all the same to the machine whether it's been smashed on purpose or by accident—so long as it'll never run again."

Bob considered this.

"You might say that of a machine—a dead thing from the start. You can't say it of a human being, who's alive from the beginning. See?"

"No, I don't see."

"And I don't know that I can explain. I'm only sure that a machine can be done for, and that a human being can't be. You can come to a time when it's no use doing anything more for the one; but you can never reach such a time with the other. With *him*, you may make mistakes or you may do him a great wrong, but you can't stop trying to put things right again."

"And you think you can put things right again for me?"

"I don't know what I can do. I haven't an idea. Very likely I can't do anything at all. I merely came back from South America to do what I could."

"Did you feel that you had to—because you'd married Jennie?"

"That was a reason. It wasn't the only one."

"What else was there?"

"I'm not sure that I can tell you. A lot of the things we do we do not from reason, but from instinct. But if you don't want me to try to take a hand—"

Under the dark streaks that blotted out what had once been Teddy's healthy coloring, a slow flush began to mantle.

"I don't want to be—to be bamboozled."

"Of course you don't. But how could I bamboozle you?"

There was no explanation. Unable to base his distrust on any other ground than that Bob was the son of the man who had dismissed Josiah Follett from the bank, Teddy fell silent again. He could not afford to reject the least good will that came his way, and yet his spirit was too sore to accept it graciously.

Some of this young Collingham divined. He began to see that as the boy was suffering and he wasn't, it was not for him to take offense. On the contrary, he must use all his ingenuity to find the way to make his appeal effectively.

"All I could do from down there," he said, when Teddy seemed indisposed to speak again, "was to get Stenhouse or some one to take up your case. I mean to see him in the morning and find out how far he's got along with it. But now that I'm here, can't you think of something of your own that you'd like me to do?"

Teddy raised his eyes quickly. His look was the dull look of anguish, and yet with sharpness in the glance.

"What kind of thing?"

"Any kind. Think of the thing that's most on your mind—the thing that worries you more than anything else—and—put it up to me." The somberness deepened in the lad's face, not from resentment, but from heaviness of thought. "Go ahead," Bob urged. "Cough it up. If it's something I can't tackle, I'll tell you so."

"What's most on my mind," Teddy began, slowly, gritting his teeth with the effort to get the words out, "what worries me like hell—is ma—and the girls. They—they must be lonesome—something fierce—without me."

In his agony of controlling himself he was rubbing his palms between his knees, but Bob put out his great hand and seized him by the wrist.

"Look here, old chap! I can't comfort them for your not being there. You know that, of course. But it always helps women to have a man coming and going in the house—to take a lot of things off their hands—and keep them company—and I'll do that. If I can't be everything that you'd be—"

"You can be more than I could ever be."

"Yes—from the point of view of having a little more money—and freedom—and a car to take them out in—and all that; but if you think I could ever make up to them for you, old sport—but that isn't what you want me to do, is it? You don't want me to be you, but to be something different—only, something that'll make your mother and Jennie and your little sisters buck up again—"

Stumbling to his feet, Teddy drew the back of his hand across his eyes.

"I—I guess I'd better beat it," he muttered, unsteadily. "They—they don't like you to stay out too long."

But Bob forced him gently back into his chair again.

"Oh, cheese that, Teddy! Sit down and let's get better acquainted. I want to tell you how Jennie and I made up our minds to get married."

CHAPTER XXIV

"And yet it's one of the commonest types of the criminal mind," Stenhouse was explaining to Bob during the following forenoon. "Fellows perfectly normal in every respect but that of their own special brand of crime. See no harm in that whatever. Won't have a cigar?"

Having declined the cigar for the third time, Bob found a subconscious fascination in watching the lawyer's Havana travel from one corner to the other of his long, mobile, thin-lipped mouth. It was interesting, too, to get a view of Teddy's case different from Jennie's.

There was nothing about Stenhouse, unless it was his repressed histrionic intensity, to suggest the saver of lives. Outwardly, he was a lank, clean-shaven Yankee, of ill-assorted features and piercing gimlet eyes. But something about him suggested power and an immense persuasiveness. He had only to wake from the quiescent mood in which he was talking to Bob to become an actor or a demagogue. With laughter, tears, pathos, vituperation, satire, and repartee all at his command, together with an amazing knowledge of criminal law, he was born to commend himself to the average juryman. Little of this was apparent, however, except when he was in action. Just now, as he lounged in his revolving chair, his limber legs crossed, his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and his perfecto moving as if by its own volition along the elastic lines of his mouth, he was detached, impartial, judicial, with that manner of speaking which the French describe as "from high to low"—"*de haut en bas*"—the "good mixer," with a sense of his own superiority.

The lack of the human element was to Bob the most disconcerting trait in the lawyer's frame of mind. To him the case was a case, and neither more nor less. The boy's life, so precious to himself, was of no more account to Stenhouse than that of a private soldier to his commanding officer on the day when a position must be rushed. Stenhouse was interested in the professional advantage he himself might gain from the outcome of the trial. In a less degree, he was interested in Teddy's psychology as a new slant on criminal mentality in general. But the results as they affected his client's fate concerned him not at all.

"I'm talking to you frankly," he went on, "because it's the only way we can handle the business. You're making yourself responsible in the case, and so I must tell you what I think."

"Oh, of course!"

"I quite understand your connection with this young fellow, and why you're taking the matter up, but I must treat you as if you were as aloof from it in sentiment as I am myself."

"That's exactly what I want."

"Well, then, the boy's in a bad fix. It's a worse fix because he belongs to the dangerous criminal type for whom you can never get a jury's sympathy. Roughly speaking, there are two classes of criminals—the criminals by accident and the criminals born. This boy is a criminal born."

"Oh, do you think so?"

"I know so. Yes, sir! You can't have as much to do with both lots as I've had without learning to read them at sight; and when it comes to drawing them out—why, he hadn't told me a half of his story before I could see he'd had murder on the brain for the best part of his life."

"I shouldn't have thought that."

"No, you wouldn't. Lot of it subconscious—suppressed desire, Freud, and all that. But start him talking, and it's 'God! I'd have shot that fellow if I'd had a gun!' or it's, 'If I'd had a dose of poison, they'd never have got me alive.' Mind ran on it. Yes, sir! Always thinking of doing somebody in—if not another fellow, then himself."

"I don't think he knew it."

"Of course he didn't know it. Seemed natural to him. Our own vices always do seem natural to us. If you put it up to him now, he'd say he'd never had a thought of shooting up anyone, and he wouldn't be lying out of it, either. Way it seems to him. Way it seems to every criminal of the class. But to judges and juries it's just so much 'bull,' and tells against the accused in the end. Sure you won't have a cigar?"

Having again declined the cigar, Bob argued in favor of Teddy, but Stenhouse was fixed in his convictions.

"I'll do what I can for him, of course; only, I'm blocked by his refusal to plead guilty. Pleading guilty might—I don't say it would, but it might—incline the judge to mercy. It would get him off, too, with the second degree, only that, when his own story shows him as guilty as hell, he keeps pulling the innocent stuff to beat a jazz band. The rascal who plumps with his confession will always get the clemency, while the fellow with a mouthful of innocence will be sent to the chair."

"But if he does feel that he's innocent—"

"Sure he feels that he's innocent! That's it! That's what I'm talking about—the ingrained criminal's lack of consciousness that his kind of crime is crime. The other fellow's—yes; but his—why, the law is a fool to be made that way and trip a good fellow up! To hear this young shaver talk, you'd think the courts should be manned by pickpockets."

"All the same, he was in a tight place—"

"What's that got to do with it? If we didn't get into tight places, there'd be no need for laws of any kind."

"I was only thinking of his motive—"

"His motive may have been all right. I'll not dispute you there, because you'll find that legally there's a difference between motive and intent. His motive may have been to provide for his mother, just as he says. Good! No harm in that whatever. But his intent was to rob a bank and shoot the guy that came out after him. The court won't go into his motives. It'll deal only with his intent, and with what came of it."

There was more along these lines which sent Bob away with some questioning as to himself. Being of a law-respecting nature, he was anxious not to uphold the transgressor to anything like a danger point. And he ran that risk. Having undertaken to help Teddy on Jennie's account, his heart had gone out beyond what he expected to the boy himself. It was the first time he had ever been in contact with a prisoner, the first time he had ever come face to face with a lone individual against whom all the organized forces of the world were focused in condemnation. His impulse being to range himself on the weaker side, he had, in a measure, so ranged himself. He had told Teddy that he stood by him, and would continue to stand by him through thick and thin. But was he right? Had he shown the proper severity? Hadn't he been sloppy and sentimental, without sufficiently remembering that a man who had killed another man was not to be handled as a pet?

It was not common sense to treat the breaker of laws as if he hadn't broken them or as if his punishment had made him a sympathetic figure. Too facile a pity might easily become a sin against the community's best standards, and by putting himself on the weaker side a man might find himself on the worse one. Even the fact that the wrongdoer was a relative ought not to blind

the eyes to his being a wrongdoer. It was his duty as a citizen, Bob argued, to support the charter of the Rights of Man as set forth in the Old Testament—thou shalt not kill—thou shalt not steal—the ideal of the New Testament, "Neither was there among them any that lacked, for they had all things common," never having been called to his attention.

As to Teddy's being a criminal born, he was not sure. Perhaps he was. Such "sports" appeared even from the most respectable stock. There was a dark tradition, never mentioned now except between Edith and himself, of a Collingham—they were not sure of the relationship—who had died in jail somewhere in the West. Of the Follett stock Bob knew nothing. Jennie was the other half of himself; but such affinities, he was sheepishly inclined to feel, dated from other worlds and other planes of existence, though finding a manifestation in this one.

But it was Jennie who gave him the lead he was in search of.

"I should think there were plenty of them to attend to that," she said, when he had expressed, as delicately as he could, his misgivings as to his own lack of rigor. "Whatever he did, and however bad it was, they've got all the power in the world to punish him, and they're going to do it. When there's just one person on earth to show him a little pity, I shouldn't think it could be too much." She added, after a second or two of silence: "He was sorry you didn't go in to see him. He missed you. I—I think he's going to cling to you just like a drowning man, you know, to a hand that's stretched out to him from a boat. Very likely he'll have to drown; but so long as the hand is there, it's—it's something."

In this speech, which was long for Jennie and betokened her growing authority, there were two or three points on which Bob pondered as he drove them homeward from the Brig. Jennie sat beside him, Lizzie in the back seat. He took the longest and prettiest ways so as to give them something like an outing.

It was the afternoon of the day on which he had seen Stenhouse, and in the interval he had been thinking out a program. Whatever the restrictions he must put upon himself with regard to the boy, his duty to protect and distract Jennie and her family was clear. Teddy had also given him to understand that, more than anything done for himself, this would contribute to his peace of mind. Done for his mother and sisters, it would be done for him, and the doer could be sure that he wasn't loosening the foundations of society. Even where there was a born criminal to be judged, and perhaps put out of the way, something was gained when the innocent could be saved to any possible degree from suffering with the guilty.

In this, too, he was not without an eye to Indiana Avenue. Though he had no experience of suburban life, he was intuitive enough to feel sure that, to the neighbors, Jennie's marriage had a "queer look," and the more so since she was not living with her husband, now that he was back from South America. To counteract this, he meant to show himself in the street as much as possible, parading his car before the door. There must be no cheap gossip as to Jennie based on lack of his devotion, even though all arrangements between her and himself were no more than provisional.

To that point, then, his course was clear. He could not console the mother, whose reason was stricken at its base, nor the three young girls whose lives were overshadowed by tragedy; but he could divert their minds from dwelling too much on calamity by bringing in a new interest. He could make it a big interest. He could enlarge the interest in proportion to their need; and, as Jennie spoke, it dawned on him that they themselves began to foresee that their need might be great indeed. "They've got all the power in the world to punish him; and they're going to do it." "He's going to cling to you like a drowning man. Very likely he'll have to drown." Jennie had had one or two interviews with Stenhouse, and perhaps had inferred from that great man's talk the difficulties of his task.

But the help she gave Bob was in her response to his misgivings. "When there's just one person on earth to show him a little pity, I shouldn't think it could be too much." It couldn't be too much—not possibly. The worst enemy of mankind had a right to "a little pity," and even Judas Iscariot had received it. If Teddy didn't get it from him, Bob, he wouldn't get it from anyone—his mother

and sisters apart. All civilized men were lined up against him, and doubtless could not be lined in any other way. In that case, punishment was assured, and, as Jennie said, there were plenty of people to take care of its infliction. He, Bob Collingham, since he stood alone, might well forget the heavy score against the boy in "bucking him up" to meet what lay ahead of him.

He worked this out before driving Jennie and her mother to their door, after which he waited for Gussie and Gladys to come home from work to take them, too, for an airing. Jennie sat beside him, as on the earlier drive, the two younger girls in the seat behind.

To both, the expedition was as the first stage of a glorification which might carry them up to any heights. Taken in connection with what they suffered on account of Teddy, it was like drinking an unmingled draught of the very bitter and the very sweet. Hardly able to lift up their heads from shame, they nevertheless felt the distinction of going out in an expensive high-powered car with a gentleman of wealth and position, who thus publicly proclaimed himself their relative.

"This'll settle Addie Inglis and Samuella Weatherby," Gladys whispered, in reference to some taunt or aspersion which Gussie understood. "Say, Gus, he's some sport, isn't he? Jen sure did cop a twenty-cylinder."

But Gussie had already turned over her new leaf. From the corner where she reclined with the grace of one accustomed from birth to this style of conveyance, she arched her lovely neck and turned her lovely head just enough to convey a hint of reprimand.

"Gladys dear, momma wouldn't like you to use that kind of language. Remember that now we must carry out her wishes all the more because she isn't able to enforce them. Your companions may not always be Hattie Belweather and Sunshine Bright, and so—"

"Say, Gus, what's struck you? Has goin' out in a swell rig like this gone to your head?"

"Yes, dear; perhaps it has. And if you'll take my advice you'll let it go to yours."

The only immediate response from Gladys was a cocking of the eye and a "clk" of the tongue against the cheek, something like a Zulu vowel; but Gussie noticed that in Palisade Park, where they descended from the car to make Bob's acquaintance, Gladys reverted to the intonation and idiom in which she had first picked up her English.

The jaunt tended to deepen the sensation which had been creeping over the girls within the past few days, that they were heroines of a dramatic romance. They had figured in the papers, their beauty, personalities, and histories becoming points of vital national concern. One legend made them the scions of an ancient English family fallen on evil days, but now to be revived through alliance with the Collinghams, while another came near enough to the truth to embody the Scarborough tradition and connect them with the historic house in Cambridge. In no case was there any waste of the picturesque, the detail that Jennie had been an artist's model and "the most beautiful woman in America" being especially underscored.

It was only little by little that Gussie and Gladys came to a sense of this importance, thus finding themselves enabled to react to some small degree against their sense of disgrace. In the shop, Gussie had heard Corinne whisper to a customer:

"That pretty girl over there is the sister of Follett, who murdered Flynn, and whose sister made that romantic marriage with the banker."

Though she glanced up from the feather she was twisting only through the tail of her eye, Gussie could reckon the excitement caused by this announcement. When it had been made a second time, and a third, as new customers came in, she saw herself an asset to the shop. Stared at, wondered at, discussed, and appraised, she began to feel as princesses and actresses when recognized in streets.

Similarly, Hattie Belweather had run to Gladys to report what Miss Flossie Grimm had said over

the counter, in the intervals of displaying stockings.

"See that little red-headed, snub-nosed thing over there? That's the Follett child, sister to the guy that shot the detective and the girl that married the banker sport. Some hummer he must be. Jennie, the married one's name is. They say she's had an offer of a hundred plunks a week to go into vawdeville. Fast color? Oh, my, yes! We don't carry any other kind."

Thus Gladys began to find it difficult to discern between notoriety and eminence, moving among the other cash girls as a queen incognita among ordinary mortals.

Most of this publicity was over by the time Bob reached New York, though the echoes still rumbled through the press. His own arrival reawakened some of it, offering opportunities that were never ignored of drawing dramatic contrasts. He was represented as having been "born in the purple," and stooping to a "maiden of low degree." Low degree was poetically fused with the occupation of a model, and by one publication the statement was thrown in, without comment, and as it were accidentally, that the present Mrs. Robert Bradley Collingham, Junior, of Marillo Park, had been greatly admired by appreciative connoisseurs as the figure in Hubert Wray's already famous picture, "Life and Death." Hubert Wray was even credited with "discovering" this beauty when she was starving in the slums.

Except for the detail of Wray's picture, the publicity was something of a relief to Bob, since it left him nothing to explain. The truth in these many reports being tolerably easy to disengage, his friends and acquaintances knew of his position, and, in view of its circumstances, they respected it. He went to the bank; he went to his club; he passed the time of day with such neighbors as remained at Marillo Park, finding it the easier to come and go because everyone knew what had happened.

From almost the first day he fell into a routine—the bank, Stenhouse, Teddy, Indiana Avenue. Though he was not yet working at the bank, he felt it wise to show himself daily on the premises, in order to establish the fact that his relations with his family were unchanged. Stenhouse he didn't visit every day, but only when there were matters connected with the case to talk over. He saw Teddy as often as the Brig regulations would allow, growing more and more touched by the eagerness with which the boy welcomed him. In Indiana Avenue he was assiduous. Whatever the hints flung out by Addie Inglis and Samuella Weatherby, they received contradiction as far as that was possible from obvious devotion.

As for his personal relations with Jennie, they changed little from the *modus vivendi* agreed upon. That she was growing more and more grateful was evident, but gratitude wasn't what he wanted. What he wanted he himself didn't know, and, in a measure, he didn't care. Till she got what she wanted, he could never be wholly satisfied; and if she wanted Wray....

But at this point his reasoning faculties failed him. If she wanted Wray and if Wray wanted her, there would, of course, be but one thing for him to do. It was that one thing itself which remained elusive or obscure, dodging, disturbing, and defying him. He could find a means to give Jennie her freedom, or he could take her by brute force, or, in certain circumstances, he could dismiss her as not worthy of his love. The trouble was that he couldn't see himself doing any of the three; and yet if what seemed to be true was true, he couldn't see himself as doing the other thing.

The *modus vivendi*, like all other arrangements of its kind, was therefore safe and convenient. It settled nothing; but it was what the term implied, a way of living. It was not an ideal way of living, or a way that shielded anyone from comment; but it was a way.

As for comment, it reached Bob only indirectly, and not oftener than every now and then. Perhaps it came in as pointed a form as it ever assumed for him in a seemingly chance remark from the chauffeur's wife, Mrs. Gull. It was not a chance remark, for the neat, pretty, thin-lipped, pinched-face Englishwoman who had passed all her life "in service" didn't make ill-considered observations.

"I suppose we shall see the young lady down, sir, some day soon?"

"Yes, some day soon," Bob replied, cautiously, getting ready in the hall to go to town.

"To remain?"

It was all summed up in those three syllables—all the gossip on the Collingham estate, and on all the estates at Marillo, not to go farther afield.

"Not to remain just yet," Bob answered, judiciously. "Mrs. Follett isn't well, and Mrs. Collingham has two younger sisters whom she has to take care of."

That this explanation was not adequate he knew; and yet it was an explanation. "It certainly do seem queer," Mrs. Gull observed to the gardener and the gardener's wife, in a company that included Gull; and Gull, who was from Somersetshire, replied, "It most zure and zertainly do."

But on the Sunday afternoon two weeks after Bob's return "the young lady" paid her visit to Collingham Lodge, accompanied by her mother and two sisters.

The journey was made in what Gladys characterized as "style," the style being mainly supplied by Gull in his sedate chauffeur's uniform. But the fact that he drove the car left Bob free to sit with his guests in the tonneau. He put Jennie, as hostess and mistress of the car, in the right-hand corner, Mrs. Follett in the left one, and Gussie in the middle. He and Gladys occupied the adjustable seats behind the chauffeur. At sight of the light linen rug with the Collingham initials in crimson appliqué, Gussie and Gladys exchanged appreciative glances, and they both searched the neighboring piazzas for a glimpse of Addie Inglis or Samuella Weatherby.

Acquainted now with the fact that Jennie had viewed the celestial country whither they were traveling, and with her descriptions of the wonders she had seen almost learned by rote, the girls came near to forgetting that Teddy was in a cell. But his mother didn't forget it. Silent, austere, incapable of pleasure, and waiting only the moment of the boy's release and her own, her eyes roamed the parched September landscape and saw none of it. She did not appear unhappy—only removed into a world of her own, a world of long, long thoughts.

No one said much. There was not much to say and a great deal to think about. Even the house, the terraces, the gardens called forth no more than "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" of approval. Gladys declared that she felt herself wandering through the castle scenes in "The Silver Queen," the latest screen masterpiece, but no one else descended to such comparisons.

"It's like heaven," Gussie murmured timidly, to Bob, as they strolled between hedges of dahlias.

"Oh no, it isn't!" he laughed. "Three or four places at Marillo are much finer than this."

Subdued by sheer ecstasy, they assembled on the flagged terrace, where Mrs. Gull brought out tea. Bob was pleased at Jennie's bearing toward the chauffeur's wife—friendly with just the right touch of dignity.

"Mr. Collingham tells me you're English. We're almost English ourselves, since we were born in Canada. I've never been in England, but I should so love to go, though they say it's quite different since the war."

There was no more to it than that, but Mrs. Gull reported to her husband: "As much a lady as any I've ever served under—and I do know a lady when I see her. Miss Edith's a lady, too, but not a patch on this one. She may have been just as bad as they say she was, but you'd never believe it to look at her, and the sisters be'ave as pretty as pretty. Oh dear! And they with a murderer for a brother! It do seem queer, now don't it?"

To which Gull replied in his usual antiphon, "It most zure and zertainly do."

The jarring chord in this harmony came from Lizzie, while Bob was in search of Gull to bid him bring round the car. Lizzie stood looking down the two flowered terraces, where in honor of the

visitors the fountains had been turned on.

"I understand now why they couldn't afford to pay your father his forty-five a week. It must cost a great deal of money to keep this establishment going."

"Oh, momma," Gussie pleaded, "don't begin to hang crape just when we're able to enjoy ourselves a little."

Lizzie turned on her daughter her rare and almost forgotten smile.

"Very well, dear; enjoy yourself. Only a world in which enjoyment must be bought at such a price is not a fit world for human beings to live in."

Gladys crept up, snuggling against her mother's shoulder.

"Yes, momma darling; but you won't say that any more till we get home, now will you? It might hurt poor Bob's feelings if you did, and you *can't* say that he's ever done us any harm."

CHAPTER XXV

On the day after the visit to Collingham Lodge, Bob left for the camp in the Adirondacks. As yet he had no knowledge of the family's attitude toward him more exact than he could infer. He had written to them all since his return, but their replies, even Edith's, had been noncommittal. He guessed that they had decided together not to express themselves fully till they came face to face with him.

Even then, the approach to his own affairs was indirect. An affectionate family reunion, based seemingly on the ground that nothing had happened when so much *had*, blocked the openings for bringing up the subjects he had most at heart. During the early part of that first evening at Sugar Maple Point he couldn't get anyone alone. Not till nearly bedtime did he himself offer a lead by strolling out into the moonlight in the hope that one of the three would follow him.

It was full moonlight, turning Sugar Maple Lake into a sheet of silver and gold laid at the base of a velvety silhouette of mountains. The magic of stillness, the tang of the forest, the repose of the spirit from the girding and striving of the world—these lovelinesses came to Bob Collingham with a peace such as they always brought, but which to-night couldn't find a resting place. It couldn't find a resting place because in this tranquil woodland more than anywhere else he found himself wishing that Teddy Follett wasn't in a cell.

Sugar Maple Lake is small for the Adirondacks, being no more than three miles long and a mile and a half in width. All its shores are owned by rich men, mostly from New York, who can keep themselves secluded. In seclusion they are able to combine rusticity with the amenities of life, in a wealthy, modern, American version of Marie Antoinette's humble village at Versailles. At a stranger's first glance, the "camps" are but lumbermen's log cabins on a larger scale; but when you come to the conveniences and luxuries of living, they differ little from Marillo Park.

Reaching the thin line of maples and pines fringing the edge of the lake, Bob turned to see if he was followed. At first there was no one. The light from the windows and doors made a golden splotch on the greenish silvery black of the sloping lawn, but no figure appeared in the glow. Coming to the conclusion that this, too, was "a put-up job," he was strolling back again when his mother, cloaked against the night air, stole out and called his name softly.

On reaching him she took his arm, and together they picked their way along a graveled path leading toward the Point.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said, instantly. "I've been having such a terrible time with your father. You know how he is—so stern—so relentless—"

"He's been corking to me."

"You mean the cablegram he sent you to Rio? Oh, well, I made him do that. It's all over now, dear, and you mustn't worry; but at first—that night when we heard that the Follett boy had got into trouble and I had to tell your father of your marriage—well, I don't want to make things out worse than they are, so I sha'n't tell you what he said; but I did manage him. I soothed him and told him how he ought to take it and what he ought to do—with the result that you got that message. You mustn't think it was easy, dear—"

"You've been a brick, old lady!"

"I'm your mother, Bob. It's all summed up in that. Whatever makes for my children's happiness makes for mine. Your father is not a woman, and that's the difference between us. And now I've had all this trouble with him over Edith's engagement; but he's given in at last."

Bob sprang away from her.

"Edith engaged? Who to? Not to Ayling?"

She took his arm again, continuing toward the Point.

"Yes, to Ernest. He was so opposed to it. But I've battled for my child's heart, Bob, and I've won out. Your father is giving her ten thousand a year. It isn't much, but they ought to be able to manage. We didn't write you, partly because it was only settled last week, and it was easier to wait and tell you."

"But I thought you didn't like the match yourself, old girl."

"Oh, me! I have to turn myself every way at once. I've no wishes of my own. To reconcile my children to their father and their father to my children is all I live and work for."

Coming to the little rustic gazebo perched on the tip of the Point, they entered and sat down. There being nothing to obtrude itself here on lake and moon and mountain, it was as if they had left human crudities behind. In the windless air, the fragrance of Bob's cigarette mingled with the aromatic pungency of millions and millions of growing things.

"There was simply nothing else to be done," Junia resumed. "There was Edith eating her heart out and stubborn as a mule—and with the mess you've made of things—not that you could *foresee* —or know the sort of people you were getting in among—"

It was the opening he had been looking for, and he knew that, whatever the outcome, he must use it.

"Exactly what do you mean by that, mother?"

She seemed confused.

"I don't suppose I mean anything—except what's obvious."

Not to press the point at once, he said, "You saw Jennie."

"Yes; I sent for her."

"What did you think of her?"

"Oh, what anyone would think. She's charming—to look at."

"Only to look at?"

"Her manner is charming, too. Of course! I—I don't quite know what you want me to say."

"How much did she tell you that afternoon?"

She looked at him through the moonlight.

"Hasn't she told *you*?"

"She's told me nothing—except that you were lovely."

"Then, Bob dear, I'm afraid I can't add anything. You see, they were *her* secrets—"

"Oh! Then she told you secrets!"

"Why, of course! What did you think?"

"Any other secret besides that she and I had been married?"

"Bob darling, I don't think it's fair to put me on the witness stand. She's your wife—and because she's your wife I accept her. What I know is buried here"—she smote her chest—"and if for your sake and hers I try to forget it I think you might let me."

For a few minutes he smoked in a silence broken only by the maniac cry of a loon in the distance.

"Did it occur to you," he asked at last, "that she was a very simple girl who could easily become entangled in her talk when she tried to explain things to a woman of the world?"

"No; because the things said were very simple—just statements of fact as to which there could be no misunderstanding."

"Had the statements of fact anything"—he moistened his dry lips—"anything to do with—with Hubert?"

"Some of them. But there!" She caught herself up. "You're not going to make me tell you things. I'm your mother, and if I intervene at all, it must be in the way of helping you to come together and not of putting you apart." She rose, drawing her cloak about her. "I think I must go in, dear. I'm beginning to feel the damp."

He, too, rose, sitting down again sidewise on the rustic rail of the summerhouse.

"Wait a minute, mother. I want to ask you something. When I was at Marillo I wandered into your room one day and saw a picture."

"A picture?"

"Yes; a picture; and I—I wondered how it—it happened to come there."

She bent a little toward him, drawing her cloak more closely about her. If it was acting it was well done.

"It—it couldn't have been—"

He chucked the butt of his cigarette into the lake.

"Yes, I guess it was. It had an inscription on it—'Life and Death, by Hubert Wray.'"

"Oh, my God! Where did you say you saw it, Bob?"

"In your bedroom, against the wall. I thought it might be a portrait you'd had done, and so lifted —"

"And I told them to put it out of sight. You see, Hubert didn't send it till after we'd left the house —just before he went to California. I'd given orders that it was to be locked up in an empty closet in my wardrobe room. Oh, Bob darling, I don't know what you're going to think of me."

"Oh, you're all right, mother. It wasn't you. I—I only wondered how you'd come by the thing at all."

She made an obvious effort at controlling emotion.

"Why, Bob, it was this way. After—after what Jennie told me that day I—I naturally thought a

good deal about Hubert—and—and their relations to each other—"

"She talked about them, did she?"

"Well, you see, in a way she had to. She was let in for it, poor thing. I can't tell you everything without giving you the whole story—and it's *her* story, as I've said before. I've no right to betray her, and least of all to you."

"All right. Go on."

"So when I'd heard that Hubert had a new picture at the Kahler Gallery—and everyone was talking about it—and I knew from the things they said what—what sort of a picture it was—"

"Yes, yes; I understand."

"Well, then, I—I went and saw it; and to—to get it out of sight I bought it on the spot. I didn't want it to be still on exhibition when you came back; and I hoped that people would forget it. I should have burned it at once, only that Hubert delayed sending it, and—well, you see how it happened. But even so, Bob dear, you knew you were marrying a model—"

"Oh yes; it isn't that—not altogether."

She laid her hand on his shoulder.

"What is it, Bob darling? Can't you tell *me*? I'm your mother, dear—"

But he moved away from her touch, as if unable to bear sympathy.

"I can't tell you yet, old lady. I must see my own way first. I've got to get through this business about the boy before I take any step whatever. She knows pretty well that I know that—that she and Hubert are in love with—with each other—"

"Oh, but Hubert is not in love with her. He told me so."

"Not in love with her?" he cried, sharply. "Why isn't he?"

"He said—oh, Bob, I can't talk about it. You'll—"

"You've got to talk about it, mother. I can't *half* know. I must *know*! If he wasn't in love with her, what did he mean by making her think—"

"I don't believe he did make her think. He hinted that—that there'd been something between them, but that—that with girls of that sort you—you couldn't call it love."

"Why couldn't you?"

"Because—no, I won't, Bob! I'm your mother. I must make things easier for you, and not harder, and so—"

"It will make things easiest for me to know the truth. So go on! Out with it! Tell me just what he said."

She wrung her hands beneath the cloak.

"He said it—it couldn't be love—with a girl whom—whom anyone could—"

He sprang from the rail, holding up his hand.

"Wait a minute, mother! Jennie's my wife. I'm her husband. I believe in her."

With her speed in trimming her sails to the wind, Junia caught the direction.

"I don't want you *not* to believe in her, Bob. I didn't want to say any of the things that—that you've been dragging out of me. You know that."

"Yes, I know that, old lady, and I'm grateful. I had to drag them out and know the worst that could be said, so as to contradict it in—in my heart."

"Oh, in your heart!"

"Yes, in my heart. It's where I'm strongest—just as it's where dad is strongest, too, if he'd only been true to himself. But that's a side issue. What I want to say now—and what I'd like you to understand—is that I *know* that Jennie is good and pure and true and one of the sweetest and loveliest spirits God ever made. I know it!"

Junia couldn't be as feminine as she was without gazing in awe and admiration at the tall, upright figure, which seemed taller and more upright for the moonlight.

"Would you know it—mind you, I'm only *putting* it this way—would you know it—with her own evidence to the contrary?"

"Yes, mother; I should know it—with her own evidence to the contrary."

She shivered and turned away from him.

"I must really go in now, dear. I'm so afraid of catching cold. But—but good night!"

Having kissed him, she went down the steps, turning once more to look back at him. Silhouetted against the oblong of light between two rough pilasters, he was mechanically taking out his case and selecting a cigarette.

"You're splendid, Bob," she said, with a ring of sincerity that startled him. "That's the way to love a woman. If there were only more men like you! And—I *will* say it, in spite of the things you've just made me confess—there must be something very, very good in a girl to—to call forth that kind of love."

But Jennie herself made that kind of love more difficult. On returning to town Bob found her changed. During all the weeks of the *modus vivendi* she had been gentle, submissive, grateful, accepting his terms in the provisional spirit in which she understood them, and carrying them out. When Teddy's affairs were settled—and they never defined what they meant by that—she knew they were to have a reckoning; but the reckoning was to be postponed till then.

And now, all at once, she seemed disposed to force it on. His visit to his family had frightened her. It frightened her the more in that he said so little about it. He, too, was changed. He was silent, pensive. He watched her more and talked to her less; but when he watched her his eyes, so she said to herself, had a queer kind of sorrow in them. She didn't wonder at that. Anyone's eyes would have had sorrow in them—anyone who was seeing Teddy nearly every day and filling him up with fortitude. If it had not been for Teddy's sake she would have done her best to get Bob "out of it" long ago.

Her fear now was of not being able to make this attempt of her own accord. In other words, she shrank from being found out before confessing of her own free will. Twenty words from Mrs. Collingham to her son would rob her, Jennie, of such poor shreds of good intention as she still possessed.

The trouble was, first, the lack of opportunity, and then, the waiting for the right emotional moment. It was not a thing you could spring at any chance hour of the day. Something must lead up to it and make it natural.

But a week after his return from Sugar Maple Point, the occasion seemed to present itself. It was one of those evenings in late September when indoors was too stifling. In pursuance of his plans for distracting the family, which meant so much to Teddy, Bob had motored the mother and daughters to a small country restaurant, where they had had supper, and had brought them home again. Lizzie and the two girls having said good night, Jennie was about to do the same, but he held her by the hand.

"Don't go in. Let's walk a bit."

"So it's come," Jennie thought. "I must do it before we get home."

Even so she put it off. He, too, put off whatever in himself was burning to find words. They said as little as they could without being altogether silent, and that little was mere commonplace.

"Wonderful night, isn't it?"

"Yes; and I think we're going to have a breeze. It isn't so hot as an hour ago."

"Anyhow, the hot weather must be nearly over. It will be October in a day or two."

"But we often have very hot days in October. I remember that last year—"

So they came to Palisade Walk and turned into it. Though the moon was not yet up, the effulgence of its approach made a halo above the city. Manhattan was a line of constellations the riverway a gulf of darkness in which were scattered stars. Along the parapet, shadowy couples, mostly lovers, formed little ghostly groups, while here and there was the point of light of a cigarette or cigar.

They came to a halt, Jennie leaning against one of the dragon's teeth, looking over at the city, Bob standing a little back from her.

"I've never been here at night before," he said. "I'd no idea it was so beautiful."

"We don't come very often ourselves. We live so near that I suppose we're used to it."

"We had some wonderful evenings at Sugar Maple Point; but that was another kind of thing."

She assembled her forces without turning to look at him or making any change in her tone.

"I suppose you talked to your mother while you were up there?"

"Oh, of course!"

"About me?"

Divining what was coming, he was on his guard. "You were mentioned—naturally."

"And she told you things?"

"Some things."

"Some things about me that—that were new to you?"

"Yes; some things about you that were new to me."

"Did she tell you—everything?"

"I'm not in a position to say that it was everything; but—but I rather think it was. What of it?"

"Oh—only, that—that I'm as bad as she said I was. I—I wanted you to know that it was true."

The long stillness was broken only by a moan like that of a wounded monster from a ferryboat far away.

"Why do you want me to know that?" he asked, at length.

"So that you'll see now that when—when everything is over about Teddy—you'll be—you'll be free."

"But suppose I don't want to be free?"

"But I want it for you."

"Why?"

"Oh, it's very simple." She turned, leaning with her back to the rock. "It's just this, Bob—I'm not fit to be your wife. I never was fit. I never shall be fit. There it is in a nutshell. It isn't education and social things that I'm talking about. I'm—I'm too—I don't know how to put it—but you're so big—"

"We'll drop all that, Jennie, if you don't mind, because it isn't a case of fitness on either your part or mine; it's one of love."

She hung her head.

"Oh, love! I—I don't think I—I know what it is."

"I'm sure you don't. It's what I've told you. I want to show you what it's like. Do you know what I said to the old lady when she got off those things? She didn't want to do it, mind you," he hastened to explain. "She wanted to keep your secrets and be true to you—but I dragged them out of her. And do you know what I said to her? Well, I'm going to repeat it to you now. I said I wouldn't believe anything against you—not even on your own evidence."

"Is that love, Bob—or is it just being stubborn?"

"I shall let you find that out for yourself—as we go on."

"Oh! as we go on?"

"Yes, as we go on, Jennie. We're going on. Don't make any mistake about that. I know how you feel. Everything looks so dark to you now that you can't believe it will ever be light again; but it will be, Jennie. All families and all individuals go through these experiences—not as terrible as yours, perhaps—but terrible all the same. Not one of us is spared. Sometimes it seems to you as if you just couldn't go through with it; but you can. You must hang on—and bear it—and it will pass. That's what I'm here for—to help you to hang on—and, Jennie, clinging together, as we're doing, we'll come out to the light—even Teddy—and your mother. Oh, look! There the light is now—the light everlasting—that always comes back, if we only wait for it!"

At the pointing of his finger and his sudden cry she turned to face the eternal wonder of the moonrise.

CHAPTER XXVI

During the next few months, the necessity for bracing Teddy and his sisters to meet fate threw Bob Collingham's personal preoccupations more and more into the background. All that was implied by the fact that Jennie was his wife and he was her husband went into this single supreme task.

Habit came to his aid by fitting them all to the situation as though they had never been in any other. They grew used to the fact that Teddy was in jail and might come out of it only by one exit. Teddy grew used to it himself. The family, once more at Marillo, grew used to the odd arrangement by which Bob and Jennie worked together and lived apart. The Collinghams grew used to the thought of the Folletts, and the Folletts to that of the Collinghams.

"You get used to anything," Junia commented to her husband, as one who has made a new discovery. "It seems to me as if Edith's living in that flat on Cathedral Heights and keeping only one maid is all I'd ever dreamed for her."

To Bob, this wonting of the mind was the easier because Wray stayed in California, his absence making it possible to leave in abeyance the subjects that couldn't yet be touched upon.

The first chance of fortifying the three girls seemed to present itself on a night in that autumn when it was still warm enough to sit on the screened piazza. His car was, as usual, before the door, and in an hour or so he would be making his way to Marillo. As he had returned to his work at the bank, his spare time was now in the evenings.

"If you want to do something for me, Gladys, there's a way."

He said this in reply to an aspiration of all three, in which the youngest sister had been spokesman.

Gladys's voice was eager and affectionate.

"What way, Bob? Tell us. We'll do anything."

Smoothing Pansy's back as she lay on his crossed knees, he considered how best to make it clear. Gladys sat close to him, as the one who most easily took him fraternally. Gussie, in whom he stirred an unusual self-consciousness, kept herself more aloof. Altogether in the shadow, Jennie was seemingly withdrawn, and yet more intensely aware of him than anyone.

"It's this way," he tried to explain: "Living is like climbing a mountainside. You drag yourself up to a ledge where you can stand and take breath, and feel that you've reached somewhere. Then, just as you think that you can camp there and be comfortable for the rest of your life, you find yourself summoned to move to the next ledge higher up. At that some of us get discouraged; some fall off and go down; but most of us brace ourselves for another great big test. Do you see?"

Gladys answered, doubtfully, "I see—a little."

"Well then, the thing we need for the test is pluck, isn't it?"

Gussie spoke dreamily.

"We need pluck for everything."

"So we do; and I often think that we don't make enough of it. Pluck is different from courage, because it's—how shall I say?—it's a little more cheery and intimate. Courage is like a Sunday suit that you wear for big occasions; but pluck is your everyday clothes, which you need all the time and feel easy in. Courage is noble and heroic—something we'd be shy about claiming. Pluck is the courage of the common man, which anyone can feel he has a right to."

"I can't," Gussie confessed. "I'm the awfulest coward."

With this Gladys agreed.

"Yes, Gus is a regular scarecat. I'm not afraid of hardly anything."

"We're all cowards in our way; but we could all be plucky when we mightn't like to call ourselves brave. Do you get what I mean?" Gladys made a sound of assent which seemed to answer for all three. "Well, what I'm trying to say is this: That the time has come when we're all being summoned—you three—and me—and Teddy—and all of us—to pull up to another ledge. It's going to be tough, but we can make up our minds that we can go through with it. I don't mean just knowing that we *must* go through with it, but knowing that we *can*."

There was silence for the two or three minutes during which the girls thought this over.

"You said," Gladys reasoned, "that it was something we could do for you. I don't see—"

"You'd do it for me, because it's easier to pull with strong people rather than with weak ones. You see, this is something which no one of us can meet alone; we must all meet it together, and the stronger each of us is the stronger we all are. Being strong is a matter of knowing that you're strong, just as being weak is the same. If I was sure that none of you was going to break down, I could be stronger myself, and we could all buck up Teddy."

After another brief silence, Gladys sighed.

"All the same, it would be terrible—if they did anything to him."

"Not more terrible than what millions of sisters faced in the last few years, with their brothers blown to bits. They were able to bear it by getting the idea that they could."

Jennie spoke for the first time.

"Ah, but that was glory, and this is disgrace."

"Then it calls for more pluck—that's all. The test comes to one in one way and to another in another. Real glory is in meeting it."

It was still Jennie who urged the difficulties.

"But when it's the hardest test that ever comes to anyone in the world!"

"Why, then, it's pluck again, and still more pluck. It *is* the hardest test that ever comes to anyone in the world. It's harder than when women hear their boys are missing, and never know what becomes of them; and that's pretty hard. But, Jennie, hard things are the making of us, and if we come through the hardest test in the world and still keep our kindlier feelings and our common sense, why, then, we come out pretty strong, don't we?"

Jennie said no more. She liked to have him talk to them in this way. It took for granted that they were worth talking to, and to become worth talking to had been a secret aim since the day when she first learned the value of pictures and books. A good many times she had stolen in to confer with the genial custodian at the Metropolitan; a good many volumes she had hidden in her room

to study after she went to bed. She had proved to herself that she had a mind; and now Bob was hinting at unknown resources of strength. It nerved her; it put new heart in her. Having always been taught to consider herself weak, the suggestion that she could come through her test victoriously—that she could help him and Gussie and Gladys and Teddy and her mother to do the same—thrilled her like a sudden revelation.

To Bob himself the theme was not a new one, though it was the first time he had ever got any of it into words. He had been mulling over it and round it ever since the war first called him from a state of mental lethargy. Needing then a clew to life, he had cast about him without finding one. Neither Groton nor Harvard had ever given him anything he could seize. His parents hadn't given him anything, nor had their religion. Mentally, he had gone to France much as a jellyfish puts to sea, to be tossed about without volition of its own, and get its support from the food that drifts its way. Nothing much had drifted his way till he found himself in the hospital.

There, in the long, empty days and sleepless nights, the "why" of things played in and out of his brain like a devil's tattoo. He hated to think that all he had witnessed was futility and waste, and yet no explanation that anyone gave him made it seem otherwise. The question of suffering was the one that most perplexed him. What was the good of it? Why had it to be? Even the agony of his slashed head and crushed foot was almost beyond bearing; and what was that in comparison with all the pain, physical and emotional, at that minute in the world? What was the idea? How did it get you anywhere?

In as far as he received an answer, it came one night when he waked from a light doze. He waked repeating certain words which he recognized as vaguely familiar:

"*Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*"

He said them over two or three times before getting their significance.

"That's it," he thought then. "That's why we have to go through all this rumpus. 'Thou therefore endure *hardness*!' *Endure* it! Accept it! Rub it in! That's it, by gum!" The expletive was the strongest in which his feeble state allowed him to indulge; but he continued: "That's what's the matter with me. I'm not hard. I'm soft. I'm soft inside. In my mind, in my heart, I'm like putty, like dough. It isn't that I'm tender; I'm just *soft*. If I've ever had to bear anything hard, I've kicked like the dickens; and that's why I'm such an ass now. 'Thou therefore endure *hardness*!' I'll be hanged if I won't try."

So the trying came to be a kind of religion—not a very vital religion, or one as to which he was very keen, and yet a religion. During the winter he was seeing Jennie, and the spring he married her, and the summer he spent in South America, he had fumbled with it without getting hold of it. Not till he began his strivings with Teddy, and his efforts to divert the minds of Teddy's family, did it grow sharply defined to his vision as a way of life.

Perhaps it was Teddy who taught him. Perhaps they mutually taught each other. He couldn't tell. He only became aware that something was working in the boy like the might of spirit in the inner man. Possibly Teddy was learning more quickly than himself because his lessons were more intensive.

He noticed this first on the day when he went, at the lawyer's suggestion, to back up the argument that to plead guilty was the only hope.

"I've done all I can with him," Stenhouse declared. "Now it's up to you. He thinks you're God; and so you may have some influence."

"But I never will," Teddy answered, coolly. "I'd never have done society—as the chaplain calls it—any harm if society hadn't done me harm to begin with. I may be guilty in the second place, but society is guilty in the first, and no one will make me say anything different from that."

"That's all very well, Teddy; but society won't accept the plea."

"Then it can do the other thing."

Bob's tone became significant.

"And you realize what—what the other thing might be?"

"You bet I do! You can't live in Murderers' Row without having *that* rubbed into you."

They talked softly, in a corner of the visitors' room, because other little groups were scattered about, each centering round some sullen, swarthy man, wreathed in mystery and darkness.

"That's all right, old chap," Bob agreed; "but you see, don't you, that it's only a stand for an idea?"

"It's a stand for telling the truth, isn't it?"

"The truth—as you see it?"

"The truth as it is—as I'm willing to bank on it."

"Banking on it in a way that—that may call for a great deal of pluck."

"Well, I've got a great deal of pluck."

"Yes—if you've got enough. It's one thing to say so now, and another to prove it when the time comes."

In his suppressed vehemence Teddy grasped Bob's wrist, as the hands of both lay on the small table above which their heads came together.

"I've got the pluck for anything but to go before their court and say what you want me to say. I took the money because my father and mother, after slaving for society all their lives, had a right to it; I shot a man because they'd got me so jumpy with all the wrongs they'd done me that I didn't know what my hand was up to. If they won't let me have my kind of justice, they'll just have to dope me out their own, and I'll swallow it."

Another conversation, in the same spot, and with heads together in the same way, was gentler.

"I know pretty well what they're going to hand me out—and it'll be all right. What kind of life would I have now, even if they acquitted me? What could I have had even if I'd never got into this scrape at all? I'm not cut out for big things. I'm just the same size as poor old dad, and I'd have gone the same way. Ma's got it straight—it's not good enough. Think of rotting in an office all your life just to reach the gorgeous sum of forty-five a week, and when you've got it to be chucked into the hell of the unemployed! Say, Bob, why can't everyone have enough in a world where there's plenty to go round?"

"I guess it's because we haven't the right kind of world."

"But why haven't we? We've been at it long enough."

"Perhaps not. That may be where the trouble lies. When life came on this planet, to begin with, it took millions of years to get it anywhere. Nobody knows how long it was before the thing that lived in the water could creep on the land; but it was time to be reckoned by ages. When you come to ages, the human race is young. It's made a life for itself which it doesn't know how to swing. In a few more ages it may learn; but it hasn't learned as yet."

Teddy reflected.

"So you've just got to take it as it is."

"That seems to be the number. We may kick because it isn't perfect, but we don't know how to make it perfect, and that's all there is to say."

"It's easier for your kind to say than for ours."

"It's not as easy as it seems for any kind. I don't see anyone, rich or poor, who hasn't to spend most of his energy in bucking up. The poor think it's easier for the rich, because they have the money; and the rich think it's easier for the poor, because they haven't the responsibilities. So there you are. I begin to think that making yourself strong—*hard*—tough in your inner fiber—is about the biggest asset you can bring to life."

"Or death," Teddy said, softly.

"Or death," Bob agreed.

On another occasion, Teddy was in another mood.

"If I didn't get it now, I guess it would have come along later; so that it's just as well to have it over."

Bob's mind went back to Stenhouse's view of Teddy's character.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, just what I say. You can't see red like me without being a more dangerous cuss than you mean to be. I'd have got into trouble sometime, even if I hadn't done this." Before Bob could find a response Teddy went on: "I suppose you think that because I don't say anything about Flynn I haven't got him on my mind. Well, you're wrong."

"Oh, I didn't think that."

"But what *can* I say? I think and think and think, and then begin thinking again. So that," he jerked out, "that's a reason, too."

"A reason for what, Teddy?"

He answered obliquely.

"I can't keep up that kind of thinking. I'll go crazy if I do. I'd rather be sent to where I can get another point of view. I don't care what kind of point of view it is, so long as it isn't this one. If I could come face to face with Flynn, I believe I could make him understand. Do you suppose there's any chance of that?"

It was inevitable that, in the long run, speculative questions should lead them farther still.

"What do you suppose God is?" Teddy said, unexpectedly, one day.

Bob smiled.

"Ask me something easier."

"But you must have some idea."

"I'm not sure that I have."

"Don't you believe in God? I should have thought that you'd be the kind of cuss who would."

"I don't know that you can call it believing. It's more like—like having a kind of instinct—helped out by a little thinking."

"Have I got the instinct?"

"Can't you tell that yourself?"

"If I told you you'd howl."

"No, I shouldn't. Go to it."

Teddy laughed sheepishly, as if he had ventured to peer into secrets which were none of his business.

"I'll tell you the way God seems to me—it's all come to me while I've been in there." He nodded toward the cells. "I don't seem to get him as a great big man, the way the chaplain says he is. He's all right, the chaplain, only he don't seem to know anything about God. He can gas away to beat the band about law, and society, and the good of the community, and hell to pay when you don't respect them; but when it comes to God—it's nix."

"Well, what do you make out for yourself?"

"I haven't made it out exactly. It's as if some great big hand had pulled aside a curtain—but it's a curtain that I didn't know was there. See?"

"Yes, I see. And what does it show you?"

"That's the funny part of it. I can't tell you what it shows me. I don't exactly see it; I only know—mind you, I'm just telling you how it seems to me—I only know that it's God."

"But I suppose, if you know that it's God, you have an idea of what it's like?"

"Ye-es; it's like—like a country into which I'm traveling—not with my body—see?—but with my *self*. No," he corrected, "that's not it. It isn't a country; it's more like a life. Oh, shucks! I haven't got it straight yet. Now look! This is the way it is. Suppose that everything we see was alive—that these chairs were alive, and the walls, and the table—that every blamed thing we ever touch or use was alive, and had a voice. See?" Bob nodded that he saw. "Now, suppose every voice was trying to make you understand things. The table would say, 'This is the way God wants you to work'; and the chair, 'This is the way God wants you to rest'; and the walls, 'This is the way God stands round you and backs you up.' Everything would be helping you then, instead of putting itself dead against you the way we have it here."

"I get the idea; but would that be God?"

Over this question the boy's face brooded thoughtfully.

"It mightn't be God in the way that you're you and I'm me. It would be more like a way of *knowing* God. It's like my case in the courts. It's set down as 'The People against Edward S. Follett.' But I don't see the People; I only feel what they do to me. It's something like that. I don't see God; but I kind of feel—" He broke with another apologetic laugh. "Oh, I guess it's all wrong. Gussie'd call me a gump. It just kind of gets you; that's all. It makes me feel as if I was moving on into something—but I guess I'm not."

The pensive silence that followed was broken by Bob's saying:

"That's what I mean by instinct."

Teddy resumed as if he hadn't heard. "When I wake up in the night—and waking up in the night in that place, with snores and groans and guys talking in their sleep and having nightmares, is some stunt, believe *me*—but when I do, it's just as if I had great big arms round me, and some one was saying: 'All right, Teddy, I'm holding you. Keep a stiff upper lip. I'll make it as easy as I can for you and everyone else. I'm just drawing you—drawing you—drawing you—a wee little bit

at a time—over here, where you'll get your big chance.' What's more, Bob," he went on, as if he touched on the heart of his interest, "it says it'll take care of Flynn and his wife and his poor little kiddies, and do the things—" Once more he broke off with his uneasy laugh. "Ah, what's the use? You think I'm a quitter, don't you?"

"Why should I think that?"

"Oh, I don't know. I talk like a quitter. But it isn't that. If I could still do anything for ma and the girls—"

"I'm looking after them, old boy."

"So there you are. What'd be the good of my staying?" He added, between clenched teeth, "God, how I'd hate to go back!"

"Back into the world?"

He spoke as if to himself: "You see—that day—the day the thing happened—and they came and caught me—and did all those things to me—and I saw Flynn lying by the road—it was—it was a kind of sickener. If putting me out of the way is the thing in the wind, it was done right there and then. Right there and then I seem to have begun—moving on." He drew a long breath. "And I'd rather keep moving, Bob—no matter to where—no matter to what—than turn back again to face a bunch of men."

CHAPTER XXVII

Teddy was not called on to face a bunch of men till going to the courtroom for his trial. Dressed long before the hour in a new dark-blue suit, fresh linen, and a dark-blue tie, his prison pallor, a little like that of death, put him out of the list of the active and free. As he sat on the edge of his bunk, somber with dread, he was nevertheless obliged to find suitable jocosities with which to answer the good-luck wishes that came slithering along the walls from the neighboring cells. It was half past nine before two guards whom he had never seen before, stalwart fellows well over six feet, came to the door and unlocked it.

"Ready, Follett? Time's come."

Springing to his feet, he found handcuffs slipped round his wrists before he was aware of what was being done. It was an unexpected indignity. He had never been handcuffed before.

"Say, fellows," he protested, "I'll go all right. I don't want these on me."

"Come along wid ye."

The words were friendly rather than rough, as was also the hand of a guard on each shoulder as they steered him along the corridor. The Brig is a rambling building, or succession of buildings, with courthouse and house of detention under the same series of roofs. The pilgrimage was long—upstairs, downstairs, through passages, past offices, past courtrooms, with guards, police, clerks, lawyers, litigants, loungers, standing about everywhere. The sight of a man in handcuffs arrested all eyes for the moment, and stilled all tongues. With his glances flying from right to left and from left to right, Teddy again began to feel the sense of separation from the human race which had struck to his soul that day on the marshes.

Of his other impressions, the chief was that of squalor. It seemed as if all the elements had been brought together that would make poor Justice vulgar and unimpressive. Out of a squalid cell he had been pushed along squalid hallways, through groups of squalid faces, into a squalid courtroom, where he was ushered into a squalid cage, long and narrow, with a seat hardly wider than a knife blade. Once within the cage the handcuffs were taken off, the door was locked, and each of the stalwart guards took his stand at one end. The cage being raised some six or eight inches above the level of the floor, the boy was well in sight of everyone. It was like being on a throne—or a Calvary.

On taking his seat, he was vaguely conscious of a bank of faces, tier above tier, at the back of the courtroom. Before him some fifteen or twenty officials, reporters, and lawyers lolled at their tables, walked about, yawned, picked their teeth, or told anecdotes that raised a smothered laugh. Most of them struck him as untidily dressed; few looked intelligent. Among them a portly man, whom he afterward saw as the district attorney, in a cutaway coat, with a line of piqué at the opening of his waistcoat, seemed like a person in fancy costume. Everyone paused as he entered the cage, but, a glance having satisfied their curiosity, they paid him no further attention.

The trial lasted three days, passing before his eyes like a motion-picture film of which he was only a spectator. Try as he would, he found it hard to believe that the proceedings had anything to do with him. "All this fuss," he would comment to himself, grimly, "to get the right to kill a man." The strain of being under so many cruel or indifferent eyes sent him back with relief to his cell, where during the nights he slept soundly.

His one bit of surprise came from Stenhouse's final argument in his defense. Up to that point, both defense and prosecution had struck him as more or less silly. The state had tried to prove him a desperado whom it was dangerous to let live; the defense had done its best to show him a youth of arrested intelligence, not responsible for his acts. He grinned inwardly when Jennie, Gussie, and half a dozen of his old chums testified to foolish pranks, forgotten or half forgotten by himself, in the hope of convincing the court that he had never had the normal sense.

But Stenhouse in his concluding speech transcended all that, taking Teddy's own stand as the only one which offered the ghost of a chance of acquittal. He began his final appeal quietly, in a tone little more than colloquial.

"There's an old saying, a variant on something said by Benjamin Franklin, which we might remember oftener than we do. It's terse, pithy, humorous, wise. Some one has called it the finest bit of free verse composed in the eighteenth century. Listen to it. '*It is hard to make an empty sack stand upright.*' So it is. The empty sack collapses of its own accord. It can't do anything but collapse. It was not meant to stand upright. To demand that it shall stand upright is to insist on the impossible. A full sack will stand as solid as a tree. A group of full sacks will support one another. Put the empty sack among them and from the very law of gravitation it will go down helplessly. Now, gentlemen of the jury, you're being asked to bring in a verdict against the empty sack—the sack that's been carefully kept empty—because it hasn't the strength and stability of that which all the coffers of the country have combined to fill."

With this as a text, Stenhouse drew a picture of the industrious man who is limited by the very nature of his industry. He is not limited by his own desire, but by the use society wishes to make of him. Serving a turn, he is schooled to serve that turn, and to serve no other turn. This schooling takes him unawares. He doesn't know it has begun before waking to find himself drilled to a system from which only a giant can escape. Few men being giants, the average man plods on because he doesn't know what else to do. There is rarely anything else *for* him to do. Having taken the first ill-paid job that comes his way, he hasn't meant to give himself to it all his life. He dreams of something bigger, more brilliant, more productive. The boy who runs errands sees himself a merchant; the lad who becomes a clerk looks forward to being a partner; the young man who enters a bank is sure that some day he will be bank president.

"Sometimes, gentlemen, these early visions work out to a reality. But in the vast majority of cases, the youth, before he ceases to be a youth, finds himself where the horse is when he has once submitted to the bridle. He can go only as he is driven. Life is organized not to let him go in any other way. Needing him for a certain purpose, it keeps him to that purpose. Work, taken as a great corporate thing, is made up of hundreds of millions of tiny tasks each of which calls for a man. The man being found, he must be trimmed to the size of his task."

Stenhouse had no quarrel with methods universally followed by civilized man. To criticize them was not his intention, as it was not his intention to complain because man had not yet brought in the Golden Age.

"But I do claim that the smaller the task to which a man is nailed down, and the smaller the pay he is able to earn, the greater the responsibility of collective society toward that individual."

There was a time, he declared, when much had been said to the discredit of slavery; but one thing could be urged in its favor. The man who had been kept throughout his life to one small job was not thrown out in his old age to provide for himself as he could. Having worked for society, as society was constituted then, society recognized at least the duty of taking care of him. Stenhouse disclaimed any comparison between free American labor and a servile condition; he was striving only for a principle. Men couldn't be screwed down during all their working lives to the lowest wage on which body and soul could be kept together, and then be judged by the same standards as those who had had opportunity to make provision for themselves and their families. The same interpretation of the law couldn't be made to cover the cases of the full sack and the empty one.

"And yet," he went on, changing his tone with his theme, "the empty sack is of value because it

can be filled. Coarse, cheap, negligible as it seems, it is much too good to throw away. It is an asset to production, to the country's trade, to the whole world's wealth. And, gentlemen, what shall we say when we call that empty sack—a man?"

The value of the human asset was the next point to which he led his listeners.

"It is only a truism to say that among all the precious things with which the Almighty has blessed his creation the most precious is a human life; and yet we live in a world which seems to believe this so little that we must sometimes remind ourselves that it is so. Within a few years we have seen millions of men reckoned merely as *stuff*. As productive assets to the race, they haven't counted. We could read of a day's loss on the battlefield running up into the thousands and never turn a hair. We came to regard a young man's life as primarily a thing to throw away. It is for this reason, gentlemen of the jury, that I venture to remind you that a young man's life is primarily a thing to save. It may be a truism to say that a human life is the most precious of all created things; but it is a truism of which we are only now, to our bitter and incalculable cost, beginning to realize the truth."

He went on to draw a picture of the contributions to the general good made by the Folletts, father and son. Their work had been humble, but it had been essential. Essential work faithfully performed should guarantee an old age protected against penury. He reminded his hearers that he was not opposed to the law of supply and demand, which was the only known method by which the business of the world could be carried on. He only pleaded for the same humanity to a man as was shown to a broken-down old horse. From his one interview with Lizzie, Stenhouse had got what he called "the good line," "*Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.*" Of this he now made use, following it up with St. Paul's explanation: "Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth may plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope."

"Gentlemen, so long as we live in a society in which the vast majority of us can never be partakers of the hope with which we started out, so long must justice take account of the suffering of the poor muzzled brute that treadeth out the corn. If he goes frenzied and runs amuck, he cannot be judged by the standards which apply to him who has been left unmuzzled and free to satisfy his wants. It is not fair; it is not human. It is true that to protect your own interests you have the power to shoot him down; but when he lies dead at your feet, no more muzzled in death than he was in life, there is surely somewhere in the universe an avenging force that is on his side, and which will make you—you as representatives of the society which has placed its action in your hands—and you as twelve private individuals with duties and consciences—there is somewhere in the universe this avenging force which will require his blood at your hands and make you pay the penalty. Surely you can find a better use for that valuable asset, a young man's life, than just to take it away. For the sake of the public whose honor is in your keeping, you must play the game squarely. For the sake of your own future peace of mind, you must not add your own crime to this poor boy's misfortune. Your duty at this minute is not merely to interpret the dead letter of a law; it is to be the voice of the People whom you represent. Remember that by the verdict you bring in that People will be committed to the most destructive of all destructive acts, or it will get expression for that deep, human common sense which transcends written phrases to act in the spirit of the greatest of us all, judging not according to the appearance—not according to the appearance, gentlemen, and you remember who counseled that—but judging righteous judgment."

He fell back into his seat, exhausted. He was so impressive and impassioned as to convince many of his hearers that he believed his own plea, while to some who had considered the verdict a certainty it was now in doubt.

Among Teddy's friends a hope arose that, in spite of all expectation to the contrary, he might be saved. Bob looked over and smiled. Teddy smiled back, but mainly because he rejoiced in what he felt to be his justification. He couldn't see how they could convict him after such a setting forth as that, though for the consequences of acquittal he had so little heart.

In the excitement of the courtroom, the judge's voice, when he began to give the jury their

instructions, fell like cool, quiet rain on thunderous sultriness. He was a small man, with a leathery, unemotional face, framed by an iron-gray wig of faultless side-parting and long, straight, unnaturally smooth hair. He had the faculty of seeming attentive without being influenced. Listening, reasoning, asking a question, or settling a disputed point, he gave the impression of having reduced intelligence to the soulless accuracy of a cash register.

He reminded the jury that the law was not on trial; society was not on trial; the industrial experience of one Josiah Follett was not a feature in the case. They must not allow the issue to be confused by the social arguments which befogged so many of the questions of the day. It was quite possible that the world was not as perfect as it might be; it was even possible that the law was not the most perfect law that could be passed. But these were considerations into which they could not enter. In merely approaching them, they would lose their way. The law as it stands is the voice of the People as it is; and the only questions before them were, first, whether or not the accused had broken that law, and second, if he had broken it, to what degree. In answering these questions, they must limit themselves to the bare facts of the charge. With the prisoner's temptations they had nothing to do, except in so far as they tended to create intent. The consequences to his person, whether in the way of liberty or of the last penalty, were no concern of others. Justice in itself, viewed as justice in the abstract, was no concern of theirs. They were not, however, to burden their consciences with the fear that the accused was thus deprived of protection. The duty of a jury was not protection, but discernment. The administration of the law was far too big and complex a thing for any one body of men to deal with. Justice having many aspects, the law had as many departments. Protection was in other hands than theirs. The application of justice pure and simple, involving punishment for guilt without excluding pity for the provocation, was duly guaranteed by the methods of the state. They would find their task simplified by dismissing all such hesitations from their minds and confining themselves to the definite question which he repeated. Had the prisoner at the bar broken the existing law, and if he had so broken it, to what degree?

Having explained the difference between manslaughter and murder, as well as between first-degree murder and second, he admitted that, in case the accused was found guilty, there was much to indicate the second degree rather than the first. There was, however, one damning fact. The hand that had shot Peter Flynn went on at once to shoot William Jackman. The killing of one man might have been an accident. If not an accident, it might still have mitigating features. But for the murderer of a first man to proceed at once to become the murderer of a second indicated a planned and deliberate intent....

When the court had adjourned and the jury had retired to consider their verdict, one of the guards unlocked the cage and Teddy was taken down by a corkscrew staircase to a room immediately below. It was a small room, lighted by one feeble bulb, and aired from an air shaft. A table and two chairs stood in the middle of the room; a shiny, well-worn bench was fixed to one of the walls. The guards took the chairs; Teddy sat down on the bench. One of the guards cut off a piece of tobacco and put it in his mouth; the other lighted a cheap cigar. Taking another from an upper waistcoat pocket, he held it out toward Teddy.

"Have a smoke, young fella?"

Teddy shook his head. He was hardly aware of being addressed. Nothing else was said to him, and the guards, almost silently, began a game of cards. This waiting with prisoners for verdicts was always a tedious affair, and one to be got through patiently.

To Teddy, it was not so much tedious as it was unreal. He sat with arms folded, his head sunk, and the foot of the leg which was thrown across the other leg kicking outward mechanically. Except for a rare grunted remark between the players, there was no sound but the slap of the cards on the table and the scooping in of the tricks.

After nearly half an hour the door opened and Bob Collingham came in with a basket containing sandwiches and a thermos bottle of hot coffee. With a word of explanation to the guards, he was allowed to take his seat beside the prisoner.

"Hello, old sport! Must be relieved that it's so soon going to be over. Brought you something to eat."

With this introduction, they took up commonplace ground as if it was a commonplace occasion. Teddy asked after his mother and sisters; Bob gave him the family news. Of the trial they said nothing. Of what they were waiting for no more was said than that Bob had persuaded Jennie and Gussie to go home, promising to come and tell them the decision. Lizzie and Gladys had not appeared in the courtroom at all. Of all this Teddy approved as he munched his sandwiches stolidly.

The supply of food and coffee being large, they invited the guards to share with them. The invitation was accepted, the officers suspending their game. The talk became friendly, commenting on the judge's wig and the glass eye of the foreman of the jury, but not touching directly on the trial. These subjects, as well as the supply of sandwiches, exhausted, the guards returned to their game, the two young men being left to themselves.

For the most part they sat in silence—a silence as nearly cheerful as the circumstances permitted.

"Don't worry about me, Bob," Teddy murmured once. "I'm not going to care much whichever way it is. Honest to God! I don't say I wouldn't like it if they sent me back home; but if they don't—"

Allowing his companion to finish the sentence for himself, he lapsed into silence again.

Another time, speaking as if subterranean thought came for a moment to the surface, he said:

"I liked what you said about hardness—and pluck. I've been practicing away on them both—making myself tough inside. Funny how you can, isn't it? You think at first that, because you're soft, you've got to be soft; but you find out that you're just what you like to make yourself. That's a great line, Bob, '*Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*' You watch," he added, with a tremulous smile, "and you'll see me doing it."

"All right, old boy, I'll watch, but we'll all be doing it with you. We're practicing, too. Jennie and the girls are regular bricks, and, of course, your mother—"

He smiled again.

"Good old ma! She sure is the best ever. I'd be sorrier for her than I am if I didn't feel certain that if—that if I go she won't wait long after me." He swung away from this aspect of his thought to a new one. "Say, Bob, do you suppose it's a sign that God really is with me—gump as I am!—that he's sent you to take ma and the girls off my hands—*you* know—and make my mind easy?"

They discussed those happenings which might reasonably be held to be signs of Divine good intention, after which silence fell again. The guards grunted or yawned; the cards were slapped on the table; the tricks were pulled in with the scratching of paper against wood. An hour went by; another hour, and then another. In spite of his efforts to make himself hard, Teddy felt the tension. Having accidentally touched Bob's hand, he grasped it with a clutch like a vise. He was still clutching it when a messenger came to the door to say that the jury was about to render their verdict and the prisoner must come back into court.

Bob climbed the corkscrew first. A guard followed him, then Teddy, then the other guard. It was after seven in the evening. The courtroom, relatively empty, had a sickly look, under crude electric lighting. But half of the spectators had come back, and only those officials and lawyers who were obliged to be in their places. All the reporters were there, watching for every shade in Teddy's face and seeing more than he expressed.

Bob managed to pass in front of the cage.

"Remember, Teddy—hardness is the big word."

"Sure thing!" Teddy whispered back.

The jury filed in. The judge took his place. Teddy was ordered to stand up. He stood very straight, his hands in the pockets of his jacket. In all that met the eye he was a sturdy, stocky young man, pleasing to look at, and with no suggestion of the criminal. His face was grave with a gravity beyond that of death, but he showed no sign of nervousness.

If anyone showed nervousness it was the foreman of the jury, a good-natured fish dealer, with a drooping reddish mustache, who had never expected to be in this situation. When asked if the jury had arrived at a verdict his voice trembled as he answered:

"We have."

"What is your verdict?"

"We find the accused guilty of murder."

"Of murder in the first or the second degree?"

"In the first."

That was all. Bob wheeled round toward Teddy, who smiled courageously.

"It's all right, Bob," he whispered, as their hands met over the rail of the cage. "I've got the right line on it. It's my medicine, and I know how to take it. Keep ma and the girls from worrying, and I can go straight through with it."

"ALL RIGHT, MA! I'M READY!"

It was all there was time for. They had not noticed that Stenhouse had said something about appeal, and the judge something about sentence. Everyone was leaving. Stenhouse came to shake hands with his client and tell him that the game wasn't up yet. The boy thanked him. The cage was unlocked, and once more Teddy, with a guard in front and a guard following after him, went down the corkscrew stair.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"What I don't understand, Bob," Collingham said, with faint indignation in his tone, "is whether you're a married man or not."

"I'm a married man, father, all right."

"Then why don't you live like a married man? I suppose you know that people are saying all sorts of things."

Bob considered the simplest way in which to put his case. It was the afternoon of the day following the end of Teddy's trial, and his father was giving him a lift homeward from the bank. It being winter, dark was already closing in, and though they were out of the city, great arc-lights were still strung along the roadways, which were otherwise lighted by flashes from hundreds of motor cars.

"I've never said anything about this before," the father resumed, before Bob had found the right words, "because we'd all agreed—your mother, Edith, and myself—that we wouldn't hamper you with questions about it while you were busy with something else. But now that that's over—"

"Part of it is over, but only part of it. We've a long road to travel yet."

"If the appeal is denied, as I expect it will be, you'll have to let me in on the application to the Governor for clemency. I think I'd have some influence there."

"Thanks, dad. That'll be a help." He asked, after further thinking, "Should you like me to live as a married man—considering who it is I've married?"

Knowing that the question was a searching one, Bob found the reply much what he expected.

"I want to see the best thing come out of a mixed-up situation. I don't deny that all these problems bother me; but we have them on our hands, and so there's no more to be said. We've got to find the wise thing to do, and do it. That's all I'm after."

"That's all I'm after, myself, dad."

"I don't admit any responsibility for all this muss," Collingham declared, as if his son had accused him. "I don't care what anyone thinks; my conscience is clear."

"Of course, dad; of course!"

"But since things have happened as they have, I'd like to make them as easy as I can for everyone; and whatever money can do—"

"Or recognition?"

They came back to the original question.

"Yes; recognition, too—as soon as we've anyone to recognize. What I don't understand is all this backing and filling—"

"Have you asked mother?"

"In a way; and she's just as mysterious as you."

Bob tried another avenue.

"You saw Jennie yourself, didn't you?"

"Once; yes."

"What did you think of her?"

"What any man would think of her. She was very charming and—and appealing."

"Did you think anything else?"

The father turned sharply.

"What makes you ask?"

"Because it's possible you did."

"Well, I did. What of it?"

"Only this—that that's the thing I want to nail before I bring her to you as my wife."

"Then why don't you go to work and nail it?"

He found the words he was in search of.

"Partly because I've other things to do; partly because I feel that, by giving it its time, it will nail itself; and, most of all, for the reason that neither she nor I want to take the—the great happiness which we feel is coming to us in the end while—while all this other thing is in the air. I wonder if you understand me."

"More or less."

"It's as if we'd accidentally put the cart of marriage before the horse of engagement. Do you see? Nominally we're married; but really we're only engaged. We can't be married—we don't want to be married—till other things are off our minds."

With this bit of explanation, the Collinghams began to live once more as if nothing had occurred. It was not easy; but by dint of skimming on the surface they were able to manage it. That is to say, Bob came and went, and they asked him no more questions, while on his part he continued to nerve Teddy and his sisters for another test.

If there was anyone noticeably different, it was Junia. Always quick to tack according to the wind, she seemed almost to have changed her course. In putting the best face on Edith's marriage and Bob's complications she had adopted the new ideals that kept her in the movement.

"It's the war," she explained to her intimates. "We're all different. Life as we used to live it begins to seem so empty. We weren't real; we people who spent our time entertaining and being entertained. It's all very well to say that we're much the same since the war as we were before, but it isn't so. I know I'm not. I'm quite a revolutionist. I may not have made much progress, but I'm certainly more in touch with reality."

With this transition, it became natural to speak of her son-in-law.

"Such a wonderful fellow—all mind, you know, but the type that helps so many of us to find our

way through the mists of materialism and selfishness out to the great big ends. To me, it's like a new life just to hear him talk, and I can't help feeling it providential that he's found a wife like Edith. She's an extraordinary girl to be my child—intellectual and practical at once. She can keep her husband company in all his researches and yet cook him a good dinner if their little maid is out. Is there anything so astonishing in life as our own children and what they turn out to be?"

This was a transition, too, leading her to speak of Bob's affairs in the tone of one who, though puzzled, takes them sympathetically.

"And yet I think it's enlarging. Though we've kept only on the outer edge of the drama through which Bob has been going with the girl he's married, the whole thing has deepened his life so much that it couldn't help deepening ours. It's broadened us, too, I think, giving us an insight into lives so different from our own. That's what we need so much, it seems to me, that kind of broadening. It's going to solve a lot of our national problems which at present seem to be insoluble. Yes; Bob is still at home with us, and I tell you frankly that I don't know what is coming out of it. It's all so queer and independent and modern. I'm old-fashioned, and I don't pretend to see through these young people's ways. But I'm Bob's mother, and through all his developments —and he *is* developing—I'm going with him."

So Junia talked, and talked so much that she was in danger of talking herself round. The instinct to be in the front line of fashion had something to do with it, but self-persuasion had more. The thing of the hour being the throwing over of the old social code, Junia wouldn't have been Junia if she hadn't done it; but, even so, the creeping-in of compunction toward Bob took her by surprise. She had told herself hitherto that she loved him so much that she would work for his permanent happiness even at the cost of his temporary pain; but now she began to fear that what had seemed to her his temporary pain might prove the very life of his life.

She came to this perception through reading in the newspapers the accounts of the Follett boy's trial. By the tacit convention which the Collinghams had established, that they had nothing to do with it, she never spoke of it to Bradley or Edith, nor did they speak of it to her; but she kept herself informed, and knew the devotion with which Bob gave himself to Jennie and her family. The boy's condemnation hit her hard. When Bradley came home that night, she saw that it had also hit him.

"I'm worth about five million dollars at a guess," he confided to her, "and I'd cheerfully have given four of them if this thing hadn't happened."

"But, Bradley dear, you had nothing to do with it."

"I know I hadn't," he declared, savagely; "and yet I'd—I'd do as I say."

But it wasn't Bradley she was most sorry for; nor was it for the Follett boy. She was sorry that, because of conditions which she herself had fostered, Bob would never reap the fruit of a love in which he had been so chivalrous. She didn't see how he could. Just as there was a natural Bradley and a standardized one, so there was a natural and a standardized Junia. The natural Junia had long seemed dead; but the bigness of the love which she saw daily and hourly exemplified moved her to the painful stirrings of new life.

Meanwhile Bob went with Teddy up the remaining steps by which he mounted his Calvary.

He stood near the cage on the morning when the boy was brought up for sentence, witnessing his coolness. On being asked if he had anything to say before sentence was pronounced he replied:

"Nothing, sir, except to thank you for giving me such a fair trial."

The words were spoken in a firmer voice than those which followed:

"The court, in consideration of your crime of murder in the first degree, sentences you to the punishment of death by the passage of a current of electricity through your body, within the week

beginning...."

When the appeal for a new trial was denied, it was Bob who informed Teddy. When all efforts to obtain Executive clemency had failed, it was Bob again who broke the news. When the boy requested that his mother and sisters should omit their next visit to Bitterwell—should wait till he sent them word before coming again—it was Bob who conveyed the request. Bitterwell, the great penitentiary, was twenty miles from Pemberton Heights, and through the winter they had gone to see him some thirty-odd times. They went in couples. Gladys and her mother, Jennie and Gussie, keeping each other company. The visits were less difficult than might have been expected because of Teddy's cheerfulness.

Of the request to wait before coming again, they didn't at first seize the significance. While frank with them about everything else, Bob had never given them the date of the week the judge had named, nor had they asked for it. If they did so ask, he meant to tell them; but they seemed to divine his intention.

Perhaps they divined the intention in this intimation from Teddy. At any rate, they didn't question it, or rebel against it. It followed on visits first of one pair and then of the other, both of which had been so normal as almost to pass as gay. That is, Teddy's spirits had infected theirs, and they had parted from him smiling. That of Jennie and Gussie had been the first of the two, and he had sent them off with a joke.

"My boy, I'm proud of you," had been Lizzie's farewell words to him. "Walk firmly, with your head erect, and never, never be sorry for anything you've done."

"Good old ma! The best ever! I sure am proud of *you*! What'll you bet that we don't have some good times together yet?"

A psychologist would have said that by suggestion and autosuggestion they strengthened each other and themselves; but whatever the process, the result was evident. Bob had given them the verb "to carry on," so that "carrying on" became at once an objective and a driving force. Gussie and Gladys went regularly to work; Jennie took care of the house and her mother. The latter task had become the more imperative, for the reason that, after Teddy's request that they should suspend their visits, she began to fail. It was not that she was hurt by it, but rather that she took it as a signal.

In the efforts to be strong, they were helped by the fact that, not long after Teddy's removal to Bitterwell, Edith Ayling had come to see them, all of her own initiative. She had repeated the visit many times, and had Gussie and Gladys go to see her at Cathedral Heights. Jennie had never been able to leave home.

"I didn't say anything about it to you," Edith explained to Bob, after the occasion of her breaking the ice, "because I wanted to do it on my own. Quite apart from you and Jennie, I feel that our lots have become involved and that we Collinghams have some responsibility. I don't say responsibility for what, because I don't know; and yet I feel—" Unable to say what she felt, she elided to the personal. "Jennie I don't get at. She's so silent—so shut away. The mother has never been well enough to see me. But the two younger girls I'm really getting to know very well and to be very fond of. They're intelligent down to the finger-tips, and with a little guidance I'm sure they could do big things."

"What kind of things?"

"I should train Gladys along intellectual lines, and Gussie was born for the stage. I know that Ernest and I could help them, if you thought it all right, and we should love doing it. You must read what he says in his new book, *Salvage*, as to getting people into the tasks for which they are fitted and in which they can be happy. He thinks that a lot of our nonproductiveness comes from the people who'd love doing one thing being compelled to do another, and that if we could only help the individuals we come across to find their natural jobs...."

It was Edith also who unconsciously helped her mother out of the trap in which she had found herself caught.

"Oh, by the way, whom do you think I met in the street the other day? No less a person than Hubert Wray, just back from California. And that reminds me. He told me you had bought his big picture that everyone was talking about last year. Where is it? Why did you never say anything about it?"

Edith was spending a day in May at Collingham Lodge, and was walking with her mother between rows of irises.

"Come in," Junia said. "I'll show you. Then you'll understand."

But not till "Life and Death" had been drawn from its hiding place and propped against the wall was Edith allowed to enter her mother's room. She advanced slowly, her eyes on the canvas. Junia waited for the shock.

"So that's it," Edith said, at last. "It isn't a thing I should want to live and die with—I never can understand that fancy people have for nudes—but I see it's very fine."

"And is that all you see?"

"All I see? I see it has a meaning, of course, but—"

Junia's throat felt dry.

"Don't you—don't you recognize anybody?"

"Who? The Brasshead woman? I shouldn't know her from Eve."

Junia crept nearer.

"'The Brasshead woman'? Who's she? What are you talking about?"

"Why, the model who sat for it. Hubert told me all about her. He said she wasn't his ideal for the part—rather a poor lot as a woman—but he couldn't get anyone better." She added, on examining the features, "I don't think she's bad, considering what he wanted."

"Doesn't she—doesn't she remind you of—of Bob's wife?"

"About as much as she does of you. Surely that's not the reason why you hid the thing away!"

"I—I did think—I was afraid—that people might see a resemblance—"

Edith made an inarticulate sound intended for derision.

"As a matter of fact, Hubert said it was probably a good thing for him to be obliged to paint some one else than Jennie. He'd been painting her so much that he was in danger of painting her into everything, like Andrea del Sarto with his wife."

"Then you—you don't think that he's painted her in here?"

Edith looked again.

"Well, if you put it that way—and you were crazy to find a likeness—perhaps about the brows—and down here at the curve of the cheek and neck—but no! Not really! This is a carnal woman, and Jennie's a thing of the spirit." She dismissed the subject as of no further importance. "Do tell me. Is there anyone in New York who reglazes these English chintzes?"

So Junia made new plans, waiting for Bob to come home to dinner in order to meet him on the threshold, throw her arms about his neck, and give him the glad facts.

But Bob sent a telephone message that he would not be home to dinner, that he would not be home that night. No one was to worry, and he would turn up at breakfast in the morning.

It was all the information he gave because, by special permission from the warden, and under a solemn promise not to convey anything to the prisoner that would enable him to cheat the law, he was spending the night at Bitterwell.

He was spending it in a low one-storied building some sixty feet long and not more than twenty in width. Its arrangements were simple. On entering, you came into a corridor some six feet wide, running the length of seven little rooms. The seven little rooms were each furnished with a cot, a fixed wash-basin, a table, and a chair. Each had, however, this peculiarity—that the end toward the corridor had no wall. Instead of a wall it had long, strong perpendicular white bars, some two or three inches apart, and running from ceiling to floor. The inmate was thus visible at all times, like an animal in a cage. In the corridor were half a dozen chairs of the kitchen variety, and at the end a little yellow door.

The little yellow door led into a room of which the chief piece of furniture was a chair vaguely suggestive of an armchair in a smoking room, though with some singular attachments. Around it in a semicircle were some eight or ten other chairs similar to those in the corridor. In one corner was a walled-off space that might have housed a dynamo; in the other a stack of brooms and mops. As a passageway gave access to this room, and the yellow door was carefully kept closed, Bob was not required to see within.

Of the seven little rooms four were empty, and three had occupants. At one end was a negro; at the other an Italian; Teddy was in the center. Outside, there was a guard for the Italian, another for the negro, while for Teddy there were two. They were big, husky fellows, three Irishmen and a Swede, genial, good-natured souls to whom their duties had become a matter of course.

There was something of the matter of course in the whole situation, even to Teddy and Bob. The human mind being ready to accept anything to which it is led by steps sufficiently graded, both young men were attuned to finding themselves as they were. As they were meant that Teddy clung to one of the bars from within, and Bob to the same bar from without. They talked through the open spaces, being able to do it quietly because they were so close.

"You don't think I'm afraid, do you, Bob? I should have been afraid if it hadn't been for you. You've bucked me up something—well, there are no words for it."

"Let it go without words, Teddy. Don't try to say it."

"I like to say it," he grinned. "Or, rather, I'd like to say it if I could. I like trying to say it, even when I can't."

That was all for the time; but after some minutes, Teddy's hand stole over Bob's big paw as it held to the bar, so that they held to it together.

It was Bob who broke the silence next.

"I didn't tell you, Teddy—I've only just found it out—that dad's been taking care of Mrs. Flynn and her kiddies and means to go on doing it."

"That's good," the boy sighed. "It takes about the last thing off my mind."

So they talked spasmodically, never saying much, and yet saying all the things for which language has no words. At intervals the Italian showed his sympathy by groaning heavily, which was generally a signal for the negro to begin singing, in a cottony voice, the first verse of "Safe in the Arms of Jesus." Teddy apologized for them as a host for unseemly members of his household.

"They're good guys, all right. That's just their way of letting me know they feel for me. It's funny how kind hearted some mutt will be who's committed a cold-blooded murder."

He had probably been following this train of thought for some minutes when he said, in a reasoning tone:

"What can the law do with fellows of our sort? Look at the thing straight now. We've got good in us, of course; but you can't trust us to hold our horses. I don't blame them for what they're giving me—hardly any. Only, I'll be darned if it doesn't make me surer that all this is only an experiment—a way of finding out how not to do it—so that we can make the next go a better one."

They discussed this topic in a desultory way, not so much letting it drop as pursuing it each in his own thought. Teddy picked up the line again after an interval of time, and some distance farther on.

"I suppose you can't believe that you come to a place where you know you're through and are in a hurry to get on. Well, you do. I guess old people like ma reach there, anyhow; and young people, too, when they're—when they're like me. I've had my shot—and I've miffed it. Now I'm all on edge to have another try. I'm so crazy about that that the thing that's to happen first doesn't seem anything—very much."

The hours wore on, but it seemed to Bob a night to which there was no time. Though the support he brought to Teddy was merely that of companionship, he felt that the boy was outstripping him. In Teddy's own phrase, he was "moving on," but moving on very fast. Bob couldn't tell how he knew this; he only felt himself being left behind. Teddy was quite right; his old experiment *was* over, and some of the exaltation of the new one was already breaking through. That was the meaning of his silences, his abstractions. That was why he came out of each such spell with a smile that grew more luminous.

The Italian and the negro fell asleep. The four guards talked less to one another. Clutching the bar grew tiring. Brannigan, one of Teddy's guards, brought up a chair, offering it to Bob.

"Why don't you sit down? It'll be quite a while yet."

Bob took the chair, Teddy the one inside the cell. Bringing it as close to the bars as possible, he thrust his fingers through the opening to touch Bob's hand. Bob closed the fingers within his palm, and so held them.

"I'm not going to send any message to ma and the girls. They know I love them. You can't add anything to that." A sidelong smile stole through the bars. "I love you too, Bob. I guess it's a bum thing to say, but to-night—well, it's different—and I'm going to say it. I can't do anything to thank you; but it may mean something to you to have me loving you like the devil all the way from—from over there."

"It means something to me now."

"Then that's all right."

The Italian breathed heavily. The negro snored. The guards were bored and somnolent. Teddy might have been asleep except for the look and the smile that every now and then crept through the bars toward his companion.

Suddenly he pulled his fingers from Bob's clasp, jumped to his feet, and held out his arms.

"All right, ma! I'm ready!"

The cry was so loud and joyous that Bob sprang up. Brannigan lumbered forward.

"Been dreamin'," he explained. "Just as well if he has."

Teddy looked about him in bewilderment.

"No, I haven't been. I wasn't asleep. I was wide awake. I guess you'll think I'm dippy, Bob; but I did see ma. 'Pon my soul I did! She was right there." He pointed to the spot. "She looked lovely, too—young, like—and yet it was ma all right. She wanted me to come. That's why I jumped. Oh, well! Perhaps I *am* dippy. But it's funny, isn't it?"

He was so preoccupied with this happening as not to notice sounds in the outer passage and beyond the yellow door. Even when he did, it was with no more than a partial cognizance.

"Listen!" he said once. "There they are. It'll be only a few minutes now. I'm not going to let you go in there, Bob. Funny about ma, isn't it?"

The sounds grew louder. The guards were moving about. Behind the yellow door people seemed to enter. There was the scraping of chairs as they sat down. The Italian woke and howled dismally. The negro shouted his hymn. Teddy was far away on the wings of speculation; but he came back to say:

"If ma had gone ahead of me, I know she'd like nothing better than to come and give me a lift over. But she hasn't gone ahead of me. She's over there in Indiana Avenue. That's the funny part of it. What do you suppose it means?"

Bob didn't know. Neither had he time to offer an opinion, because the main door opened and the warden appeared, accompanied by the chaplain, the doctor, the principal keeper, and three other men whom Teddy didn't know.

"Here they are!" Teddy whispered, as if their coming was a relief.

The warden advanced to the central cell. The door was unlocked. Teddy stood on the threshold.

"Thank you, warden. I suppose I can say good-by to my friend?"

Permission was given. Teddy stepped out into the corridor.

"You'd better go now, Bob. No use in your staying any longer." He nodded toward the men standing round him. "They'll handle me gently. I'm not afraid."

Their hands clasped; but the boy was only a boy, loving and in need of love. Before Bob knew what was happening, Teddy's arms were about his neck, in a long, desperate embrace.

A gulp that was almost a sob from each—and it was over.

"All right, boys. I'm ready. Go to it."

The words were spoken steadily. Bob limped toward the door. A guard unlocked it.

"Say, Bob!" It was Teddy's voice again. Bob turned. The lad had taken off his collar, no more conscious of the act than if he was going to bed. One of the strange men was kneeling on one knee, making a significant slit in a leg of Teddy's trousers. "Say, Bob! I wonder—if it doesn't take you too far out of your way-if you'd mind driving round by the house? You see, if anything has happened to ma, why, the girls'll be all up in the air, poor things!"

Bob nodded because he couldn't trust himself to words—and so it was the end.

Out in the air it seemed to him as if he had dreamed and waked up. The May night was so exquisite, so hallowing, that the walls of Bitterwell were mellow and enchanted against the dome of stars. Even in these grim courts the scent of growing things was sweet.

Driving in the deadest hours of night over the long flat road, he was too tired to think. His imagination didn't try to follow Teddy, because it had become an instinct to spring to the need to "carry on." Teddy was behind him. There were other things in front; and his mind was already with them.

And yet not actively. After he had slept he would be able to take them up; but just now his main desire was to get home to bed. Nothing but that would dispel this overweight of emotion.

Along the familiar road he drove mechanically. Even Teddy's last request, though it formed an intention, was hardly in his mind. At Bond's Corner, where the roads forked, to the right to Pemberton Heights, to the left to the bridge that would take him over toward Marillo, he was so nearly asleep that he might have gone straight on homeward had he not been startled by seeing a man and a woman standing in the middle of the road.

He jammed down the service and emergency brakes, swinging to the right. The fact that they stood facing him without getting out of his way both amazed him and rendered him indignant. Turning to look at so strange a pair of pedestrians, he saw—Teddy and his mother.

They were not quite on the road, but a little above it. Neither were they in the dark like other things around, but shining with a light of their own. Neither were they shadowy apparitions, but definite, vital, forcible. They were dressed as he had generally seen them, and yet they wore a kind of radiance. The mother's arm was over her boy's shoulder, but Teddy was waving his hand. Smiles were on both faces, on the lips, in the eyes, and somehow in the personality.

Bob was not frightened, but he was thrilled. It seemed to him that they stayed long enough to overcome all the doubts of his senses. Though he pressed on the brakes, the car went a number of yards before he could bring it to a standstill; and yet they never left his side. They didn't exactly move; they were only there—living, lovely, sending out love as if it had been light, wrapping him round and round. It was so vivid, so much a fact, that when the car stopped and he saw no one there, he was amazed once more to find himself alone.

He couldn't drive on at once. He lingered—staring at the spot where they had stood, looking over the wide, dim country, gazing up at the stars in their yearning infinitude. He tried to persuade himself that his own mind had projected something unreal in itself; but he couldn't throw off the extraordinary happiness the vision left behind it.

Before reaching Indiana Avenue he had decided on a course. If there were no lights in the house, he would drive on homeward. If there were he would stop. At this hour in the very early morning, unless something unusual had happened, there would of course be none.

But there were lights. At sound of his approach, Pansy gave a little silvery yelp. Jennie opened the door before he had time to ring.

"Come in, Bob. I saw your car from the window."

In the living-room Gussie and Gladys, wearing their dressing-gowns, cried out their relief at seeing him. It was the situation Teddy had foreseen, in which they were all "up in the air." As usual, Gladys was the spokesman.

"Oh, Bob, we're so glad to have you. We didn't know what to do. Momma—"

A sob stopped her, but Jennie was more calm.

"Momma's gone, Bob. Gussie went into her room about half past ten to take her the glass of milk we always put by her bed, and she was asleep."

They gathered round him as if he formed their rallying point. He took Jennie and Gussie each by the hand. Gladys held his coat by the lapel.

"You're not sorry, any of you, are you? She wanted to go; and she's gone in the sweetest of all ways."

"She won't have to hear about Teddy," Gussie wept. "That's a comfort, anyhow."

Gladys laid her head against Bob's breast.

"No; but Teddy'll have to hear about her."

Bob saw the opportunity. "No, Gladys; Teddy will not have to hear about her." He let this sink in. "Teddy—*knows*."

It was some seconds before Jennie and Gussie released his hands and Gladys let go his lapel. When they did they moved away silently. Gussie dropped on her knees at the arm of a big chair, bowing her head, and crying quietly. Jennie, a slim figure with hands behind her back, walked down the length of the room, staring at the curtained window toward Indiana Avenue. Gladys stood off, looking at Bob, nodding her head sagely, as she said:

"I thought that's what it meant when he didn't want us to come. He liked it better without saying good-by. So we all do." She gave a big, sudden sob, controlling herself as suddenly. "We're going to carry on, Bob. We're not going to show the white feather"—there was another big sob, with another successful effort to keep it back—"we're not going to show the white feather—any of us—just to please you."

"Thank you, Gladys. It will please me. But there's something that pleases me more. I'd like to tell all three of you about it."

Jennie turned round from the window, coming back down the room. She was pale, but she didn't cry. Gussie dried her eyes and was struggling to her feet when Bob laid his hand on her shoulder.

"No, Gussie; stay where you are. I'll sit down here." He dropped into the chair. "You come on this side, Jennie. Gladys—"

But Gladys had already crouched at his feet, while Jennie, balancing Gussie, sank beside the other arm of the chair. Pansy sprang up to her place on his knee.

He told them about Teddy and his mother—about Teddy's vision and his own.

"I don't say I know what to make of it. I'm not at all sure that we're obliged to explain that sort of thing unless we're scientists or psychologists. It seems to me that when beauty and comfort flash on us at a time of great need, we're at liberty to take them for what they seem to be, even if we don't understand them."

As his hand lay on the arm of the chair, Jennie kissed it again and again. It was the first spontaneous affection she had ever shown him, and, though it moved him with a stirring strange and fundamental, he felt that with the awesome things so fresh in their minds, the time had not yet come to respond to it. It was one more impulse to gather force by being restrained a little longer.

"It isn't as if this thing stood alone. A great many people have had experiences like it. They may be no more than fancy, just as some people say; but I do know this: that by what he saw Teddy was helped to do what he had to do, and that for me—"

"Yes, Bob," Gladys pleaded. "What was it for you?"

"Something real—and assuring—and beautiful—and comforting—and glorious." He uttered the words slowly, as if selecting his terms. "More than that," he went on, "it was something that's given me a happiness I can't describe but which I should like to share with you—which perhaps I shall be able to share with you—as we get to know one another better—and time goes on."

The little snub-nosed face, something like Pansy's, was lifted to him adoringly.

"Are we going to be your very own, Bob?"

"Yes, Gladys, my very own."

CHAPTER XXIX

"How can we be your very own when—you don't know anything about *me*?"

Gussie and Gladys had gone up to get some sleep. Jennie was crouched, not against the arm of the chair, as before, but against Bob's knee. Still pressing back the instincts of his passion, he did no more than let his hand rest lightly on her hair.

"I know this much about you, Jennie—that after all we've gone through we're welded together. Nothing can separate us now—no past—nor anything you could tell me."

"Is that why you don't want to know?"

"I don't want to know *now*. That's all I'm saying. Things are settled for us. They're settled and sealed. It's what we get out of so much that's terrible, that we don't have to debate that point any more. We may have to adapt ourselves to conditions we don't know anything about as yet—but it will be a matter of adapting, not of cutting loose. What should I be if I were to cut loose from you and the girls now, Jennie? What should you be if you were to cut loose from me?"

She pressed her cheek against his knee.

"We'd die," she said, simply.

"So there you are! I know what you mean. I'd die, too. That is, we mightn't die outwardly; but something would be so killed in us that we'd never be really alive again. So why try to pull apart what life has soldered into one?"

"But you don't *know*!"

"Yes, I do. I know more than you think. I know that the things that trouble you are dreams and that our life together is reality. You'll tell me the dreams as we go on—a little at a time—and I'll show you that you've waked from them. I know there are things to explain; but I know, too, that there's an explanation. But I don't want the explanation yet. I'm—I'm too tired, Jennie. I want to rest. And I can't rest unless we all rest together—you with me—and the girls with us—in a kind of quiet acceptance of the things that have happened—and in the—I hardly know how to express it—but in the tranquillity of love. I wonder if you understand me?"

She murmured:

"I don't know that I understand you, Bob—quite—but I do—I do love you. It's—it's different from love—it's—it's more. It's like—like melting into you—"

"That's love, Jennie. It isn't anything different. It's just—*love*."

"But you're so big—"

"And you're so little—so wee. Don't you see?—that's it! That's the compensating thing in nature. It's because we're different that we need each other and complete each other. I can't explain it as you'd explain a sum in arithmetic. I only *know*. You complete me, Jennie. As I've said so often, you're the other half of me—"

"And you're all of me—and more."

"Then since we know that, why not do as I said—just rest awhile? We've come up to our next ledge, as I was trying to explain to you a few months ago; I know we can camp here a bit; and if we've had some scratches in the climb we can talk of them by and by. We've learned the one big thing we needed to know—that we belong together, that we can't be torn apart. Just for now, why can't that be enough for us?"

"It will be enough if you will let me tell you that—that what I've said about Hubert wasn't—wasn't as bad as perhaps you think. I don't say it mightn't have been; it was as bad as that in—in intention; but the magic cloak of your love which you used to write about seemed to hang round me—that's the only way I can put it—"

"That'll do, Jennie. Don't try to say any more now. It's only what—in some way—I can't tell you how—I know already."

He knew she was crying, but he let her cry. He would have cried himself, only that, since the vision at Bond's Corner, he felt this extraordinary happiness. While his reason would have striven to accept the psychologist's explanation his inner self was convinced of Teddy's delight in beginning his next experiment. He himself was tired, but at peace—tired, but no longer with a need of sleep—only with the need of being quiet with a sense of fulfillment.

There were tears in her voice as she whispered, brokenly:

"Is it wrong, Bob, to feel so—so comforted—when momma is lying upstairs—and darling Teddy is —"

"We can't choose the way by which comfort comes to us, Jennie darling. Things happen which we don't want to have happen, and yet they *can* work together for good if we only give them half a chance—"

He was interrupted by the loud, sweet thrilling of a thrush. Jennie raised her head in surprise, looking at the pallid shimmer through the curtained window.

"It's day!"

They were both on their feet.

"Yes, Jennie; it's day—again. Let's go out."

They went as they were, bareheaded like children, into the purity of morning. Pansy, disturbed by the many strange auras in the house, scampered ahead of them, relieved by the escape. The street was still asleep, empty, clean, with every lawn patch and garden bed drenched with dew. Only the birds and the flowers were waking to the light.

Turning toward the cliffs and the river, their talk became more practical. Bob suggested to Jennie what his father had suggested to him. Mr. Huntley was going to Europe in connection with some new European loan. The proposal was that Bob should go with him. The trip might last six months.

"And if I go," he added, "we both go. We should have a few weeks to settle things finally here—"

"Oh, but, Bob—how could I go and—and leave the two girls? They need me more than ever now. I'm not only their sister, but their mother."

"Why shouldn't they come with us? I'd love having them. Six months over there would make a break with what they've been through here; and when we come back, Edith has things she's going to suggest—"

"That would be heavenly, Bob; but—but the money?"

"The money's all right. In my new job at the bank I've a bigger salary—five thousand; and now that dad's giving Edith ten thousand a year as allowance, he's giving me the same. That's a pretty good income to begin with, besides which, dad—you'll have to know dad, Jennie—he doesn't want me to spare any money while we're—we're passing through this—this crisis."

"And your mother's lovely. I know *that*."

"Yes; mother's splendid, too. So's Edith. You'll find that they all want—want to make up to you—and to the girls—for—"

But he didn't say for what because they came to where they saw above the cloud-wrapt city the glory of chrysoprase, turquoise, and topaz which precedes the sunrise and takes the breath away.

"Oh, look!"

"Oh, look!"

Instinctively they clasped hands as they stood on the edge of the flowery precipice, watching the chrysoprase yellow into saffron, and the turquoise melt into sapphire, while the topaz became light.

Then silently, above the wraithlike towers and cubes and battlements, slipped the rim of gold.

"There it is, Bob!"

He drew her to him, holding her close.

"Yes; there it is again, Jennie—always coming back to us! The last time we were here we had only the moonrise; and now it is the sun—the sun!"

Her head lay against his shoulder; and as the rim became an orb the cloud-built vision of Manhattan was touched with flecks of fire. Within its heart lay Broadway, Fifth Avenue, Wall Street, and the Bowery, shops, churches, brothels, and banks, all passions, hungers, yearnings, and ambitions, all national impulses worthy and detestable, all human instincts holy and unclean, all loveliness, all lust, all charity, all cupidity, all secret and suppressed desire, all shameless exposure on the housetops, all sorrow, all sin, all that the soul of man conceives of as evil and good—and yet, with no more than these few miles of perspective, and this easy play of light, translated into beauty, uplifting, unearthly, and ineffable.

THE END

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