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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SAILOR ***



"Mr. Harper was completely out of his depth." ([Page 267.](#))

THE SAILOR

BY

J. C. SNAITH

AUTHOR OF "ANNE FEVERSHAM," "BROKE OF COVENDEN,"
"ARAMINTA," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
W. A. HOTTINGER

THOMAS LANGTON
TORONTO
1916

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"Mr. Harper was completely out of his depth." *Frontispiece*

"A nigger with rings in his ears came forward with a light."

"I was a bit on last night,' she said with well assumed humility."

"Mary,' he said. 'do you remember your words eleven months ago?'"

THE SAILOR

BOOK I

I

A large woman in a torn dress stood at the gate of a rag and bone dealer's yard. The season was November, the hour midnight, the place a slum in a Midland textile town.

Hanging from the wall of the house beyond was a dirty oil lamp round which the fog circled in a hundred spectral shapes. Seen by its light, she was not pleasant to look upon. Bare-armed, bare-headed, savage chest half bare and sagging in festoons, she stood stayless and unashamed, breathing gin and wickedness. A grin of quiet joy was upon her alcoholic countenance. Nay, more than joy. It was a light of inward ecstasy, and sprang from the fact that a heavy carter's whip was in her hand.

Not many feet from the spot on which she stood was the wall of a neighbor's house. Crouching against it so that he was scarcely visible in the darkness was a boy of thirteen. Without stockings or shoes, he wore only a filthy shirt, a thing that had once been a jacket, and a tattered lower garment which left his thighs half naked.

His face was transfigured with terror.

"Enery Arper," said the woman with a shrill snigger not unlike the whinny of a horse, "Auntie said she'd wait up for you, didn't she? And she always keeps a promise, don't she, my boy?"

The figure six yards away the fog was doing its best to hide cowered yet closer to the wall.

"And what was it, Enery, that Auntie promised you if you come 'ome again with ninepence?" The wheeze of the voice had a note of humor.

The boy was wedged so close to the wall that he had barked the skin off his bare knees. The woman, watching him intently, began to trail the heavy lash on the cobbled yard.

"Said she'd make it up to a shillin' for you, didn't she? ... if you come 'ome again with ninepence. Said she'd cut the heart out o' you ... same as if it was the eye of a pertater."

A powerful arm was already loose. The eye of an expert had the distance measured to a nicety.

"Clean out."

A scream followed that was not human. The heavy whip had caught the boy round the unprotected thighs.

"I'll do ye in this time."

Mad with pain and terror the boy dashed straight at her, charging like a desperate animal, as with leisurely ferocity she prepared for a second cut at him. The impact of his body was so unexpected that it nearly knocked her down.

It was his only chance. Before she could recover her balance he was out of the gate and away in the fog. A lane ran past the yard. He was in it before the whip could reach him again; in it and running for his life.

The lane was short, straight and very narrow, with high walls on both sides. A turn to the right led through a small entry into a by-street which gave access to one of the main thoroughfares of the city. A turn to the left ended in a blank wall which formed a blind alley.

By the time the boy was halfway down the lane, he realized that in his mad terror he had turned to the left instead of to the right. There was no escape. He was in a trap.

A moment he hesitated, sick with fear. He could hear the heavy footfalls of his pursuer; as she plowed through the fog he could hear her wheezy grunts and alcoholic curses.

"Took the wrong turnin', eh?" She was within ten yards. "Hold on a minute, that's all, young man!"

In sheer desperation the boy ran on again, well knowing he could not get beyond the wall at the bottom of the lane. He could see it already. A lamp was there, faintly revealing its grim outline with fog around it.

"I'll do ye in, by God, I will!"

The voice was so near that his knees began to fail. Overcome with terror he threw himself on the ground near the wall. He had neither the strength nor the courage to try again the trick that had saved him a minute ago.

He knew she was standing under the lamp, he knew she was looking for him.

"Ah, Enery, I see yer," she said, with a savage laugh.

Content to know there was no escape for him she paused to get her breath.

The boy began to wriggle along under the lea of the wall, while she stood watching him. The wall was old, and all at once he made a discovery. Close to his head was a small hole, where three or four bricks had fallen out. It was a mere black space, leading he knew not where. But he didn't hesitate. Hardly knowing what he did, he squeezed his head through the hole. And then with the frenzied desperation of a rat in a trap he dragged his body after it.

An oath came from the woman under the lamp, a short ten yards off. She sprang at the wall. She lashed at it again and again, cursing horribly. But it was no use. Her prey had escaped with one savage cut across the heels. She continued to lash at the hole, but the boy was out of her reach.

II

Where was he? He didn't know. Half dead with fear he could hear her lashing at the wall, but she wouldn't be able to get at him.

With a great effort he rose from his hands and knees. He had hardly strength to stand up. He seemed to be in a sort of garden. There was mold under his feet. It was too dark to see it, but he knew by the smell; also it was damp and sticky. He moved a few yards and his feet became entangled among roots and bushes. And then suddenly a dog began to bark and his heart stood still.

For quite a minute he dared not move another step. The dog sounded very near, yet he could not return by the way he had come. No, in spite of the dog he must find another outlet from this garden. Very cautiously he moved a yard or two, and then stopped to listen. Shaking with terror he then moved on again.

Groping about in the fog and darkness, his teeth chattering with cold, his brain quite numb, it seemed that he would never be able to find a way out. Where was he? He had no idea of anything except the ground under his feet. Now it was a stretch of gravel, now a rubbish heap, now moist earth, now roots and bushes, and then finally, after the lapse of hours as it seemed, he came up against a wall.

It might be the wall through which he had crept. Of that he could not be sure, but yet he did not think it was. He began to follow the line of it, taking care to do so in the opposite direction to the dog whose barking was incessant. As he walked he rubbed his hands along the surface of the wall in the hope of finding a gate.

For a long time he groped through the darkness, but came upon nothing in the least resembling a gate. Again he grew desperate. He would have to wait there until daylight. But he simply dared not do that with the dog straining at his chain, seemingly, only a very few yards off.

Sick with cold and shaking in every limb he began to cry feebly. His knees were knocking, he was at the end of his wits. There was no way out of the garden, yet if he stayed in it the dog would kill him. Suddenly he decided upon the only possible course; he must climb the wall. Not knowing its height, or what there was beyond, or whether it was merely the wall of a house, he began to "shin" up it for all he was worth, grasping its rough surface as well as he could with his hands and his knees and his bare toes. There must be some kind of a top to it, and when the dog broke his chain, as every moment he threatened to do, he might not be able to reach him.

Wild and precarious struggling, in the course of which he was several times within an ace of toppling backwards into the garden, brought his numb fingers at last to a kind of coping. He had just strength enough to draw up his body on to the narrow ledge, only to find that he could not possibly remain on it. The top of the wall was sown thickly with broken glass.

He knew his hands and knees were cut, yet he could hardly feel anything. There was only one thing to do now; he must jump for it—one side or the other. He came to no deliberate decision; at that moment he was completely unbalanced in body and mind, but a voice inside him said suddenly:

"Chance it!"

Hands and knees instinctively gripping as hard as they could, he slipped over the other side. But it was impossible to keep a hold. He slipped and swayed and slipped again, and then he knew that he was falling ... falling ... falling through space into the unknown.

III

Something hit him, something so hard that it seemed to crack him as if he had been an egg. It was the earth. He lay a moment almost without sensation, and then he realized that the dog was no longer barking. Feeling reassured he made an effort to rise. He couldn't move. The sensation was horrible. Perhaps he had broken his back.

He tried several times, and because he could feel no pain the thought seemed to grow upon him. Presently, however, he found he could stand. Still dazed and shaken in every bone, he knew now that he had had the luck to fall upon soft earth. But as soon as he stood up there came a savage grinding pain in his left leg, and he lay down whimpering feebly. He then got up again, and then lay down again, and then suddenly he wished he was dead.

If only he had had the luck to kill himself! But every moment now made the wish seem more vain. He was conscious of one ache after another, in every part of his body; his hands and feet were bleeding, he was sick and sorry, but he seemed to know that death was a long way off. Suddenly he stood up again. The cold, wet earth under him was unendurable. Where was he? He set his teeth, and began to drag his left leg after him in order to find out. Where was he? This place seemed a sort of garden too. But there was no dog in it. The damp soil was merged very soon in substances less gentle to the feet; old crocks and scraps of metal and other debris, the prelude to a rubbish heap. And then without in the least expecting it, he came upon water. The question was answered. He was on the bank of the canal.

The knowledge chilled right through him. Here and now was his chance. It wouldn't take more than a minute if he jumped straight in. But the water looked still and cold and horrible. As he came to the edge he found he couldn't face it. He simply hadn't the pluck.

He limped on a few yards. It might seem easier a bit lower down. But when he came a bit lower down he couldn't face it either, and he stood at the edge of the water crying miserably.

After a while he dragged himself away from the canal. He stumbled over rubbish heaps and stones and brickbats, varied now and then with nettles and twitch grass. He came to a low bridge and crossed it. Nothing would have been easier than to slip over the side; it might have been there for the purpose; but this was one of the places where the fog had lifted a little, again he caught a glimpse of the water and again he moved on.

At last he came to some wooden railings and got through a gap where one or two had been broken. Here the fog was so thick that he lost his bearings altogether. He didn't know in the least where he was, he couldn't see his hand before him; and then he stumbled over something which jarred his hurt foot horribly. The something was a wire.

Of course, it was the railway. He remembered, almost with a feeling of excitement, that the railway was in the next field to the canal. A moment he stood trying to make out things and noises in the fog. Yes, he could hear, at least he thought he could hear, wagons being shunted in the sidings. After he had moved a few yards towards the sound, he was able to make out a red light in the distance.

For some odd reason which he couldn't explain, the feeling of excitement began to grow with the certainty that he was on the line. He could feel the metals, icy cold, smooth and slippery under his feet. He limped along until a dim shape loomed ahead. It was a signal box. By this time his excitement was almost terrible.

He stood a moment listening to the snortings of an engine which he couldn't see, and the clang-clang-clang of the wagons as they were being shunted in the sidings. And then all at once the signal under which he was shivering dropped with a great clatter, and something very deep down in him, a something he had not known existed until that moment, gave a sort of little exultant cry and told him that now was his chance.

Excited almost to the verge of joy he limped past the signal box in order to get away from its lights. If the thing was done at all it would have to be done in darkness. Presently he looked round, and with a sensation of downright terror, found that the lights of the signal box were no longer to be seen. Here the fog was quite thick again; whichever way he looked there was not a single object he could make out in the darkness. But under his bare feet he could feel the broad metals icy, smooth, inexorable.

"Now's your chance," said a gentle voice deep down in himself.

Instantly he lay full length in the six-foot way.

"Set your head on the line," said the voice.

He did as he was told. The sensation of the icy metal under his right ear was so horrible that

his heart almost stopped inside him.

"Close your eyes," said the voice, and then it said a little more gently as if it knew that already he was half dead with fear, "Stay just as you are and you'll not know nothink about it."

He closed his eyes.

"Don't move," said the voice. "Stay there and it'll not hurt you."

If he had had a God to pray to, he would have prayed.

The engine seemed a long time on the way. He daren't move hand or foot, he daren't stir a muscle of his body. But as the seconds passed an intense desire came upon him to change the position of his head. It felt so undefended sideways on. Surely it would be better if he turned it round so that....

"Don't move," the voice commanded him. "Keep just like that. Quite still."

He was bound to obey. The voice was stronger than he.

"Eyes shut, and you'll not know nothink."

It was as a mother would have spoken had he ever heard a mother speak.

... The engine was coming. He could hear it snorting and rattling in the distance. He simply daren't listen. He tried to imagine he was already dead. But a frightful crash suddenly broke in upon his brain, and then another, and then another ... he had never realized how much it took to...

"Fog signals," said the voice. "Keep just as you are ... eyes shut ... quite still ... quite still."

There it was, grunting and rattling.... Know nothink! ... there ... now...

Grunting, rattling, snorting, what a time it took! In spite of himself he opened his eyes, and found that he was still alive.

"You were on the wrong line after all."

The sound of the voice turned him faint.

IV

There was only one thing to be done now, and this he did without delay. He took his head from the metals and stood up as well as he could. His body was all numb and lifeless, but there was a queer excitement in him somewhere that for the moment made him feel almost happy. After all, he wasn't dead. And in that strange moment that was like a dream he was almost glad he wasn't. Yes, almost glad. It was hard to believe that he should wish to find himself alive, and yet as he stretched his limbs and began to move he couldn't honestly say that after all he wasn't just a little bit pleased.

He was not able to move very fast; he was so dreadfully cold for one thing, and then his left foot was hurt. But now, as he walked along the six-foot way, he felt somehow stronger than he had ever felt in his life before. Of a sudden he crossed the metals and plunged recklessly sideways into the fog. He stumbled over some signal wires and fell on his knees, got up and stumbled over some more. What did it matter? What did anything matter? After all, it was quite easy to die. He must find the right line and make a job of it.

He stopped a moment, and turned this thought over in his mind. And then he heard the voice again.

"Henry Harper, you'll never be able to do that again as long as you live."

The words were gentle and composed, but they struck him like a curse. He knew that they were true. Not as long as he lived would he be able to do again as he had just done. It was as if the judge in his wig whom he had seen that afternoon riding to the Assizes in his gilt carriage had passed a life sentence upon him. His knees began to crumble under him again; he could have shrieked with terror. Crying miserably he limped along into the sidings. He came to a lamp. All around were silent, grim shapes upon which its feeble light was cast. They were loaded wagons, sheeted with tarpaulins. With the amazing recklessness that had just been born in him he determined to find a way into one of them in the hope of being able to lie down and sleep. It was not very difficult to climb up and get under one of the sheets, which happened to have been loosely tied. Also he had the luck to find a bed that would have been more or less comfortable

had the night not been so bitterly cold. The wagon was loaded with sacks full of a substance soft and yielding; as a matter of fact, it was flour.

Henry Harper lay down with a feeling of relief and burrowed among the sacks as far as he could get. A mass of aches in body and soul, anything was better than the darkness and damp fog and icy substances cutting into his bare feet. Presently, with the sacks piled all round him, he felt less miserable, and he fell asleep.

How long he slept he didn't know. But it must have been some little time, and the sleep must have been fairly sound, for he was only awakened by a great jolt of the wagon. And before he was fully awake it had begun to move.

Hadn't he better jump out? No, let it move. Let it do anything it liked. Let it go anywhere it pleased. What did it matter? Again he fell asleep.

The next time he awoke he was shivering with cold and feeling very hungry. But the wagon was moving now and no mistake. It was still pitch dark, although the fog seemed to have lifted a bit, but the detonators which had been placed on the line were going off now and again with tremendous reports, signals flew past, and while he lay wondering what he ought to do now, he passed through an array of lights which looked like a station.

He soon came to the conclusion that it was useless to do anything. He couldn't get out of the wagon now even if he wanted to, that was unless he wanted to kill himself. Yes ... that was exactly what...

"Lie quiet. Go to sleep," a stern voice commanded him.

He tried to sleep again but soon found he couldn't. He was cold and ill, but after an attack of vomiting he felt better. Meanwhile the wagon rattled on and on through the night, and it seemed to go faster the farther it went.

Where was it going? What did it matter where it went so long as he went with it? But—the sudden thought was like a blow—that was just what did matter! They would find him lying there, and they would give him to the police, and the police would do something to him. He knew all about that, because they had done something to him once already for taking an apple off a stall in the market place. He had only taken one, but they had given him six strokes, and in spite of the cold and the pain in his left leg he still remembered just what they were like.

Perhaps he ought to jump for it. No, that was impossible with his leg like that; the wagon was going too fast. He had better lie quiet and slip out as soon as the wagon stopped at a station. He burrowed far down into the sacks once more, for the sake of the warmth, and after a while he went to sleep again.

And then he had a dream that filled him with terror. The police had found him. The police had found him in the wagon.

He awoke with a start. Rough hands were shaking him. Yes, it was perfectly true!

"Kim up ... you!"

It was the voice of the police.

He turned over with a whimper and lifted up his head, only to drop it instantly. He had been blinded by the glare of a lantern held six inches from his eyes.

"Well, damn me," a great, roaring voice surged into his ears. "Here, Ike!"

"What's up now?" said a second voice, roaring like the first.

"Come and look at this."

The boy dug his head into the sacks.

"What's up?" said voice the second.

"What about it? Must ha' got in at Blackhampton."

"Well, damn me."

The boy burrowed deeper and deeper into the sacks.

"Here, come out of it." The owner of the first voice took him by the ear and dragged him out of the wagon.

"What's yer name?"

No answer.

His captor shook him roughly.

"Enry Arper," whimpered the boy.

"Enry what?"

"Enry Arper."

"Enry Arper, is it? Well, you are going to have something to 'arp for, you are, my lad."

"Ever had the birch rod, Mister Enry Arper?" inquired the first voice with a kind of grim pleasantness.

The boy didn't answer.

"No? Not had that pleasure? The police are going to cut the skin off o' you and sarve you right. They'll larn you to trespass on to the railway. Fetch the foreman, Ike."

While the boy, securely held by the ear, stood shivering, Ike went leisurely in search of the foreman shunter. It was six o'clock, and that individual, who had been on duty since that hour the previous evening, was on the point of going home. Ike found him in the messroom, where he had gone to exchange his lantern for the small wicker basket in which he brought his meals. His name was Job Lorimer, and being large and fat and florid he sauntered up to the scene of action with an air of frank acceptance of life as it is, that seems to go as a rule with his type of physique and countenance.

"Why, blow me, Iggins, what's all this year?"

"Allow me to introjuice Mr. Enry Arper o' Blackhampton.—Mr. Job Lorimer, foreman shunter, Kentish Town."

"Owdy do, young man. Pleased to meet you." Mr. Lorimer winked solemnly at both his subordinates. "What can we do for you?"

"Twelve strokes with the birch rod," said subordinate the first.

"Eight for the first offence," said subordinate the second.

Suddenly the boy fell down senseless at the foreman shunter's feet.

V

"Well, blow me," said the Foreman Shunter. "Show the light, Pearson."

The second subordinate maneuvered the lantern. "On'y a kid. And I never see sich a state as he's in. No boots. No stockings. Just look at them feet. And his hands all of a mush. Gawd!" said the Foreman Shunter.

"What'll you do about it, Job?" said subordinate number one.

"Do about it?" said the Foreman Shunter sharply. "Do about what?"

"Might let him go this time?" said subordinate number two.

The boy opened his eyes.

"I'll take him 'ome to the missus and give him some breakfast," said the Foreman Shunter with an air of asperity.

The odd thing was that both subordinates seemed silently to approve this grave dereliction of a foreman shunter's duty.

"Can you walk, me lad?"

"O' course he can't, Iggins, not with them," said the Foreman Shunter. "Can't stand on 'em, let alone walk on 'em. Here, catch holt o' the bawsket."

The Foreman Shunter took the boy in his arms and carried him away from the goods yard as he would have carried a baby.

"Leave the bawsket at No. 12 when you come off duty," he called back to the first subordinate.

"Right, Job, I will," said the first subordinate rather respectfully, and then as the Foreman

Shunter passed out of hearing, the first subordinate said to his mate, "Fancy taking a thing like that 'ome to your missus."

In the meantime the boy was shivering and whimpering in what he felt to be the strong arms of the police.

"Let me go, mister, this once," he whined as awful recollections surged upon him. He had been getting terribly hurt all through the night, but he knew that he was going to be hurt still more now that the police had got hold of him.

But his faint whimpers and half-hearted wriggles were without effect upon the majesty of the law.

"Lie still. Keep quiet," growled the Foreman Shunter, adding as quite an impersonal afterthought, "Blast you!"

It seemed a very long time to the boy before he came to prison. Up one strange street and down another he was carried. As he lay in the arms of the police he could make out lamp after lamp and row after row of houses in the darkness.

It was a long way to the station.

"Let me go this once, mister," he began to whine again. "I'll not do it no more."

"Quiet, blast you," growled the large, rich voice of the police.

At last they came to a door, which in the uncertain light seemed exactly similar to one he had passed through on an occasion he would never forget to his dying day. He began to cry again miserably. Perhaps they would give him something to eat—they did so before—but he would not be able to eat anything this time if they offered it, not until they had done what they had to do.

He could hear sounds a little way off ... inside the prison. He gripped convulsively the rough overcoat of his captor. How vividly he remembered it all! They gave it two other boys first. Again he could hear their screams, again he could see the blood running down their bare legs.

He must try to be a man ... he remembered that one of the other boys had laughed about it afterwards ... he must try to be a man ... at least that had been the advice of a fatherly policeman in spectacles who had presided over the ceremony....

"Mother ... that you..." The terrific voice of his captor went right through him. "Where are you, Mother? Show a light."

Suddenly a door at the end of the passage was flung open. There came a blinding gush of gaslight.

"Why, Job ... whatever...!"

"I'll set him on the sophy."

"Yes, on the sophy. Goodness gracious me!"

The boy realized that he was on a horsehair sofa, and that a fine, clean, handsome-looking lady was standing with her mouth open in front of him.

"Goodness gracious, Job!"

"Come all the way from Blackhampton in a truck this morning. By the 5:40 Express."

"Well, I'm blessed if I ever see such a hobject. I'll give him some tea and a bit o' bacon, and some bread and butter, and then I'll get some o' that mud off him."

"Some of it's blood," said the Foreman Shunter.

"Yes, I see it is. Never ... did ... I ... see ... anythink ... like him. I'll make the tea; the kettle's boiling." The voice of Mother was the nearest thing to music the boy had ever heard. It was better even than that of the ladies who sang in the bar of the Wheat Sheaf, the Red Lion, and the Crown and Anchor, outside which places he had always stayed to listen when he could conveniently do so. This room was not in the least like the police station. And he was quite sure that the lady called Mother had nothing whatever to do with....

"Set him a bit nearer to the fire, Job,"—yes, the voice was music—"and put this round him."

"This" was an old coat.

VI

"I'll give it him in a saucer," said Mother. "It'll be cooler that way."

A saucer of tea was offered to the boy.

"Can you hold it, me lad?"

"Yes, lady," he said, faintly.

"Lap it up, then. Better let me try it first." She sipped a little out of the saucer. "Yes, that's right enough."

The tea was so perfectly delicious that he swallowed it at a gulp. Mother and the Foreman Shunter watched him with surprise.

"Now for a bite o' bread and butter," said Mother, sawing away at a quartern loaf.

The boy seized the bread and butter like a hungry dog. Mother and the Foreman Shunter stood looking at him with queer, rather startled faces.

"I never see the likes o' that, Job."

"No, never," said the Foreman Shunter, solemnly. "Damn me."

"What's your name, boy?"

"Enry Arper, lady."

"Enry what?"

"Enry Arper, lady."

"Could you eat a bit o' bacon, do you think?"

The boy nodded with an eagerness that made the Foreman Shunter laugh.

"I see nothing to laugh at, Job Lorimer," said his wife sharply. Tears had come into her eyes. She whisked them away with a corner of her apron, and then gave a sniff of remarkable violence. "And they call this a Christian land."

"You never heard me call it that, Mother," said the Foreman Shunter.

"More shame to you, then, Job Lorimer."

"I know this," said the Foreman Shunter, speaking in a slow and decisive manner, "whatever this country is or whatever it ain't, there's as much Christianity in it as there is in that hearthrug. And there ain't a bit more."

"Shut your head," said his wife. "And hand me that knife and I'll cut up this bit o' bacon for him."

She took a delicately browned rasher out of a hissing, delicious smelling frying-pan on the fire, cut it into very small pieces, gave it to the boy, and told him to eat it slowly.

After the boy's wants had been attended to, Mother spread a newspaper on the sofa and told him to put up his legs and rest a bit. The Foreman Shunter then passed through a door and performed wonders in the way of blowing and splashing at the scullery sink. When he reappeared his face was very red and shining and the boy was fast asleep.

"I'm thinking I'll have a bite meself," said Job, with a glance at the sofa. "And then I suppose I had better take him along to the police station."

Mother made no reply, but gave her husband a breakfast worthy of a foreman shunter. She then examined carefully the boy's hands and feet.

"I never did see such a hobject," said she. And then with an imperious air, "I'll give him a wash, that's what I'll do."

In order to carry out this resolve, she went into the scullery, filled the copper, and lit the fire.

Presently the members of the family, three small boys and a smaller girl, came down to breakfast *en route* to school. They looked wonderingly at the creature on the sofa, with great curiosity in their half frightened eyes. Their father told them sternly to keep away from it, to get on with their breakfasts, not to make a noise, and to clear off to school.

"Is it a boy or a girl?" Alfie asked Johnnie, in a thrilling whisper as soon as father had retired to help Mother in the scullery.

"A girl, o' course."

There was some excuse for Johnnie: there was something that looked exactly like a girl in the sleeping face. The rest was hidden by the coat.

The family was soon packed off to school, Johnnie "with a flea in his ear" for having cleaned his boots imperfectly the night before. Mother then cleared away the remains of breakfast, and the Foreman Shunter fetched a fair-sized zinc bath out of the washhouse, pushed back the table, and set it down before the fire. He filled it with warm water from the copper, and then gave the sleeper a shake and said,

"Now, then, boy."

The boy roused himself with a little whimper of protest. He had not been very fast asleep; the police in varying forms of their activity were still hovering round the outskirts of his mind. He began to cry miserably at the sight of the zinc bath, which supplied a forgotten link in an awful chain of memories. Yes, this was the police station after all. He remembered now quite well how they gave him a bath before they ...

"What are you crying for?" asked Mother. "I'm not going to hurt you, my boy. Nice warm bath. Bind up your feet. Then you can go to sleep again."

Perhaps it wasn't the police station, after all. Certainly that institution as he knew it had no Mother and no warm tea and no fried bacon, and no sofa and no old coat.

Mother removed the filthy shirt and the tattered knickerbockers with uncompromising but not indelicate hands.

"Them had better be burnt, Job," she said sharply, as she gave them to the Foreman Shunter to throw into the back yard.

"Better ha' done this job in the scullery, Mother," said he.

"Too cold...." She took the temperature of the bath with an expert's finger.... "I never did see anything like this poor child. There's nothing to him. Look at his ribs. You can count 'em. Ugh!" The eye of Mother had been arrested by a broad red mark across both thighs.

"That's been done with a whip," said the Foreman Shunter, grimly.

"Just look at those feet ... they are beginning to bleed again. And these pore hands. I'll get some rags and some Friar's Balsam. And his hair! Goodness gracious me! I'll have to go to the chemist's for that, I'm thinking."

It was perfectly true that Mother had to pay a visit to the chemist for the boy's hair. Nothing less than the chemist could meet the case.

In the meantime, the Foreman Shunter soaped and washed the boy thoroughly, dried him with a coarse towel, rubbed the Friar's Balsam on the mutilated hands and feet, which made them smart horribly, and bound them in clean rags. Mother then returned to perform wonders with the chemist's lotion. Afterwards she fetched a nightgown of Alfie's, put it on the boy, wrapped him up in a couple of blankets, and made him comfortable on the sofa, and the Foreman Shunter drew it a bit nearer the fire. Then the boy was told he could sleep as long as he liked. Presently he began to doze, his mind still running on the police; but certainly this was not a bit like the station.

VII

"What'll you do with him, Mother?"

It was tea time, the kitchen blind was down, the gas was lit; and mother was toasting a muffin for the Foreman Shunter, who was about to go on duty.

"He can't stay here, you know. We've as many as we can manage already."

"I know that," snapped Mother.

Like most mothers who are worth their salt, she had rather a habit of snapping at the Foreman Shunter.

The boy was feeling wonderfully comfortable. In fact, he had never felt so comfortable in his life. And he was just sufficiently awake to know that his fate was being decided upon.

"What'll you do with him, anyhow?"

"I don't know," snapped Mother.

"I don't neither. Seems to me there's nothing for it but to hand him over to the police."

The boy was fully awake now. His heart stood still. It seemed an age before mother spoke in answer to this terrible suggestion.

"Yes, of course, there's always that," she said, at last.

The boy's heart died within him.

"He can't stay here, that's a moral," said the Foreman Shunter.

"I never said he could," snapped Mother. "But I don't hold with the police myself. It means the Work'us, and you'd better not be born at all, Job Lorimer, than go to the Work'us."

"You are right there," said the Foreman Shunter.

"He wants a honest occipation," said Mother, buttering the muffin.

"He wants eddicatin' first," said the Foreman Shunter, beginning to eat the muffin. "What can you do with a kid like that? Don't know A from a bull's foot. Not fit for any decent society."

"You are right there," said Mother. "But I'm all against the Work'us, and it's no use purtending I ain't."

"Same here," said the Foreman Shunter. "But he can't stay at No. 12, Gladstone Villas, and you can lay to that."

"Did I say he could?" snapped Mother yet again.

"Very well, then."

And the Foreman Shunter went on duty.

It took five days for the *famille* Lorimer to decide the fate of Henry Harper. Five wonderful days in which he lay most of the time wrapped in warm blankets on a most comfortable sofa in a warm room. Everybody was remarkably good to him. He had the nicest things to eat and drink that had ever come his way; he was spoken to in the only kind tones that had ever been used to him in all his thirteen years of life. He was given a clean shirt of Alfie's without a single hole in it; he was given a pair of Johnnie's socks; a pair of the Foreman Shunter's trousers were cut down for him; he was given boots (Alfie's), a waistcoat (Alfie's), a jacket (Alfie's), a necktie (Johnnie's), a clean linen collar (Alfie's), a red-spotted handkerchief (Percy's—by Percy's own request). In fact, in those five days he was by way of being taken to the bosom of the family.

He was really a very decent sort of boy—at least, Father said so to Mother in Johnnie's hearing. That is, he had the makings of a decent boy. And Johnnie knew that if Father said so it must be so, because Johnnie also knew that Father was an extremely acute and searching critic of boys in general. They were all very sorry for him, and Alfie and Percy were also inclined to be sorry for Johnnie, who had made a regular mug of himself by declaring that this poor street arab was a girl. It would take Johnnie at least a year to live it down, but in the meantime they were full of pity for this miserable waif out of the gutter who could neither write nor read, who tore at his food, who called Mother "lady" and Father "mister," and said "dunno" and used strange terms of the streets in a way they could hardly understand. This poor gutter-snipe, who had been so badly knocked about, who had never had a father or a mother, or a brother or a sister, was whole worlds away from the fine assurance, the complete freedom and security of Selborne Street Higher Grade Schools. He was more like a dumb animal than a boy; and sometimes as they watched his white, hunted face and heard his strange mumblings—the nearest he got, as a rule, to human speech—it would have taken very little to convince them that such was the case, could they only have forgotten that his like was to be found at every street corner selling matches and evening papers and begging for coppers when the police were not about.

During those five days the boy's future was a sore problem for the Foreman Shunter and his wife. And it was only solved at last by a god out of a machine. Mr. Elijah Hendren was the deity in question.

That gentleman happened to look in upon the evening of the fatal fifth day. A benign, cultivated man of the world, he came regularly once a week to engage the Foreman Shunter in a game of draughts. It was also Mr. Hendren's custom on these occasions to smoke a pipe of bacca and to give expression to his views upon things in general, of which from early youth he had been an accomplished critic.

Mr. Hendren, it seemed, had a relation by marriage who followed the sea. He was a rough sort of man, in Mr. Hendren's opinion not exactly what you might call polished. Still, he followed a rough sort of trade, and this was a rough sort of boy, and Mr. Hendren didn't mind having a word with Alec—the name of the relation—and see what could be done in the matter.

"I don't know about that," said Mother. "They might ill-use him, and he's been ill-used more than enough already."

"Quite so," said Mr. Hendren politely, "huffing" the Foreman Shunter. "Quite so, M'ria"—Mr. Hendren was a very old friend of the family—"I quite agree with you there. The sea's a rough trade—rough an' no mistake—Alec can tell you tales that would make your hair rise—but as I say, he's a rough boy—and even the 'igh seas is better than the Work'us."

"Anything is better than that," said Mother. "All the same, I wouldn't like the poor child to be knocked about. You see, he's not very strong; he wants building up, and he's been used that crool by somebody that he's frit of his own shadow."

"Ah," said Mr. Hendren impressively. Impressiveness was Mr. Hendren's long suit. At that time, he was perhaps the most impressive man under sixty in Kentish Town. "Ah," said Mr. Hendren, "I quite understand, M'ria. I'll speak to Alec the first thing tomorrer and see what he can do. Not to be knocked about—but the sea's the sea, you quite understand?"

"My great-uncle Dexter sailed twelve times round the Horn," said Mother with modesty.

"Did he so?" said Mr. Hendren. "Twelve times. Before the mast?"

"Before the mast?" was a little too much for Mother, as Mr. Hendren intended it to be, having no doubt a reputation to keep up.

"I don't know about afore the mast," said Mother stoutly. "I only know that great-uncle Dexter was terrible rough ... terrible rough."

"All sailors is terrible rough," said Mr. Hendren, politely "huffing" the Foreman Shunter again. "Still, M'ria, I'll see what I can do with Alec ... although, mind you, as I say, Alec's not as much polish as some people."

"Great-uncle Dexter hadn't neither," said Mother. "Foulest-mouthed man I ever heard in my life ... and that's saying a good deal." And Mother looked volumes at the Foreman Shunter.

"That so?" said Mr. Hendren, tactfully, crowning his second king. "However ... I'll see Alec ... first thing tomorrer...."

"Thank you, 'Lijah," said the Foreman Shunter.

VIII

"Alec's" real name was Mr. Thompson. He was a very hirsute man, with whiskers all over him, and at first sight he seemed to bear a very striking resemblance to his arboreal ancestors of the largest and most terrifying species. His distinguished relation, upon introducing him in the course of the next evening to the family circle of No. 12, Gladstone Villas, seemed not in the least proud of him, and to tell the truth about Mr. Thompson, he did appear to be lacking in the graces of the town. His rough pea-jacket and huge, ungainly limbs, his gruff voice and gibbon-like aspect might all have been forgiven on the ground of his calling, but unfortunately he began by expectorating with really extraordinary freedom and vehemence into the kitchen fire, and from that moment it was quite impossible for Mother or any other responsible person to render Mr. Thompson in terms of the higher humanity. This was a pity, because Mr. Thompson had evidently a range of private qualities.

Truth to tell, Mother did not take to Mr. Thompson as kindly as she might have done, and it needed all Mr. Hendren's tact, which was very remarkable even for one who was "wholesale," to enable her to have any truck with "Alec" at all.

"You must be reasonable, M'ria," said Mr. Hendren, urbanely. "It's either the Work'us for this boy or it's the 'igh seas. If it's the latter, you couldn't have a better man than Alec to look after him; if it's the former, of course I wash my hands of the matter."

This flawless logic was strongly approved by the Foreman Shunter.

"'Lijah speaks to the p'int," he affirmed, with a rather doubtful glance in the direction of Mr. Thompson, who was again expectorating into the fire with a display of virtuosity that was almost uncanny.

In the meantime, the boy stood white and trembling in the midst of Johnnie and Alfie and Percy while his fate hung in the balance. Not one of these had taken kindly to Mr. Thompson, in spite of the fact that at frequent intervals the admired Mr. Hendren assured their father and mother that "he was a first-rate seaman."

"Now, this is the crux of the matter," said Mr. Elijah Hendren, bringing in the word "crux" as though he well knew it was only "wholesale" people who were allowed to use such a word at all. "Either the boy goes to sea with Alec, and he couldn't have no better to take charge of him—Alec's a first-rate seaman—else he goes to the Work'us. Now, my boy, which is it to be?" And Mr. Hendren fairly hypnotized the poor waif in father's trousers cut down with the large and rolling eye of an accepted candidate for the honorary treasurership of the Ancient Order of Hedgehogs.

"Now, me lad, which is it to be?" Mr. Hendren's forefinger wagged so sternly that the boy began to weep softly. "Alec'll not eat you, you know. If he says he'll see you through, he'll see you through. Am I right, Alec?"

"Yep," growled Alec, beginning to threaten a further assault upon the kitchen fire.

"Very well, then," said Mr. Hendren. "There you are. What can you ask fairer? You can either go with Alec—Mr. Thompson to you, my boy—else you can be handed over to the police, and they'll send you to the Work'us. Now, boy, which is it to be?" Mr. Hendren put the question with awful impressiveness. "It's a free country, you know. You can take your choice: Alec—Mr. Thompson—or the Work'us?"

If Henry Harper had had a doubt in his mind as to which was the less grim of these alternatives, the casual mention of the police undoubtedly laid it at rest. Mr. Thompson looked capable of eating a boy of his age, but after all that was very little compared with what the police, as Henry Harper knew them, took a pride in doing in the ordinary discharge of their functions.

"I'll go wiv 'im, mister," said Henry Harper, in sudden desperation.

He then hid himself behind his friend Johnnie.

"With Mr. Thompson?"

"Yes, mister."

Henry Harper began to sob, and Alfie and Percy at least didn't blame him. Mr. Thompson was the nearest thing to the wicked ogre in "Jack and the Beanstalk" they had ever seen in their lives.

However, their mother who had the heart of a lion, who was afraid of nothing so long as it was human—and even Mr. Thompson was apparently that—took upon herself to have a little serious discourse with the man of the sea.

"I suppose, Mr. Thompson, this is a decent ship to which you will be taking the poor child?" said she.

It was necessary for Mr. Thompson to roll his eyes fearfully before he could do justice to such a leading question. He was then understood to say in his queer, guttural voice, which seemed to come out of his boots, that the ship was right enough, although a bit hungry at times as all ships were.

"Is the captain of the vessel a gentleman?" demanded Mother at point-blank range.

Mr. Thompson was understood to say that when the Old Man was all right he was all right, but when in drink he was a devil.

"All men are," said Mother, succinctly. "That's the worst of it. But I understand you to say that at ordinary times the captain's a gentleman."

"Yep," said Mr. Thompson, comprehensively.

In spite, however, of this valuable testimonial to the captain's character and status, Mother seemed very loath to put her trust in him or in Mr. Thompson either. For one thing that admirable seaman expectorated again into the kitchen fire, but that apart, the note of primeval extravagance in his outward aspect hardly commended itself to Mother.

"The child is very young," she said, "to be going to sea. And you sailors has rough ways—my great-uncle Dexter always said so. And he was a rough man if you like—not as rough as you are, Mr. Thompson, but still he was rough. And as I say, the boy is not grown yet, there's nothing to him, as you might say; still, as it's you, Mr. Thompson, or the Work'us, I suppose it'll have to be you."

"Quite so, M'ria," interposed Mr. Hendren with marked urbanity.

"Now you quite understand," said Mother. "Mr. Thompson, I hold you responsible for this boy. You'll be good to him, and stand his friend, and teach him seafaring ways, and you'll see that nobody ill-uses him. You'll promise that now, Mr. Thompson. This boy's delicate, and as I say, he's already been knocked about so crool, he's frit of his own shadow."

Mr. Thompson promised with becoming solemnity that he would see no harm came to the boy. Thereupon he seemed to go up a little in Mother's estimation. Moreover, he suddenly took an odd fancy to Johnnie. He produced a foreign penny from his pea-jacket, offered it to Johnnie

and asked him what he thought of it, and he seemed so gratified that Johnnie—who had about as much imagination as the leg of a chair—was not in the least afraid of him, that he told Johnnie to keep the penny, and then he fairly took away the breath of everybody, Mother included, by promising magnificently to bring Johnnie a parrot from the West Indies.

Even Mr. Elijah Hendren was impressed by this princely offer on the part of his kinsman by marriage.

"He's rough, o' course," whispered Mr. Elijah Hendren to the Foreman Shunter, "but he means it about the parrot. That's the kind o' man he is, although, mind you, I don't say he's polished."

Whatever doubts might have been entertained for the future of Henry Harper, the parrot somehow seemed to soften them. Even Mother felt that to express misgiving after that would be in bad taste. Mr. Thompson promised that he would see the old man in the course of the morrow, as the *Margaret Carey* had to sail on Friday, but he had no doubt it would be all right as they never minded a boy or two. And then the Foreman Shunter sent Johnnie to the end of the street for a quartern of rum, as there was only beer in the house, and that mild beverage was not the slightest use to a sailor.

Johnnie walked on air. At every shop window he came to he stopped to examine his foreign penny. But what was that in comparison with a real live parrot all the way from the West Indies? That night, Johnnie was the happiest boy in Kentish Town. He slept with the foreign penny under his pillow, and his dreams were of unparalleled magnificence.

And on the sofa in the kitchen below, tossed and dozed the unhappiest boy in Kentish Town. He had escaped the police by a miracle, he was quit of Auntie, he was free of the selling of matches, but tomorrow or the day after he was leaving the only friends he had ever known. As for the sea and Mr. Thompson and the *Margaret Carey*, there was some subtle but deadly instinct in him that had warned him already. There would be no Mother to wash him and bind his wounds, or to give him fried bacon and see that he came to no harm.

Twice he woke in the middle of the night, sweating with fear, and wildly calling her name.

IX

The next day it rained incessantly from morning till night, and there was just a faint hope in the boy's mind that it might prevent Mr. Thompson coming to fetch him. He clung desperately to this feeble straw, because it was the only one he had, but he was not such a fool as to think that Mr. Thompson was the kind of man who stays at home for the weather. Therefore it did not surprise him at all when he was solemnly told that evening about six o'clock, just after he had had his tea, that Mr. Thompson had come for him.

Sure enough Mr. Thompson had. Moreover, he had come in a cab. All the same, he managed to enter the kitchen with the water running off his pea-jacket on mother's spotless floor, and as he stood blinking fiercely in the gas light, he looked bigger and hairier and less like a human being than ever.

Henry Harper's one instinct was to take a tight hold of Mother's apron. And this he did in spite of the fact that Johnnie and Alfie and Percy were sitting round the table, drinking tea and eating bread and jam. Mother told Henry Harper very gently he must be a man, whereupon he did his best to meet Mr. Thompson boldly. But he made a very poor job of it indeed.

Mr. Thompson, whose speech could only be followed with certainty by specialists, was understood to ask whether the boy's sea chest was ready.

"He has only the clothes he stands in," said Mother, tartly.

Mr. Thompson said that was a pity.

The boy hadn't even an overcoat, and Mother decided to give him quite a good one of Johnnie's—Johnnie bravely saying he didn't mind, although he minded a goodish bit, as he was rather proud of that particular garment.

"Your father will buy you another," said Mother. "I couldn't think of sending any boy to sea without an overcoat."

She also made up a bundle of odds and ends for the boy: a flannel shirt, two much-darned pairs of drawers, a rather broken pair of boots, a knitted comforter, and a pot of marmalade. She then gave him a kiss and put an apple into his hand and told him to be a good boy, and then he was gone.

X

Henry Harper followed Mr. Thompson into the cab that was waiting at the street door. He sat all alone opposite that ogre in the darkness, holding on desperately to the bundle and the apple that Mother had given him. He didn't venture to speak; he hardly ventured to breathe while the cab rumbled and tumbled through the rain. He didn't know where he was going. He only knew that he was going to sea, and he didn't even know what the sea was like, except that it was water and people got drowned in it. There was no sea at Blackhampton.

Mr. Thompson had not much conversation. This may have been due to his superior rank, or because he was one of those strong, silent men who prefer actions to words after the manner of the heroes in the best modern romances. Not that the boy was acquainted with any of these; he could neither read nor write; indeed, it was quite true what the Foreman Shunter had said, "that he didn't know A from a bull's foot," although, of course, that was speaking figuratively.

Mr. Thompson sat grim and silent as the tomb. But suddenly, by the light of a passing lamp, the boy saw his right hand enter his pocket and come out with a large clasp knife in it. This he opened at his leisure. And then all at once a wave of terror swept over Henry Harper. This man was Jack the Ripper.

That famous person was then at his zenith. He had lately committed his fourth horrible murder in Whitechapel. The boy knew that as an undoubted fact, because he had cried the crime in the streets of Blackhampton, and had sold out twice in an hour. Moreover, he knew as a fact—extremely well informed contemporaries had told him—that Jack the Ripper was a sailor.

It was no use attempting to struggle or cry out. Besides, he was now paralyzed with terror. The only thing there was to hope for was that the Ripper would kill him before he started to mutilate.

They passed another street lamp, and the boy saw that Mr. Thompson had something else in his hand. It was a fantastically shaped metal case. The murderer opened it coolly and took out a queer, dark looking substance. He cut a piece off with his knife, put it in his mouth, then closed the blade and returned it to his pocket. The boy began to breathe again. It was a plug of tobacco.

All the same, Henry Harper knew he was not yet out of the wood. He was as sure as he was sitting in a four-wheeler—a thing he had never done before in his life—that this large and hairy sailor with the clasp knife was the murderer. Moreover, as he cast terrified glances through the wet windows into the sodden streets, he was certain this was Whitechapel itself. Everything looked so dark and mean and sullen, with noisome alleys on every hand and hardly any lamps to see them by, that full-grown women, let alone boys of thirteen, could be done to death in them without attracting the police.

It was not a bit of use trying to escape. Jack the Ripper would cut his throat if he moved hand or foot. The best thing he could do was to keep still. That was all very well, but he was sick with fear. He was being taken into the heart of Whitechapel to be done to death as Mary Ann Nichols and Catherine Morton—he was always very good at remembering names—and the other victims had been. He was familiar with all the details; they had been enormously discussed; there wasn't a newsboy in Blackhampton who hadn't his own private theory of these thrilling crimes. For instance, Henry Harper himself had always maintained that the sailor was a big sailor, and that he had a black beard. He had little thought a week ago when he had presented this startling theory to young Arris with a certain amount of intellectual pride that he would so soon be in a position to prove it.

They came to some iron gates. The cab stopped under a lamp. Mr. Thompson put his head out of the window. If the boy had not been petrified with terror now would have been his chance. But he couldn't move.

The Ripper began to roar like a bull at some unseen presence, and soon the gates moved back and the cab moved on. And then about a minute later, for the first time in his life, the boy saw the mast of a ship. He knew it was a ship. He had seen pictures in shop windows. There was one shop window in particular he frequented every Friday evening, which always displayed the new number of the *'Lustrated London News* and the *'Lustrated London News* was great on ships. This was a kind of glorified canal boat with masts, but according to the *'Lustrated London News*, and there could be no higher authority, it was undoubtedly a ship.

In his excitement at seeing it, he nearly forgot who was sitting opposite. Perhaps he wasn't going to be mutilated in Whitechapel after all. There might be yet a chance; the murderer had not again taken his knife out of his pocket. But suddenly another special edition flashed through his memory: "'Orrible crime on the 'Igh Seas. Revolting Details." And then he knew that he was being decoyed to the high seas, in order that this man could work his will upon him at his leisure

in circumstances of unspeakable ferocity.

The cab stopped again. Mr. Thompson opened the door and got out. It was still raining very hard. There was a lamp close by, and the boy could see the water falling in long, stealthy, narrow rods. The murderer told him roughly to come out. He came out at once. Had he had the pluck of a mouse, he would have run for it. But he was quaking and trembling, his knees were letting him down.

The driver of the cab, a grotesque in an oilskin cape with a hat to match it, dragged a large wooden box tied round with cord off the roof of his machine and with the help of its owner lowered it to the ground. By the time this was done there came out of the darkness three or four strange men, who moved with the stealth of those used to the night. They gathered round the box and its owner with humble offers of their assistance.

The boy's first thought was that these scarecrows were confederates of the eminent murderer. But this theory was soon shattered. At any rate, if confederates they were, Mr. Thompson seemed to have little use for them at the moment. Without a word of warning he suddenly ran boot first at one of these wretches and sent him spinning into the mud. The man fell with a howl and rose with a curse, and then made off into the darkness muttering imprecations, in the wake of his companions who had disappeared already.

The boy could only feel that murderers of Mr. Thompson's class act according to their tastes in these little matters; but the cabman was rather impressed. He had made up his mind to stand out for "eight and a kick," but he now took what was given him without a word. As a matter of fact, he was given five shillings, which was considerably under his legal fare, but he did not venture to question Mr. Thompson's arithmetic. He moved off at once, but proceeded to take it out of his wretched horse as soon as he got through the dock gates.

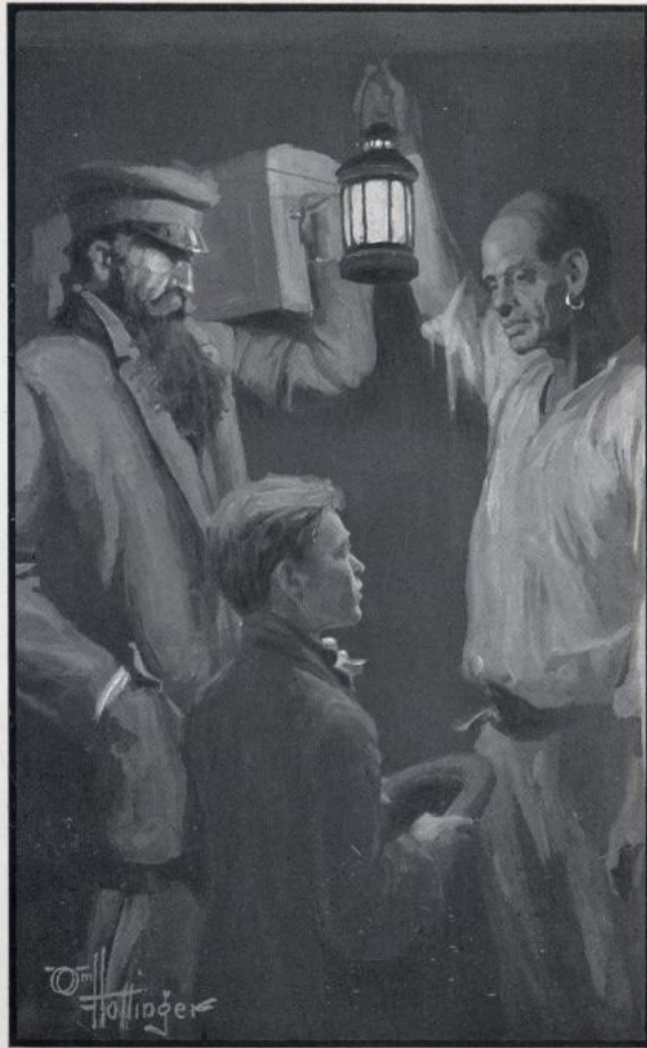
In the meantime, Mr. Thompson was left standing beside his sea chest in the rain, and Henry Harper stood beside it also, convulsively clutching in one hand the bundle Mother had made up for him and in the other the apple she had given him.

Should he run for it? What was the use? All at once Mr. Thompson shouldered his sea chest with an air of quiet ferocity, and growled something that sounded like, "Git forrard, bye."

XI

Expecting to be kicked into the sea if he didn't do as he was told, the boy got forrard at once. Mr. Thompson and his sea chest followed close upon his heels. Henry Harper crossed a couple of crazy planks with water lying far down underneath them, Mr. Thompson and his sea chest always just behind him, and then to his wonder and dismay he suddenly realized that he was on the deck of a ship.

He hadn't time to take his bearings, or to make out at all clearly what the deck of a ship was like, before he was descending a ladder into total darkness which smelled like a sewer. A nigger with rings in his ears came forward with a light, and Mr. Thompson asked if the Old Man was in the cabin, and the nigger said, "Yessah."



"A nigger with rings in his ears came forward with a light."

"A nigger with rings in his ears came forward with a light."

Mr. Thompson led Henry Harper to the cabin, which was a kind of room, about twelve feet by ten, miserably lit by a single dirty oil lamp. Here the smell of sewage that pervaded the vessel was rather genteelly mingled with an odor of rum. The Old Man was in the cabin right enough. He was not a very prepossessing old man to look at; to begin with, he hardly looked old at all. He was just a rough, middle-aged seaman, with a sodden, half-savage face, with a peculiar light in it that somehow reminded the boy of Auntie when she had been to the public. It might almost have been taken for humor, had not humor some little reputation as a Christian quality.

"Bye, sir," said Mr. Thompson, briefly.

"Bye," said the Old Man, with equal brevity. He then passed half a bloodshot eye over the shrinking figure in Johnnie's overcoat and father's trousers cut down, and said, "Git forrard, bye," in a tone that no boy of judgment would ever hesitate for a single moment to obey.

Henry Harper got forrard at once, although he didn't know where. He found his way out of the cabin somehow, and made ahead for a light that was suspended in an iron bracket. Under this he stood a moment trying to collect himself, or as much of himself as he had managed to bring aboard the ship, when Mr. Thompson came along and led him through various queer sorts of passages and up a flight of stairs to a place which he called the cook's galley.

The cook, a fearful looking Chinaman, received Henry Harper with a scowl, which, however, was merged at once in an extreme servility towards Mr. Thompson who was clearly a person of high consequence aboard the *Margaret Carey*. In deference to Mr. Thompson's wishes, the cook, whose name was Sing, showed the boy a sort of small manhole between the copper and the galley stairs where he could put his gear, and also where he could creep in and rest whenever his duties permitted.

"All snuggee," said Sing, with an ingratiating grin for the exclusive benefit of Mr. Thompson. Moreover, still further to impress Mr. Thompson with his humanity, Sing kindly presented the boy with a piece of moldy biscuit and a couple of scraps of broken meat. Mr. Thompson, having formally started Henry Harper on his career, withdrew. Sing resumed his scowl and pointed to an inverted bacon box on which his new assistant could sit and eat his supper.

But Henry Harper found very little in the way of appetite. The biscuit was so hard that it seemed to require a chisel, and the meat so salt and tough that any expenditure of jaw power was unlikely to prove a profitable investment. There still remained the apple that Mother had given him. But not for a moment did he think of eating that. It would have been sacrilege. Mother had her shrine already in his oddly impressionable mind. No matter how long he might live, no matter where his wanderings might take him, he never expected to come across such a being again. He wrapped the apple reverently in Percy's red-spotted handkerchief. He would always keep that apple in order that he might never forget her.

Sing, like Mr. Thompson, was not a great hand at conversation. Nevertheless, he had his share of natural curiosity. His wicked little yellow eyes never left the boy's face. He seemed unable to make up his mind about him, but what sort of a mind it was that he had to make up greatly puzzled and perplexed Henry Harper, who had only once seen a real live Chinaman before, and that was through the open door of the worst public in Blackhampton. Sing looked capable of anything as he sat scowling and smoking his pipe, but it was a subtler and deeper sort of capability than the sheer Jack-the-Ripperishness of Mr. Thompson. It was reasonably certain that Mr. Thompson would be content with a knife, although he might do very fearful things with it in moments of ecstasy; with Sing there might be every sort of horror known to the annals of crime.

After Sing had gazed in silence at Henry Harper for about an hour, he pointed to the manhole, which meant that the boy had better get to bed. Henry Harper took the hint as quickly as possible, not in the least because he wanted to get to a bed of that kind, but because the Chinaman seemed of a piece with Mr. Thompson and the Old Man. Implicit obedience was still the only course for a boy of judgment. Those wicked little yellow eyes, about the size of a pig's, held a promise he dared not put into words. Henry Harper had still a morbid dread of being hurt, in spite of the fact that he had been hurt so often.

With a heart wildly beating, he crawled into the manhole and he knew at once, oversensitive as he was, that it was full of things that crept. He shuddered and nearly screamed, but fear of the Chinaman restrained him. It was so dark in that chasm between the copper and the galley stairs that he couldn't see his hand when he held it in front of him; also it was so hot, in spite of the cold November rain he had left in the good and great world outside this death trap, that he could hardly breathe at first; yet as soon as he had got used to the temperature he took off Johnnie's overcoat and wrapped his face in it in order to prevent unknown things crawling over it.

He didn't cry himself to sleep. Tonight he was too far gone for tears. If only he had had a bit of pluck he would have chosen the police. The thing they did was awful, but after all it could not compare with a 'orrible crime on the 'igh seas. The police did one thing sure and you knew the worst—but there were a thousand ways of murder, and very likely more for Jack the Ripper and a Chinaman.

He hardly dared to breathe, indeed was scarcely able to do so, with Johnnie's overcoat covering his eyes and mouth. But even as he lay gasping in a sweat of fear, there was just one thing, and the only one he had to which to cling. And he clung to it desperately. It was the sacred apple he had had the luck to wrap in the red-spotted handkerchief which Percy had given him.

Sleep was not to be thought of. Something was racing and hammering upon his brain. After a lapse of time which seemed like hours, but was only twenty minutes in point of fact, he began to understand that this turmoil had a definite meaning. An idea was being born.

When at last it burst upon his mind it was nothing very remarkable. "Henry Harper, you must find your way out of this before it's too late. Never mind the police. You must find your way out of this, Henry Harper."

He took Johnnie's overcoat from his face and sat up and listened. It was absolutely pitch dark. At first there was not a sound. Then he thought he could detect a gentle scratching, a noise made by a rat near his head. But he could hear nothing of the Chinaman. No doubt he had gone to bed. The boy rose with stealthy care, and well it was that he did, otherwise he would have hit his head against the under side of the galley stairs.

It was so dark that he couldn't see the opening from the manhole into the galley itself. But he found it at last and climbed out cautiously. The lamp in the galley had gone out; there was not a glimmer of light anywhere. He had no knowledge of the Chinaman's whereabouts, he could not find the opening which led into the other parts of the ship. He groped about as noiselessly as he could, hoping to avoid the one and to find the other, and then suddenly there came a truly terrible sound. He had put his foot on the Chinaman's face.

He heard the Chinaman get up in his rage; he even knew where he was although it was too dark to see him. His heart stood still; the Chinaman was feeling for him in the darkness; and then he was obliged to feel himself for the Chinaman in order to avoid him.

Suddenly he caught a glimpse of a light. He ran towards it not knowing what else to do. But in almost the same moment the Chinaman had seen it too, and also had seen him go. Near the light was a ladder which ascended to some unknown region. The boy raced up the ladder with the Chinaman upon his heels. As soon as he got to the top the sharp, wet air caught his face. He was

on the deck. He dashed straight ahead; there was no time for any plan. The Chinaman was at the top of the ladder already and trying to catch him by the leg.

Running like mad, the boy gained a yard or two along the deck. But he had no real chance of escape, for he had not the least notion of his bearings or of the hang of the ship. And luck did not favor him at all. Suddenly he tripped over an unseen obstacle and fell heavily, and then the Chinaman came down on him with both knees, fastening fingers upon his throat.

He was not able to cry out, the Chinaman saw to that. But if Sing was going to kill him, he could only hope it would be soon. This, however, was not the cook's intention. He merely led Henry Harper back to the galley by the ear, gave his arm a ferocious twist which made the boy gasp, and then sent him flying head-first into the stifling darkness of the manhole with the help of a well-timed boot. The boy pitched in such a way that he was half stunned, and when at last he came fully to himself light was creeping through a tiny chink in the manhole, and he knew that it was morning. Also he knew by the curious lapping sound made by the waves under the galley stairs that the ship was already at sea.

XII

Yes, it was true, the ship was already at sea. He was lost. And hardly was there time for his mind to seize this terrible thought when the Chinaman looked into the manhole. As soon as he saw the boy was sitting up, a broad grin came on his face and he beckoned him out with a finger.

The boy obeyed at once, and tumbled unsteadily into the galley. But as soon as he tried to stand on his legs he fell down. The Chinaman with a deep smile pointed to the bacon box, and the boy sat on it, and then tried as well as he could to prevent his head from going round.

Luckily, for the time being, the Chinaman took no further notice of Henry Harper, but set about the duties of the day. It was nearly six bells of the morning watch, and he had to serve breakfast for the crew. This consisted partly of a curious mixture that was boiling in the copper, which was called wet hash, and was esteemed as a luxury, and partly of an indescribable liquid called coffee, which was brewed out of firewood or anything that came handy, and was not esteemed as anything in particular by the most catholic taste.

Long before the boy's head had done spinning six bells was struck, and the members of the crew came into the galley with their pannikins. There were sixteen all told, excluding the Old Man and the superior officers, of whom Mr. Thompson was the chief. Henry Harper's breath was taken away by the sight of this wolfish looking lot. He had seen distinguished members of the criminal classes massed around the Judge's carriage at the Assizes at Blackhampton, just for old sake's sake as it were, and to show that they still took a friendly interest in the Old Cock; but these were tame and rather amateurish sort of people compared with the crew of the *Margaret Carey*.

As a body of seamen the crew of the *Margaret Carey* was undoubtedly "tough." Dagoes, Yanks, Dutchmen and a couple of not very "white" Britishers; they came into the galley, one after another, took up their pannikins of wet hash, and as soon as they saw and smelled it, told Mr. Sing what they thought of him in terms of the sea. Henry Harper was chilled to the marrow. He was still seated on the bacon box, his head was still humming; but he seemed to remember that Auntie, even on Saturday nights, when she came home from the public, was not as these.

At the end of a fortnight the boy was still alive. At first he was so dreadfully ill that his mind was distracted from other things. And as he did not lack food as soon as he could eat it, body and soul kept together in a surprising way.

He was still in great dread of the Chinaman and of the nights of torment in the crawling darkness of the manhole under the galley stairs. But he kept on doing his job as well as he could; he took care to be alert and obliging to whomever crossed his path; he tried his honest best to please the Chinaman by saving him as much trouble as possible, thus at the end of a fortnight not only his life was intact, but also his skin.

The truth was he was not a bad sort of boy at all. For one thing he was as sharp as a needle: the gutter, Dame Nature's own academy, had taught him to be that. He never had to be told a thing twice. Also he was uncommonly shrewd and observant, and he very soon came to the conclusion that the business of his life must be to please the Chinaman.

In this task he began to succeed better than he could have hoped. Sing, for all his look of unplumbed wickedness, did not treat him so badly as soon as he began to make himself of use. For one thing he got a share of the best food that was going, the scraps from the cabin table, and this was a very important matter for one of the hungriest boys aboard one of the hungriest ships athwart the seas.

In the course of the third week, Henry Harper began to buck up a bit. His first experience of the motions of a ship at sea had made him horribly unwell. As night after night he lay tossing and moaning as loudly as he dared in the stifling darkness between the boiler and the galley stairs, without a friend in the world and only an unspeakable fate to look forward to, he felt many times that he was going to die and could only hope the end would be easy.

However, he had learned already that the act of death is not a simple matter if you have to compass it for yourself. Every morning found him limp as a rag, but always and ever alive. And then gradually he got the turn. Each day he grew a little stronger, a little bolder, so that by the end of the third week he had even begun to feel less afraid of the Chinaman.

In the middle of the fourth week, he had a bit of real luck. And it came to him in the guise of an inspiration. It was merely that one night when the time came for turning into that stifling inferno which he still dreaded with all his soul, he literally took his courage in his hands. He spread Johnnie's overcoat in the farthest corner of the galley itself, made a pillow of the bundle that Mother had given him, and then without venturing a look in the direction of the Chinaman very quietly lay down and waited, with beating heart, for the worst.

Strange to say, the worst never happened. For a long time he expected a boot in his ribs. Every nerve was braced to receive it. But the slow minutes passed and no boot came. All this time Sing sat on the bacon box, smoking solemnly, and taking an occasional sip of grog from his pannikin. And then suddenly Henry Harper went quite deliciously to sleep, and dreamed that he was in the West Indies, and had caught a real live parrot for Johnnie.

It was a really wonderful sleep that he had. He did not wake once till four bells struck in the morning watch, the proper time for starting the duties of the day. These began with lighting the fire and filling the copper. He rose from his corner a new boy, and there was Sing lying peacefully in the middle of the floor, not taking notice of anyone. And the odd thing was that during the day Sing showed him no disfavor; and when night came and it was time once more to turn in, Henry Harper lay down again in the corner of the galley. There was now no need to await the arrival of the Chinaman's boot.

XIII

The floor of the galley gave Henry Harper his first start on the road to manhood. He got so far along it as to be only a little afraid of the Chinaman. But that was his limit for some little time to come. Meanwhile he continued in the punctual discharge of his duties, and for some months things seemed to go fairly well with him. But at last there came a fatal day when the sinister figure of Mr. Thompson appeared once more upon the scene. The boy was told briefly and roughly that the ship was short-handed, that he was wanted aft at once, and that he had better take his truck along with him.

From that hour the current of his life was changed. For many a day after that he was to know neither peace nor security. He had been called to bear a part in the terrific fight that went on all day and all night, between this crazy windjammer and the forces of nature.

For days and weeks the brain of Henry Harper was a confused horror of raging seas, tearing winds, impossible tasks, brutal and savage commands. He did his best, he kept on doing it even when he didn't know what he was doing, but what a best it was! He was buffeted about the slippery decks by the hand of man or the hand of nature; he understood less than half of what was said to him, and even that he didn't know how to set about doing. The *Margaret Carey* was so ill found that she seemed at the mercy of the great gales and the mighty seas of the Atlantic. She was flung and tossed to all points of the compass; her decks were always awash; her furious and at times half demented Old Man was always having to heave her to, but Henry Harper was never a hand's turn of use on the deck of that hell ship.

He was so unhandy that in the port watch they christened him "Sailor." There wasn't a blame thing he could do. He was so sick and sorry, he was so scared out of his life that the Old Man used to get furious at the mere sight of him.

For weeks the boy hardly knew what it was to have a whole skin or a dry shirt. The terrible seas got higher and higher as they came nearer the Horn, the wind got icier, the Old Man's temper got worse, the ship got crazier, the crew got smaller and smaller by accidents and disease; long before Cape Stiff was reached in mid-Atlantic the *Margaret Carey* was no habitation for a human soul.

Sailor's new berth in the half-deck was always awash. Every time he turned into it he stood a good chance of being drowned like a rat in a hole. The cold was severe. He had no oilskins or any proper seaman's gear, except a pair of makeshift leggings from the slop chest. Day after day he was soaked to the skin, and in spite of Johnnie's overcoat and all the clothes in the bundle Mother

had given him, he could seldom keep dry.

Every man aboard the *Margaret Carey*, except the Old Man and Mr. Thompson, and perhaps the second mate, Mr. MacFarlane, in his rare moments of optimism, was convinced she would never see Frisco. The crew was a bad one. Dagoes are not reckoned much as seamen, the Dutchmen were sullen and stupid, none of the Yankees and English was really quite white. The seas were like mountains; often during the day and night all available hands had to be literally fighting them for their lives.

All through this time Henry Harper found only one thing to do, and that was to keep on keeping on. But the wonder was he was able even to do that. Often he felt so weak and miserable that he could hardly drag himself along the deck. He had had more than one miraculous escape from being washed overboard. His time must come soon enough, but he could take no step to bring it nearer, because he felt that never again would he be able to arrange the matter for himself. Something must have snapped that night he had waited on the wrong rail for the engine. Bowery Joe, the toughest member of the crew, a regular down-east Yankee, who liked to threaten him with a knife because of the look on his face, had told him that he ought to have been born a muddy dago, and that he was "short of sand."

There seemed to be something missing that others of his kind possessed. But he had many things to worry about just then. He just kept on keeping on—out of the way of the Old Man as well as he could—out of the way of the fist of the second mate—out of the way of the boots and the knives of all and sundry—out of the way of the raging, murderous sea that, after all, was his only friend. The time came when sheer physical misery forced him to be always hiding from the other members of the crew.

One morning the Old Man caught him skulking below after all hands had been piped on deck to get the canvas off her. The Old Man said not a word, but carried him up the companion by the nape of the neck as if he had been a kitten, brought him on the main deck, and fetched him up in the midst of his mates at the foot of the mast. He then ordered him aloft with the rest of them.

In absolute desperation Sailor began to climb. He knew that if he disobeyed he would be flung into the sea. Clinging, feet and claws, like a cat, for the sake of the life he hadn't the courage to lose, he fought his way up somehow through the icy wind and the icier spray that was ever leaping up and hitting him, no matter how high he went. He fought his way as far as the lower yardarm. Here he clung helpless, dazed with terror, faint with exhaustion. Commands were screamed from below, which he could not understand, which he could not have obeyed had he understood them, since he now lacked the power to stir from his perch. His hands were frozen stiff; there was neither use nor breath in his body; the motions of the ship were such that if he tried to shift a finger he would be flung to the deck he could no longer see, and be pulped like an apple. So he clung frantically to the shrouds, trying to keep his balance, although he had merely to let go an instant in order to end his troubles. But this he could not do; and in the meantime commands and threats were howled at him in vain.

"Come down, then," bawled the Old Man at last, beside himself with fury.

But the boy couldn't move one way or the other. At that moment it was no more possible to come down than it was to go up higher.

They had to roll up the sails without his aid. After that the fury of the wind and the sea seemed to abate a bit. Perhaps this was more Henry Harper's fancy than anything else; but at least it enabled him to gather the strength to move from his perch and slide down the futtock shrouds to the deck.

The Old Man was waiting for him at the foot of the mast. He took him by the throat.

"One o' you fetch me a bight o' cord," he roared quietly. He had to roar to make himself heard at all, but it was a quiet sort of roar that meant more than it could express.

He was promptly obeyed by two or three. There was going to be a bit of fun with Sailor.

Frank, an Arab and reckoned nothing as a seaman, was the first with the cord, but Louis, a Peruvian, was hard on his heels. The boy wondered dimly what was going to happen.

The Old Man took hold of his wrists and tied them so tightly behind him that the double twist of cord cut into his thin flesh. But he didn't feel it very much just then. The next thing the boy knew was that he was being dragged along the deck. Then he realized that he was being lashed to the mizzen fife-rail while several of the crew stood around grinning approvingly. And when this was done they left him there. They left him unable to sit or to lie down, or even to stand, because the seas continually washed his feet from under him. There was nothing to protect him from the pitiless wind of the Atlantic that cut through his wretched body like a knife, or the yet more pitiless waves that broke over it, soaking him to the skin and half dashing out his life. Mercifully the third sea that came, towering like a mountain and then seeming to burst right over him, although such was not the case, left him insensible.

He didn't know exactly how or when it was that he came to. He had a dim idea that he was very slowly dying a worse death than he had ever imagined it was possible for anything to die. It

was a process that went on and on; and then there came a blank; and then it started again, and he remembered he was still alive and that he was still dying; and then another blank; and then there was something alive quite near him; and then he remembered Mother and tried to gasp her name.

When at last Henry Harper came to himself he found he was in the arms of Mr. Thompson. The Old Man with the devil in his eyes was standing by; all around the Horn he had been drinking heavily. Mr. MacFarlane, Mr. Petersen the third mate, and some of the others were also standing by.

The boy heard the Old Man threaten to put Mr. Thompson in irons, and heard him call him a mutinous dog. Mr. Thompson made no reply, but no dog could have looked more mutinous than he did as he held the boy in his arms. There was a terrible look on his face, and Mr. MacFarlane and the others held back a bit.

It chanced, however, that there was just one thought at the back of the Old Man's mind, and it was this that saved Mr. Thompson, also the boy and perhaps the ship. He feared no man, he had no God when he was in drink, and he didn't set much store by the devil as a working institution; but drunk or sober he was always a first-rate seaman and he cared a great deal about his ship. And he knew very well that except himself Mr. Thompson was the only first-rate seaman aboard the *Margaret Carey*, and that without his aid there was little chance of the vessel reaching Frisco. It was this thought at the back of the Old Man's mind that prevented his putting Mr. Thompson in irons.

The boy lay longer than he knew, hovering much nearer to death than he guessed, in Mr. Thompson's bunk, with Mr. Thompson's spare oilskins over him, his dry blankets under him, and Mr. Thompson moistening his lips with grog every few minutes for several hours. It was a pretty near go; had Henry Harper known how near it was he might have taken his chance. But he didn't know, and in the course of two or three days nature and Mr. Thompson and perhaps a change in the weather pulled him through.

All the way out from London until the third day past the Horn the weather had been as dirty as it knew how to be; and it knows how to be very dirty indeed aboard a windjammer on the fifty-sixth degree of latitude in the month of December, which is not the worst time of the year. But it suddenly took quite a miraculous turn for the better. The wind allowed Mr. Thompson to shift the course of the *Margaret Carey* a couple of points in two hours, so that before that day was out the old tub, which could not have been so crazy as she seemed to Henry Harper, was running before it in gala order with all her canvas spread.

During the following morning the sun was seen for the first time for some weeks, and the port watch gave it a cheer of encouragement. By nightfall the wind and the sea were behaving very well, all things considered, and they shared the credit with Mr. Thompson of having saved the life of Henry Harper.

The Old Man's temper began to mend with the weather. He was not all bad—very few men are—it was merely as Mr. Thompson had said, that when drink was in him he was a devil. The dirtier the weather the more drink there was in him, as a rule. When the sun shone again and things began to look more hopeful, the Old Man's temper improved out of all knowledge.

The Old Man set such store by seamanship that it was the one quality he respected in others. His world was divided into those who were good seamen and those who were not good seamen. If you were a good seaman he would never forget it in his dealings with you; if you were not a good seaman, whatever else you might be, you could go to hell for all that he cared. And of all the seamen he had shipped in the course of a pretty long experience as a master mariner, he had never, in his own judgment, come across the equal of Mr. Thompson. This was his fifth time round the Horn with that gentleman as mate, and each voyage increased the Old Man's respect for his remarkable ability. He had never seen anything better than the style in which the mate got the old ship before the wind; nothing could be more perfect than the way she was moving now under all her canvas; and that evening in the cabin, after supper, the Old Man broached a bottle of his "pertickler" and decided upon some little *amende* to the mate for having threatened to put him in irons.

"That bye is no use on deck," he said. "He had better come here and make himself useful until he gets stronger."

The Old Man meant this for a great concession, and Mr. Thompson accepted it in the spirit in which it was offered. The Old Man now regarded the boy as part and parcel of Mr. Thompson's property, and it was by no means certain, such is the subtle psychology of active benevolence, that Mr. Thompson did not regard the boy in that light also. At any rate the boy looked on the mate as his natural protector. Henry Harper craved for someone to whom he could render homage and obedience. He would have revered the Old Man had he been worthy of such an emotion; as it was he had to fall back on the mate, a rough man to look at, and a very bad one to cross, but one to whom he owed his life, and the only friend he had.

It took Henry Harper a fortnight to get fairly on his legs again. Then he was able to come on deck as far as the break of the poop. Much seemed to have happened to the world since he had

been below. He found the sun shining gloriously; there was hardly a puff of wind; the crew in high good humor were cheerfully mending sails. It was not the same ship, it was not the same sea, it was not the same world he had left a long fortnight ago. He was amazed and thrilled. The slum-bred waif had no idea that any world could be like this. Moreover, the convalescent stage of a dangerous illness was cleansing and renewing him. For the first time since he had been born he forgot the burden of his inheritance. He was suddenly intoxicated by the extraordinary majesty and beauty of the universe.

The sea, what an indescribably glorious thing! The sky without a cloud in it! He had never seen any sky at Blackhampton to compare with this. The air, how clean and bright it was! The mollymawks with their beautiful white breasts were skimming the green water. It was a glorious world. He heard a dago singing at his work. He almost wanted to sing as well.

He got a needle and some packthread and sat down on the afterhatch and suddenly made up his mind to do his best. He could make nothing of his life, or of his circumstances. His wretched body was all sore and bruised and broken; his head was still going round and round; he didn't know what he was, or why he was, or where he was; but a very glorious earth had been made by Somebody, just as a very miserable thing had been made by Somebody. However, let him keep on keeping on.

He had gone too far, thus early in life, for self-pity. Besides there was too much happening around him, too much to look at, too much to do to think very deeply about himself. Yes, it was a very wonderful world. The sun began to warm his veins as he sat plying his needle, such a sun as he had never known. The colors all around were simply marvelous; blues and yellows, greens and purples! There was nothing at Blackhampton to compare with them. The dago seated near had set down his needle, had dabbled his hand in the water, had begun to sing louder than ever. Yes, Blackhampton was not to be compared with such a world as this.

For the next three weeks things began to go a bit kinder for Henry Harper. Each day grew warmer, more gorgeous; there was no wind to speak of; the sea became so smooth that it might have been the West Norton and Bagsworth canal. And as it was clearly realized by the rest of the crew that for some mysterious reason Sailor was now under the extremely powerful protection of Mr. Thompson, they were careful to keep their hands off him, and also their boots. This made life a little duller for them, but a bit easier for Henry Harper.

XIV

Three weeks or so this good life went on. Horror unspeakable was at the back of the boy's mind. There were things he could never forget as long as life lasted. At any moment they might return upon him; but during those days of sun and calm Henry Harper was in an enchanted world. It was so warm and fair that he retrieved Johnny's overcoat and Mother's bundle from his bunk where they had been a long time soaking, spread them on the deck to dry, and had them for a pillow when he slept that night underneath the stars.

But the good days were soon at an end. Each one after the twenty-second got hotter and hotter; the twenty-fourth was quite unpleasant; the heat on the twenty-seventh became almost unbearable. They were now in the doldrums in a dead calm.

"Shouldn't wonder if we find trouble before we get to the China seas." Thus Mr. MacFarlane, the second mate, a prophetic Scotsman, in Henry Harper's hearing.

Mr. MacFarlane was right, as he generally was in these matters—more so perhaps than he had reckoned, for they managed to find a good deal of trouble before they got to the China seas.

For several days there was no stir in the air. The heat grew worse; and then one afternoon it suddenly became very dark, without any apparent reason. Mr. Thompson went about with a face uglier than usual, and Mr. MacFarlane said they were cutting straight into the tail of a typhoon; and then there was an anxious consultation with the Old Man on deck.

Mr. Thompson's face got uglier as the sky got darker, and the sea became like a mixture of oil and lead. It was almost impossible to breathe even on deck; there wasn't a capful of air in the sails or out of them; all the crew had their tongues out; and instead of eating his supper that evening the Old Man opened a bottle of his "pertickler."

The boy turned in that night, in the new berth that had been found for him by Mr. Thompson's orders, with a feeling that something was going to happen. For one thing the Old Man looked like having the devil in him again before the morning. Moreover, the heat was so intense that sleep seemed out of the question.

However, the boy fell asleep unexpectedly, and was presently awakened in a stifling darkness

by a sudden awful and incredible sound of rushing and tearing. He sat up gasping for air and wondering what it was that had happened.

Afraid to stay where he was, for it was certain that something terrible had occurred, he got out of his bunk and groped his way as well as he could through the darkness, and at last made his way on deck. Here it was as black as it was below; all the lights were out; the sky was like pitch; the sea could not be seen; but he knew at once the cause of the tearing and rushing. It was the wind.

The wind was blowing in a manner he would not have thought to be possible. Its fury was stupendous. It was impossible to stand up in it, therefore he did the only thing that he could: he lay down.

Some time he lay on the deck, unable to move forward a yard, or even to return whence he came, such was the pressure that held him down. Then it was he felt a new kind of terror. This was more than physical, it seemed beyond the mind of man. They had had high winds and fierce storms at Blackhampton, but never had he known or guessed that there could be a thing of this kind. Such a wind was outside nature altogether. It seemed to be tearing the ship into little bits.

Several times he tried to rise to his feet in the darkness and find his way below, but it was no use. Flesh and blood could not stand an instant against such a rage as that. And then as he lay down again full length, clutching the hot deck itself for safety, he began to wonder why no one else was about. Slowly the truth came to him, but not at first in a form in which he could recognize or understand it. It seemed to creep upon him like a nightmare. All the crew and Mr. Thompson and the Old Man had been blown overboard, and he was drifting about the world, a strange unbelievable world, alone on the ship.

He began to shriek with terror. Yet he didn't know that. It was not possible to hear the sound of his own voice. He lay writhing on the deck in a state of dementia. A caveman caught and soused by his first thunderstorm could not have been more pitiable. He was alone, in this unknown sea, in this endless night, with all eternity around him.

Again he tried to rise from the deck, but he was still held down, gasping and choking, by a crushing weight of wind. It would be a merciful thing if the ship went to the bottom. But even if it did his case might be no better. Then came the thought that this was what had happened. The ship had foundered, and this tempest and this appalling darkness were what he had heard the Reverend Rogers speak of, at a very nice tea party at the Brookfield Street Mission Hall to which he had once been invited, as "the life to come."

Henry Harper remembered that "the life to come" was to be a very terrifying business for "those who had done evil," and according to the Reverend Rogers all men had done evil; moreover, he had dwelt at great length on the Wrath of the Supreme Being who was called God.

Henry Harper was in the presence of God. This terrific wind in which it was impossible for any created thing to exist was the Wrath of the Supreme Being. Such a thought went beyond reason. It was a key which unlocked secret chambers in the inherited memory of Henry Harper. Many were the half remembered things of which he had had experience through former eons of time. The idea of God was the chief of these.

Half mad with subconscious recollection, he began to crawl like a snake on his belly along the deck. The key was unlocking one chamber after another in his soul. Now he was a fire worshiper in a primeval forest; now he was cleansing his spirit in the blood of sacrifice; now he was kneeling and praying; now he was dancing round a pile of stones. He was flooded with a subconscious memory of world-old worship of the Unseen, a propitiation of the thing called God.

He was a caveman in the presence of deity. Shuddering in every pulse of his being he pressed his face to the hot boards of the deck. The secret chambers of his mind were assailing him with things unspeakable. Even the Reverend Rogers could not have imagined them.

All at once he rolled up against something soft in the darkness. With a thrill of hope he knew it was a living thing. It was a dago bereft like himself. Lying with his sweating face pressed to the deck, he also was in the presence of deity.

The noise was too great for their voices to be heard, but each knew that the other was alive, and they lay side by side for two hours, contriving to save their reason by the sense of each other's nearness.

After that time had passed they were able to crawl into shelter. Here they found others of the crew in varying states of terror and stupefaction. But it was now getting lighter, and the wind was blowing less. The worst was over. It seemed very remarkable that the *Margaret Carey* was still afloat.

In two hours more the wind had died. An hour after that they saw the sun again and the ship kept her course as if nothing had occurred. Indeed, nothing had occurred to speak of, in Mr. Thompson's opinion, except that two members of the crew had fetched away and gone overboard, and they could ill afford to lose them, being undermanned already.

It was now the boy's duty to wait on the Old Man in the cabin. This was more to his taste than having to lend a hand in the port watch. He was not the least use on deck, and was assured by everybody that he never would be, but in the cabin he was very alert and diligent, and less inefficient than might have been expected. He was really very quick in some ways, and he laid himself out to please the Old Man with his cheerful willingness, not that he felt particularly willing or cheerful either, but he knew that was the only way to save his skin. At any rate, Sailor was not going back into the port watch if he could possibly help it.

For such a boy as he, with an eager, imaginative brain always asking questions of its profoundly ignorant owner, the cabin was a far more interesting place than the half-deck or the forecabin. There was a measure of society in the cabin; Mr. Thompson and Mr. MacFarlane sometimes fraternized with the Old Man, after supper, and their discourse when they turned to and smoked their pipes and discussed a noggin of the Old Man's "pertickler," of which they were great connoisseurs, was very well worth hearing.

Henry Harper found that when the Old Man was not upset by the weather—which generally brought on a drinking attack—he was human more or less. Although prone to outbursts of fury, in which anything might occur, he was by no means all bad. In fact, he was rather by way of being religious when the elements were in his favor. When at a loose end he would read a chapter of the Bible, which was of the large family order, adorned the cabin sideboard, and had apparently been handed down from father to son. If the weather was good there was often an instructive theological discussion with Mr. MacFarlane after supper. The second mate was very full of Biblical lore. His interpretation of Holy Writ was not always identical with that of his superior officer, and being a Scotsman and a man of great parts and character, he never temporized or waived a point. Sometimes he flatly contradicted the Old Man who, to Henry Harper's intense surprise, would take it lying down, being an earnest seeker after light in these high matters. For all that, some of the Old Man's Biblical theories were quite unshakable, as, for instance, that Jonah could not have been a first-rate seaman.

In spite of being short-handed, things began to go a bit better. There was very little wind, the sea was like glass, the sun was beautifully warm all day, and at night a warm and glowing sky was sown thickly with stars. Rather late one afternoon, while the Old Man was drinking his tea, Mr. MacFarlane appeared in the cabin with a look of importance, and reported land to starboard.

"Nonsense, Mr. MacFarlane," said the Old Man. "We are a good nine days from anywhere."

Mr. MacFarlane, however, maintained with polite firmness—land to starboard not being a theological matter—that land there was on the starboard bow, N. by NE. as well as he could reckon.

"Nonsense, Mr. MacFarlane," said the Old Man.

But he rose from his tea at once, took his binoculars and clambered on deck. A little while afterwards he returned in a state of odd excitement, accompanied by Mr. Thompson, and they spread out a chart on the cabin table.

"By God," said the Old Man, "it's the Island of San Pedro." And he suddenly brought his fist down on the chart. Moreover, he pronounced the name with a curious intensity. "By God," he said, "I haven't seen that island for four and twenty years. We tried to dodge a typhoon, but was caught in her, and went aground on the Island of San Pedro. There was only me and the ship's bye as lived to tell the tale."

The voice of the Old Man had grown hoarse, and in his eyes was a glow of dark excitement. Suddenly they met full and square the startled eyes of the boy who was listening eagerly.

"Only me and the ship's bye," said the Old Man, his voice falling lower. "We lived six weeks on shellfish and the boots and clothes of the dead."

The voice of the Old Man sank to a thrilling whisper. He then said sharply: "Bye, a bottle o' brandy."

When Henry Harper brought the brandy his face was like a piece of white chalk.

"Only me and the ship's bye," repeated the Old Man in a hoarse whisper. "The others went ravin' mad. We knifed 'em one by one; it was the kindest thing to do. The bye didn't go ravin' mad till afterwards. And there weren't no Board of Trade Inquiry."

"No, sir," said Mr. Thompson, nodding his ugly head and speaking in a slow, inhuman voice.

"No Board o' Trade inquiry," said the Old Man. "Nine men and the ship's bye on the Island o' San Pedro, latitude eighteen degrees, longitude one hundred and twenty-four degrees." He placed his finger on the chart on the cabin table. "There y'are, Mr. Thompson. And on'y me to tell the tale. The bye was gibbering like a baboon by the time he was fetched aboard the *Para Wanka*, Chinese barque out o' Honolulu. I was a bit touched meself. Thirteen weeks in 'orspital. Remarkable recovery. That's the knife on the sideboard in the leather case."

Mr. Thompson took the knife in his hand reverently.

"No Board o' Trade inquiry, sir," he said.

"No Board o' Trade inquiry," said the Old Man, taking a good drink of neat brandy. "Come on deck and let us have another look at the Island of San Pedro."

Overcome by a sense of uncanny fascination the boy followed the Old Man and the mate up the companion and to the deck. Long the Old Man gazed at the island through his glass, but made no further remark. Then, having seen enough of it, he handed the glass to Mr. Thompson, who made no remark either, but gazed with a mask of steel at the Island of San Pedro.

Mr. MacFarlane, who stood by, pointed with his finger suddenly.

"Sharks," he said.

"Aye," said the Old Man with queer eyes, "these roads is full of 'em. Aye, there they are, the pretties!"

The boy followed Mr. MacFarlane's finger over the deck rail, and sure enough, quite near to the ship was a number of creatures whose upturned bellies shone a strange dead white.

"Come every morning to look at us, the pretties, on the Island of San Pedro." The Old Man laughed in a queer way. "The tide brought 'em more than one nice breakfast, but they never had no luck with me and that bye. He! he! he!"

The Old Man went down to the cabin rather unsteadily, but laughing all the way.

XV

"Shouldn't wonder if it's a wet night," said Mr. MacFarlane to the mate in the hearing of the boy.

This was a technicality that Henry Harper didn't understand, but it held no mystery for Mr. Thompson, who smiled as he alone could and growled, "Yep."

After supper, the Old Man sat late and drank deep. He pressed both his officers to share with him. He was always passing the bottle, but though Mr. Thompson and Mr. MacFarlane were able to keep a stout course, they were simply not in it with the Old Man. For one thing both were men of principle who preferred rum to brandy, and very luckily for the *Margaret Carey*, Mr. Thompson in certain aspects of his nature preferred his ship to either.

The Old Man talked much that night of the Island of San Pedro, overmuch perhaps for the refined mind of the second mate. The boy stood listening behind the Old Man's chair, ready to go about as soon as the Old Man should be at the end of the bottle.

"No, we didn't touch human flesh," said the Old Man. "I give you my word of honor as a Christian man. But we caught one o' the Chinamen at it—two of us was Chinamen—an' we drew lots as to who should do him in. There was three white men left at that time, including myself and excluding the bye. Andrews it was, our bosun, who drewed the ticket, and as soon as he drewed it I thought he looked young for the work. He wanted to pass it to me, but I said no—he'd drawed the ticket an' he must do the will o' God."

"Scuse my interrupting, sir," said Mr. MacFarlane, "but how did ye know it was the will o' God?"

"Because he'd drawed the ticket, you fool," snapped the Old Man. "Didn't I say he'd drawed the ticket?"

"Yep," nodded Mr. Thompson.

"Very well, then," said the Old Man with acerbity. "It was up to Andrews to do the will o' God. He said he'd not do it then, but he'd wait until the morning. I said, 'There's no time like the present,' but he was Scotch, and he was obstinate, an' the mornin' never come for Andrews. He began to rave in the night, as we all lay together on the sand, with the Chinaman in the middle, and at the screech o' dawn when I give him the knife, I see at once he was off his rocker."

"Up the pole, sir?" asked Mr. MacFarlane, politely.

"Yes, blast you," said the Old Man. "Don't you understand plain English? Bye, another bottle."

As the boy's livid face was caught by the lamp on the table while he bent over it with the new bottle, the Old Man suddenly laughed. There was something in the boy's eyes that went straight to his heart.

"By God!" he said, refilling his glass. "That's a good idea. We'll put Sailor here ashore on the Island o' San Pedro first thing in the morning. We will, so help me!" And the Old Man winked solemnly at Mr. Thompson and the second mate.

Mr. Thompson smiled and the second mate laughed. The idea itself was humorous, and the Old Man's method of expressing it seemed to lend it point.

"That's a good idea," said the Old Man, bringing his fist down so sharply that the brandy out of his glass slopped over on the tablecloth. "Sailor here shall be put ashore at sunrise on the Island of San Pedro. We'll never be able to make a man of him aboard the *Margaret Carey*. We'll see what the tigers and the lions and the wolves and hyenas 'll do with him on the Island o' San Pedro."

"Sirpints, Cap'n?" inquired Mr. Thompson innocently, as he returned the look of his superior officer.

"God bless me, yes, Mr. Thompson!" said the Old Man in a thrilling voice. "That's why you've got to keep out o' the trees. My advice to Sailor is—are ye attendin', young feller?—always sleep on sand. Sirpints won't face sand, and it's something to know that, Mr. Thompson, when you are all on your lonesome on the Island of San Pedro."

"I've heard that afore, sir," said Mr. Thompson, impressively. "Never knowed the truth o' it, though."

"True enough, Mr. Thompson," said the Old Man. "Sirpints has no use for sand. Worries 'em, as you might say."

"I've always understood, sir," said Mr. MacFarlane, whose humor was apt to take a pragmatistical turn, "that it's only one sort o' sirpint what's shy o' sand."

The Old Man eyed the second mate sullenly.

"O' course it is," he said, "and that's the on'y sort they've got on the Island o' San Pedro. The long, round-bellied sort, as don't bite but squeegees."

"And swallers yer?" said Mr. Thompson.

"And swallers yer. Pythons, I think they're called, or am I thinkin' o' boar constrictors?"

"Pythons, sir," said Mr. MacFarlane. "What swallows a bullock as easy as it swallows a baby."

"Yes, that's right." The Old Man turned to grin at the boy, but there was pathos in his voice. "Sailor, my bye, you must keep out o' the trees. Promise me, Sailor, you'll keep out o' the trees."

The boy had to hold on by the table. The laughter that rang in his ears could only have one meaning. He knew that the Old Man with the drink in him would be as good as his word. Suddenly, by a queer trick of the mind, Henry Harper was again a newsboy crying, "'Orrible Crime on the 'Igh Seas," along the streets of Blackhampton.

XVI

Sailor didn't sleep that night in his bunk in the half-deck but lay in the lee of the chart-house looking up at the stars. Now and again, he could hear little plop-plops in the water, and these he knew were sharks. It was a night like heaven itself—not that Sailor had had much experience of heaven so far—wonderfully calm, with the stars so bright that even as he lay he could see the outline of the Island of San Pedro. It was so clear in the starlight that he could see little dark patches here and there rising to the skyline. These were trees he was sure.

He didn't try to sleep, but lay waiting for the dawn, not thinking of what he should do, or what he ought to do. What was the use? He was alone and quite helpless, and he was now in a state altogether beyond mere terror; he was face to face with that which his mind could not meet. But he was as sure as those stars were in the sky, that as soon as it was light the Old Man would put him ashore on the Island of San Pedro, and that even Mr. Thompson would raise no protest.

Once or twice he tried to think, but it was no use. His brain was going. He must lie there and wait. How long he lay he didn't know, but it seemed hours before he heard the morning watch come on deck, and even then it was some while from daylight. For a long, long time he lay stupefied, unable to do anything but listen for the stealthy plop-plop of the sharks in the water. And when the daylight came, at first it was so imperceptible that he did not notice it.

At last the sun got up, and then he saw that right away to starboard the sky was truly

wonderful, a mass of delicate color which the eye could not grasp. For a moment, the soul of Henry Harper was entranced. Heaven itself was opening before him. His mind went back to the Reverend Rogers and the Brookfield Street Mission. With a stab of shame for having so long forgotten them, he suddenly recalled the words of the Reverend Rogers upon the subject of the Golden Gates. Flooded by an intolerable rush of memories, he imagined he could see and hear the Choir Invisible. The fowls of the air were heralding a marvelous sunrise in the Pacific.

For a moment he forgot the Island of San Pedro. Another door of memory had been unlocked. He was in a flood of golden light. There straight before him were the gates of paradise. He was looking at the home of God. Suddenly Henry Harper thought he could hear the voices of the angels. He strained his eyes to starboard. Real angels with wings would be a wonderful sight. The fowls of the air were in chorus, the sharks were plopping in the water, the gates of heaven were truly marvelous—orange, crimson, gold, purple, every color he had ever seen or imagined, and he had seen and imagined many, was now filling his eyes with ecstasy. At every pore of being he was sensing light and sound. He was like a harp strung up. And then in the midst of it all, there came the voice of the Old Man as he climbed on deck, with Mr. Thompson at his heels. And then ... and then ... the heavens opened ... and Henry Harper saw ... and Henry Harper saw....

There was a great plop in the water, much nearer than that of the sharks. There followed heartrending screams and cries, enough to appall the soul of man. All hands rushed to the side of the ship.

"It's on'y Sailor," said the Old Man, with a drunken growl. "Let him drown."

In the next instant there came another great plop in the water.

"What the hell!" roared the Old Man.

"Please, sir, Mr. Thompson's gone for him."

"Mr. who? ... blast you!"

"Mr. Thompson, sir."

"Then lower the gig." The Old Man began to stamp up and down the deck, roaring like a maniac. "Lower the gig, I tell ye." His fingers were the first on the davits. "And all hands pipe up a chantey ... louder ... louder ... blast you! ... to keep off those sharks."

The Old Man's voice was hoarse and terrible, as he worked like a demon to launch the boat.

"Louder, louder, blast you!" he kept roaring. The smooth, dead-white bellies lay all around, shining in the sunrise. The Old Man was in a frenzy; it seemed as if the boat would never be got into the water.

At last it was launched and the Old Man was the first to jump into it, still roaring like one possessed. He beat the water furiously with a piece of spar. But Mr. Thompson with the boy in tow seemed to be holding his own very well. Either the sharks had not seen them, or they dare not approach in the midst of that terrific outcry.

They were soon in the boat, Mr. Thompson being a powerful swimmer; and when at last they were back on the deck of the *Margaret Carey*, the boy lay gasping and the mate stood by like some large and savage dog, shaking the water out of his eyes.

"Whatever made you do that, Mr. Thompson?" expostulated the Old Man. He was a good deal sobered by the incident, and his manner showed it.

Mr. Thompson did not answer. He stood glowering at a number of the hands who had gathered round.

"Don't none o' you gennelmen touch that bye," he said with a slow snarl, and he pointed to the heap on the deck.

They took Mr. Thompson's advice. Most people did aboard the *Margaret Carey*. Even the Old Man respected it in the last resort, that was if he was sober enough to respect anything. But with him it was the seamanship rather than the personal force of his chief officer that turned the scale. It was the man himself to whom less exalted people bowed the knee.

It took the boy the best part of two days to recover the use of his wits. And even then he was not quite as he had been. Something seemed to have happened to him; a very subtle, almost imperceptible change had taken place. He had touched bottom. In a dim way he seemed to realize that he had been made free of some high and awful mystery.

The knowledge was reflected in the thin brown face, haunted now with all manner of unimaginable things. But the feeling of defeat and hopelessness had passed; a new Henry Harper had come out of the sea; never again was he quite so feckless after that experience.

For one thing, he was no longer afraid to go aloft. During the warm calm delightful days in the Indian Ocean when things went well with the ship, and there happened to be nothing doing in the cabin, Sailor began to make himself familiar with the yards. All through the good weather he practiced climbing assiduously, so that one day the Old Man remarked upon it to the mate, demanding of that gentleman, "What has happened to Sailor? He goes aloft like a monkey and sleeps in the cross-trees."

Mr. Thompson made no reply, but a look came into his grim face which might be said to express approval.

The Old Man and the mate were the first to recognize that a change had taken place in Sailor, but the knowledge was not confined exclusively to them. It was soon shared by others. One evening, as Sailor sat sunning himself with the ship's cat on his knee, gazing with intensity now at the sky, now at the sea, one of the hands, a rough nigger named Brutus, threw a boot at him in order to amuse the company. There was a roar of laughter when it was seen that the aim was so true that the boy had been hit in the face.

Sailor laid the cat on the deck, got up quietly, and with the blood running down his cheek came over to Brutus.

"Was that you, you ——?" To the astonishment of all he addressed in terms of the sea the biggest bully aboard the ship.

"Yep," said the nigger, showing his fine teeth in a grin at the others.

"There, then, you ugly swine," said Sailor.

In an instant he had whipped out one of the cabin table knives, which he had hidden against the next attack, and struck at the nigger with all his strength. If the point of the knife had not been blunt the nigger would never have thrown another boot at anybody.

There was a fine to-do. The nigger, a thorough coward, began to howl and declared he was done. The second mate was fetched, and he reported the matter at once to the Old Man.

In a great fury the Old Man came in person to investigate. But he very soon had the rights of the matter; the boy's cheek was bleeding freely, and the nigger was more frightened than hurt.

"Get below you," said the Old Man savagely to the nigger. "I'll have you in irons. I'll larn you to throw boots."

That was all the satisfaction the nigger got out of the affair, but from then boots were not thrown lightheartedly at Sailor.

XVII

After many days of ocean tramping with an occasional discharge of cargo at an out of the way port, the ship put in at Frisco. Here, after a clean up, a new cargo was taken aboard, also a new crew. This was a pretty scratch lot; the usual complement of Yankees, Dutchmen, dagoes, and an occasional Britisher.

For a long and trying fifteen months, Sailor continued on the seas, about all the oceans of the world. At the end of that time he was quite a different boy from the one who had left his native city of Blackhampton. Dagoes and niggers no longer did as they liked with him. He still had a strong dislike, it was true, to going aloft in a gale, but he invariably did as he was told to the best of his ability; he no longer skulked or showed the white feather in the presence of his mates. Nevertheless, he was always miserably unhappy. There was something in his nature that could not accept the hateful discomforts of a life before the mast, although from the day of his birth he had never known what it was to lie soft. He was in hell all the time. Moreover, he knew it and felt it to the inmost fiber of his being; the soul of Henry Harper was no longer derelict.

The sense of the miracle which had happened off the Island of San Pedro abided with him through gale and typhoon, through sunshine and darkness, through winter and summer. It didn't matter what the sea was doing, or the wind was saying, or the Old Man was threatening, a miracle had happened to Henry Harper. He had touched bed rock. He had seen things and he had learned things; man and nature, all the terrible and mysterious forces around him could do their worst, but he no longer feared them in the old craven way. Sailor had suffered a sea change. The things in earth and heaven he had looked upon none could share with him, not even Mr. Thompson, that strange and sinister man of the sea, to whom he owed what was called "his life"; nay, not even the Old Man himself who had lived six weeks on shellfish on the Island of San Pedro.

When the *Margaret Carey* had been to Australia and round the larger half of the world, she put in at Frisco again. Here she took another cargo and signed on fresh hands for a voyage round the Pacific Coast. Among the latter was a man called Klondyke. At least, that was the name he went by aboard the *Margaret Carey*, and was never called by any other. At first this individual puzzled Henry Harper considerably. He shared a berth with him in the half-deck, and the boy—now a grown man rising sixteen—armed with a curiosity that was perfectly insatiable, and a faculty of taking lively and particular notice, found a great deal to interest him in this new chum.

He was about twenty-four and a Britisher, although Sailor in common with most of his shipmates thought at first that he was a Yankee. For one thing, he was a new type aboard the *Margaret Carey*. Very obviously he knew little of the sea, but that didn't seem to trouble him. From the moment he set foot aboard, he showed that he could take good care of himself. It was not obtrusive but quietly efficient care that he took of himself, yet it seemed to bear upon the attitude of all with whom he had to do.

Klondyke knew nothing about a windjammer, but soon started in to learn. And it didn't seem to matter what ticklish or unpleasant jobs he was put to—jobs for which Sailor could never overcome a great dislike—he had always a remarkable air of being in this hard and perilous business merely for the good of his health.

Klondyke said he had never been aloft before in his life, and the first time he went up it was blowing hard from the northeast, yet his chief concern before he started was to lay a bet of five dollars with anybody in the starboard watch that he didn't fall out of the rigging. But there were no takers, for there was not a man aboard who would believe that this was the first time he had gone up on a yard.

It was not many weeks before Klondyke was the most efficient ordinary seaman aboard the *Margaret Carey*. And by that time he had become a power among the after gang. As one of the Yankees, who was about as tough as they made them but with just a streak of the right color in him, expressed it, "Klondyke was a white man from way back."

The fact was, Klondyke was a white man all through, the only one aboard the ship. It was not a rarefied or aggressively shining sort of whiteness. His language on occasion could be quite as salt as that of anybody else, even more so, perhaps, as he had a greater range of tongues, both living and dead, from which to choose. He was very partial to his meals, and growled terribly if the grub went short as it often did; he also set no store by dagoes and "sich," for he was very far from believing that all men were equal. They were, no doubt, in the sight of God, but Klondyke maintained that the English were first, Yankees and Dutchmen divided second place, and the rest of sea-going humanity were not on the chart at all. He was always extremely clear about this.

From the first day of Klondyke's coming aboard, Sailor, who was very sharp in some things, became mightily interested in the new hand in the wonderful fur cap with flaps for the nose and ears, who went about the ship as if he owned it; while after a time the new hand returned the compliment by taking a friendly interest in Sailor. But that was not at first. Klondyke, for all his go-as-you-please air, was not the kind of man who entered easily upon personal relations. Moreover, there was something about him which puzzled Henry Harper. He spoke a kind of lingo the boy had never heard before. It was that as much as anything which had made Sailor think he was a Yank. He had not been used to that sort of talk at Blackhampton, nor was it the kind in vogue on the *Margaret Carey*. If not exactly la-di-da, had it been in the mouth of some people it would have been considered a trifle thick.

Sailor's intimacy with Klondyke, which was to have an important bearing upon his life, began in quite a casual way. One afternoon, with the sea like glass, and not a puff of wind in the sails, they sat together on the deck picking oakum to keep them from idleness, when Klondyke suddenly remarked: "Sailor, don't think me inquisitive, but I'm wondering what brought you to sea."

"Inquisitive" was a word Sailor had not heard before, and he could only guess at its meaning. But he thought Klondyke so little inquisitive that he said at once quite simply and frankly, "Dunno." He then added by way of an afterthought, although Klondyke was a new chum and rated the same as himself, "Mister."

"No, I expect not," said Klondyke, "but I've been wondering a bit lately"—there was something very pleasant in Klondyke's tone—"how you come to be aboard this hell ship. One would have thought you'd have done better ashore."

Sailor was not able to offer an opinion upon that.

"In some kind of a store or an office?"

"Can't read, can't write."

"No?" Klondyke's eyebrows went up for a fraction of an instant, then they came down as if a bit ashamed of themselves for having gone up at all. "But it's quite easy to learn, you know."

Sailor gasped in astonishment. He had always been led to believe that to learn to read and write was a task of superhuman difficulty. Some of his friends at Blackhampton had attended a

night school now and again, but none of them had been able to make much of the racket of reading and writing, except one, Nick Price, who had a gift that way and was good for nothing else. Besides, as soon as he really took to the game a change came over him. Finally, he left the town.

"I'd never be able to read an' write," said Sailor.

"Why not?" said Klondyke. "Why not, like anybody else ... if you stuck it? Of course, you'd have to stick it, you know. It mightn't come very kind at first."

This idea was so entirely new that Sailor rose with quite a feeling of excitement from the upturned bucket on which he sat.

"Honest, mister," he said, gazing wistfully into the face of Klondyke, "do you *fin*k I could?"

"Sure," said Klondyke. "Sure as God made little apples."

Sailor decided that he would think it over. It was a very important step to take.

XVIII

Klondyke's library consisted of two volumes: the Bible and "Don Quixote." Sailor knew a bit about the former work. The Reverend Rogers had read it aloud on a famous occasion when Henry Harper had had the luck to be invited to a real blowout of tea and buns at the Brookfield Street Mission. That was a priceless memory, and Henry Harper always thought that to hear the Reverend Rogers read the Bible was a treat. Klondyke, who was not at all like the Reverend Rogers in word or deed, said it was "a damned good book," and would sometimes read in it when he was at a bit of a loose end.

It was by means of this volume that Sailor learned his alphabet. Presently he got to spelling words of two and three letters, then he got as far as remembering them, and then came the proud day when he could write his name with a stump of pencil on a stray piece of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, in which Klondyke had packed his tooth brush, the only one aboard the *Margaret Carey*.

"What is your name, old friend?" Klondyke asked.

"Enry Arper."

"H-e-n with a Hen, ry—Henry. H-a-r with a Har, p-e-r—Harper."

"There ain't no aitch in Arper," said Sailor.

"Why not?"

Enry Arper was Sailor's own private name, which he had been given at his birth, which he had used all his life. He had always felt that as it was the only thing he owned, it was his to do with as he liked. Therefore he was determined to spell it according to his fancy. He wouldn't admit that there could possibly be an aitch in Arper; and for some little time his faith in Klondyke's competence was a bit shaken, for his mentor was at pains to make out that there could be and was.

Henry Harper stuck to his ground, however.

"It's me own name," he said, "an' I oughter know."

Klondyke was amused. He seemed rather to admire Sailor's attitude. No doubt he felt that no Englishman is worth his salt who doesn't spell his name just as the fancy takes him.

Klondyke's own name was Jack Pridmore, and it was set out with other particulars on the flyleaf of his Bible. In a large and rather crude copperplate was inscribed:

Jack Pridmore is my name,
England is my nation,
Good old Eton College
Gave me a lib'ral education.
Stet domus et
Floreat Etona.

The arms of Eton College with the motto "Floreat Etona" were inscribed on the opposite page, also in tattoo on the left arm of the owner. In Sailor's opinion, Eton College did flourish undoubtedly in the person of Jack Pridmore. He was a white man all through, and long before Sailor could make out that inscription on the flyleaf of Klondyke's Bible, he was convinced that

such was the case.

In Sailor's opinion, he was a good one to follow anywhere. Everything in Klondyke seemed in just the right proportion and there was nothing in excess. He was new to the sea, but he was not in the least green or raw in anything. You would have to stay up all night if you meant to get ahead of him. So much had he knocked about the world that he knew men and cities like the back of his hand, and he had the art of shaking down at once in any company.

All the same, in Sailor's opinion, he had odd ideas. For one thing, he set his face against the habit of carrying a knife in your shirt in case the dagoes got above themselves.

"It's not quite white, you know, old friend," said Klondyke.

"Dagoes ain't white," said Sailor.

"No; and that's why we've got to show 'em how white we are if we are going to keep top dog."

This reasoning was too deep for Sailor.

"Don't see it meself. Them dagoes is bigger'n me. If I could lick 'em, I'd lick 'em till they hollered when they started in to fool around. But they are real yaller; none on 'em will face a bit o' sheffle."

"No," said Klondyke, "and they'll not face a straight left with a punch in it either."

Klondyke then made a modest suggestion that Sailor should acquire this part of a white man's equipment. He was firmly convinced that with the rudiments of reading and writing and a straight left with a punch in it, you could go all over the world.

At first Sailor took by no means as kindly to the punching as he did to the other branches of knowledge. He wanted a bit of persuading to face Klondyke in "a little friendly scrapping practice" in the lee of the chart house when no one was by. Klondyke was as hard as a nail; his left was like a horse's kick; and when he stood in his birthday suit, which he did once a day to receive the bucket of water he got Sailor to dash over him—another of his odd ideas—he looked as fine a picture of make and muscle as you could wish to see. Sailor thought "the little friendly scrapping practice" was a very one-sided arrangement. His nose seemed to bleed very easily, his eyes began to swell so that he could hardly see out of them, and his lips and ears thickened with barely any provocation at all, whereas he never seemed to get within a yard of Klondyke's physiognomy unless that warrior put down his hands and allowed him to hit it.

By this time, however, Klondyke had laid such a hold on Henry Harper that he didn't like to turn it up. He'd never make a Slavin or a Corbett—it simply wasn't in him—but all that was "white" in Sailor mustered at this chap's call. The fact was, he had begun to worship Klondyke, and when with the "sand" of a true hero he was able to get over an intense dislike of being knocked about, he began to feel a sort of pride in the process. If he had to take gruel from anybody, it had better be from him. Besides, Sailor was such a queer fish that there seemed something in his nature which almost craved for a licking from the finest chap he had ever known. His affection for this "whitest" of men seemed to grow with the punishment he took from him.

One night, after an easy watch, as they lay talking and smoking in their bunks in the dark, Klondyke remarked:

"Sailor, there's a lot o' guts in you."

Henry Harper, who was very far off that particular discovery, didn't know what Klondyke was getting at.

"You've taken quite a lot of gruel this week. And you've stood up to it well. Mind, I don't think you'll ever make a bruiser, not if you practice until the cows come home. It simply isn't there, old friend. It's almost like hitting a woman, hitting you. It is not your line of country, and it gets me what you are doing aboard this blue-nose outfit. How do you stick it? It must be hell all the time."

Henry Harper made no reply. He was rather out of his depth just now, but he guessed that most of this was true.

"I don't mind taking chances, but it's all the other way with you. Every time you go aloft, you turn white as chalk, and that shows what grit you've got. But your mother ought never to have let you come to sea, my boy."

"Never had no mother," said Sailor.

"No"—Klondyke felt he ought to have known that. "Well, it would have saved mine a deal of disappointment," he said cheerfully, "if she had never had such a son. I'm her great sorrow. But if you had had a mother it would have been another story. You'd have been a regular mother's boy."

Sailor wasn't sure.

XIX

Klondyke was ten months an ordinary seaman aboard the *Margaret Carey*. In that time the old tub, which could not have been so crazy as she seemed to the experts of the fore-castle, went around the Pacific as far as Brisbane, thence to Durban, thence again to California. Meanwhile, friendship ripened. It was a great thing for Sailor to have the countenance of such a man as Klondyke. He knew so much more about the world than Sailor did, also he was a real friend and protector; and, when they went ashore together in strange places, as they often did, he had a wonderful knack of making himself respected.

It was not that Klondyke wore frills. In most of the places in which they found themselves a knife in the ribs would have done his business out of hand had that been the case. It was simply that he knew his way and could talk to every man in his own language, and every woman, too, if it came to that. Whether it was a Frisco hash-slinger or a refined bar-lady along the seaboard made no difference to Klondyke. It was true that he always looked as if he had bought the earth at five per cent. discount for cash and carried the title deeds in his pocket, but he had such a way with him that from Vancouver to Sydney and back again nobody seemed to think the worse of him for it.

However, the day came all too soon when a tragic blow fell on Sailor. The ship put in at Honolulu one fine morning, and as soon as Klondyke went ashore he picked up a substitute for himself on the waterfront, whom the Old Man was willing to accept for the rest of his term. Klondyke then broke the news to Sailor that he had just taken a fancy to walk across Asia.

It was a heavy blow. Sailor was very near tears, although he was growing in manhood every week.

"It's no use asking you to come with me," said Klondyke. "We shouldn't have enough brass to go round. Besides, now the *wanderlust* is on me there is no saying where I'll get to. I'm very likely to be sawed up for firewood in the middle of Tibet."

Sailor knew that Klondyke wanted to make the journey alone. Partly to soften the blow and partly as an impulse of friendship, he gave the boy his Bible and also his wonderful fur cap with flaps for the nose and ears.

"Stick to the reading and writing, old friend," were the final words of this immortal. "That's your line of country. It'll pay you in the end. You'll get no good out of the sea. If you are wise, whenever you touch the port of London, you'll give a miss to this old tub. A life on the ocean wave is never going to be the least use to you."

Sailor knew that Klondyke was right. But among the many things he lacked was all power of initiative. As soon as he had lost his prop and stay, he was once more a derelict. For him life before the mast must always be a hell, but he had no power of acting for himself. After Klondyke left the ship there didn't seem anything else to do beyond a mere keeping of body and soul together aboard the *Margaret Carey*. There was nothing else he could do if it came to that. He had only learned to sell papers on land, and he had given the best years of his life to the sea. Besides, every voyage he became a better sailor and was paid a bit more; he even had visions of one day being rated able seaman. Moreover, being saving and careful, his slender store of dollars grew. But his heart was never really in his work, never in the making of money nor in the sailing of the ship.

He was a square peg in a round hole. He didn't know enough about himself or the world or the life he was trying to live to realize fully that this was the case. And for all his weakness of will and complete lack of training, which made his life a burden to him, he had a curious sort of tenacity that enabled him to keep on keeping on long after natures with more balance would have turned the thing up. All the years he was at sea, he never quite overcame the sense of fear the sea aroused in him; he seldom went aloft, even in a dead calm, without changing color, and he never dared look down; he must have lost his hold in many a thrashing northeaster and been broken on the deck like an egg but for an increasing desire to live that was simple torment. There was a kind of demon in his soul which made him fight for a thing that mocked it.

He had no other friend after Klondyke went. No other was possible; besides, he had a fierce distrust of half his shipmates; he even lost his early reverence for Mr. Thompson, in spite of the fact that he owed him his life, long before the mate left the ship at Liverpool nine months after the departure of Klondyke. Above all, the Old Man in liquor always inspired his terror, a treat to be counted on once a month at least. The years of his seafaring were bitter, yet never once did he change ship. He often thought about it, but unluckily for Henry Harper thought was not action; he "never quite matched up," as Klondyke used to express it. He had a considerable power of reflection; he was a creature of intuitions, with a faculty of observation almost marvelous in an untrained mind, but he never seemed able to act for himself.

Another grave error was that he didn't take Klondyke's advice and stick to reading and writing. No doubt he ought to have done it; but it was such a tough job that he could hardly take it on by himself. The drudgery made him miserable; it brought too vividly to his mind the true friend who had gone out of his life. For the rest of his time aboard the *Margaret Carey* he never got over the loss of Klondyke. The presence and support of that immortal had meant another world for him. For many months he could hardly bear the sight of the Bible his friend had given him, but cherished it as he had once cherished an apple that had also been given him by one who had crossed his orbit in the night of time and had spoken to him in passing.

It is not unlikely that Henry Harper would have sailed the seas aboard the *Margaret Carey* until that miraculous ship went to pieces in mid-ocean or turned turtle round the Horn; it is not unlikely that he would have gone down to his grave without a suspicion that any other kingdom awaited him, had it not been that in the last resort the decision was taken out of his hands.

One day, when he had been rather more than six years at sea, the *Margaret Carey* was within three days of London, whither she was bound with a cargo of wheat, when the Old Man informed him briefly and curtly that she was making her last voyage and that she was going to be broken up. The news was such a blow that at first Sailor could not realize what it meant. He had come to feel that no sort of existence would be possible apart from the *Margaret Carey*. He had lived six crowded and terrible years of worse than discomfort, but he could envisage no future apart from that leaking, crazy, foul old tub.

All too soon the day came, a misty morning of October, when he stepped ashore. A slender bundle was under one arm, Klondyke's fur cap on his head, a weird outfit on his lathlike body, an assortment of clothes as never was on sea or land before; and he had a store of coins of various realms, no less than eighty-five pieces of all sizes and values, from an English farthing to a Mexican five dollars, very carefully disposed about his person.

BOOK II

TRAVAIL

I

The Sailor, shipless and alone, was about to enter the most amazing city in the world.

He was a handsome boy, lean, eager eyed, and very straight in the body in spite of his gear, which consisted mainly of leggings, a tattered jersey, and a wonderful fur cap with flaps for the nose and ears. He was fairly tall, but being as thin as a rail looked much taller than he was. His face and hands were the color of mahogany, his vivid eyes were set with long intercourse with the sea, and in them was a look that was very hard to forget.

He came ashore about ten o'clock in the morning of Tuesday, October the fifth. For a while he stood on the edge of the quay with his bundle under his arm, wondering what he should do. It had not occurred to him to ask advice when he left the ship. Even the bosun had not said, "So long" to him; in spite of six years' service he was a poor seaman with no real heart for his job. He had been a cheap and inefficient hand; aboard a better ship, in the Old Man's opinion, he would have been dear at any price.

His relations with the rest of the crew had never been intimate. Most considered him "soft" or "a bit touched"; from the Old Man to the last joined ship's boy, he was "only Sailor." He never thought of asking what he ought to do; and had he done so his curious intuition told him the answer he would have been likely to receive. They would have told him to go and drown himself.

He had not been ashore a quarter of an hour when he began to feel that it was the best thing he could do. But the queer faculty he had told him at once that it was a thing he would never be able to do now. If he had had any luck it would have been done years ago.

Therefore, instead of jumping over the side of the quay, he suddenly walked through the dock gates into the streets of Wapping. All the morning he drifted aimlessly up one street and down another, his bundle under his arm, but neither plan nor purpose in his mind. At last, he began to feel very hungry, and then he found himself up against the problem of getting something to eat.

Opposite where he stood in the narrow, busy, interminable street was an imposing public house, painted a magnificent yellow. He knew that bread and cheese and a tankard of beer, which he so greatly desired, were there for the asking. But the asking!—that was the rub. He always felt tongue-tied in a public house, and his experience of them in his brief shore-goings in Frisco, Sydney, Liverpool, or Shanghai had never been happy, and had sometimes ended in disaster. But now under the spur of need, he crossed the street and, fixing his will, found his way

through the swing doors into the gilded interior of the Admiral Nelson.

Happily, the American bar was at that moment without a customer. This was a great relief to the Sailor. But a truly thrilling bar-lady, replete with earrings, a high bust, and an elaborate false front, gave him an eye of cool disdain as he entered with his bundle, which he laid upon a marble-topped table as far from her as possible; and then, after a long moment's pause, in order to screw his courage to the sticking-point, he came over to the counter.

The sight of the bar-lady brought a surge of previous shore-goings into the Sailor's mind. Quite automatically, he doffed his fur cap as Klondyke would have done in these heroic circumstances, and then all at once she forgot to be magnificent. For one thing, in spite of his grotesque clothes and his thin cheeks and his shock of chestnut hair, he was a decidedly handsome boy. Also he was a genuinely polite and modest one, and the bar-lady, Miss Burton by name, who had the worldly wisdom that owns to thirty-nine and the charm which goes with that period of life, was favorably impressed. "What can I do for you?" Miss Burton inquired. It was clear that her one desire was to help a shy youth over his embarrassment.

The voice of the fair, so charmingly civilized, at once unlocked a door in the Sailor's memory. With a further slow summoning of will-power which made it the more impressive, he answered precisely as Klondyke had at the Bodega in Frisco: "May I have some bread and cheese, please, and half a pint of beer?"

"Certainly you may," she smiled.

The tone of deference had touched a chord in her. Moreover, he really was handsome, although attired as a very ordinary, not to say a very common, seaman, and evidently far more at home on the deck of a windjammer than in the American bar of an up-to-date public-house.

"Fourpence, please." The bar-lady set before him a pewter flagon of foaming fresh-drawn ale, also a liberal piece of bread and cheese, beautifully white to one accustomed to hard tack aboard the *Margaret Carey*.

In some confusion the Sailor produced a handful of silver coins from his amazing trousers, out of which he solemnly chose a Spanish fourpenny.

"Haven't you got anything English?" she asked, bursting suddenly into a laugh.

Not a little disconcerted, the Sailor began to struggle with a second handful of coins which he took from another pocket. Blushing to the tips of his ears, he finally tendered half a crown.

"Two-and-two change." With an intent smile she marked what he did with it.

Having stowed away the two-and-twopence, he was about to carry his plate of bread and cheese and tankard of beer to the marble-topped table where he had left his bundle, when the lady said, in a royal tone of gracious command, "Why not sit and eat it here?"

The Sailor would have been the last young man in the world to think of disobeying. He felt a little thrill creep down his spine as he climbed up on the high stool exactly opposite her. It was the sort of thrill he had had when under the ægis of Klondyke he had carried out this delicate social maneuver for the benefit of the bar-ladies of Frisco, Liverpool, and Shanghai.

At first, he was too shy to eat.

"Go on. Don't mind me," she encouraged him.

An intensive politeness caused him to cut his bread carefully with his knife. And then before he put it into his mouth he said, in an abrupt, but well modulated Klondyke manner, "'Scuse me, lady, won't yer 'ave a bite yerself?"

The deferential tone belonged to the mentor of his youth, yet the speech itself seemed to owe little to Eton College.

"No, thank you," said Miss Burton. "I'm not hungry." And then, seeing his look of embarrassment, "Now get on with it. Don't mind me."

This was a woman of the world. She was a ripe student of human nature, at least of the trousers-wearing section of human nature. Not for many a day had she been so taken by a specimen of an always remarkable genus as by this boy with the deep eyes, whose clothes and speech and behavior were like nothing on earth.

A true amateur of the male sex, she watched this quaint specimen eating bread and cheese. Presently he raised his tankard aloft, said, "Good 'ealth, lady," in a shy manner, and drank half of it at a gulp.

"When are you going to sea again?" asked Miss Burton, conversationally.

"Never going to sea no more," said the young man, with a strange look in his eyes.

"What—never?" She seemed surprised.

"Never no more. I'll never sail agen afore the mast. I'd sooner starve. It's—it's——"

"It's what?"

"It's hell, lady."

Miss Burton was taken aback by the tone of conviction. After all, this grotesque young sea monster was no true amphibian.

"Well, what are you going to do ashore?" she asked after a pause, while she gazed at him in astonishment.

"Dunno."

"No plans?"

The boy shook his head.

"Like another tankard of mild?"

"Yes, please, lady."

The impact of the bar-lady's easy and familiar style had caused a rather sharp relapse from the Klondyke standard of refinement, but not for a moment did the Sailor forget the dignity of her estate. In spite of the hybrid words he used, the note of subtle deference was never out of his voice; and Miss Burton, unconsciously intrigued by it, became even more interested in this strange product of the high seas.

"How long have you been afloat?" She handed him a second tankard of mild.

"Near six year."

"Six years. Gracious goodness! And you didn't like it?"

"No."

For some reason, the look in his eyes caused her to shiver a little.

"Why did you stick it, then?"

"Dunno."

A pause followed. Then he lifted his tankard again, said, "'Ere's lookin', lady," and drank it right off.

"Well, you are a rum one, you are, and no mistake," murmured Miss Burton, not to the Sailor, but to the beer engine at her side.

II

After the young man from the sea had drunk his second tankard of mild, he sat on the high stool silent and embarrassed. He was hoping that the gorgeous creature opposite would continue the conversation, but he didn't seem to know how to encourage her. However, as soon as a powerful feminine intelligence had told her the state of the case, she said abruptly, "Well, and what are you going to do for a living now you've retired from the sea?"

He gave his head a wistful shake.

The gesture, rather pathetic in its hopelessness, touched Miss Burton.

"Well, you can't live on air, you know."

"No, lady."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

Another shake of the head was the only answer, but as he met her sympathetic eyes, an inspiration came to him.

"Lady," he said humbly, "you don't happen to know of a shack?"

"Know of a what!" The touch of acerbity froze him at once. "Shack!" Coming to his assistance, "What on earth's that?"

"Lodgings, clean and decent, for a single man." The phrase was Klondyke's, and it came to him quite oddly at that moment in all its native purity. His mentor had a private collection of such phrases which he used to roll out for his own amusement when he went ashore. This was one. Henry Harper could see him now, pointing to a dingy card in a dingy window in a dingy street, in some miserable seaboard suburb, and he could hear him saying, "There you are, Sailor, lodgings, clean and decent, for a single man."

Miss Burton pondered. And then the slow smile came again.

"Well, if you really want lodgings clean and decent for a single man I suppose I must try and help you," she said graciously. "But I'm afraid I shan't be much use. They are not quite in my line."

"No, lady."

"Still, Fore Street is full of them. That's the second turn to the left and then the first on the right, and then the first on the right again."

"Yes, lady."

"You might try No. 5—or No. 7—or No. 9—but Fore Street's full of them."

Miss Burton was really trying to be helpful, and the young seaman was very grateful to her, but Klondyke would have known at once that "she was talking out of the back of her neck."

Armed with this valuable information, the young man got off his high stool at last, raised his fur cap once more, with a little of the unconscious grace of its original owner, said, "So long, lady," collected his bundle and went out by the side door. And in the meantime, the bar-lady, who had marked every detail of his going, hardly knew whether to laugh or to shed tears. This was the queerest being she had ever seen in her life.

The Sailor managed to find Fore Street after taking several wrong turnings and asking his way three times. And then his difficulties really began.

Fore Street was very narrow, very long, very gloomy, very dirty. In each of these qualities it seemed well able to compare with any street he had seen in Frisco, in Sydney, in Liverpool, or even in Port Said. But it didn't discourage him. After all he had never been used to anything else.

The first house in Fore Street had a grimy card in a grimier window, exactly in the manner to rejoice the heart of Klondyke. Sailor, who had forgotten almost every syllable of "book-learning" he ever possessed—and at no time had he been the possessor of many—leaped at once to the conclusion that the legend on the card was, "Lodgings, clean and decent, for a single man." Unfortunately it was, "Dressmaking done here."

A very modest knock was answered by a large female of truculent aspect, to whom he took off his cap, while she stood looking at him with surprise, wonder and inveterate distrust of mankind in general and of him in particular spreading over her like a pall.

"Lodgings, clean and decent, for a single man!"

The door of No. 1, Fore Street, was slammed violently in the face of the applicant.

The Sailor nearly shed tears. He was absurdly sensitive in dealing with the other sex and prone to be affected by its hazards and vicissitudes. However, Auntie of the long ago surged into his mind, and the recollection seemed to soften the rebuff. All, even of that sex, were not bar-ladies, sympathetic, smiling, and magnificent. Therefore he took courage to knock at the door of the next house which also had a card in the window. But, unfortunately, that again was not to proclaim lodgings, clean and decent, for a single man, but merely, "A horse and cart for hire."

Here the blow, again from the quarter which knows how to deal them, was equally decisive. A creature, blowsy and unkempt, told him, after a single glance at his fur cap and his bundle and his deep-sea-going gear, "that if he didn't take hisself off and look sharp about it she'd set the pleece on him."

At this second rebuff the Sailor stood at the edge of the curb for some little time, trying to pluck up spirit to grapple with the problem of the next card-bearing domicile, which happened to be the third house in the street. He felt he had begun to lose his bearings a bit. It had come upon him all at once with great force that he was a stranger in a strange land whose language he didn't know.

He had just made up his mind to tackle the next card in the window, let the consequences be what they might, when he felt his sleeve plucked by a small urchin of nine with a preternaturally sharp and racial countenance.

This promising product of the world's greatest race, one Moses Gerothwohl by name, had had

an eye fixed on the fur cap ever since he had heard its owner ask at the first house in the street for lodgings, clean and decent, for a single man. This was undoubtedly one of those foreign sailors, perhaps a Rooshian—a Rooshian was the very highest flight of which the imagination of Moses Gerothwohl was at present capable—who, even if they were apt to get drunk on queer fluids and sometimes went a bit free with their knives, were yet very good-natured, and as a rule were pretty well off for money.

"Did yer sye, mate, yer wanted a shakedown?" said Moses Gerothwohl, plucking at the sleeve of the Sailor.

The Sailor looked down at the urchin and nodded.

"Come with me, then," said Moses, stoutly. "And I'll take yer to my grandma's."

He led the Sailor through a perfect maze of by-streets, and through a nest of foul courts and alleys, until at last he came to the house of his grandmother, to whom he presented the foreign seaman.

She was not very prepossessing to look at, nor was her abode enticing, but she had a small room to offer which, if not over clean and decidedly airless, contained a bed of which he could have the sole use for the reasonable sum of sixpence a night.

The young man accepted the terms at once and laid his bundle on the bed. But the old woman did not accept him with equal alacrity. There was a little formality to be gone through before the transaction could be looked upon as "firm." It was usual for the sixpence to be paid in advance.

Grandma was one-fifth tact, three-fifths determination, one-fifth truculence, and the whole of her was will power of a very concentrated kind. She was as tough as wire, and in the course of several tense and vital minutes, during which her wolf's eyes never left Henry Harper's face, that fact came home to him.

It took nearly five minutes for the Sailor to realize that Grandma was waiting for something, but as soon as he did, the way in which he bowed to fate impressed her right down to the depths of her soul. He took an immense handful of silver out of his pocket, the hoarded savings of six years of bitter toil, chose one modest English "tanner" after a search among many values and nationalities, and handed it over with a polite smile.

The old woman was a very hard nut of the true waterside variety, but the sight of such affluence was almost too much for her. Money was her ruling passion. She went downstairs breathing hard, and with a deep conviction that Rothschild himself was in occupation of her first floor front.

In the meantime, the Sailor had seated himself on the bed at the side of his bundle, and had started to think things out a bit. This was a long and tough job. Hours passed. The small, stuffy, evil-smelling bedroom grew as black as pitch; a heavy October darkness had descended upon the strange land of Wapping, but the Sailor was still thinking very hard; also he was wondering what he should do next.

He hadn't a friend on the wide earth. There was nothing to which he could turn his hand. He could neither read nor write. And in his heart he had a subtle fear of these queer longshore people, although he had sense enough to know that it was a Sailor's duty to trample that feeling under foot. One who six long years had sailed before the mast aboard the *Margaret Carey* had nothing to fear in human shape.

As Henry Harper sat on that patched counterpane in the growing October darkness, unloosing that strange and terrible thing, the mind of man, he was not merely lonely, he was afraid. Afraid of what? He didn't know. But as the darkness grew there came an uncanny feeling under his jersey. It seemed to stick him in the pit of the stomach like the icy blade of a knife. He had tasted fear in many forms, but this kind of stealing coldness was something new and something different.

It grew darker and darker in the room. The sense of loneliness was upon him now like a living presence. There was not a soul in the world to whom he could turn, to whom he might speak, unless it was the old woman downstairs. Yet lonely and rather terrified as he was, his odd intuition told him it would be better to converse with no one than to converse with her.

At last, shivering and supperless, although his pockets were heavy with silver untold, he made up his mind to turn in. It was a counsel of desperation. He was sick to nausea with the business of thinking about nothing, a process which began in nothing and ended in nothing; and at last with a groan of misery, he pulled off his boots and leggings, but without removing his clothes stretched himself on the bed.

If he could have had his wish he would have gone to sleep, never to awake again. But he could only lie shivering in the darkness without any hope of rest. Presently a clock struck two. And then he thought he heard a creak on the stairs and shortly afterwards a stealthy footfall outside his door.

He had never been anything but broad awake. But these creeping noises of the night seemed to string up every sense he had to a point that was uncanny. He held his breath in order to listen—to listen like a frightened animal in a primeval forest that has begun to sense the approach of a secret and deadly foe.

The door of the room came very softly open. It was at the side of the bed, and he could not see it; but he felt an almost imperceptible vibration in the airless stuffiness in which he lay. Moreover, a breathing, catlike thing had entered the room; a thing he could neither hear nor see. It was a presence of which he was made aware by the incandescent forces of a living imagination.

It was too dark to see, there was not a sound to hear, but he knew there was a breathing shape within reach of his left hand.

Suddenly his hand shot out and closed upon it.

He caught something electric, quivering, alive. But whatever it was, a deadly silence contained it. There was not a sound, except a gasp, as of one who has made a sudden plunge into icy water. The Sailor lay inert, but now that live thing was in his hand he was not afraid.

He expected a knife. Realizing that he must defend his face or his ribs or whatever part might be open to attack, he knew he must be ready for the blow.

But a queer thing happened. The attack was not made by a knife. It was made by a human will. As he lay grappling in the darkness with his visitor, slowly but surely he felt himself enfolded by an unknown power. Such a force was beyond his experience. His own will was in a vice; there was a deadly struggle, yet neither moved. Not a sound was uttered, but in the end the Sailor nearly screamed with the overmastering tension which seemed to be pressing out his life. And then he realized that his hand was no longer holding the thing upon which it had closed.

The room was empty again. The darkness was too great for his eyes to tell him, but every sense he had, and at this moment he had more than five, seemed to say that whatever his peril, it had now passed.

He sat up and listened tensely through the still open door. He thought he could hear the creak of a foot on the stairs. Then he began to search his pockets for a box of matches, and suddenly remembered that he hadn't one. But the sense of physical danger had given him a new power over his mind. He was now terribly alert.

His instinct was to get out of that house at once. But a very little reflection showed that such a course was not necessary. It was only an old woman after all.

III

Reinforced with the idea that an old woman with wolf's eyes should have no terrors for a sailor, Henry Harper decided to stay where he was, until daylight at least. In the absence of matches and local knowledge it would not be easy to find a way out of the house in the middle of the night. Moreover if he drew the chest of drawers from under the skylight, which was too thickly plastered with generations of grime to dispense light from the sky or anywhere else, and barricaded the door, he could not be taken by surprise and need have fear of none.

He decided to do this. With arms as tough as steel, he lifted up the chest of drawers bodily and dumped it with a crash against the door. Let Grandma get through that if she could. If she did, God help her.

Yes, God help her. The Sailor suddenly took from his pocket a large, bone-hafted clasp knife. There came the friendly click of the opening blade, he felt the well ground edge lightly with the ball of his thumb. He would lie quietly for Grandma in comfort and in simple faith.

What a fool to let her go! ... the trusty friend in his hand was speaking to him.... Had you forgotten me? I'd have done Grandma's business in a brace of shakes, you know.

The Sailor, aware of that, felt rather sorry.

But in a little while there was another voice in the room. In climbing back on the bed, one hand touched the fur cap which lay at the foot of it. Instantly, a second voice spoke through the darkness.

"No, Sailor, my boy." What a voice it was! "It ain't quite white. Put your knife in your pocket, old friend. And if Grandma calls again and you feel you *must* set your mark on her, what's wrong with your ten commandments, anyway?"

The tones of Klondyke filled the darkness with their music.

Sailor obeyed instinctively, in the way he had always done. He put the knife back in his pocket with a gentle sigh.

The dirty dawn of a wet October day stole on the young man's eyes as he was attempting a doze on the patched counterpane with his sea-going gear around him. The arrival of an honest Wednesday morning, chill and dismal as it was, dispelled with a magic that seemed ironical any lingering trace he might have of his night fear of Grandma. Was he not a sailor who six long years had sailed the seas? Had he not seen, done and suffered things which held him forever from any human thrall?

But Henry Harper knew better than to ask Grandma what she had got for breakfast.

He chose instead to sling his hook. Gathering his truck back into its bundle, and cramming the magic cap over his eyes, he pulled the chest of drawers away from the bedroom door. Then as soon as there was light enough to see the way he crept down the creaking stairs, unlocked, unbolted and unchained the door below, and slipped out into Wednesday morning.

Wednesday morning received him with a chill spatter of rain. He stood a minute on the cobbles of the squalid yard in front of Grandma's abode—wondering where he was, what he should do, which turn he should take. As a fact, there was only one turn he could take, and that lay straight ahead across the yard, through a short arched passageway leading to a maze of courts and alleys which led heaven knew where.

He proceeded to find out. Bundle under arm, fur cap over eyes, a roll in his gait, the Sailor emerged at last upon a main street, at present only half awake. But it contained a thing of vast importance: a policeman.

The Law in its majesty looked at the Sailor. The Sailor in his simplicity looked at the majesty of the Law. There was a time, six long, long years ago, when he would not have ventured such a liberty with the most august of human institutions. But he was through that phase of his career. By comparison with all the stripes that had since been laid upon him even the police were gentle and humane.

There was not a soul in sight except this solemn London bobby, who stood four square in the Sailor's path.

"Mornin', mister." The Sailor lifted his cap, partly from a sense of fraternity, partly from a proud feeling of being no longer afraid to do so.

The bobby surveyed the strange nondescript that had been washed up by the tide of Wapping. He looked gravely at the bundle and at the fur cap, and then decided in quite an impersonal way not to return their owner's salutation.

The Sailor was not hurt by the aloofness of the Law. He had not expected anything else. After all, the police were the police. He knew that a gulf of several hemispheres was fixed between a real three-stripe rozzer of the Metropolitan Force and a thing it had pleased fate to call by the name of Henry Harper.

"A wrong un, I expect," was the reflection of Constable H23, who always expected a wrong un at that hour of the morning. Upon the spur of this thought, the bobby suddenly turned on his heel, and saw the wrong un, bundle, fur cap and all, crossing the road like an early morning fox at the lure of a favorite hencoop. Moreover, he was crossing it for the reason that he was frantically hungry.

Across the road, at a junction it formed with three others as mean and dismal as itself, was a sight supremely blessed in the eyes of the Sailor. It was nothing less than a coffee stall in the panoply of matutinal splendor. Steaming fluids, with flames glowing under them, flanked one half of its counter; rock cakes, ham sandwiches, beef sandwiches, rolls and butter, and pork pies, splendidly honest and genuine pork pies, flanked the other half of it.

The proprietor of the stall, an optimist in white apron and shirt sleeves, being unmistakably of the male sex had no terrors for the Sailor. Besides, he was flushed with the knowledge that he had just said good morning to the police.

"Cup o' coffee, mister, and one o' them."

Nothing less than a pork pie could meet the need of the Sailor. Moreover, he dived in his pocket, took the first coin that came, which happened to be half a crown, and laid it with true Klondyke magnificence on the counter.

The proprietor of the stall, who added a power of clear thinking to his many qualities, appeared to see in the action as well as in the coin itself, a declaration of financial status on the part of the young seaman in the remarkable gear. Also this view was shared by the only one of his early morning customers who happened to be at the stall: to wit, an almost aggressively capable looking and slightly bow-legged young man with flaming red hair and ears set at right angles to

his head, who was devouring a pork pie with quiet ferocity.

A single glance passed between Ike, who owned the stall, and the most influential of his patrons, who answered to the name of Ginger; a single glance and that was all.

"Nothing smaller, sonny?" said Ike, smiling and pleasant. "Not used to big money at seven g.m. Penny the corfee and two pence the pie. Three d." The proprietor raised three fingers and beamed like a seraph.

Ginger suspended operations on the pork pie to see what Dr. Nansen would do next.

The Sailor, with memories of Grandma still in his mind, put back the half-crown carefully before he brought out anything else. He was not going to give himself away this time. Thus he went warily in search of the smallest coin he could disentangle from the welter of all shapes and sizes, of all values and countries, which had been disposed in every pocket of his person. At last he produced one and laid it on the oilcloth modestly, as though he merely valued it at threepence. But in that part of the world it was valued at half a sovereign.

"Rich aunt," said the proprietor of the stall, with respectful humor.

The young man with the flaming hair turned half about, pork pie in hand, to get a better view of Dr. Nansen. This close observer proceeded to chew steadily without venturing any remark.

There was nothing left for the Sailor but to give away his wealth in handfuls now. He had to keep diving into his secret hoard, which out of deference to the thought of Grandma he was still determined not to disclose in bulk and sum. Now came up a Spanish fourpenny, now a Yankee nickel, now a Frenchman, now a Dutchman, now a Mexican half-dollar, now a noble British quid. For several crowded and glorious minutes, Ike and the most influential of his patrons had the time of their lives.

"Thank you, Count," said the proprietor of the stall urbanely, when at last the owner of the fur cap had managed to discharge his liability in coin current in the realm of Great Britain. Then, in common with the entranced Ginger, he watched the young man recruit exhausted nature.

The Sailor having made short and clean work of his first pie went on to his second, then to his second cup of coffee, then to a rock cake, then to a ham sandwich, then to a third cup of coffee, then to a third pie, when Ike and Ginger, his patron, watched with ever growing respect. And then came the business of finding ninepence, and with it a second solemn procession of Yankees and Dutchmen and Spaniards and Mexicans, which roused the respect of Ginger and Ike to such a pitch that it became almost unbearable.

"See here, Vanderbilt!" said Ike at last, yielding reluctantly the hope that the young plutocrat would ever hit the exact coin that would meet the case. "Dig up that half dollar. Me and Ginger"—a polite grimace at Ginger—"can make up one-and-nine."

Ginger, divided between the reserve of undoubted social position—he was earning good money down at the docks—and an honest desire to make himself agreeable in such romantic circumstances, warily produced a grimy and war-worn sixpence and handed it across the counter, looking Ike straight in the eyes as he did so.

"Any use?" said Ginger, calm, aloof, and casual.

In the meantime the Sailor had begun the search for his half-crown. Ginger and Ike waited hopefully, and in the end they were rewarded. The Sailor found it at last, but not before he had made an end of all secrecy. In sheer desperation he disclosed handfuls of his hoard.

"Thank yer, Count. One-and-nine change," said Ike.

IV

The Sailor, fortified by one of the best breakfasts of his life, politely said "Mornin'" to the proprietor of the coffee stall with a lift of the cap not ungraceful, adding a slightly modified ritual for the benefit of Ginger, and stepped out again into the world.

Ike and Ginger, his patron, turned to watch the Sailor go. Neither spoke, but with eyes that glowed in the gray light of the morning like those of a couple of healthy basilisks, they marked all that the young man did. The Sailor walked into the middle of the road to the point where four arteries of traffic met, and then hesitation overcame him as to what he should do next. For a little while, he stood looking up one street and down another with an expression of bewilderment upon his face.

"So long," said Ginger to Ike.

The proprietor of the stall had now none to share his thoughts. He saw Ginger, assured but wary, saunter up to the Sailor as he stood at gaze; saw him touch the young man on the shoulder as if by chance rather than design; saw him speak words which, bend across the counter as he might, he was too far away to catch.

"Lookin' for anything?" were the words that Ginger spoke. Moreover, he spoke them blandly, yet with such a subdued air that he might have been talking in his sleep. The Sailor, whose eyes were far away in the gray mists of the morning, was looking for nothing, it seemed.

"Which way you goin'?" asked Ginger, in the same tone of mild somnambulism.

"Dunno," said the Sailor, his eyes farther away than ever.

"Don't know," repeated Ginger.

At this point, he ventured to look very hard and straight into the face of the Sailor. His knowledge of the human race was pretty considerable for one of his years, and there was something about the wearer of the fur cap that interested him. The face under it was fine-drawn, much tanned by the weather, open as the sky. Ginger then flung an expert's eye over the lean length of blue jersey which surmounted a grotesque pair of leggings.

"You don't know," said Ginger. "Well, suppose you walk as far as the docks?"

The Sailor didn't seem to mind.

"Been long at sea?" inquired Ginger, as with intimate local knowledge he piloted the young man through a series of short cuts.

"Six year."

"Have ye so!" Ginger was surprised and impressed. "Like it?"

The eyes of the Sailor looked straight down into those of Ginger. But he didn't say anything.

"You didn't like it?"

"No."

"Why did you stick it, then?"

"Dunno."

The conversation languished a moment, but Ginger's curiosity was increasing.

"Still foller the sea?"

"No."

"What's yer job?"

"Ain't got one."

Ginger stroked a resolute jaw.

"Lookin' for a billet?"

"Yep."

"Ashore?"

The Sailor nodded.

"Better come with me, then," said Ginger, with an air of decision. "Dare say we can fix you at our shop. Fifteen bob a week ... fifteen bob and a tizzey ... if you leave it ter me."

The heart of the Sailor leaped under his jersey. This was big money as money was understood aboard the *Margaret Carey*.

At the end of a narrow street they came suddenly upon the dock gates. Through these on the left, then to the left again, and then to the right was the private wharf of Antcliff and Jackson, Limited, and also at Hull and Grimsby. Ginger, having told the Sailor tersely to wait outside, entered the decrepit wooden office at the entrance to the wharf, with the air of a partner in the firm. After he had had two minutes' conversation with a melancholy individual with a red nose and a celluloid collar, he beckoned to the Sailor to come inside.

The Sailor entered the office like a man in a dream.

"Name?" said, or rather snapped, the Individual.

"Enry Arper."

The Individual took down the time book from the rack above his head with a vehemence that seemed quite uncalled for, opened it savagely, dipped a pen in a cracked inkpot and dashed down the name ferociously.

"Sign."

The Sailor took up the pen coolly and with a sense of power. The Individual was a mere babe at the breast compared to Mr. Thompson and the Old Man. Moreover, the ability to sign his name was his one literary accomplishment and he was honorably proud of it. Klondyke had taught him that, and he had hung on for all he was worth to such a priceless asset. H-e-n with a Hen, r-y Henry, H-a-r with a Har, p-e-r Harper—the letters were formed very carefully with his tongue sticking out of his mouth.

Ginger, rather impressed by the insouciance of the whole proceeding, then led the Sailor across the yard to his duties. He wasn't quite such a guy as he looked. There was something there it seemed; something that went pretty deep. Ginger noted it not unfavorably. He was all for depth. He was a great believer in depth.

The Sailor was informed by this new and providential friend that he had stood out for the princely emolument of seventeen and a tizzey, and had been able to get it. This was big money for his rank of life, but his occupation was menial. He had to haul sacks, to load and unload cargoes. Still he didn't complain. It was the life of a gentleman in comparison with being afloat on the high seas.

To be sure his money was not as big as it looked. He had to live out of it and to find a berth to sleep in at night. But making every allowance for longshore extravagance there could be no doubt that this new existence was sheer luxury after six years of Sing and wet hash and hard-tack and a bed in the half-deck of the *Margaret Carey*.

Dinner time came at twelve o'clock, and under the ægis of Ginger, the Sailor walked up the main street once more to Ike's coffee stall, and at Ginger's expense had as much as he could eat for sixpence. He wanted to pay his own shot and Ginger's also, but Ginger simply would not hear of such a thing. This was His, he said firmly; and when Ginger spoke firmly it generally had to be His whatever it was or might be. It was nice of Ginger; all the same that paladin was far-sighted, he was clear-headed, he was sure and cool. What Ginger didn't know was not knowledge, and it was no less a person than Ike who said so.

For example, after dinner, which took exactly twelve minutes by the clock of the Booteries across the road and opposite the stall, Ginger remarked almost in the manner of one who communes with his subliminal self, "There's one thing yer wantin'."

The Sailor looked incredulous. At that moment he felt it was not in the power of wide earth or high heaven to offer him anything further.

"You want a belt for your brass." Ginger spoke behind his hand in a whisper. "Mon't carry it loose. Wear it round your waist, next your skin. Money's money."

Ike, absorbed in the polite occupation of brushing stray crumbs of rock cake from the strip of grimy oilcloth which graced the counter, was so much impressed by Ginger's grasp of mind that he had the misfortune to bring down a jubilee mug with his elbow, without breaking it, fortunately.

Ginger laid such emphasis upon the point that the Sailor accompanied him across the street to Grewcock's emporium, where body belts were kept in stock. A careful survey of all to be found on the premises, together with an examination, equally careful, of their prices convinced Ginger that better value for the money could be had elsewhere. Thus they withdrew lower down the street to Tollemache and Pearson's, where unfortunately the scale of charges was even higher.

This was discouraging, but there was a silver lining to the cloud. It appeared that Ginger had a belt, which in his own opinion was far superior to anything they had yet seen; it was Russia leather of the finest quality and he was willing to sell it for less than it cost if the Sailor was open to the deal. The Sailor was not averse from doing business, as Ginger felt sure would be the case, when the material advantages had been pointed out to him. But as Ginger had not the belt upon him he suggested that they should call at his lodgings on their way back to the docks in order that the Sailor might inspect it.

Ginger's lodgings were within a stone's throw of the wharf of Antcliff and Jackson, Limited. Not only were they very clean and comfortable, but also remarkably convenient; in fact, they were most desirable lodgings in every way. Their only drawback was they were not cheap. Otherwise they were first class.

By a coincidence the Sailor, it seemed, was in need of good lodgings as well as a belt for his money. Before he returned to the wharf of Antcliff and Jackson, Limited, at one o'clock, he had

been provided with things so necessary to his comfort, well-being, and social status.

V

The Sailor paid six-and-six for the belt of Russia leather, and in Ginger's opinion that was as good as getting it for nothing. Also he agreed to share bed and board with Ginger for the sum of twelve shillings a week. It was top price, Ginger allowed, but then the accommodation was *extra*. Out of the window of the bedroom you could pitch a stone into the wharf of Antcliff and Jackson, Limited.

This arrangement, in Ginger's opinion, was providential for both parties. Such lodgings would have been beyond Ginger's means had he been unable to find a decent chap to share them with him. Then the Sailor was young, in Ginger's opinion, in spite of the fact that he had been six years at sea. It would be a great thing in Ginger's opinion for so young a sailor to be taken in hand by a landsman of experience until he got a bit more used to *terrier firmer*.

So much was the Sailor impressed by Ginger's disinterestedness that at six o'clock that evening, when his first day's work was done, he brought his gear from the wharf to No. 1, Paradise Alley. Ginger superintended its removal in the manner of an uncle deeply concerned for the welfare of a favorite nephew. Indeed this was Ginger's permanent attitude to the Sailor from this time on; all the same, he received twelve shillings in advance for a week's board and lodging. Uncle and nephew then sat down to a high tea of hot sausages, with unlimited toast and dripping, before a good fire, in a front parlor so clean and comfortable that the mind of the Sailor was carried back a long six years to Mother and the Foreman Shunter.

When Henry Harper sat down to this meal with Ginger opposite, and that philanthropist removed the cover from three comely sausages, measured them carefully and helped the Sailor to the larger one-and-a-half, his first thought was that he was now as near heaven as he was ever likely to get. What a change from the food, the company, and the squalor of the *Margaret Carey*! Klondyke himself could not have handed him the larger sausage-and-a-half with an air more genuinely polite. There was a self-possession about Ginger that was almost as wine and music to the torn soul of Henry Harper.

As the Sailor sat eating his sausage-and-a-half and after the manner of a sybarite dipping in abundant gravy the perfectly delicious toast and dripping, he felt he would never be able to repay the debt he already owed to Ginger. That floating hell which had been his home for six long years, that other hell the native haunt of Auntie where all his early childhood had been passed, even that more contiguous hell in the next street but two, the abode of Grandma, were this evening a thousand miles away. Just as the mere presence of Klondyke had once given him courage and self-respect which in his darkest hours since he had never altogether lost, so now, after such a meal, the mere sight of Ginger sitting at the other side of the fire, smoking Log Cabin, put him in new heart, touched him, if not with a sense of joy, with a sense of hope.

As became a man of parts Ginger was not content to sit for the rest of the evening smoking Log Cabin and gazing into the fire. At a quarter past seven, by the cuckoo clock on the chimneypiece, there came a knock at the outer door of the room which opened on the street. This was to herald the arrival of Ginger's own private newspaper, the *Evening Mercury*, which had been brought by a tattered urchin of nine, of whom the Sailor caught a passing glimpse, and as in a glass darkly beheld his former self.

In the eyes of the Sailor hardly anything could have ministered so much to Ginger's social position as that every evening of his life, Sundays excepted, his own newspaper should be delivered at No. 1, Paradise Alley. It was impossible for the Sailor to forget his early days in spite of the fact that fortune had come to him now in a miraculous way. His world was still divided into those who sold papers and those who bought them. Ginger clearly belonged to the latter exclusive and princely caste. He was of the class of Klondyke—of Klondyke who in his shore-goings in the uttermost parts of the earth behaved in an indescribably regal and plutocratic manner. Sometimes it had appeared to the Sailor, such were the amazing uses to which Klondyke had put his money, that the earth was his and all the lands and the waters thereof.

Ginger's ideas were not as princely as those of Klondyke; that was, in regard to money itself. He did not throw money about in the way that Klondyke did, nor had he Klondyke's air of genial magnificence which vanquished all sorts and conditions of men and women. But in their own way Ginger's ideas were quite as imperial.

As soon as Ginger opened his evening paper he remarked, with a short whistle, "I see Wednesday has beat the Villa."

"No," said the incredulous Sailor.

It was an act of politeness on the part of the Sailor to be incredulous. He might have accepted the fact without any display of emotion. But he felt it was due to his feelings that he should make some kind of comment, for they had been stirred considerably by the victory of Wednesday over the Villa.

"Win by much?" asked the Sailor, his heart suddenly beginning to beat under his seaman's jersey.

"Three two," said Ginger.

"At Brum?"

"No, at Sheffle, in foggy weather, on a holdin' turf."

The Sailor's eyes glowed. And then with his chin in his hands he gazed deep into the fire.

"I once seen the Villa," he said in a dreaming voice. It was the proudest memory of his life.

Ginger withdrew his mind from a consideration of the Police Report and the latest performances of the Government.

"At the Palace?" Ginger's tone was deep as becomes one entering upon an epic subject.

"No," said the Sailor, the doors of memory unlocked. "At Blackhampton. The Villa come to play the Rovers. My! they could play a bit. Won the Cup that year. Me and young Arris climbed a tree overlookin' the ground. Young Arris got pinched by a rozzer."

Ginger was not impressed by the reminiscence. It seemed a pity that a chap who had been six years before the mast, and not a bad sort of fellow, should give himself away like that. From the style and manner of the anecdote it was clear to this exact thinker that the Sailor had begun pretty low down in the scale. In the pause which followed the Sailor shivered like a warhorse who hears the battle from afar. The memories of his youth were surging upon him. In the meantime, Ginger, who appeared to be frowning over the Government and the Police news, was watching the Sailor's eyes very intently. He was watching those strange eyes with a cool detachment.

"Enery," said Ginger, choosing his words carefully, "if I was you, do you know what I'd do?"

Enery didn't.

"I'd very seriously be considerin' how I could earn my four quid a week."

The Sailor smiled sadly. He knew from cold experience that such a remark was sheer after-supper romance. Still it must be very nice to own a mind like Ginger's, which could weave such fantasy about the facts of life.

"If I was you," proceeded Ginger, "I wouldn't sleep in my bed until I was earnin' my four quid a week, winter *and* summer."

The Sailor who knew the price exacted in blood and tears to earn a pound a month could only smile.

"I'm goin' out for it meself," said Ginger. "And I'm not so tall as you. And I haven't your make and shape, I haven't your turn o' the leg, I haven't your arms an' wrisses."

Ginger might have been speaking Dutch for all that the Sailor could follow the emanations of his remarkable intellect.

"See here,"—an unnecessary adjuration since the Sailor was looking in solemn wonder with both eyes—"my pal Dinkie Dawson has just been engaged for three years by the Blackhampton Rovers at four thick uns a week. Fact."

The Sailor didn't doubt it. The very genius of scepticism would have respected such an announcement.

"Dinkie Dawson, if you please," said Ginger. "Why, I used to punch his head fearful. He did my ciphering at school—an' now—an' now——!" Ginger was overcome by emotion. "But if a mug like Dink—yes, mark you, a *mug* can earn big money, I'm sort of thinkin' *that* puts it right up to William Herbert Jukes, Esquire."

The eyes of the Sailor glowed like stars in the light of the fire. It was almost as if he had heard the flutter of the wings of destiny. As a boy of nine flying shoeless and stockingless through the icy mud of Blackhampton, bawling, "Result of the Cup tie," he had felt deep in his heart the first stab of ambition. One day he would help the Rovers bring the Cup to his native city. That was no more than a dream. The Rovers were heroes and supermen—not that Henry Harper was able to formulate them in terms of psychological accuracy. And here was Ginger, a new and very remarkable friend, whom fate had thrown across his path, seated within three yards of him, setting his soul on fire.

"Why not?" There was no fire in the soul of Ginger. His voice was arctic cold, but the purpose in it was deadly. "If a guy like Dink, why not me?" A slight pause. "And if Ginger Jukes, who is five foot six an' draws the beam at eleven stun in his birthday suit, why not Mr. Enery Arper?" And Ginger looked across at the Sailor almost with pity.

The heart of the Sailor began to thump violently. And there came something soft and large in his throat.

"How tall are you, Sailor? Six foot?" The eye of an expert traversed the finely turned form.

"Thereabouts."

"What's your fighting weight in the buff?"

"Dunno."

"Ought to know to a bounce. But it don't matter. You'll thicken. How old next birthday?"

"Nineteen."

"That's a good age. Wish I was. I'm one and twenty."

The Sailor thought he looked more.

"I'm a lot more in some things," said Ginger. "But at football I shall not be one and twenty until the middle o' Janawerry."

The Sailor was a little out of his depth. There was a subtlety about Ginger that went far beyond anything he had ever met. Even Klondyke, great man as he was, seemed a mere child by comparison with this forcible thinker.

"Nineteen is just the age," said Ginger, "to learn to chuck yerself about. But I dare say you know how to do that, having follered the sea."

"I can climb a bit," the Sailor admitted with great modesty.

"Can yer jump?"

The Sailor could jump a bit too.

"Could you throw yerself at the ball like a rattlesnake if you see it fizzing for the fur corner o' the net?"

The Sailor's modesty could not hazard an opinion on a matter of such technical complexity.

"I expect so," said Ginger, with a condescension that was most agreeable. "You are just the build for a goalkeeper. If it's fine tomorrow dinner-hour, we'll put you through your paces on Cox's Piece. I'm thinkin', Enery, you and me will soon be out after that four quid. Anyhow, I'll answer for Mr. W. H."

With the air of a Bismarck, Mr. W. H. Jukes, *alias* Ginger, resumed an extremely concentrated perusal of the evening's news.

VI

That night the repose of the Sailor was rather disturbed. For one thing he was unused to sleeping on dry land; for another Ginger took up a lot of the bed, and as he slept next the wall, the Sailor's position on the outer verge was decidedly perilous. Also when Ginger lay on his back, which he did about two, he was a snorer. Therefore the Sailor had to adjust himself to circumstances before he could begin to repose at all.

Even when slumber had really set in, which was not until after three, he had to wriggle his lean form into the famous but very tight jersey of the Blackhampton Rovers, the historic blue and chocolate. But what a moment it was when he came proudly on to the field in the midst of the heroes of his early dreams, coolly buttoning his goalkeeping gloves, and pretending not to be aware that thousands were massed tier upon tier around the amphitheater craning their necks to get a glimpse of him, and shouting themselves hoarse with their cries of battle!

It was odd that his first game with his beloved Rovers should be against the doughtiest of their foes, the world-famous Villa. And it seemed at first that the occasion would be too much for him. But Ginger was there, ruddy and insouciant, also in a magnificent new jersey. Ginger was playing full back, and just as the match was about to begin he turned round to the goalkeeper

and said, "Now, Sailor, pull up your socks, old friend." But the queer thing was, the voice did not belong to Ginger, it was the voice of Klondyke. Then confusion came. It was not Ginger, it was Klondyke himself who was playing full back, Klondyke the noblest hero of them all. So much was the Sailor astonished by the discovery that he fell out of bed, without disturbing Ginger who was in occupation of three parts of it and snoring like a traction engine.

Next day, the dinner-hour being fine, the Sailor made his *début* as a football player on Cox's Piece in the presence of a critical assembly. A number of the choicest spirits of the neighborhood, some in work, some out of it, but one and all fired with real enthusiasm for a noble game, gathered with a football about a quarter past twelve. This was a stalwart company, but as soon as Ginger appeared on the scene he took sole command of it. There were those who could kick a football as well as he, there were those who were older, bigger, stronger, but by sheer pressure of character in that assembly Ginger's word was law.

"Parkins," said Ginger, "you can't keep goal. Come out of it, Parkins. Here's a chap as can."

While the crestfallen and unwilling Parkins deferred to the master mind, a wave of solemn curiosity passed through the cognoscenti of Cox's Piece. The Sailor was seen to doff his wonderful fur cap, which alone was a guaranty of untold possibilities in its wearer, to roll up solemnly the sleeves of his tattered blue seaman's jersey, and to take his place in the goal which had been formed by two heaps of coats.

"He's a sailor," said Ginger, for the general information. But the statement was entirely superfluous. It was clear to the humblest intelligence that he was a sailor and nothing else, but Ginger knew the value of such an announcement. To a landsman—and these were landsmen all—a sailor is a sailor. Strange glories are woven round his visionary brow. He is a being apart. Things are permitted to him in speech and deed that would excite criticism in an ordinary mortal. For instance, the first shot at goal, which Ginger took himself by divine right, and quite an easy one, by design, for a real goalkeeper to parry, the Sailor missed altogether. Had he been aught but a sailor his reputation as far as Cox's Piece was concerned would have been gone forever.

"Ain't got his sea legs yet." Ginger's coolness and impressiveness were extraordinary. "Been eight year at sea. Round the world nine times. Wrecked twice. Seed the serpent off the coast o' Madagascar. Give me the ball, Igson. Wait till he gets his eye in an' you'll see."

Ginger's second shot at goal was easier than his first, and the Sailor, to the gratification of his mentor, was able to mobilize in time to stop it.

"What did I tell yer?" said Ginger. "You'll see what he can do when he gets his sea legs."

Within a week the Sailor was the unofficial hero of Cox's Piece. Ginger, of course, was the only authentic one. But he was too great a man ever to be visited by a suspicion of jealousy. Jealousy is a second rate passion, and whatever Ginger was he was not second rate. Besides the Sailor's remarkable success on Cox's Piece increased the prestige of his discoverer.

The Sailor took to goalkeeping as a duck takes to water. The truth was he was a goalkeeper born, as a poet is born or a soldier or a musician. His slender body was hung on wires, his muscles were toughened into steel and whipcord by long years of hard and perilous training. Then his eye, keen and clear as a hawk's, was quick and true. Also he was active as a cat, and with very little practice was able to compass that *tour de force* of the goalkeeper's art, the trick of flinging himself full length upon the ground in order to parry a swift shot at short range.

Ginger was a wonderfully shrewd judge of men. And this faculty had never shown itself more clearly than in seeing a born goalkeeper in the Sailor even before that young man had made his *début* on Cox's Piece. The brilliant form of his protégé was a personal triumph for Ginger. His reputation for omniscience was more firmly established than ever. In little more than a fortnight the Sailor was able to keep goal not merely to the admiration of Cox's Piece, his fame had begun to spread.

It was not that Henry Harper, even in these critical days, was wholly absorbed in the business of learning to play football. Of vast importance to his progress in the world, as in Ginger's opinion that art was, there was still time and opportunity for the Sailor to think of other things.

He was much impressed by Ginger's perusal of the evening's news, which always took place after supper. At the same time he was troubled. Ginger took it for granted that Enery could read a newspaper. He treated that as a matter of course, perhaps for the reason that he had seen the Sailor sign his name, laboriously it was true, in the time-book of Antcliff and Jackson, Limited. But Ginger, with all his shrewdness, made a bad mistake. He little guessed that the Sailor's signature stood for the sum of his learning. He little guessed when he flung the *Evening Mercury* across to the Sailor after he had done with it himself, and the Sailor thanked him with that odd politeness which rather puzzled him, and became absorbed in the paper's perusal, that the young man could hardly read a word.

On the evening this first happened the Sailor had intended no deceit. He was so straight by nature that he could not have set himself deliberately to take in anybody. The deception came about without any will of his to deceive at all; and he was soon having to maintain a false

impression which he had not intended to create. All the same, he would have been mortally ashamed to let the cat out of his bag. He well knew that it would have been a crushing blow to that terrible thing, the pride of Ginger.

The young man wrestling behind the *Evening Mercury* with the simplest words it contained, and able to make very little of them in the way of sense because they so seldom came together, reflected ruefully that he ought at all costs to have borne in mind Klondyke's advice. "Stick to the reading and writing, old friend. That's your line of country. You'll get more out of those than ever you'll get out of the sea." Bitterly he regretted now that he had not set store by those inspired words. He began to see clearly that you could not hope to cut much ice ashore unless you were a man of education.

He was able to write his name, and that was all. Also he knew his alphabet and could count up to a hundred if you gave him plenty of time. There were also a few words he knew at sight, and thirty, perhaps, short ones, and the easiest in the terribly difficult English language, that he could spell with an effort. This was the sum of his knowledge, and the whole of it was due to Klondyke, who had given many a half-hour of his leisure to imparting it in the cold and damp misery of the half-deck with no more than a sputter of candle by which to do it.

Sailor had clung desperately to all the scraps of learning which Klondyke had given him, but when his friend left the ship he had not had the grit to plow the hard furrow of knowledge for himself. Somehow he had not been able to stick it. He needed the inspiration of Klondyke's voice and presence, of Klondyke's humor and friendliness. He could hardly bring himself to open the Bible his friend had given him, and when he tried to read the *Brooklyn Eagle* he couldn't see it for tears.

Now he had left the sea for good, he knew a bitter price would be exacted for his weakness. To begin with it would be impossible to tell Ginger the truth. Ginger was the kind of man who would look down on him if once he knew his secret. Besides it was a grievous handicap ashore never to have been to school. Moreover the Sailor was so honest that any kind of deception hurt him.

"Read that yarn about Kitchener and the Gippy?"

"No," said the miserable Sailor.

"Better. Page three. Bottom. Damn good. What?"

"Yep," said the Sailor, wishing to commit the act of hari-kari. He must find a way out. The longer the pretense was kept up the worse it would be. But it was impossible to tell Ginger that he couldn't even find the yarn of Kitchener and the Gippy, let alone attempt to read it.

VII

Ginger was a wonderful chap, but his nature was hard. He had little of Klondyke's far-sighted sympathy, which in circumstances of ever growing difficulty would have been an enormous help to the Sailor.

Henry Harper had felt no shame when he told the dismal truth to Klondyke that he could neither read nor write. But he would rather have his tongue cut out than tell that particular truth to Ginger. Still the game of make-believe must not go on. It made the young man horribly uncomfortable to be driven to play it after supper every night. Something must be done if the esteem, perhaps the friendship, of Ginger was not to be forfeited.

The Sailor was no fool. Therefore he set his wits very seriously to work to grasp the nettle without exposing his ignorance more than was absolutely necessary. He spent anxious hours, not only during the day, but in the watches of the night, trying to find a way out.

One Saturday evening he sat in a frame of mind bordering upon ecstasy. At the instance of Ginger, who was the captain and treasurer of the club, the chairman of the committee, and also one of its vice-presidents, the Sailor had been invited that afternoon to keep goal for the Isle of Dogs Albion. The Sailor had done so. Ginger had shaken hands with him impressively after the match, and had solemnly told him that he had won it for his side, which was truly the case. And the fact was frankly admitted by the rest of the team.

"Mark my words," said Ginger to his peers, "that feller's young at present, but he plays for England when he gets a bit more powder in his hold."

This was talking, but no member of the Isle of Dogs Albion was so misguided as to argue the matter. Ginger's word was the law of nations. Besides, the Sailor was a goalkeeping genius; his form that afternoon could not have been surpassed by Robinson of Chelsea.

That evening as the Sailor sat gazing, chin on hands, into the fire, while Ginger read out the results of the afternoon's matches, he began to think to a purpose.

"Sunderland hasn't half put it acrost the Arsenal. Villa and Wolves a draw."

"Ginger," said the Sailor wistfully, "if you had been to sea for near seven year an' you had forgot a bit o' what you knowed at school, what would you do about it?"

"Do about what? 'Otspur hasn't half punctured Liverpool, I don't think."

"Do about learnin' what you've forgot?"

"Come again, pardner. I'm not Old Moore. Manchester City and Birmingham no goals half time."

"Do about learnin' a bit o' figurin' what you ought to ha' knowed afore you went to sea?"

"Do you think I'm Datas?" The flash of scorn seared the soul of Henry Harper like the live end of an electric wire. "It's a silly juggins question. How the hell should I know?"

No, Ginger was not helpful.

But tonight the Sailor was in the seventh heaven, he was walking on air, therefore with a courage not his as a rule he would not own defeat.

"Suppose you'd almost forgot how to read the news. What'd you do about it?"

"Do about it? Why, I'd pleadin' well go and drown meself."

The Sailor drew in his breath in a little gasp. But the matter was so tragic that he must go on. And it was no more than Klondyke had foreseen.

"Perhaps there's someone as would learn me," said the Sailor half to himself. And then his pluck gave out.

Silence fell for twenty minutes. Ginger smoked Log Cabin and read the evening's news, while the Sailor continued to stare in the fire. Then Ginger flung across the *Evening Mercury* with, as the Sailor fancied, a slight touch of contempt. But Henry Harper had not the heart to take up the paper tonight. He must never take it up again until he had learned to read it!

In the meantime Ginger reflected.

"Sailor," he said, looking at the fire-lit figure, with vibrations of depth and power in his voice, "you'll go far. That's my opinion, an' I don't talk out o' the back o' my neck as a general rule. You'll go far."

This conveyed nothing to the Sailor.

"I'm tellin' yer," said Ginger. Rising with his freckled face shining and his deep mind fired by ambition, he took from a drawer in the supper table a sheet of writing-paper, an envelope, and a blotter which a philanthropic insurance company had presented to the landlady, an ancient ink bottle and a prehistoric pen from the chimneypiece, cleared a space by piling saucers upon plates and cups on the top of them, and then sat down to compose the following letter:

DEAR DINK,

I write these few lines hoping you are well as they leave me at present. A chap has just joined our club as I think you ought to know about. He's a sailor, and his goal-keeping is marvelous. None of our chaps has seen anything like it. Thought you might like to know this as the Hotspurs is after him. Two of their directors came to see him play this afternoon, and from what I hear they are going to make him an offer. But from what he tells me he would rather play for the Rovers than anybody as he is Blackhampton born, and though he's been nine times round the world and wrecked twice, he thinks there's no town like it. At present he is young and green, being took to sea as quite a kid, but I honestly think your directors ought to know about him, as he will be snapped up at once. I can arrange to bring him over to Blackhampton any Saturday for your club to look at if they care to give us both a trial with the Rovers' second team. We would both come for our expenses, railway fares, and one day's wages, but he won't come without me as we lodge together and play for the same club. You can take it from me he's a Nonesuch.

Yours truly,
W. H. JUKES.

P. S.—This season I am in pretty fair form myself at right full back. W. H. J.

Ginger wrote this letter with great pains in a very clear and masterful hand. He addressed it

to Mr. D. Dawson (Blackhampton Rovers F.C.), 12 Curzon Street, Blackhampton. Then, without saying a word to the Nonesuch, he went out to post it at the end of the street. Having done this, thinking hard, he made his way to the little alien hairdresser in the High Road, who had the honor of his patronage, and sternly ordered "a hair cut, and see that you go close with the lawn mower."

Meanwhile the Sailor sat by the fire. Presently the room was invaded by Mrs. Sparks, the landlady. She was a fatigued and faded creature, but honest, discreet, and thoroughly respectable in Ginger's opinion, and in that of his fellow lodger there could be no higher. Besides it was no secret that Mrs. Sparks had seen better days. She was the widow of a mariner, who had borne a gallant part in the bombardment of Alexandria, although his country and hers appeared rather to have overlooked the fact.

The Sailor was a little afraid of Mrs. Sparks. She was to his mind a lady, and overawed by her sex in general, the young man was rather embarrassed by her air of austerity. She never spoke without choosing her words, also the order in which to place them; and Ginger, who was frankly and cynically contemptuous in private discourse of Mrs. Sparks' sex, was always careful to address her as "Ma'am," a fact which as far as the Sailor was concerned amply vouched for her status.

At ordinary times the Sailor would not have dared to speak to his landlady unless she had first spoken to him. But tonight he was in a state of excitement. By some curious means the events of the afternoon had translated him. A tiny bud of ambition was breaking its filaments in his brain.

While Mrs. Sparks, weary and sallow of countenance, was clearing the table, a compelling force made the Sailor remove his chin from his hands and cease gazing into the fire.

"Beggin' pardon, m'm," he said, with the odd, almost cringing humbleness which always inspired him in his passages with even the least considerable of Mrs. Sparks' sex, "would you mind if I ask you a question?"

The landlady was a little surprised. Her lodgers were not in the habit of taking her into their confidence. But in spite of a bleak exterior she was less formidable than she looked, and this the Sailor had felt to be the case. In his tone, moreover, was a note to touch the heart of any woman.

"Not at all," said Mrs. Sparks genteelly.

"If you had been seven year at sea," said the young man, enfolding her with his deep eyes, "an' you had forgot your figurin', what would you do about it?"

Mrs. Sparks was so completely at a loss that the Sailor felt it to be his duty to make himself a little clearer.

"Suppose, m'm, you had forgot all yer knowed of your writin' and readin' while you was at sea, what 'u'd you do about *that*?"

Mrs. Sparks shook her head. It was a ladylike expression of hopeless defeat.

The Sailor grew desperate.

"See here, m'm." He took up the *Evening Mercury* with a fierceness which immensely surprised Mrs. Sparks; he looked so gentle that he didn't seem to have it in him. "It's like this year. I can't read a word o' this pleadin' paper. Beg parding, lady." Her face had hardened at such a term of the sea. The voice of the young man died suddenly as if thoroughly ashamed of its own vehemence.

However the vehemence had done the trick.

"I would learn," said the landlady curtly.

"Yep," said the Sailor, with the blush of a girl, "it's what I want to."

"Then why not?"

"Dunno how, m'm," he said helplessly.

"Why not go to a school?"

"Can't while I'm at work, m'm."

"There are schools you can go to at night."

Mrs. Sparks swept up the crumbs, whisked away the table cloth, replaced it with a cheerful looking red one, and retired with a look which the Sailor took for disdain.

No, he ought never to have let the cat out of the bag. It would have been better to have bitten off his tongue. But after all it was only Mrs. Sparks ... although Mrs. Sparks was Mrs. Sparks. He

must be very careful how he let on to people about his shameful ignorance.

He was a fool to worry about it. "It's nothing to be ashamed of, old friend," Klondyke had said, but the world was not made up of Klondykes. It was something to be ashamed of if you looked at it as Mrs. Sparks and Ginger did. He felt, as far as they were concerned, he would never live it down. Once more he looked into the fire in order to resume the captaincy of his soul. But it was no use. Fix his will as he might, the famous blue and chocolate jerseys of the Blackhampton Rovers had yielded permanently to Mrs. Sparks with a look of scorn in her face.

He got up and in sudden despair took his cap off the peg behind the door. No longer could he stay in the room with his shame. More space, more air was needed. As he flung open the outer door, a gust of damp fog came in; and with it came the squat, powerful, slightly bow-legged figure of Ginger, looking more than ever like a man of destiny now he had had his hair cut.

"Where goin'?"

"Walk," said the Sailor miserably.

"Nice night for a walk. Rum one you are." Had the Sailor's promise as a goalkeeper been less remarkable Ginger would have been tempted to rebuke such irresponsible behavior. As it was he was content merely to place it on record.

"Well if you must, you must," said Ginger magisterially, closing the door.

VIII

At five minutes past six on Tuesday evening, when Ginger came home from work, a letter was waiting for him on the sitting-room chimneypiece. The first thing he noticed was that it bore the Blackhampton postmark, but being a very cool and sure hand, he did not open it at once. He preferred to fulfil the first and obvious duty of a self-respecting citizen of "cleaning himself up" at the scullery sink with water from the pump, and of sitting down to a dish of tripe and fried onions, always a favorite with him, and particularly on Tuesday when the tripe was fresh, while the Sailor, looking rather forlorn, poured out the tea. Ginger chose to do all this with astounding sang-froid before opening Dinkie Dawson's letter.

He read slowly, with unruffled countenance. Then with a noncommittal air, he threw the letter carelessly across the table to the Sailor, who had to retrieve it from the slop basin which fortunately was empty.

"Read it," said Ginger, his face a mask, his tone ice cold, without a trace of emotion.

The Sailor blushed vividly.

"Read it, yer fool," said Ginger. The pitiless autocrat was now striking through the tone of detachment.

Hopelessly confused, the Sailor turned the letter the right side up. But he didn't attempt to read. He knew it was no use. There was not a line he could understand, yet he was forced to hold it before his eyes.

"What do you think o' that, young feller, my lad?"

Stern triumph was striking now through Ginger's almost terrible detachment. "What do you think on it, eh?"

The Sailor was not able to think anything of it at the moment.

"None so dusty—what?" Ginger fairly glowed with a sense of victory.

"Yep," said the Sailor feebly.

"About fixes it—what?"

"Yep," said the Sailor.

He gave back the letter to Ginger with nervous guilt, neither knowing why it was none so dusty nor what it was that it fixed.

"Yer silly perisher. Don't yer see what it means?"

The Sailor nodded feebly.

"Very well, then, why don't yer say so?"

There was the light of contempt in the truculent eyes of Ginger. The Sailor simply could not meet them.

"Blymy"—the scorn of Ginger was withering—"if you hadn't been nine times round the world afore the mast, I should say you was just a guy—I should straight. Don't you understand what Dinkie Dawson says?"

The Sailor's stammer might be taken for, "Yep."

"Very well, then," said Ginger, so savagely that he had to read the *Evening Mercury* in order to calm himself.

The Sailor began to wish he was dead. And then suddenly Ginger laid down the paper.

"This touch is goin' to cost you money, young Mister Man," he said, magniloquently.

The Sailor's face was haggard.

"You'll have to lay out thirty bob on a new suit of clothes to start with."

The Sailor nodded.

"Of course, you can get a suit for less, but myself I'm all for quality."

The Sailor nodded.

"If you'll take my advice, young feller, you'll go to Dago and Rogers and get one o' them blue suitings as they shows in the winder, neat but not gaudy, cut in the West End style. I'm thinkin' o' gettin' one meself; you simply can't help lookin' a gentleman in one o' them, with a spotted tie and a double turnover collar."

"Yep," said the Sailor, to whom all this was as intelligible as a play of Sophocles.

"You'll also want a nice neat Gladstone."

"Yep," said the Sailor abjectly.

"Brown paper parcel and your boots tied on by string at the end o' it won't do in this scene, young feller."

"No," said the Sailor.

"Got to dress the shop winder a bit in this act." A strange inner light was beginning to gleam in the eyes of Ginger. "Nice new Gladstone, pair o' nice wide knickers cut saucy round the knee, and a set o' new laces in your boots. And I'm thinking one o' those all-wool white sweaters you can get at Tallow's might turn out a good investment."

The Sailor nodded feebly.

"Never spile the ship for a ha'porth o' tar. Allus dress the part. Never stint a coat o' paint for Mrs. Jarley's Waxworks."

The Sailor nodded.

"You've got to learn to knock the public silly," concluded Ginger, with a ferocity almost frightening, "if you are ever goin' to cut any ice on this bleedin' planet."

Utterly nonplussed, the Sailor went early to bed with his shame.

IX

In the opinion of Cox's Piece, "lift" was not the word for the bearing of Ginger on the morrow at the mid-day gathering. It was pardonable, no doubt; Ginger was Ginger, a being apart. Twopenny Sturgess wouldn't half have had it dusted out of him. It wouldn't have been stood from Gogo, or Hogan, or Foxey Green, but with Ginger it was different. It was realized in a way that was almost sinister by the cognoscenti of Cox's Piece that if there was such a thing existing in the world, Ginger was really and truly It.

Nevertheless, Pouncer Rogers was so unwise as to put into words the unspoken thought that was in every mind when he told Ginger bluntly to his face "that he'd believe it when he seed it."

"Yer call me a liar," said Ginger, drawing himself up to his full height of five feet six inches with remarkable dignity.

"I said I'd believe it when I seed it," said the heroic Pouncer.

"Sailor here read the letter," said Ginger, underplaying from the sheer strength of his hand. "Didn't you, Sailor boy? *You* read Dinkie Dawson's letter?"

"Yep," said the miserable Sailor.

"An' didn't he say a day's wages and railway fares both ways?"

The answer of the Sailor was understood to be in the affirmative.

"First class, o' course," said Pouncer, with a deliberate wink at Gogo and Twopenny.

Ginger's hand was so full that he could afford to treat the observation on its merits.

"*Third* class, Pouncer. It was *third*, Sailor boy?" The appeal to Sailor boy had a superb touch of condescension. Pouncer would cheerfully have given a week's wages for the privilege of slaying Ginger.

"Yep—third," muttered the miserable one.

"Ginger Jukes," said the defiant Pouncer, "if you want my 'pinion, you don't know Dinkie Dawson at all. That's my 'pinion."

"Your opinion was not *ast*, young Pouncer." Ginger's air was that of a Napoleon. "An' when anyone pleadin' well *asts* it, Pouncer, you can give it. Perhaps you'll say that Sailor didn't read Dinkie's letter?"

"So he says," sneered Pouncer.

The Sailor winced, but the cognoscenti were much too busy to notice him.

"You are never goin' to call *him* a liar," said Ginger.

"I call him nothing."

"You had better not," said Ginger, who noticed that Pouncer was drawing in his horns a bit. "*I* can afford to take your lip, young Pouncer Rogers. I'm used to it an' you are no class, anyway, but if you call the Sailor here a liar, he'll have to put it acrost you. Won't you, Sailor boy?"

No reply from the Sailor.

"I call him nothing," said Pouncer, coming back a bit at this rather unexpected silence on the part of the Sailor. "But I simply says he pleadin' well didn't read no pleadin' letter from Dinkie Dawson, that's all I simply says."

"Young Pouncer," said Ginger, "you have called the Sailor a liar." He turned to his protégé with the anxious air of an extraordinarily polite Samaritan. "I'll hold your coat, Sailor boy. You've took too much already from the likes o' him. Give me your coat. You are bound to put it acrost him now."

Ginger looked around magisterially; the cognoscenti concurred as one. Already the Sailor's coat was in Ginger's hand. In the next moment he had rolled up the sleeves of the Sailor's blue jersey, remarking as he did so, "If ever I see a chap on his bended knees a-lookin' for trouble, it's this here young Pouncer. Sailor boy, if you'll be ruled by me, you won't half give him his gruel."

"It's more than you can, Ginger Jukes," said Pouncer, with ill-timed and unworthy defiance.

Ginger was aware of that fact. In the first place, fighting was not his long suit. He had too much intellect to love so vulgar a pastime merely for its own sake. Not only was it violent and dangerous, but it seldom meant anything in particular when you were through with it. All the same, it had its uses. Pouncer had been getting above himself for some little time now. If he didn't soon receive a proper licking from somebody, the hegemony of Cox's Piece might cease to be a sinecure.

"His left's fairly useful," whispered Ginger, as he brought his man up to the scratch. "But that's all he's got. Now mind you punch a hole right through him."

It was a rather disappointing scrap. But for this it would be unfair to blame either Pouncer or the Sailor. The fiasco was due to the unexpected, unwarranted, thoroughly ill-timed, and almost unprecedented behavior of the Metropolitan Police, who in the person of a certain Constable Y28 promptly moved on the combatants while they were sparring for position. He was obviously a young constable who had not quite shaken down into his duties.

"It'll have to be a draw," announced Ginger a little lower down the road, while Constable Y28 stood watching the ebb and flow of the cognoscenti. But it may have been that Ginger's verdict

was governed less by a consideration of the attitude of Constable Y28, than by the fact that Pouncer's ring-craft appeared to have improved considerably since Ginger had last seen it in action. For obvious reasons, it would not do for the Sailor to meet his Waterloo just then.

"Young Pouncer," said Ginger, as a final and dramatic parting shot, "you've called the Sailor a liar, but all the same, we can neither on us play next Saturday for the Isle of Dogs Albion. An' if on Saturday mornin' you take the trouble to roll up at the station about five minutes to seven, you will flaming well see the reason."

"Seein' ain't always believin'," said Pouncer.

In spite, however, of that unchallengeable statement, Cox's Piece was well represented at the up platform to London Bridge at five minutes to seven, or thereabouts, on the morning of Saturday, November 3. These enthusiasts, touched with scepticism as they were, deserved well of fate. It was not that they sympathized with Pouncer Rogers in his ignoble point of view; they believed that for the first time in its brief and rather checkered history, the Isle of Dogs Albion F.C. was coming into its own.

An impressive sight met the faithful who were present on the up platform to London Bridge at a few minutes to seven on the morning of Saturday. Then it was that Ginger and the Sailor were seen in the booking-hall taking their tickets for Blackhampton. Each carried a brand-new and decidedly elegant Gladstone bag, brilliant of hue and affirming its ownership in bold and clear letters; W.H.J.—H.H. Moreover, both Ginger and the Sailor wore a brand-new cap of black and white tweed, a brand-new overcoat with velvet collar, a brand-new blue suit, undoubted masterpieces of Jago and Brown, 25 The Arcade, and at Finsbury Circus, the whole surmounted by lustrous boots, spotted necktie and spotless double collar. The effect was heightened by a previous evening's haircut and a close matutinal shave.

Those of the faithful who had assembled on the up platform to wish *bon voyage* to their club mates on their journey to High Olympus were rather staggered by the sight of them. Had the goalkeeper and the right full back of the Isle of Dogs Albion been going forth to play for the first team of the Villa itself, they could not have dressed the part more superbly. Such stage management, its inception due to the genius of Ginger, its execution, the fruit of the Sailor's fabulous wealth, filled their friends with awe. The unworthy doubt cast by Pouncer upon Ginger's *bona fides* brought its own Nemesis. Pouncer was so completely overthrown by the spectacular appearance on the up platform that he sneaked out of the station *via* alternate doors of the refreshment buffet, an illegal crossing of the main line, and a final exit by the booking-hall of the down platform.

Seated in a third smoker, on the way to his natal city of Blackhampton, upon which he had not set eyes for seven long and incredible years, the emotions of Henry Harper were very complex. He was in a dream. He had been made to realize by the Force seated opposite smoking Log Cabin and reading *Pearson's Weekly*, that romance had come at last into a mean and hopeless life—into a life which had never looked for such things to happen.

The Sailor knew now the ordeal before him. He was to be tried as a goalkeeper by the great and famous Blackhampton Rovers, the gods of his youth. The fact was very hard to believe, but according to the relentless Force to the wheel of whose chariot he was tied such was the case. And there was his new gear to prove it.

When they got past Luton, they had the compartment to themselves. It was then that the Force, *alias* Ginger, laid *Pearson's Weekly* aside and admonished the Sailor out of the store of his wisdom.

"First thing you bear in mind, young feller, is your name's Cucumber. That's the hallmark o' class. It's the coolest player what takes the kitty. Did you ever see Jock Norton o' the Villa?"

The Sailor did not remember having done so.

"It don't matter," said Ginger. "This afternoon you'll see me. I've formed myself on Jock Norton o' the Villa. There's no better model for a young and risin' player. But as I say, Cucumber's your docket. That's my first an' my last word to you, young feller. It's Cucumber what'll put the half Nelson on the kermittee. And, o' course, everythink else yer leave to me. Understand?"

The Sailor did his best to do so.

"Everythink I tells yer, you'll do. Everythink I says, you'll stand by. What I says you've said, you've pleadin' well said, young feller, an' don't forget it."

The Sailor was not likely to forget. The look in the eyes of Ginger, slightly flecked with green in a good light—why they should have assumed that color is part of the eternal paradox—sent little chills down the Sailor's spine.

They steamed into the Central Station of the famous but murky city of Blackhampton at half-past twelve. The Sailor was still in a dream, but of so vivid a hue that he was fairly trembling with excitement. And the first person he saw, who actually opened the door of their compartment, was

a certain grim railway policeman, who, on Henry Harper's last appearance at Blackhampton Central Station, had led him outside by the ear and cuffed him soundly for having ventured to appear in it. The final words of this stern official had been, "If ever you come in here again, you'll see what I'll do."

Well, Henry Harper had come in again, and he was now seeing what the policeman did. He felt subconsciously that fate was laughing at this obsequious figure in uniform opening the door of a third smoker for a new goalkeeper, who had come specially from London to be tried by the Rovers.

Ginger considered it an economy of time, also the part of policy, to have a light repast at the refreshment buffet. While they were in the act of consuming egg sandwiches, bananas, and a pint of bitter—they were good to play on—the throng around the buffet was swollen by three or four smart individuals not quite so well dressed as themselves perhaps, but each carrying a handbag which if not so new as theirs was very similar in shape, design, and general importance.

There was a little commotion near the beer engine. "Play up, Rovers," cried an enthusiast in a chocolate and blue necktie. The quick ear of Ginger caught the sound; his eye envisaged the cause of it. He gave the Sailor a nudge so shrewd and sudden as to involve disaster to his pint of bitter.

"There's Dink," he said, in a thrilling whisper.

One less than Ginger would have waited for the situation to evolve. He would have been modestly content for the famous and redoubtable Dinkie Dawson, already an idol of the public and the press, to confer notice upon those whose reputations were in the womb of time. But that was not Ginger's way.

"Come on, Sailor boy, I'll introjuice yer. But mind—Cucumber. And leave the lip ter me."

The Sailor didn't feel like being introduced to anybody just then, certainly not to Dinkie Dawson, or the Prince of Wales, or Lord Salisbury, or anyone of equal eminence. In spite of new clothes and a Gladstone bag, he knew his limit. But the relentless Force to the wheel of whose chariot he was tied, the amazing Ginger, sauntered up to the beer engine and struck Dinkie Dawson a blow on the shoulder.

"Hullo, Ginge," said the great man. Moreover he spoke with the large geniality of one who has really arrived.

"Hullo, Dink." Cucumber was not the word for Ginger. "Where are ye playin'?"

"At Durbee agen the Countee."

"Mind yer put it acrost 'em," said Ginger, in the ready and agreeable tone of the man of the world. "Let me introjuice Mr. Enery Arper. Mr. Dinkie Dawson."

"Ow do," said Dinkie. But it was not the tone he had used to Ginger. There was inquiry, condescension, keep-your-distance and quite a lot of other things in it. Ginger, whom Dinkie knew and liked, had described Mr. Enery Arper as a Nonesuch, but Dinkie, who was himself a Nonesuch of a very authentic breed, was not all inclined to make concessions to a Nonesuch in embryo.

Mr. Harper's shyness was so intense that it might easily have been mistaken for Lift. But Ginger, wary and alert, stepped into the breach with his accustomed gallantry.

"I told yer in my letter he had been a sailor," whispered Ginger in the great man's ear. "He's sailed eight years afore the mast. Three times wrecked. Seed the serpent. Gee, what that chap's done an' seen—it fair makes you dizzy. Not that you would think it to look at him, would yer?"

"No, I wouldn't," said Dinkie, who measured men by one standard only. "But what about his goalkeeping? Can he keep goal or can't he? There's a big chance for a chap as can really *keep* goal. But he must be class."

"He's class," said Ginger—coolly.

"Can he clear well?"

"He's a daisy, I tell yer."

"That's got to be seen," said Dinkie. "But he looks green to me. An' I tell you this, Ginger Jukes, it's not a bit o' use anybody trying to lumber a green un on to a club like the Rovers."

"I know that," said Ginger urbanely. "But you'll see—if he keeps his thatch. By the way, Dink, you didn't say in your letter whether the Rovers had a vacancy for a right full back."

"We've got Mullins and Pretyman, the best pair o' backs in England."

Ginger knew that perfectly well, but he did not allow it to defeat him.

"There's as good fish in the sea as ever come out of it," said he.

"I don't know about that," said Dinkie Dawson coldly.

It was clear that Ginger Jukes did not realize where he was or what he was up against.

X

Ginger and the Sailor drove to the ground of the Blackhampton Rovers on the roof of a two-horse bus. It was a long way from the Central Station, but they had time in hand; the match did not begin until half-past two, and it was only a little after one at present. As together they made what both felt to be as fateful a journey as they would ever take in the whole course of their lives, their emotions were many and conflicting.

"There y'are, young feller." Ginger pointed to a hoarding on which a chocolate and blue poster was displayed. In spite of his religion of Cucumber, the thrill in his voice was perceptible. "There's a bill of the match."

"Who are we p-playin'?" stammered the Sailor, half choked by a sudden rush of emotion that threatened to unman him.

"Can't yer read?"

"No," gasped the Sailor.

"No?" gasped Ginger.

"I—I mean, I can't see very well."

"*Can't see!*"

Ginger nearly fell off the bus.

"Not at this distance, I—I mean."

"Blymy." For a moment Ginger was done. Then he said with a ferocity ruthless and terrible, "Young feller, you've pleadin' well *got* to see this afternoon. You've got to keep yer eyes skinned or ... or I'll scrag yer. Understand? If you let me down or you let Dinkie make a mark on us, you'll see what I'll do." There was something deadly now in the freckled skin and the green eyes. Ginger might have been a large reptile from the Island of San Pedro.

The Sailor felt horribly nervous, and the demeanor of Ginger did not console him. The fact was, Ginger was horribly nervous too. It was the moment of his life, the hour to which vaulting ambition had long looked forward. Before this damp, dismal November afternoon was three hours older would be decided the one really pregnant problem of Ginger's universe, namely and to wit, could he contrive to get his foot on the ladder that leads to fame and fortune? If courage and resolution and an insight into the ways of men could bring this thing to pass there was reason for Ginger to be of good faith. But—and the But was a big one—none knew better than Ginger that many are called and few are chosen, that the world is full of gifted and ambitious people who have never quite managed to "deliver the goods," that life is hell for the under dog, and that it is given to no man to measure the exact distance between the cup and the lip.

The ground of the Blackhampton Rovers Football Club came into view as the bus dived into a muddy and narrow lane. It then crossed the bridge of the West Norton and Bagsworth canal, and there before the thrilled eyes of the Sailor was the faded flag of chocolate and blue flying over the enormous corrugated iron roof of the grand stand. But there were not many people about at present. It was not yet two o'clock, moreover the spectators were likely to be few, so dismal was the afternoon, and of such little importance the match, which was a mere affair of the second team.

Ginger, with all his formidable courage, was devoutly thankful that such was the case. It was well that the prestige of the Blackhampton Rovers was not at stake. For he knew that he was taking a terrible risk. The Sailor was young and untried, his experience of the game was slight, and had been gained in poor company. Even the second team of the august Blackhampton Rovers was quite a different matter from the first team of the Isle of Dogs Albion. They were up against class and had better look out!

This was the thought in Ginger's mind as he entered the ground of the famous club, with the Sailor at his heels, and haughtily said, "Player," in response to a demand for entrance money on the part of the man at the gate. Ginger was a little overawed by his surroundings already in spite of a fixed determination not to be overawed by anything.

As for the Sailor, following upon the heels of Ginger and speaking not a word, he was as one in a dream. Yes, this was the ground of the Rovers right enough. There was the flag over the pavilion. God in heaven, what things he had seen, what things he had known since he looked on it last! Somehow the sight of that torn and faded banner of chocolate and blue brought a sudden gush of tears to his eyes. And in a queer way, he felt a better man for shedding them. There at the end of the ground by the farther goal, in the shadow of the legend, Blackhampton Empire Twice Nightly, painted in immense letters on a giant hoarding, was the tree out of which young Arris fell and was pinched by a rozzer on the never-to-be-forgotten day when the Villa came to play the Rovers in that immortal cup tie it had been the glory of his youth to witness. And now ... and now! It was too much! Henry Harper could not believe that he was about to wear the chocolate and blue himself, that he was about to tread the turf of this historic field which had not so much as one blade of grass upon it.

"Young feller." The face of Ginger was pale, his voice was hoarse. "Don't forget what I've told yer. Remember Cucumber. Stick tight to your thatch. There's a lot at stake for both on us. This has got to mean two quid a week for you and me."

The Sailor did not reply. But an odd look came into his deep eyes. Could Ginger have read them, and it was well he could not, those eyes would have accused him of sacrilege. It was not with thoughts like these that Henry Harper defiled the classic battleground, the sacred earth of High Olympus.

XI

In the Rovers' dressing-room the reception of Ginger and the Sailor was cool. Their look of newness, of their bags and overcoats in particular, at once aroused feelings of hostility. They implied greenness and swank; and in athletic circles these carry heavy penalties. Greenness is a grave misdemeanor, swank a deadly sin. Fortunately Ginger was far too wise to talk. He contented himself with a civil passing of the time of day. One less a warrior might have been a little cowed by the glances at his bag and his overcoat. But Ginger was not. He did not care two straws for the opinion of his fellow hirelings. It was his business to impress the club committee.

As for the Sailor, he was not in a condition to understand what was taking place around him. Cucumber might be his name, but his brain was like a ball of fire.

One of the immortal chocolate and blue shirts was handed to him, but when the time came to put it on he stood holding it in his hand.

"Into it, yer fool," said his mentor, in a fierce whisper. It would not be wise to attract by a display of eccentricity the notice of nine pairs of eyes.

With a start, the Sailor came back to the present and thrust his head into the shirt. His thoughts were with young Arris. He, too, had had a dream of playing for the Rovers. If only young Arris could see him now!

The "gate" was small, the afternoon unpleasant, the match by no means a good one. The result did not matter to the Rovers, whose reputation was known wherever football was played. In the view of the ruling powers of that old and famous club, who sat in the center of the grandstand, the object of this rather scratch game was not glory but the discovery of new talent. But small as the audience was, it contained a personage of vast consequence, who sat like Olympian Zeus enthroned on high with his satellites around him.

He was a majestic figure whose importance could be seen at a glance. His expansive fur coat, his superb contour, his spats, his red face, the flower in his buttonhole, and the large cigar with a band round it stuck in the side of his mouth, were a guaranty of status, apart from any consideration of supreme capacity. Mr. Augustus Higginbottom was the chairman of the club.

"Who have we got keepin' goal?" said Olympian Zeus, as he fixed a pair of gold-rimmed eyeglasses on his nose and looked at his card. "Arper, I see. Who the 'ell's Arper?"

"On trial, Gus." Three or four anxiously officious satellites hastened to enlighten the chairman.

"I rather like the look o' Arper." It was as Plato might have spoken had he ever worn a fur coat and had a large cigar with a band round it tucked in the side of his mouth, and had he placed his services at the disposal of the committee of the Blackhampton Rovers Football Club in order to enable it to distinguish the false from the true.

"Make and shape there," said Mr. Higginbottom. "Light on his pins. Gets down to the ball."

"Oh, well stopped, young un!" shouted an adventurous satellite, in order that an official

decree might be promulgated to the general public.

It was known at once round the ground that the critics had got their eyes on the new goalkeeper.

"I've heard say, Gus," said the adventurous one, "that this youth—*well* saved, *my* lad!—is a sailor."

"Sailor is he?" Mr. Higginbottom was so much impressed by the information that he began to chew the end of his cigar. "Ops about, don't he. I tell you what, Albert"—six satellites craned to catch the chairman's ukase—"I like the cut o' the Sailor."

"Played, young un," cried the grandstand.

"Albert," said the chairman, "who's that cab oss?"

"The right full back, Gus?"

"Him I mean. He's no use." The chairman glanced augustly at his card. "Jukes, I see. Who the 'ell's Jukes?"

"On trial," said Mr. Satellite Albert. "But I don't altogether agree with you there, Gus." Albert differed deferentially from the chairman. "There's nothing like a touch o' Ginger."

"I grant you," said the chairman. "But the goods has to be there as well. Ginger's no class. Moves like a height-year-old with the staggers."

"Wake up, Jukes." The official decree was promulgated from the grandstand.

It was known at once round the ground that it was all up with Jukes.

"Chrysanthemum Top can't play for rock cakes and Everton toffee," was the opinion of the proletariat in the sixpenny stand.

"Ginger's no class," said Mr. Augustus Higginbottom. "There's no class about Ginger."

"Pull up your socks, Jukes," the grandstand exhorted him.

Ginger knew already, without any official intimation, that he was being outplayed. Do as he would he did not seem able to mobilize quickly enough to stop these swift and skillful forwards. He had never met anything like them on Cox's Piece. Ginger knew already, without any help from the grandstand, that he was out of it. He was doing his level best, he was doing it doggedly with set teeth, but the truth was he felt like a carthorse compared with these forwards of the enemy who were racehorses one and all.

But the Sailor ... the Sailor was magnificent so far. He had stopped every shot, and two at least only a goalkeeper touched with the divine fire could have parried. Half time was signaled, and in spite of the inefficiency of the right full back, the enemy had yet to score a goal.

As the players walked off the field to refit for the second half, a special cheer was raised for young Harper.

"Played, me lad." It was the voice of the chairman of the club from the center of the grandstand.

"Played, me lad." Three hundred throats echoed the cry. Zeus himself had spoken.

A ragged urchin, who had paid his threepence with the best of them and had therefore a right to express his opinion in a public manner, looked up into the sweating face and the haggard eyes of Ginger as he walked off the ground. "Go 'ome, Ginger. Yer can't play for nuts. Yer no class."

Like a sick gladiator, Ginger staggered into the dressing-room, but in his eyes was defiance of fate and not despair of it.

"Mate," he said, in a hollow voice to the attendant, "fetch me six pennorth o' brandy."

He dipped his head into a basin of cold water and then sat in a truculent silence. He did not so much as glance at the Sailor, who had the rest of the team around him. Where did Harper come from? What club did he play for? Was it true that he had been a sailor?

Henry Harper was only able to answer these questions very shyly and imperfectly. He was in a dream. He could hardly realize where he was or what he was doing. When they returned to the field of play, the goalkeeper, already a favorite, was given a little private cheer. But the Sailor heard it not; he was dreaming, dreaming, walking on air.

"Buck up, Ginger," piped the shrill urchin, as the tense and heroic figure of that warrior came on the field last of all. But the grim eyes and the set face were not in need of admonition. Ginger was prepared to do or die.

"Cab Oss can use his weight," said the All Highest.

"First good thing he's done," said Mr. Satellite Albert. The right full back, it seemed, had charged like a tiger at the center forward of the enemy and had laid him low.

"Good on yer, Ginger," cried the proletariat.

After this episode, the game grew rough. And this was in Ginger's favor. Outclassed he might be in pace and skill, but no human soul could outclass Ginger in sheer fighting quality when his back was to the wall. Before long the stricken lay around him.

"It isn't footba'," said Mr. Augustus Higginbottom. "You can't call it footba', but it's the right game to play under the circumstances."

It began to seem that the enemy would never score the goal it so much desired. The goalkeeper kept up his form in quite a marvelous way, parrying shot after shot of every range and pace from all points of the compass. He was a man inspired. And the right full back was truly terrible now. He had ceased to trouble about the ball, but wherever he saw a red-shirted adversary he brought him down and fell on him. Ginger did not achieve any particular feat of arms, but his moral effect was considerable.

The shades of night were falling, but not a single goal had been scored by either party. The goalkeeper grew more and more wonderful, the right full back was more like a lion than ever.

"Blame my cats," said Mr. Augustus Higginbottom, "that Ginger's mustard. But they'll never stan' him in a League match. What do you say, Davis?"

Mr. Davis, a small buttoned-up man in a knitted comforter and a brown bowler hat, had given far fewer opinions than his peers. He was a man of deeds. He had played for England v. Scotland in his distinguished youth, but no one would have guessed it to look at him.

"Quite agree, Gus," said Mr. Davis, in a measured tone. "Football is not a game for Ginger. Not the man we are looking for. But that goalkeeper..."

"That's all right, Davis," said Mr. Augustus Higginbottom, "we are going to make no mistake about him."

Night fell, the referee blew his whistle, the match was at an end, and still not a goal had been scored. Utterly weary, covered with mud from head to heel, the twenty-two players trooped back to the dressing-room. They flung off the reeking garments of battle and fought for the icy shower bath, the heroic Ginger still the foremost in the fray.

"Look slippy into yer duds, young feller," he breathed hoarsely in the ear of the Sailor. "We've pleadin' well got to catch that kermittee afore it goes."

XII

Ginger might have spared himself all anxiety in regard to the "kermittee." The Great General Staff had made up its mind in the matter already. The directors would like to see Harper in the committee room before he went.

"What abaht me?" said Ginger.

"It's Harper they want to see," said their emissary. "They don't want to see no one else."

"Oh, don't they!" was Ginger's eloquent comment to himself.

"Ready, Harper?" said the emissary, with the air of a law-giver. "I'll show you the way."

"Come on, Sailor boy," said Ginger, with his affectionate avuncular air, as he gave a final touch, aided by a hairbrush and a looking-glass, to his auburn locks which he wore in the form of a fringe on his forehead.

"Jukes, there's your expenses," said the emissary rather haughtily, as he handed Ginger a sovereign. "The directors don't require to see you."

"I'd like to see them," said the imperturbable Ginger.

"Their time is valuable."

"So's mine," said Ginger. "Come on, Sailor boy."

The chairman, now enthroned in the committee room, had short shrift for Ginger.

"Jukes," he said with brutal directness, as he chewed the end of his cigar, "we didn't send for you. You are not the Rovers' sort and never will be. You are a trier an' all that, you are a good plucked un, but the Rovers is only out for one thing, an' that's class."

This oration was extremely well delivered, cigar in mouth, yet the committee seemed to be more impressed by it than Ginger himself.

"That's right, Gus," said Mr. Satellite Albert. "Those are our views."

Mr. Augustus Higginbottom might have expressed the views of the committee, but it did not appear that they were the views of Mr. W. H. Jukes. That warrior stood, tweed cap in hand, the Sailor by his side, as though they did not in any way concern him.

"You understand, Jukes?" said the chairman.

No reply.

"Arper here is the man we sent for. Arper"—the impressiveness of Mr. Higginbottom was very carefully calculated—"you've no polish, me lad, you lack experience, you are young, you've got to grow and you've got to learn, but you might make a goalkeeper if you was took in hand by the Rovers. Understand me, Arper,"—the chairman raised an eloquent forefinger—"I say ye *might* if you was took in hand an' trained by a club o' the class o' the Rovers. But you've a long way to go. Do you understand, me lad?"

"Yes, mister," said the Sailor humbly.

The "mister" jarred horribly upon the sensitive ear of Mr. W. H. Jukes, who whispered, "Call him 'sir,' yer fool."

"Very well, then," proceeded Mr. Augustus Higginbottom, "now we'll come to business. My feller directors"—the chairman waved a magniloquent hand—"agrees with me that the Rovers can offer you a pound a week because you are promisin', although not justified as you are at present. Now what do you say?"

"Nothin' doin'," said Mr. W. H. Jukes, before the goalkeeper could say anything. "Come on, Sailor boy. We are wastin' our time. We'll be gettin' to the station."

"My remarks, Jukes, was not addressed to you," said the chairman with awful dignity. "The directors has no use for *your* services, as I thought I 'ad made clear."

"I'm sorry, sir," said Ginger, with a considered politeness that seemed rather to surprise the committee. "Come on, Sailor. A quid a week! I think we can do better nor that."

"One moment," said Mr. Augustus Higginbottom. There was a hurried consultation while Ginger and the goalkeeper began to move to the door. "One moment, Arper."

Ginger, drawing the Sailor after him, returned with every sign of reluctance to the middle of the room.

"Jukes," said the chairman, "you have nothing to do with this matter, anyway."

"No, sir," said Ginger, with a deference he was very far from feeling.

"You quite understand that, Jukes?"

"Yes, sir," said Ginger, with formidable politeness.

"Very good. Now, Arper, the directors is prepared to rise to twenty-five shillings a week, an' that's their limit."

"I'm sorry, gentlemen," said Ginger, "but twenty-five bob a week is not a bit o' use to either on us. We like the town what we've seen on it, but two pound a week's our minimum. It's only wastin' time to talk of less. If we ain't worth two pound a week to the Blackhampton Rovers, I dessey we'll be worth it to the Otspur or the Villa. Come on, Sailor. We're only wastin' our time, boy."

This carefully delivered ultimatum made quite a sensation. There was not one of the committee who would not cheerfully have slain Mr. W. H. Jukes. But they wanted that goalkeeper very badly. Moreover, the mention of the Hotspur and the Villa did not lessen this desire.

"One moment, Jukes."

A further consultation followed. This matter called for very masterful and, at the same time, very delicate handling.

Mr. Augustus Higginbottom went to the length of removing his cigar from the corner of his mouth.

"See here, Jukes," said he, "it's not you we want, it's the goalkeeper. Now, Arper, I am empowered by my feller directors to offer you two pound a week with a rise next year if you turn out satisfactory."

"That's more like it," said Ginger coolly. "Two pound a week and a rise next year. What do you say, Sailor boy? Or do you think it would be better to see the Villa?"

It was as much as the chairman could do to keep from pitching Jukes out of the room. His cheek was amazing, but if this course was taken, it was clear that Harper would not adorn his person with a chocolate and blue shirt.

The unlucky fact was that the goalkeeper and the right full back had only one mind between them. And that mind was not in the possession of the goalkeeper.

"We've allus played together," said Ginger, "and we allus shall. I've taught him all he knows—haven't I, Sailor boy?"

"Yep," said the Sailor, coming humbly into the conversation for the first time.

"We've allus played for the same club, we lodge together, we work together, we are pals in everythink—ain't we, Sailor boy?"

"Yep," said the Sailor.

"And if you don't want us it's all the same to us—ain't it, Sailor boy?"

"Yep," said the Sailor.

There followed a final consultation between the chairman of the club and his fellow committee-men. But only one conclusion to the matter was possible. The Blackhampton Rovers must either accept Mr. W. H. Jukes with all his limitations, or lose the type of goalkeeper they had been seeking up and down the land for many a year.

XIII

To the Sailor, the visit to Blackhampton was a fairy tale. At first, he could not realize that he had worn the chocolate and blue, and had performed wonderful deeds at the instance of a power beyond himself. As for the sequel, involving a farewell to the wharf of Antcliff and Jackson, Limited, and a triumphal return to his natal city as a salaried player of the Rovers, even when this had really happened, it was very hard to believe.

Ginger took the credit. And if he had not had a talent for affairs these things could not have come about. It was entirely due to him that Henry Harper learned to play football, and had he not mastered the art, it is unlikely that he would ever have found the key to his life.

The Sailor was a simple, modest soul. He felt the sudden turn of fortune's wheel was due to no grace of his own. From that amazing hour when certain documents were signed and Henry Harper, who had suffered terrible things to gain a few dollars a month, began to draw a salary of two pounds a week with surprisingly little to do in order to earn it, his devotion to Ginger became almost that of a dog for its master.

They both had their feet on the ladder now, if ever two young men had. It might be luck, it might be pluck, it might be a combination of anything you chose to call it, but there it was; two untried men had imposed their personalities upon some of the shrewdest judges of football in the United Kingdom. The Sailor had shown genius on the field; Ginger had shown genius of a kind more valuable.

On the Monday week following their triumph, they invaded Blackhampton again. This time they were accompanied not merely by their Gladstone bags and their velvet-collared overcoats, but they came with the whole of their worldly goods.

They obtained—"they" meaning Ginger—some quite first-rate lodgings in Newcastle Street, near the canal. These had been recommended by Dinkie Dawson, who lodged in the next street but two. The charges of the new landlady, Miss Gwladys Foldal, were much higher than those of Mrs. Sparks, but the accommodation was Class compared to Paradise Alley. As Ginger informed the Sailor, socially they had taken a big step up.

For example, Miss Foldal herself was, in Ginger's opinion, far more a woman of the world than Mrs. Sparks. Her hair was golden, it was always amazingly curled about tea time, when she had newly powdered her nose; she maintained a "slavey" and did little of the housework herself,

apparently never soiling her well-kept hands with anything menial; also she had an undoubted gift of conversation, could play the piano, and if much entreated would lift occasionally an agreeable voice in song; in a word, Miss Foldal was a lady versed in the enchantments of good society.

The Sailor was quite overawed at first by Miss Foldal. Always very responsive to the impact of her sex, a word or a look from the least of its members was enough to embarrass him. Miss Foldal, with her tempered brilliancy and her matured charm, impressed him greatly.

Even Ginger, who was so cynical in regard to ladies in general and landladies in particular, was inclined to approve her. This was a great concession on Ginger's part, because up till then there were only two persons in the universe whom Ginger did approve, one being himself, whom he approved wholeheartedly, the other being Dinkie Dawson, whom he accepted with reservations.

Ginger and the Sailor soon settled down in their new quarters. They were well received by their fellow players. They must not look beyond the second team at present, so august was the circle in which they now moved, but Harper was "the goods" undoubtedly; one of these days the world would hear of him; while as for Jukes, although without genius as a player he was such a trier that he was bound to improve. Indeed, he began to improve in every match in which he appeared in this exalted company. His time was not yet, but the directors of the club, resentful as they were of the coup that Ginger had played, shrewdly foresaw that a man of such will and determination might one day prove a sound investment.

These were golden days for the Sailor. The perils and the hardships aboard the *Margaret Carey*, the titanic fights with nature, the ceaseless struggles on the yards of that crazy vessel in order to save himself from being dashed to pieces on the deck below, had been such a training for his present life as nothing else could have been.

It was now for the first time that Henry Harper began to envisage that queer thing, Himself. He was never at any period an egotist in a narrow way. Fate had mercilessly flogged a sense of proportion into him at the threshold of his life; whatever the future had in store he would never be able to forget that man himself is a creature of strange, terrible, and tragic destiny. As soon as a little prosperity came to him, he began to develop. The respect of others for the accidental prowess he wore so unassumingly, good food, regular habits, a sense of security, did much for Henry Harper in this critical phase of his fortunes.

First he learned to take a pride in his body. That was a very simple ethic of the great religion to be revealed to him. He was quick to see that he was one of a company of highly trained athletes whom nature had endowed nobly. Together with his fellow players, he was exercised with as much care as if he had been a racehorse. He was bathed and massaged, groomed and tended; such a sense of physical well-being came to him that he could not help growing in grace and beauty, in strength and freedom of mind and soul.

After several weeks of this new and wonderful life there was still a dark secret that continued to haunt the Sailor. He could neither read nor write, and he was living in a world in which these accomplishments were taken for granted. He had to conceal the fact as best he could. None must know, but a means would have to be found of overcoming this stigma.

He dared not speak of it to Ginger, or to Miss Foldal either, much as he liked and respected her. He remembered the face of Mrs. Sparks. But after giving much thought to the matter, he made cautious inquiries, and then one morning it suddenly occurred to him that he was a fool. Here was Henry Harper in his native city of Blackhampton, certain parts of which he knew like the back of his hand, and yet he had forgotten the night school in Driver's Lane that Cocky Footit and Leary Jeacock went to and never did any good afterwards.

The thought hit the Sailor hard as he was seated at his princely breakfast of eggs and bacon, very choicely fried, and such a cup of coffee as any man might have envied him. He remembered how seven years ago, in the Cocky Footit and Leary Jeacock days, he simply daren't go home at night unless he had sold a certain number of *Evening Stars*. And what a home it was for any boy to go to!

In spite of the eggs and bacon and the warm fire and Ginger seated opposite with the *Athletic News* propped against the coffee pot, a shudder crept through Henry Harper. He regretted bitterly that he should have allowed his thoughts to stray. But how could they go back to Cocky Footit and Leary Jeacock and the night school they attended in Driver's Lane, without taking a leap unbidden to that other lane which ran level with Driver's, with the rag and bone yard and the iron gates where dwelt Auntie and her cart whip, the only home at that time he had known?

He couldn't help shuddering at the picture in his mind. Where was Auntie now? How would she look to one who had sailed before the mast over all the oceans of the world?

The subject of Auntie had a morbid fascination. It held him as completely as the night school in Driver's Lane. The truth was, it was impossible to recall the one without envisaging the other.

As soon as he had finished breakfast, he put on the overcoat with the velvet collar and the smart tweed cap, stepped into Newcastle Street and began to wander across the canal bridge.

Then he turned to the right through Clover Street, crossed the tram lines, passed the Crown and Cushion, his favorite public-house of yore, where he had listened many an evening to the music and singing that floated through the swing doors, with always a half formed thought at the back of his mind which he dared not face. As of old, he stood to listen, but there was no music now, for it was only ten o'clock in the morning, and it didn't begin until seven at night.

He was not afraid of the life of seven years ago. As he stood outside the Crown and Cushion that was the idea which exalted him. Henry Harper was not obliged to meet Auntie, but was going to do so out of curiosity, and because he owed it to himself to prove that he no longer went in fear of her.

That might be so, but as he passed through the old familiar streets and alleys, with bareheaded Aunties standing arms akimbo in conversation with the neighbors, while many a Henry Harper sprawled half naked in the gutter, his courage almost failed. The slums of Blackhampton had changed less than he in seven years.

Yes, this was Crow's Yard. And there at the door of No. 1, as of yore, was Mother Crow, toothless and yellow, unspeakably foul of word and aspect, whose man often threatened to swing for her and finally swung for another. Henry Harper stole swiftly through Crow's Yard, fearing at every step that he would be recognized.

With a thudding heart, he came into Wright's Lane. It was like a horrible dream; he nearly turned and ran. What if Auntie was still there? He had just seen Mother Crow and Meg Baker and Cock-eyed Polly and others of her circle. Well, if she was...?

The beating of his heart would not let him meet the question. He ought not to have come. All the same, there was nothing to be afraid of now.

No, there was nothing to be... Again he nearly turned and ran. The iron gates were before him. There were the piles of stinking bones, old newspapers, foul rags, scrap iron, and all sorts of odds and ends. And there was the broken-down handcart he had trundled so often through the mud. The wheels were still on it, but they looked like new ones. And there on the wall of the shed was the nail.

A sick thrill passed through Henry Harper. He couldn't make out in the thick November half-light whether on that nail there was really what he thought there was. A wave of curiosity forced him to enter the yard. The whip was hanging there as usual. The heavy handle bound with strips of brass shone through the gloom. The sight of it seemed again to hold him in a thrall of terror. As if it were a nightmare he fought to throw it off. He had been a sailor; he was the goalkeeper for the Blackhampton Rovers; he was earning two pounds a week; he had a velvet collar to his overcoat; there was no need to be afraid of...

"Now, young man?"

A thick, wheezy grunt came out of the inner murk of the yard and sent a chill down the spine of Henry Harper.

"What can I do for yer?"

Auntie, cheerfully alcoholic as ever, stood before him in all her shapeless obscenity. She stood as of old, exuding gin and humor and latent savagery. She had changed so little that he felt he had not changed either. At first he could not believe that she did not recognize him.

Auntie stood eyeing him with disfavor. The good clothes, the clean collar, the polished boots told against him heavily. Most probably a detective.

"What do you want for *that*, missus?" He pointed to the nail.

"Not for sale." The light he had seen so often sprang to her eyes. "You can have anything else. Scrap iron, rags and bones, waste paper, bedsteads, but yer can't have that." And Auntie looked at him, wheezing humorously at the idea of anyone wanting to buy such an article. Suddenly Henry Harper met again the eyes of Medusa in their depth and power.

At once he knew why he had stayed those long years under her roof. It was not merely that he had nowhere else to go. There was a living devil in the soul of Auntie and it was far stronger than anything at present in the soul of Henry Harper. Already he could feel the old helpless terror striking into him again. He was forgetting that he had been a sailor, he was forgetting the Blackhampton Rovers, he was forgetting his two pounds a week...

"Well, missus, if yer won't, yer won't," he said, with a mighty effort of the will.

Auntie laughed her old rich note of genial defiance, as if an affection for a thing of little value and less use must be defended. As she did so, a miserable cur sneaked out through the open door of the house beyond the archway. She turned to it humorously.

"I thought I told *you* to keep in."

The dog cast a look at her and sneaked in again.

"Mornin', missus."

"Mornin', young man. Sorry I can't oblige yer." It was the old note of affability that always endeared her to the neighbors.

But it was not of Auntie that Henry Harper was thinking when he got into Wright's Lane. It was of the dog. In the eyes of that animal he had seen his former self.

XIV

It had been Henry Harper's intention to go on across the Lammas and make inquiries about the night school. But his courage suddenly failed. As soon as he got into Wright's Lane, he felt that for one day at least he had seen enough of the haunts of his youth.

As he stood at the corner, trying to make up his mind what to do, an intense longing for Newcastle Street came upon him. It seemed wiser to postpone the night school until the afternoon.

He had not expected to find the other side of the canal quite so bad as it had proved to be. It seemed ages away in point of experience. There was no place for good clothes, a clean collar, and polished boots in the region the other side of the canal. It was very unfortunate that the night school lay in the middle of that area.

Henry Harper was in an unhappy frame of mind when he sat down to dinner with Ginger at one o'clock. A very bad aura enveloped him. The sight of Auntie in her lair would take him some little time to overcome. Then the sense of failure was unpleasant. It was unworthy of a sailor to have shirked his job. Every day made it more necessary for something to be done. His pretence of understanding the newspapers when he could hardly read a word was telling against him with Ginger. His contribution to the after-supper conversation was so feeble, as a rule, that Ginger was almost afraid "he was not all there."

However, he would inquire about the night school that afternoon. The matter was so urgent that he could have no peace until he had moved in it. But fate, having taken his measure, began to marshal silent invisible forces.

To begin with the forces were silent enough, yet they were not exactly invisible. A little after three, while the Sailor, still in the Valley of Decision, was looking into the fire, wondering whether it was possible after all to postpone the task until the following morning when he might be in a better frame of mind, Ginger looked out of the window, announced that "there wasn't half a fog coming over," and that he had a good mind to make himself comfortable indoors for the rest of the day.

This was enough for the Sailor. The fog put the night school out of the question for that afternoon; it must be postponed till the morrow. All the same, he fell into a black and bitter mood in which self-disgust came uppermost.

Ginger's good mind to stay indoors did not materialize. As soon as the clock chimed four he remembered that he had to play a hundred up with Dinkie at the Crown and Cushion.

At quarter-past four, Miss Foldal came in, drew down the blinds, lit the gas, and laid the cloth for tea. She then sought permission, as the fire was such a good one, to toast a muffin at it, which she proceeded to do with the elegance that marked her in everything.

The Sailor had never seen anybody quite so elegant as Miss Foldal in the afternoon. The golden hair was curled and crimped, the blonde complexion freshly powdered, there was a superb display of jewelry upon a fine bosom, she was tightly laced, and the young man watching her with grave curiosity heard her stays creak as she bent down at the fire.

Two ladies further apart than Miss Foldal and Auntie would be hard to conceive. Dimly the young man had begun to realize that it was a very queer cosmos in which he had been called to exercise his being. There were whole stellar spaces between Auntie and Miss Foldal.

The latter lady was not merely elegant, she was kind. Miss Foldal was very kind indeed to Mr. Harper. From the day he had entered her house, she had shown in many subtle ways that she wanted to make him feel at home. And Mr. Harper, who up till now only realized Woman extrinsically, already considered Miss Foldal a very nice lady.

It was true that Ginger referred to her rather contemptuously as Old Tidde-fo-lol, and saw, or affected to see, something deep in her most innocent actions. But the Sailor, with a natural reverence for her sex in spite of all he had suffered at its hands, was constrained to believe these slighting references to Old Tidde-fo-lol were lapses of taste on the part of his hero. Homer nods

on occasion. Henry Harper was not acquainted with that impressive fact at this period of his life, but he was sure that Ginger was a little unfortunate in his references to Miss Foldal.

The Sailor was beginning to like Miss Foldal immensely. He did not go beyond that. The great apparition of Woman in her cardinal aspect had not yet appeared to him, and was not to do so for long days to come. As Ginger said, he was a kid at present, and hardly knew he was born. Still, he was beginning to take notice.

"Would you like me to pour out your tea, Mr. Harper?"

"Thank you, miss." He was no longer so ignorant as to say, "Thank you, lady."

"Sugar?"

"Please, miss."

He admired immensely the manipulation of the sugar tongs by those elegant hands. They were inclined to be fat and were perhaps rather broad to the purview of a connoisseur, but they were covered in rings set with stones more or less precious, and the soul of Henry Harper responded instinctively to all that they meant and stood for. The hands of Auntie were not as these.

"You *do* take two lumps and milk, of course?"

There was an ease and a charm about Miss Foldal that made the Sailor think of velvet.

"Now take a piece of muffin while it's warm."

She offered the muffin, already steeped in delicious butter, with the slightly imperious charm of a Madame Récamier, not that Henry Harper knew any more about Madame Récamier than he did about Homer at this period of his career. Yet he may have known all about them even then. He may have known all about them and forgotten all about them, and when the time came to unseal the inner chambers of his consciousness, perhaps he would remember them again.

Auntie had never handed him a muffin in such a way as that. Mrs. Sparks hadn't either. Ginger might sneer and call her Old Tidde-fo-lol, although not to her face—he was always very polite to her face—but there was no doubt she was absolutely a lady, and her muffins ... her muffins were *extra*.

This afternoon, Miss Foldal lingered over the tea table in most agreeable discourse. The fog was too thick for her to venture into the market place, where she wanted to go.

"If it's shopping you want, miss," said Mr. Harper, with an embarrassment that made her smile, "let me go and do it for you."

"I couldn't think of it, Mr. Harper."

"I will, miss, I'll be very glad to." She liked the deep eyes of this strikingly handsome young man.

"I couldn't think of it, Mr. Harper. I couldn't really. Besides, my shopping will keep till tomorrow."

"You know best, miss." There was resignation tempered by a certain chivalrous disappointment. Quite unconsciously, Mr. Harper was doing his utmost to rise to the standard of speech and manner of Miss Foldal, which was far beyond any he had yet experienced.

"I saw in the *Evening Star* that you won your match on Saturday."

"Yes, miss, four-two." But the mention of the *Evening Star* was a stab. Every night the *Evening Star* presented its tragic problem.

"Mr. Jukes tells me you will be having a trial with the first team soon."

Mr. Jukes had told Miss Foldal nothing of the kind. She was the last person to whom he would have made any such confidence.

"Oh no, miss." The native modesty was pleasant in her ear. "I'm nothing near good enough yet."

"It will come, though. It is bound to come."

The young man was not stirred by this prophecy. His mind had gone back to the night school; it was tormenting itself with the problem ever before it now. He would have liked to bring the conversation round to the matter, if only it could be done without disclosing the deadly secret. But the memory of Mrs. Sparks was still fresh. There was no denying that for a chap of nineteen not to have the elements of the three r's was a disgrace; it was bound to prejudice him in the eyes of a lady of education.

Still, Miss Foldal was not Mrs. Sparks. Being a higher sort of lady perhaps she would be able to make allowances. Yet Henry Harper didn't want her or anyone else to make allowances. However, he could not afford to be proud.

Chance it, suddenly decreed the voice within. She won't eat you anyway.

XV

Miss Foldal, it seemed, had been trained in her youth for a board school teacher. In a brief flash of autobiography, she told Mr. Harper she had never really graduated in that trying profession, but had forsaken a career eminently honorable for the more doubtful one of the stage, and had spent the rest of her life in regretting it. But always at the back of her mind was the sense of her original calling to leaven the years of her later fall from grace.

Not only Miss Foldal, but the Sailor also was quick to see the hand of Providence, when that young man, coloring pink in the gaslight and eating his last muffin, made the admission, "that his readin' an' writin' was rusty because of havin' followed the sea." And she answered, "Reelly," in her own inimitable way, to which the Sailor rejoined, "Yes, miss, reelly, and do you *fin*k you could recommend a night school?"

"Night school, Mr. Harper?" And this was where the higher kind of lady was able to claim superiority over Mrs. Sparks. "Please don't think me impertinent, but I would be delighted to help you all I could. You see, I was trained for a pupil teacher before I went on the stage against my father's wishes."

The heart of the Sailor leaped. In that tone of sincere kindness was the wish to be of use. If Miss Foldal had been trained as a pupil teacher, the night school in Driver's Lane might not be necessary, after all.

"What do you want to learn?" said Miss Foldal, with a display of grave interest. "I am afraid my French is rather rusty and I never had much Latin and Italian to speak of."

The Sailor was thrilled.

"Don't want no French, miss," he said, "or anythink swankin'. I just want to read the *Evenin' Star* an' be able to write a letter."

"Do you mean to say——" Like the lady she was, she checked herself very adroitly. "I am quite sure, Mr. Harper, that is easily arranged. How much can you read at present?"

"Nothink, miss." The plain and awful truth slipped out before he knew it had.

Miss Foldal did not flicker an eyelash. She merely said, "I'll go and see if I can find Butter's spelling-book. I ought to have it somewhere."

She went at once in search of it, and five minutes later returned in triumph.

"Do you mind not sayin' anythink about it to Ginger Jukes, miss?" the young man besought her.

"If it is your wish," said Miss Foldal, "I certainly will not."

Here was the beginning of wisdom for Henry Harper. The prophetic words of Klondyke came back to him. From the very first lesson, which he took that evening after tea before the return of Ginger from the Crown and Cushion, it seemed that reading and writing was the Sailor's true line of country. A whole new world was spread suddenly before him.

Mr. Harper was an amazingly diligent pupil. He took enormous pains. Whenever Ginger was not about, he was consolidating the knowledge he had gained, and slowly and painfully acquiring more. At Miss Foldal's suggestion, he provided himself with a slate and pencil. This enabled him to tackle a very intricate business in quite a professional manner.

It was uphill work making pothooks and hangers, having to write rows of a-b, ab, and having to make sure of his alphabet by writing it out from memory. But he did not weaken in his task. Sometimes he rose early to write, sometimes he sat up late to read; every day he received instruction of priceless value. And never once did his preceptress give herself airs, or sneer at his ignorance; above all, she did not give him away to Ginger.

These were great days. The beginning of real, definite knowledge gave Henry Harper a new power of soul. C-a-t spelled cat, d-o-g spelled dog; nine went five times into forty-five. There was no limit to these jewels of information. If he continued to work in this way, he might hope to read

the *Evening Star* by the end of March.

In the meantime, while all these immense yet secret labors were going forward, he felt his position with Ginger was in jeopardy. Somehow as the weeks passed with the Sailor still in the second team, they did not seem to be on quite the terms that they had been. The change was so slight as to be hardly perceptible, yet it hurt the Sailor, who had a great capacity for friendship and also for hero worship. Ginger, to whom his present fabulous prosperity was due, must always be one of the gods of his idolatry.

The truth was, Ginger was one of those who rise to the top wherever they are, while Henry Harper lacked this quality. Ginger, although only in the second team at present, always talked and behaved as if he was a member of the first. There could be no doubt his honorable friendship with Dinkie Dawson—one of England's best, as the *Evening Star* often referred to him—was the foundation upon which he sedulously raised his social eminence.

In fact, Ginger seldom moved out of the company of the first team. He played billiards with its members at the Crown and Cushion; he played whist and cribbage with them at the same resort of fashion; they almost regarded him as one of themselves, although he had yet to win his spurs; moreover, and this was the oddest part of the whole matter, even the committee had come to look upon him favorably.

The Sailor was a little wounded now and then by Ginger's persiflage. Sometimes he held him up to ridicule in a way that hurt. He made no secret, besides, of his growing belief that there was not very much to the Sailor after all, that he was letting the grass grow under his feet, and that he was good for very little beyond getting down to a hot one. No doubt, the root of the trouble lay in the fact that during the first months of his service with the Rovers, the Sailor was less interested in football and the things that went with football than he ought to have been. He was secretly giving his nights and days to a matter which seemed of even greater importance than his bread and butter. This might easily have led to disaster had it not been for a saving clause ever present in the mind of Henry Harper.

His dream, as a shoeless and stockingless newsboy, miserably hawking his Result Edition through the mud of Blackhampton, had been that one day he would help the Rovers bring the Cup to his native city. This thought had sustained him in many a desperate hour. Well, Henry Harper was something of a fatalist now. He had come very much nearer the realization of that dream than had ever seemed possible. Therefore, he was not going to let go of it. His mind was now full of other matters, but he must not lose sight of the fact that it was his bounden duty to make his dream come true.

To begin with he had to find his way into the first eleven. But the weeks went by. January came, and with it the first of the cup ties, but Henry Harper was still in the second team and likely to remain there. It was not that he did not continue to show promise. But something more than promise was needed for these gladiatorial contests when twenty, thirty, forty, fifty thousand persons assembled to cheer their favorites, whose names were in their mouths as household words. His time might one day come, if he kept on improving. But it would not be that year. As Ginger said, before he could play in a cup tie he would have to get a bit more pudding under his shirt.

During these critical months Henry Harper was getting other things to sustain him. Every week marked a definite advance in knowledge. Miss Foldal found him other books, and one evening at the beginning of March, he astonished her not merely by spelling crocodile, but by writing it down on his slate.

April came, and with it the end of the football season. Then arose a problem the Sailor had not foreseen. Would the Rovers take him on for another year? He was still untried in the great matches, he was still merely a youth of promise. Would he be re-engaged? It was a question for Ginger also. But as far as he was concerned, the matter did not long remain in doubt. One evening in the middle of that fateful month, he came in to supper after his usual "hundred up" at the Crown and Cushion.

"Well, Sailor," he said, a note of patronage in his tone. "I've fixed it with the kermittee. They are going to take me on for next year."

Sailor was not surprised. His faith in Ginger never wavered.

"Wish I could say the same for you, Sailor," said Ginger, condescendingly; "but the kermittee think you are not quite class."

"They are not goin' to take me on again!" said the Sailor in a hollow voice.

"No. They think you are not quite Rovers' form. They are goin' to give you back your papers."

Such a decree was like cold steel striking at the Sailor's heart. The dream of his boyhood lay shattered. And there were other consequences which just then he could not muster the power of mind to face.

XVI

Those were dark hours for Henry Harper. Not only must he yield great hopes, he must also give up a princely mode of life. Here was a disaster which must surely make an end of desires that had begun to dominate him like a passion.

In this time of crisis Ginger showed his faith. He was not a young man of emotional ardor, but the Sailor was a chap you couldn't help liking, and in his heart Ginger believed in him; therefore all the influence he could muster he brought to bear on those in high places.

This could not be done directly. Ginger was still in the second team himself, but his social qualities had given him a footing with the first. Among these, with the redoubtable Dinkie Dawson for his prop and stay, he let it be widely circulated that it would be an act of folly for the Rovers to turn down the Sailor without giving him a fair trial, because sooner or later he was bound to make good.

This view became so fashionable in the billiards' saloon at the Crown and Cushion that it came to the ears of its proprietor, who was no less a person than Mr. Augustus Higginbottom. Therefore one evening Ginger was able to hearten the Sailor in the depths of his despair.

"They are goin' to give you a trial with the first on Saturday, young feller. And just remember all depends on it. If you do well, you'll stay; if you don't, you'll have to pack your bag."

It was not very comforting for one so highly strung as the Sailor. But Ginger meant well; also he had done well; it was entirely due to him that the Sailor was to have his chance. And that chance would never have been his if Ginger's astuteness had not been very considerable.

Saturday came, and Henry Harper found himself in action with the first team at last. It was the end of the season and little importance was attached to the match, but the Sailor, as he took his place nervously in the goal, well knew that this game was to make or mar him. All was at stake. He had felt as he lay sleepless throughout the previous night that the issue would try him too highly. It was the penalty of imagination to be slain in battle before the battle came. But when the hour arrived and he stood in the goal, he was able after all to do his bit like a workman.

In his own way he was a fighter. And genius for goalkeeping stood to him, as Ginger had been confident it would. In the first minute of the game he gathered a hot one cleverly, got rid of it before the enemy could down him, and from that moment he had no further dread of losing his nerve.

"What did I tell yer, Dink?" said Ginger with an air of restrained triumph. "That young feller plays for England one o' these fine afternoons."

This was a bold statement, yet not unsanctioned in high places. That evening the Sailor was summoned to the Presence, and was offered a contract for another season with a promised rise if he continued to do well.

The months which followed meant much to Henry Harper. In many respects they were the best of his life. It was a time of dawning hope, of coming enlargement, of slow-burgeoning wisdom. During those golden summer mornings in which he wandered in the more or less vernal meadows engirdling the city, latent, unsuspected forces began to awake. Knowledge, knowledge, knowledge, he craved continually. Every fresh victory won in an enchanted field was a lighted torch in the Sailor's soul.

He knew that the playing of football was but a means to an end. It gave him leisure, opportunity, wherewithal for things infinitely more important. During those months of his awakening, his desire became a passion. There were whole vast continents in the mind of man, that he could never hope to traverse. There was no limit to the vista opened up by those supreme arts of man's invention, the twin and cognate arts of reading and writing.

Knowledge is power. That statement had been made quite recently by his already well-beloved Blackhampton *Evening Star*. With his own eyes he had been able to read that declaration. Its truth had thrilled him.

He was making such progress now that he could read the newspaper almost as well as Ginger himself. He no longer dreaded the unmasking of his guilty secret because he no longer had one to unmask. Of course he had not Ginger's ease and facility; to tackle a leading article was a task of Hercules, but give him time and Marlow's Dictionary—Miss Foldal had marked his diligence by the gift of her own private copy—and he need not fear any foe in black and white.

September came, and with it football again. And from the first match it was seen that Sailor Harper, which was the name the whole town called him now, had taken a long stride to the front. By the end of that month his place in the first team was secure, and his fame was in the mouth of

everybody.

For many years, in Mr. Augustus Higginbottom's judgment—and there could be none higher—the one need of the Blackhampton Rovers had been a goalkeeper of Class. They had one now. The Sailor was performing miracles in every match, and Ginger, his mentor, was going about with a permanent expression of, "What did I tell yer?" upon a preternaturally sharp and freckled countenance.

Ginger did not allow the grass to grow under his own feet either. He was now installed as billiards marker and general factotum at the Crown and Cushion; in fact he had already come to occupy quite a place at court. But even this was not the limit of that vaulting ambition, which was twofold: (1) to be the official right full back of the Blackhampton Rovers; (2) the acquisition of a tobacconist's shop in the vicinity of the Crown and Cushion. But the latter scheme belonged, of course, to the distant future.

Ginger was far-sighted, such had always been Dinkie Dawson's opinion, and Dinkie did not speak unless he knew. Therefore little surprise was caused by a startling rumor at the beginning of November of Ginger's engagement to Miss Maria Higginbottom. And it was coincident with Ginger's "making good" with the Rovers' first team.

It was said that the engagement had not the sanction of the chairman of the club. Nevertheless Ginger kept his place as general factotum at the Crown and Cushion; moreover, as understudy to Joe Pretymen who had been smitten with water on the knee, he stepped into the breach with such gallantry that the first part of his ambition was soon assured. By sheer fighting power, by his sovereign faculty of never knowing when he was beaten, Ginger in the first week of December was in a position that nature could hardly have meant him to grace.

"Blame my cats," said Mr. Augustus Higginbottom, whose thoughts were a little rueful. "That Ginger's mustard. He plays better an' better in every match."

"Yes, Gus, he does," said Mr. Satellite Albert.

On the evening of that proud day, Ginger obtained a rise in his salary. According to rumor, no sooner had it been granted than he urged Miss Maria Higginbottom to fix a date. It was said that, in spite of Ginger's recent triumphs, the lady declined the offer. Even money was freely laid, however, that within a twelvemonth Ginger would lead her to the altar.

During that glorious December, the Rovers won every match. While the Sailor continued to be a wonder among goalkeepers, Ginger quietly took his place as the authentic successor to the famous Joe Pretymen. Indeed, things were carried to such a perilous height of enthusiasm in the town of Blackhampton that two coming events were treated as accomplished facts: the Rovers would win the Cup and the Sailor would be chosen for England in the match against Scotland.

These were dream days for Henry Harper. He was performing miracles, yet compared with going aloft in a gale in latitude fifty degrees everything seemed absurdly simple. He had merely to stand on dry land, or on land dry more or less, since the ground of the Rovers was not so well drained as it might have been, in thick boots and a warm sweater, catching a football which was so much easier to seize than a ratline, and evading the oncoming forwards of the enemy who were not allowed to use their hands, let alone their knives. It was as easy as tumbling off a yard. But there was just one drawback to it, which he did not think of mentioning to anyone, not even to Miss Foldal. Every match in which he played seemed to increase a feeling of excitement he was never without.

This was queer. There was really so little to excite one who had been six years before the mast. At first he was inclined to believe it must be the presence of the crowd. But he ought to have got over that. Besides, it was not the crowd which caused the almost terrible feeling of tension that always came upon him now the night before a match.

After a great game on Christmas Eve, he was raised shoulder high by a body of admirers and carried off the field. The committee of the club marked his achievements by a substantial rise of wages and by obtaining his signature to a contract for the following year. Ginger also, who had performed wonderful deeds, was honored in a manner equally practical. That Christmas both were on the crest of the wave. But the highest pinnacle was reserved for the Sailor. It was not merely that he was tall and straight and strong as steel, that he could spring like a cat from one side of the goal to the other, or hang like a monkey from the crossbar, or fling his lithe body at the ball with calculated daring; it was perhaps his modesty which took the public captive.

It may have been this or it may not; there is so little of the corporate mind of man that can be reduced to set terms. Ginger's most partial worshiper would have had to look a long while to find modesty in the bearing of that hero, yet he was very popular also. Nothing succeeds like success, was an apothegm of the Blackhampton *Evening Star*. The Sailor knew that now from experience, but he was presently to know, as he had known before, that nothing fails like failure, at least in the minds of many for whom the Blackhampton *Evening Star* was the last word of wisdom.

XVII

"Sailor boy," said Ginger, on Christmas night, "what are you readin' now?"

"Pickwick Papers," said the Sailor, trying to speak as if this was nothing out of the common.

"Potery?"

"It's by Charles Dickens," said the Sailor, with a thrill of triumph which he was quite unable to keep out of his voice.

When Ginger was out of his depth, which was not very often, he always took care not to give himself away. The only Charles Dickens with whom he was acquainted was doing great things just now at center half back for Duckingfield Britannia. But with all respect to Chas., Ginger did not believe that he was the author of the "Pickwick Papers." Therefore he made no comment. But silence did not debar him from the process of thought.

"Sailor boy," he said at last, "if you take the advice o' your father, you'll not go over-reading yerself. Them deep books what you get out o' the Free Libry is dangerous, that's my experience. Too much truck with 'em turns a chap's brain. Besides, they mean nothing when you've done."

The Sailor was less impressed than usual. But Ginger was very clear upon the point.

"I once knowed a chap as over-read hisself into quod. He was as sound a young feller as you could find in a month o' Sundays, but he took to goin' to the Free Libry to read Socialism, and that done him in. He come to think all men was equal and Mine is Thine, and that sort o' tommy, an' it took a pleadin' old Beak to set him right in the matter; at least he give him six months without the option, and even that didn't convince the youth. Some chaps take a deal o' convincin'. But the Free Libry was that chap's ruin, there's no doubt about it."

Ginger urged this view with a conviction that rather alarmed the Sailor. "Pickwick Papers," although very difficult and advanced reading, seemed harmless enough, but Ginger had such a developed mind, he appeared to know so much about everything, that the Sailor felt it would be the part of wisdom to consult Miss Foldal.

It had been her idea that he should join the Free Library. He had promptly done so, and from the perfectly amazing wealth of the world's literature garnered there had led off with the "Pickwick Papers," which he had heard was, next to the Bible and "Barriers Burned Away," the greatest book in the English language. His instinct pointed to "Barriers Burned Away"—he had read little bits of the Bible already, of which Miss Foldal had a private copy—but he felt that "Pickwick Papers" was the less difficult work of the two. For the present, therefore, he must be content with that famous book.

Miss Foldal reassured him wonderfully. She was convinced that Mr. Jukes took an extreme view. She had never read any of the works of Dickens herself, she simply couldn't abide him, he was too *descriptive* for her, but she was sure there was no harm in him, although she had heard that with Thackeray it was different. Not that she had read Thackeray either, as she understood that no unmarried lady under forty could read Thackeray and remain respectable.

The Sailor was strengthened by Miss Foldal's view of Dickens, but her reference to the rival and antithesis of that blameless author was in a sense unfortunate. Mr. Harper wanted to take back "Pickwick Papers" at once; he had had it three weeks and had only just reached Chapter Nine; he would exchange it for the more lurid and worldly works of the licentious Thackeray. But Miss Foldal dissuaded him. For one thing, she had the reputation of her household to consider. She had once had an aunt, an old lady very widely read and of great literary taste, who always maintained that the "Vanity Fair" of Thackeray ought to have been burned by the common hangman, and that nothing but good would have been done to the community if the author had been burned along with it. Miss Foldal allowed that her aunt had been an old lady of strong views; all the same, she was of opinion that *Thorough* must be Mr. Harper's motto. He had begun "Pickwick Papers," and although she allowed it was dry, he must read every word for the purpose of forming his character, before he even so much as thought about Thackeray.

"Rome was not built in a day," said Miss Foldal. "Those who pursued knowledge must not attempt to run before they could walk. Thackeray was so much more advanced than Dickens that to read the one before the other was like going to a Robertson comedy or Shakespeare before you had seen a pantomime or the Moore and Burgess Minstrels."

The ethics of Miss Foldal were a little too much for the Sailor. But one fact was clear. For once Ginger was wrong: no possible harm could come of reading Charles Dickens.

Thus Henry Harper was able to continue his studies in ease of mind. And at the beck of ambition one thing led to another in the most surprising way. His appetite for knowledge grew on what it fed. Reading was only one branch; there was the writing, also the ciphering. The latter art was not really essential. It was rather a side-dish, and *hors-d'oeuvre*—Miss Foldal's private word

—but it was also very useful, and in a manner of speaking you could not lay claim to the education of a gentleman without it.

The Sailor did not at present aspire to a liberal education, but he remembered that Klondyke had always set great store by ciphering and had taught him to count up to a hundred. It was due perhaps to that immortal memory rather than to Miss Foldal's somewhat fanciful and romantic attitude towards the supremely difficult science of numbers that Henry Harper persevered with the multiplication table. At first, however, the difficulties were great. But his grit was wonderful. Early in the winter mornings, while Ginger was still abed, and Miss Foldal also, he would come downstairs, light the gas in the sitting-room, put on his overcoat and sit down to three hours' solid study of writing and arithmetic. Moreover, he burned the midnight oil. Sometimes with the aid of Marlow's Dictionary, he read the "Pickwick Papers" far into the night, with a little of the Bible for a change, or the Blackhampton *Evening Star*. And if he had not to be on duty with the club, he would spend all his time in these exacting occupations.

In the meantime, the Blackhampton Rovers were making history. They were an old established club; for many years they had had one of the best teams in the country, and although on two occasions they had been in the semi-final round for the Cup, they had never got beyond that critical stage; therefore the long coveted trophy had not yet been seen in the city of Blackhampton.

However, the Cup was coming to Blackhampton this year, said the experts in football with whom the town was filled. The Rovers had not lost a match since September 12. They had won three cup ties already, beating on each occasion a redoubtable foe, of whom one was that ancient and honorable enemy, the Villa. One more victory and the Rovers would be in the semi-final again.

As far as local knowledge could discern there was none to thwart the Rovers now. In the words of Mr. Augustus Higginbottom, every man was a trier, the whole team was the goods. They had the best goalkeeper in England, and Ginger, in whom he had never really believed, had turned out mustard. The proprietor of the Crown and Cushion, with that largeness of mind which is not afraid to change its opinions, expressed himself thus a few minutes before closing time in the private bar when he took "a drop of summat" to stimulate the parts of speech and the powers of reason.

The Rovers could not fail to win the Cup. According to rumor, after the triumph over the Villa, they were freely backed. This may have been the case or it may not. But no body of sportsmen could have been more confident than the thirty thousand odd who paid their shillings and their sixpences with heroic regularity, who followed the fortunes of the Rovers in victory or defeat.

For this noble body of partisans there was one authentic hero now. Dinkie Dawson was class, Erb Mullins was a good un, Mac was as good a one as ever came over the Border, Ginger was a terror for his size and never knew when he was beat, but it was the Sailor in goal who caught and held every eye. There was magic in all the Sailor did and the way he did it, which belonged to no one else, which was his own inimitable gift.

Sailor Harper was the idol of the town. He might have married almost any girl in it. People turned round to look at him as he walked over the canal bridge towards the market place. Even old ladies of the most fearless and terrific virtue seemed involuntarily to give the glad eye to the fine-looking lad "with all the oceans of the world in his face," as a local poet said in the *Evening Star*, when he got into a tram or a bus. If the Sailor had not been the soul of modesty, he would have been completely spoiled by the public homage during these crowded and glorious weeks.

It was a rare time for Blackhampton, a rare time for the Rovers, a rare time for Henry Harper. The very air of the smoke-laden and unlovely town seemed vibrant with emotion. A surge of romance had entered his heart. The wild dream of his newsboy days was coming true. He was going to help the Rovers bring the Cup to his native city. Such a thought made even the "Pickwick Papers," now Chapter Twenty-three, seem uninspired. He had not ventured on Shakespeare; he was not ripe for it yet, said Miss Foldal. Shakespeare was poetry, and the crown of all wisdom, the greatest man that ever lived with one exception, but the time would come even for the Bard of Avon. On the night the Rovers brought home the Cup, Miss Foldal volunteered a promise to read aloud "Romeo and Juliet," the finest play ever written by Shakespeare, in which she herself had once appeared at the Blackhampton Lyceum, although that was a long time ago.

However, there the promise was. But when it came to the ears of Ginger he expressed himself as thoroughly disgusted.

"Keep your eyeballs skinned, young feller," said that misogynist. "That's the advice of your father. She's after your four pound a week. Take care you are not nabbed. You ain't safe with old Tidde-fol-lol these days, you ain't reelly."

The Sailor was hurt by such reflections on one to whom he owed much. It is true that a recent episode after supper in the passage had rather disconcerted him, but it would be easy to make too much of it, as he was never quite sure whether Miss Foldal did or did not intend to kiss him, even if she put her arms round his neck. Also he had once seen her take a bottle of gin to her

bedroom, but he was much too loyal to mention to Ginger either of these matters; and, after all, what were these things in comparison with her elegance and her refinement, her knowledge of Shakespeare and the human heart?

XVIII

Great was the excitement in the town when the *Evening Star* brought out a special edition with the news that the Rovers had to play Duckingfield Britannia in the fourth round of the Cup.

Duckingfield was the center of a mining district about fifteen miles away, and the rivalry between the Britannia and the Rovers was terrific. In the mind of any true Blackhamptonian there was never any question as to their respective merits. The Rovers had forgotten more about football than the Britannia would ever know. One was quite an upstart club; the other, as all the world knew, went back into the primal dawn of football history. The Rovers practiced the science and culture of the game; the Britannia relied on brute force and adjectival ignorance.

Still, Duckingfield Britannia were doughty foes, and although the Rovers had no need to fear anyone, the feeling at the Crown and Cushion was that they rather wished they had not to play them. The truth was, in their battles with these upstarts, the Rovers never seemed able to live up to their reputation. Whether they met at Duckingfield or at Blackhampton, and in no matter what circumstances, the Rovers invariably got the worst of the deal. This was odd, because the Rovers were much the superior team in every way, always had been, always would be. They didn't know how to play football at Duckingfield, whereas Blackhampton was the home of the game.

Moreover, there was one historic meeting between these neighbors which was always a *causa foederis* at any gathering of their partisans. It was a certain match on neutral ground in which they met in the semi-final for the Cup, when to the utter confusion and bewilderment of all the best judges, the Rovers, who in their own opinion had really won the Cup already, were beaten four goals to nothing. It is true that a snowstorm raged throughout the match, and to this fact the defeat of the Rovers was always ascribed by the lovers of pure football. It could never be accounted for on any other hypothesis. No comparison of the real merits of the teams was possible, any more than it was possible to compare the towns whence they sprang. You could not mention a town like Duckingfield in the same breath as a town like Blackhampton; to speak of the Britannia being the equal of the Rovers merely betrayed a fundamental ignorance of what you were talking about.

All the same the feeling in the private bar of the Crown and Cushion on the night of the announcement that the Rovers and the Britannia must meet once more in a cup tie was one of anxiety. It had long been felt in Blackhampton that the fates never played quite fairly in the matter of Duckingfield Britannia. No reasonable person outside the latter miserable place ever questioned the Rovers' immense superiority, but there was no glossing over the fact that a clash of arms with these rude and unpolished foemen ended invariably in darkness and eclipse. "It's what I always say," Mr. August Higginbottom would affirm on these tragic occasions, "they don't know *how* to play footba' at Duckingfill. Bull-fighting's their game. Brute force and—*ignorance*, that's all there is to it."

For ten days nothing was talked of in Blackhampton but the coming battle. But there could be only one result. Britannia was bound to be wiped off the face of the earth. Still, the whole town would breathe more freely on Saturday evening, when this operation had been performed and the Rovers were safely in the semi-final round.

On the eve of the match, it was whispered all over Blackhampton that big money was on. The confidence of the enemy was overweening, ridiculous, pathetic; partisans of the Britannia were said to be backing their favorites for unheard-of sums. "Rovers would be all right if they had a front parlor to play in," was a favorite axiom of these unpolished foemen. "Britannia plays footba'. They don't play hunt-the-slipper nor kiss-in-the-ring."

The great day dawned. A chill February dawn it was. Queerly excited by the coming match, Henry Harper had hardly closed his eyes throughout the previous night. He knew that wonders were expected of him; there seemed no reason, under Providence, why he should not perform them; in match after match, he had gone from strength to strength; yet on the eve he hardly slept.

He had not been sleeping for some little time now. He had paid no heed to the warnings of Ginger, who was quite sure "he was over-reading hisself," but he didn't believe this was the case. No doubt he had studied hard; his thirst for knowledge grew in spite of the copious draughts with which he tried to quench it. Only too often before a match, he felt nervous, overstrung, but it did not occur to him that he was on the verge of disaster.

On the morning of a never-to-be-forgotten day, the Sailor rose before it was light to practice

writing and to study arithmetic—he was as far as vulgar fractions now. He sat in an overcoat in a fireless sitting-room for three hours before breakfast, and continued his labors for several hours afterwards. Then, after a light luncheon, he walked with Ginger to the ground.

The famous field of the Rovers was called Gamble's Pleasance. History has not determined the source of its name. Extrinsically it was hard to justify. Only one tree was visible, and not a single blade of grass. It was surrounded on four sides by huge roofed structures of wood and iron, towering tier upon tier; it had capacity for fifty thousand people. When Ginger and the Sailor came on the scene, these had taken up their places already, the gates had been closed, and disappointed enthusiasts were turning away by the hundred. There was not room in Gamble's Pleasance for another human being.

It was a scene truly remarkable that met the eyes of Ginger and the Sailor. Tier upon tier, wall upon wall of solid humanity rose to the sky. The Blackhampton Excelsior Prize Brass Band fought nobly but in vain against fifty thousand larynxes, and mounted police did their best to prevent their owners bursting through the barriers to the field of play.

The majority were strong partisans of the Rovers and wore favors of chocolate and blue. But there had been an invasion of the Huns. Barbarians from the neighboring town of Duckingfield could be picked out at a glance. One and all wore aggressively checked cloth caps, on which a red-and-white card was pinned bearing the legend, "Play up, Britannia."

The supporters of that upstart club were massed in solid phalanxes about the scene of action. They waved red-and-white banners, they shook rattles, they discoursed the strains of "Rule, Britannia" on trumpets and mouth-organs, they let off fireworks, and far worse than all this, they indulged in ribald criticism of their distinguished opponents' style of play. "They were goin' to mop the floor with 'em as usual." The consequence was hand-to-hand conflicts became general all over the ground between the dignified supporters of True Football, and these Visigoths who were ignorant of that godlike science. These encounters pleasantly assisted the efforts of the mounted police and the Blackhampton Excelsior Prize Brass Band to beguile the fleeting minutes until the combatants appeared on the field of honor.

"Yer talk about yer Sailor," said a red-and-white-rosetted warrior with a rattle in one hand and a bottle of beer in the other. "We'll give him Sailor. Rovers can swank, but they can't play footba'."

"Villa didn't think so, anyway," said another sportsman, who flaunted a chocolate-and-blue rose in his buttonhole without intending any affront to horticulture.

"Villa," said the Duckingfield barbarian. "Who's Villa! Play oop, Britann-yah!" He then proceeded to render the slogan of Britannia on the mouth-organ, until some seething superpatriot hit him on the head from behind with a rattle.

In the midst of the "scrap" that followed this graceful rebuke, which two unmounted members of the Blackhampton Constabulary regarded from a strategic distance with the utmost detachment, a cry of "'Ere they come!" was loosed from at least thirty-five thousand throats, and such a roar rent the heavens as must have disturbed Zeus considerably just as he was settling down for the afternoon.

"Play up, Rovers!"

Blackhampton might well be proud of the eleven wearers of the chocolate and blue. A finer-looking set of warriors would have been hard to find. And it did not lessen the pride of their friends that among the eleven only the goalkeeper could claim to be representing the place of his birth.

"Play up, Sailor!"

The slender, handsome boy, looking rather fine-drawn, but with something of the turn of limb of a thoroughbred racehorse, came into the goal and was duly greeted by his admirers.

"'E plays for England," proclaimed one of these.

"I don't think," said a Visigoth with a mouth-organ.

"Play up, Dink!"

The great Dinkie, side-stepping with the loose-limbed elegance of a ragtime dancer, looked as smart as paint.

"There's not a better inside left playing footba'," said another enthusiast, looking round for contradiction.

"I don't think," said a Visigoth with a rattle.

"Play up, Ginger!"

Ginger, with head of flame, looking more bow-legged, prick-eared and pugnacious than ever,

was a veritable pocket edition of the "Fighting Temeraire."

"E's a daisy, ain't 'e?" said the enthusiast.

"I don't think," quoth the Visigoth.

Another roar was loosed, this time by fifteen thousand Duckingfield larynxes.

"Ere they are. Play oop, Britann-yah. Play oop, me little lads."

All this was merely the prelude to such a game as never was seen on Gamble's Pleasance. The Rovers were on the crest of the wave. They had not lost a match since September 12, and this day was Saturday, February 20. They were proud and confident, they were playing on their own ground in the presence of their friends, and they had a very long score to settle with Duckingfield Britannia.

And yet deep in the hearts of the wearers of the chocolate and blue was the sense of fate. And it is a stronger thing than any that has yet existed in the soul of man. Fought they never so fiercely, under no matter what conditions, whenever the haughty Rovers met these unpolished foemen they had invariably to bite the dust or the mud, as the case might be.

The pace was a corker to start with. It was as if twenty-two parti-colored tigers had been suddenly let loose. But it was not football that was played. Britannia was not capable of expounding the noble science as it was understood by the polished and urbane Rovers of Blackhampton.

"Goin' to be a dog-fight as usual," proclaimed Mr. Augustus Higginbottom, who was seated in the exact center of the members' stand.

This grim remark was a concession to the fact that the Britannia was already fiercely attacking the Rovers' goal, and that Ginger, under great pressure, had been compelled to give a corner kick.

From the word "go" it was a terrific set-to. Up and down, down and up, ding dong, hammer and tongs, east, west, north and south of that turfless, sand-strewn area surged the tide of battle. Every yard of ground was yielded at the point of death; at least so it seemed to fifty thousand spectators and six mounted constables who could hardly breathe for excitement.

"Durn me, if that Ginger ain't top weight," hoarsely remarked the chairman of the club to Mr. Satellite Albert.

Ginger had just laid out the center forward of the enemy when a goal seemed sure. The advantage of the proceeding was twofold. In the first place, the Rovers' citadel was still uncaptured, in spite of the fact that thirty-five thousand persons had as good as yielded it to the enemy, fifteen thousand of whom were already hooting with delight at receiving it; while in the second place, Ginger's fellow warriors, who were gasping and holding their sides, were provided with a "breather."

"If Britannia would only play footba', it wouldn't matter," roared the Rovers' chairman in a bull's voice above the din.

Five minutes' grace, the fruit of Ginger's timely action, was much appreciated by his comrades, who were able to recover their wind while the enemy's center forward, supine and attended by the club trainer with a sponge and a cordial, recovered his. Nevertheless, the referee, a cock-sparrow in knickerbockers, who tried to spoil a fine game by stopping it without visible reason for doing so, felt he could do no less than caution Ginger for dangerous play.

"Turn him off." Fifteen thousand Duckingfielders besought the referee. "Turn him off. Dirty dog!"

"Good old Ginger! Played, Ginger! Good on yer, Ginger!" proclaimed thirty-five thousand stalwart Blackhamptonians.

Had Ginger received marching orders thirty-five thousand Blackhamptonians would know the reason why.

"Don't know what footba' is at Duckingfill," said Mr. Augustus Higginbottom, glaring around with a truculence awful to behold.

But they were at it again. Quarter was neither asked nor given. Duckingfield Britannia couldn't play for rock cakes, they couldn't play for toffee and bananas, but had not the Sailor in goal performed one of his miracles just before the referee blew his whistle for half time, the Rovers would have been a goal down at that sorely needed interval.

As it was, when, at the end of forty-five minutes' pounding, the twenty-two warriors limped off the ground to the strain of "Hearts of Oak," rendered with extraordinary vehemence by the Blackhampton Excelsior Prize Brass Band, no goal had been scored, and fifty thousand persons and six mounted policemen appeared for the time being reasonably content.

"Can't call it footba', but you mark my words, Albert, it is goin' to be a hell of a second half."

Mr. Satellite Albert could only faintly concur with the chairman of the club. He had a rather weak heart.

XIX

In the Rovers' dressing-room the trainer, an obese individual in a dirty cloth cap and dirtier sweater, handed round a plate of sliced lemons to the team. But, white as a ghost, sat the Sailor in a corner apart from the rest. He realized that the match was only half over, and with all his soul he wished it at an end. He was in no mood for sucking lemons just now. The hand of fate was upon him.

Everything seemed to be going round. He was so oddly and queerly excited that he could hardly see. How in the world he had stopped that shot and got rid of the ball with two Britannias literally hurling themselves upon him, he would never know. But he understood dimly, as he sat chin in hand on the farthest bench by the washing basins, that anything might happen before the match was over. The truth was, and he simply dared not face it, this terrific battle of giants was a bit too much for him. No, he dared not face that thought, he, whose dream, whose imperial destiny it was to bring the Cup for the first time to his native city.

"Buck up, Sailor boy."

Ginger, the greatest hero of them all, had laid an affectionate hand on his shoulder.

"Buck up, Sailor boy. You'll never stop a better nor that one. We've got 'em boiled."

Mr. Augustus Higginbottom appeared in the dressing-room, fur coat, chocolate waistcoat, blue tie, spats, watch-chain and all. His face had a grim and dour expression.

"Me lads," said he, "if ye can make a draw on it there's two pound apiece for ye. And if ye can win there's four. Understand?"

They all understood but Sailor. At that moment he could neither hear nor see the chairman of the committee. The only person he could see was a certain young Arris in a certain tree, and all he knew was that a decree of inexorable fate compelled him to stand in the shadow of that tree for forty-five minutes by the clock, with the gaze of fifty thousand people and six mounted policemen centered upon him.

The second half of the match began with a sensation. In the very first minute, the dauntless Ginger checked a rush by the enemy's left, gave the ball a mighty thump with his good right boot, and more by luck than anything it fell at the feet of Dinkie Dawson. And he, as all the world knew, was, on his day and in his hour, a genius. He trapped the ball, he diddled and dodged, he pretended to pass but he didn't. He merely kept straight on, yet feinting now to the right and now to the left of him. Britannia's center half back, a bullet-headed son of Hibernia, challenged him ruthlessly, but at the psychological instant Dinkie side-stepped in a way he had, and he of the bullet head barged fathoms deep into the mud of Gamble's Pleasance. Britannia's left full back now came up to see what was the matter, a singularly ill-advised proceeding; he ought to have waited for trouble instead of going to look for it was the unanimous opinion of fifteen thousand Duckingfielders, who shrieked with dismay as Dinkie and the ball went past the ill-advised one before you could say "knife." And then it was that fifty thousand persons and six mounted policemen suddenly grew alive to an intensely critical situation.

It was this. Only one thing under Providence could now save Britannia's citadel. A very fine and notable thing it was, no less than the agile yet majestic goalkeeper, Alexander MacFadyen by name, late of Glasgow Caledonians, and many times an international player. There was no better in the world to cope with such a titanic situation, but in times like these Dinkie Dawson was not as other men.

The heroic Scot knew that, but he didn't flinch or turn a hair. All the same, he must not go to Dinkie, as his puir fulish Saxon comrade had; Dinkie must come to him. "Yes, ma laddie," said the dour visage of Alexander MacFadyen, "I'll be waitin' for ye, I'm thinkin'."

It was such a moment as no pen—leaving out Shakespeare and the football reporter for the *Evening Star*—could do justice to. "I'm waitin' for ye, Dinkie, ma laddie," said Alexander MacFadyen, with Dinkie coming on and on, his dainty feet twinkling to the tunes of faërie. Hardly so much as the horse of a mounted policeman ventured to breathe. For a fraction of an instant, the two warriors eyed each other like tiger-cats about to spring. Crash! It was sheer inspiration. Dinkie had drawn a bow at a venture. The ball lay in the corner of the goal net, the citadel was captured, Britannia's flag was down.

It was, undoubtedly, in the opinion of thirty-five thousand souls the finest goal seen on Gamble's Pleasance within the memory of man. In the considered judgment of the other fifteen thousand it was such a wicked fluke that a well contested game was covered with ridicule.

Over the scene that followed it is kind to draw the veil. People of all ages and both sexes made themselves so indescribably ridiculous that Zeus of the Bright Sky, in dudgeon no doubt for the ruin of his afternoon, drew down the blinds and sought to cool their courage with one of his honest showers of rain.

It seemed all over, bar the shouting. There was only twenty minutes to play. The Rovers were still leading one goal to nothing, the attacks of the Britannia were being shattered against the rock of an impregnable defense, when a string of tragic incidents befell which turned a sure triumph into dire disaster.

Some maintain it was the rain alone which caused the débâcle. None can deny that the ball was greased by Jupiter's shower. But even that fact cannot cover all that happened. As for the other sinister explanation, which is firmly believed at Blackhampton to this day, it was never accepted by the fellow players of him who gave away the match.

Fate was at the root of the tragedy. There were twenty minutes to play, the Rovers were leading one to nothing, and the Sailor had to take a free kick from goal. He could do this at his leisure; according to the laws of the game no opponent was allowed to approach. But as he placed the ball for the kick, he somehow failed to notice in the gathering gloom that Ginger was right in the line of fire. Of course he ought to have done so. Yet so great was his excitement now that he did not know what he was doing. He took the kick; the ball struck Ginger full in the middle of the back and rebounded through the goal.

It was growing so dark that at first not a soul realized what had happened. By the time the goalkeeper, like a man in a dream, had retrieved the ball from the net, the awful truth was known. The Sailor had given away the match.

Henry Harper never forgot to his dying day the look in the eyes of Ginger. In the presence of their grim reproach his one desire was for the earth to open and swallow him.

Pandemonium had been unchained, but the Sailor heard it not, as he leaned against the goalpost feeling like a man in a nightmare. At that moment his whole being was dominated by a single thought. He had given away the match.

Strictly speaking, all was not yet lost. But the Sailor was completely unnerved by his crime, and Ginger's eyes were haunting him. As he leaned against the post, the farthest from the tree sacred to the memory of young Arris, he knew that if anything came to him now, he would not be able to stop it.

Another shot came. It was inevitable. The gift of the gods was as wine in the veins of Duckingfield Britannia. They were tigers again: eleven parti-colored tigers. But the second shot was just a slow trickling affair that any goalkeeper in his senses ought to have been able to deal with. But the Sailor bungled it miserably. He didn't know how, he didn't know why, but the ball wriggled slowly out of his hands through the goal, and the match was lost beyond hope of recovery.

There could be no thought now of the Cup coming to Blackhampton. He daren't look at Ginger. He tried not to hear, he tried not to see. It must all be a hideous dream. But there to the left was the historic tree simply alive with young Arrises cursing and scorning him. Suddenly there was a mighty surge by the crowd in the farthest corner of the ground, which called for all the address of the mounted police to restrain.

"Sailor, you've sold the match."

The ugly words were being bellowed at him out of the night. He could hear the loud and deep curses of the Rovers' partisans; he imagined he could see their fists being shaken at him. He wished he was dead, but he had to stand there another twelve minutes exposed to the public ignominy.

In that twelve minutes, Duckingfield Britannia scored four goals more. All was darkness and eclipse. The Rovers, noble warriors as they were, had done all that mortal men could do; in the case of the heroic Ginger, they might even be said to have done a little more. But fate was too much for them. The last line of defense, on which all depended, had played them false. The Sailor muddled hopelessly everything that came to him now. The end of the game was not merely a defeat for the Rovers, it was a disaster, a rout.

The referee blew his whistle for the last time, and Act One of the tragedy was at an end. But its termination was merely the signal for Act Two to begin. The crowd, in a frenzy of rage, surged over the ground. "Sailor's sold the match," was the cry of the angry thousands.

The oncoming hordes had no terrors for Henry Harper. Let them do with him as they liked. Death would have been more than welcome as he leaned against the goalpost, not seeking to escape the tender mercies of the mob.

It was Ginger who realized the danger.

"Dink," he called hoarsely, "Mac, Peter, Joe, they are coming for Sailor. They'll kill him if they catch holt on him."

It was true. And it seemed that the sternest fight of that terrific day was yet to be. An angry mob is not responsible for its actions. There was a fierce set-to between a handful of good men, with help from six mounted constables, and many hundreds bereft by an excitement which at that moment made them little better than savages.

"Scrag 'im! Scrag 'im!"

Henry Harper could hear their voices all about him, but little he cared. Indeed they were almost pleasant to his ears. Again it was a case of hard pounding, with the police bearing a gallant part, and the goalkeeper's escort taking blows and freely returning them.

There was a vision in the mind of Henry Harper which he never forgot, of the blood streaming down the face of Ginger as he dealt out blows to the right and to the left of him. He never forgot the look on the face of Dinkie as they kept driving on and driving home.

Times and again it seemed as if the Rovers' partisans must tear their late hero in pieces. But his escort got him somehow to the dressing-room, and a strong force of the Blackhampton Constabulary watched over it for a solid hour by the pavilion clock. By that time, the crowd had dispersed, the ground was clear, and Henry Harper was able to go home.

XX

"You are late for your tea, Mr. Harper," said Miss Foldal. "It's twenty past seven. It will be supper time soon."

The Sailor apologized in his gentle, rather childlike way.

"Do you know where Ginger Jukes is, miss?" he asked, in a queer voice.

"He came in for his tea and then went out again," said Miss Foldal, regulating her tone with care.

She had been told already by the *Evening Star* that the Rovers, after leading by a goal within twenty minutes of the end of the game, had suffered a crushing and incomprehensible defeat, that the crowd had made an infuriated attack on Harper, the goalkeeper, and in the blank space reserved for the latest news, it said that in deference to public feeling, the committee of the club had decided to hold an inquiry into his conduct.

Miss Foldal was far too discreet to refer to the match. But if ever she had seen tragedy in a human countenance, it was now visible in the face of this young man. She poured out a cup of tea for him, which he declined. Then he said, in that queer voice which did not seem to belong to him, that he would not be in need of supper.

"If you want my opinion, Mr. Harper," said Miss Foldal, "you have been working too hard. I really think the best thing for you is bed."

The young man stood white as a sheet with a face not pleasant to look upon.

"I do reelly. Go to bed now, and I'll bring you a basin of gruel with a little something in it."

A basin of gruel with a little something in it was Miss Foldal's specific for all the ills to which flesh is heir. Mention of it was clear proof that Mr. Harper's present condition gave cause for anxiety.

"I don't want nothing, miss," said the young man, in a voice quite unlike his own. "It's very kind of you, but the only thing I want just now is to be let be."

Had Mr. Jukes or any of her other lodgers made that speech it would have seemed uncivil, but Miss Foldal knew that Mr. Harper was incapable of any kind of intentional rudeness. He was as gentle as a child. Perhaps that was why the look now in his eyes hurt her so much.

Without saying anything else, the young man went up to his bedroom.

Time passed. The supper hour came and went. Mr. Jukes did not return and Mr. Harper did not come down again. But it was this latter fact that disconcerted the landlady. She could not get the look of those eyes out of her brain. Only once had she seen such a look in the eyes of any human being, and that was in those of her Uncle Frederick just before he destroyed himself.

Nine struck. There was no sound from the room above. Miss Foldal grew horribly afraid. Memories of her Uncle Frederick had descended very grimly upon her.

Perhaps Mr. Harper had gone to bed. She hoped and believed that he had. And yet she could not be sure. It was her duty to go up to his room and inquire. But it was too much for her nerves to be quite alone in the house. Ethel, the maid-servant, had gone out shopping as it was Saturday night, and Mr. Jukes had not yet come in for his supper.

Miss Foldal was not a brave woman. Her deepest instinct was against going up those stairs. It was much to her credit that she did go up at a quarter past nine. The door of Mr. Harper's room was shut, but a light was coming from under it.

She knocked so timidly that a mouse would not have heard her.

No answer.

She knocked again, a little louder, as she imagined, but no louder in reality.

Still no answer.

"It is exactly as I feared." Miss Foldal began to shake, and the spirit of her Uncle Frederick crept out from under the door.

She wanted to scream; indeed, she was about to act in this futile manner, when it suddenly occurred to her that screaming would be no use whatever. Far wiser to open the door, if only out of deference to the manes of her uncle, whose end had taught her that suicide was not such a terrible thing after all.

At last Miss Foldal opened the door of the bedroom. A great surprise was in store, but it was not of the kind that had been provided by her Uncle Frederick.

Mr. Harper, wearing his overcoat and cap, was in the act of strapping together a bag full of clothes. The relief of Miss Foldal was great; at the same time a quaver in her voice showed that she was full of anxiety.

"Why, Mr. Harper, you are never going away?"

"Yes, miss."

"Without your supper?"

"Yes, miss."

"Mr. Harper, wherever are you going to?"

"Dunno, miss." The gentle voice had a stab in it for the woman's heart of his landlady. "'Ere's my board and lodging, miss." He took a sovereign from his pocket, and put it in her hand. "I'll be very sorry to go. I'm thinking I'll never 'ave another 'ome like this."

Miss Foldal thought so too. Somehow she was not the least ashamed of the sudden tears which sprang into her eyes. There was some high instinct in her, in spite of her rather battered and war-worn appearance, which seemed to urge her to protect him.

"I cannot hear of you going away like this, Mr. Harper, not at this time of night and without your supper, I cannot reelly."

It was vain, however, of Miss Foldal to protest. Moreover, she knew it was vain. There was a look in Mr. Harper's face that all the Miss Foldals in the world could not have coped with.

"Well, I'm sorry, I'm very sorry," was all she could gasp, and then he was gone.

XXI

Bag in hand he entered the February night. As he turned up the collar of his overcoat his excitement crystallized into a definite thought. Whatever happened he must not meet Ginger.

He didn't know where he was going; he had neither purpose nor plan; his only guide was a vague desire to get a long way from Blackhampton in a short space of time.

In obedience to this instinct, he passed over the canal bridge, the main highway to the center of the city, turned down several byways in order to avoid the Crown and Cushion, threaded a path through a maze of slums and alleys, and emerged at last, almost without knowing it, within

twenty yards of Blackhampton Central Station.

This seemed a special act of Providence; and subsequent events confirmed Henry Harper in that view. He walked through the station booking-hall, yet without taking a ticket, since in a dim way he felt it was not wise to do so before you have given the least thought to where you are going.

A train was standing in the station. The porters were closing the doors, the guard had taken out his whistle.

"Jump in, sir, we're off."

Henry Harper pitched head foremost into a first non-smoker, his bag was pitched in after him, the door was slammed, and the train was already passing through the long tunnel at the end of the station before he was able to realize what had happened.

An old lady was the only other occupant of the compartment. She was a stern looking dame, with a magnificent fur cloak, a dominant nose, fearless eyes, and a large black hat with plenty of trimming but without feathers.

It was clear from the demeanor of the old lady that she was inclined to regard the intruder with disfavor. However, as she was a person not without consequence in her own small world, this was her fixed attitude of mind in regard to the vast majority of her fellow creatures. But she never allowed herself to be afraid of them, partly out of pride, also because it was good for the character. All the same, a nature less powerful might easily have pulled the cord and communicated with the guard, such was the look of wildness in the eyes of her fellow traveler. Moreover, he had fallen into her lap, and had trodden on her foot rather severely, and she was not sure that he had apologized.

Between Duckingfield Junction and High Moreton she became involved in quite a train of speculations. In the first place, he was obviously not a gentleman. That was her habitual jumping-off point in her survey of the human male. In fact, she would have ignored his existence had it been possible to do so. But her foot had suffered so much from his clumsiness that she was not able to put him out of her mind. Besides, she was a sharp and quizzical old thing, and from the height of her own self-consequence she stole glances at him that were a nice mingling of caution and truculence. It was an honest, open, unusual face, there was that to be said for it. The behavior, the manner, and the portmanteau marked H.H. were unconventional, to say the least; there was an absence of gloves, but the eyes were remarkable. Probably a young poet on his way to Oxford for the week-end. Although they confessed to two of these unfortunate persons in her own family, it was an article of her faith that a poet was never a gentleman.

Somehow the young man in the corner interested the old lady so much that when the last of the tunnels was safely passed, a temperament by nature adventurous as became three grandsons in the Household Cavalry led her to study him at closer quarters.

"Do you mind having the window down a little?"

"No, lady."

He sprang to his feet and lowered the window, and the old lady, pitying herself profoundly that she could ever have thought about him at all, settled herself in her corner and was very soon asleep.

This cynical proceeding had no effect upon the young man opposite. As far as he was concerned she did not exist, any more than he now existed for her; moreover, she never had existed for him, therefore the balance of indifference was in his favor.

The Sailor's one preoccupation, as the long and slow succession of stations passed, was the face of Ginger. It was gazing through the window at him out of the intense darkness of the night. And what a face it was, with the blood streaming down it and a look in the eyes he would never forget.

Where was he going? He didn't know and he didn't care, if only it was far enough from Blackhampton. Presently he began to feel cold and hungry and horribly lonely. Now he was beginning to realize that Ginger and Miss Foldal and Dinkie and the Rovers were things of the past, his misery grew more than he could bear. His dream was shattered! He would never bring the Cup to Blackhampton. And there was the face of Ginger looking in at the window, and he nearly woke the old lady by jumping up with a cry of agony.

There was nothing left for him now but to go on into unending night. He was moving out of an unspeakable past into a future of panic and emptiness. And then he tried to sleep, but strange and awful thoughts prevented him. The old lady awoke with a start, only to find that her feet were cold in spite of their hot water bottle, which was also cold, and was great negligence on the part of the railway company. Still, she hoped to be at the end of her journey soon. In that reflection the old lady was more fortunate than her fellow traveler, who had no such hope to console him.

XXII

The train went on and on. Its stoppings and startings were endless; the night grew very cold; the old lady, gathering her fur cloak around her, resettled herself in her corner and slept again. The chill in the heart of the Sailor was now a deadly thing. Repose for him was out of the question. Red and white striped phantoms converged upon him through the gloom; tier upon tier of massed humanity rose shrieking to the sky; but there was only one face that he could recognize, and it was a face he would never forget.

At last the Sailor dozed a little. And then the train stopped once more, and an official of the railway company entered the carriage with a demand for tickets. The old lady found hers without difficulty, but the young man opposite had no ticket, it appeared. Also his behavior was so odd that at first the official seemed to think he was drunk. He had no idea of where he was going. But the next station, it seemed, was Marylebone, and that was as far as he could go.

While the old lady watched from her corner grimly, the official was able to gather that this unsatisfactory traveler had come from Blackhampton, which, as he had been so unwise as to travel first class, meant a sovereign in coin of the realm.

The traveler was able to produce a sovereign from a belt which he wore round his waist—a proceeding which seemed to stimulate the curiosity of his fellow traveler in the highest degree—and paid it over without a murmur. The official wrote out a receipt with an absurd stump of pencil.

"Thank you, mister," said the young man.

The train moved on.

A few minutes later it had come to the end of a long and wearisome journey. The old lady was the first to leave the carriage. She was assisted in doing so by the ministrations of a very tall and dignified footman.

As the Sailor stepped to the platform, bag in hand, there was a great clock straight before him pointing to the hour of midnight. Where was he? He had never heard of Marylebone. It might be England, it might be Scotland; in his present state of mind it might be anywhere.

"Keb, sir?" The inquiry surged all round him, but the Sailor did not want a cab.

His first feeling as he stood on the platform of that immense station was one of sheer bewilderment. He didn't know where he was, he had nowhere to go, he had no plans. An intense loneliness came over him again. Soon, however, it was merged in the exhilaration of the atmosphere around him. This was a different place from Blackhampton; it was larger, more vital, more mysterious.

As he walked slowly down the platform the importance of everything seemed to increase. He would have to think things out a bit, although just now any kind of thinking was torment.

He had learned much during his sixteen months at Blackhampton, not only in regard to the world in which he lived, but also—and as he moved down the platform with his bag the thought gave him a thrill of joy—to read and write. He felt these things, bought and paid for at a heavy cost, were so infinitely precious that he need not fear the future.

Straight before his eyes was the legend, "Cloak Room." Sixteen months ago it would have been High Dutch. But the new knowledge told him it was the place to leave your bag. Accordingly, he went and left it, paid his twopence, and put the ticket in exchange carefully in his belt, where nineteen sovereigns and twelve half-sovereigns were secure.

He had learned the meaning of money during his six years at sea. Perhaps it was the sight of so much and the knowledge of its value that gave him a thrill of power as he passed out of the station into the wide, peopled immensity of this unknown land. There was a policeman standing on an island in the middle of the road, and the time had long passed since those grim days when he would have been as likely to fly to the moon as to address a question to the police.

"What place is this, mister?"

"Marylebone Road."

The information did not seem very valuable. Still, the policeman's tone implied that it might be. As the Sailor stood in the middle of the road he was suddenly comforted by the sight of manna in the wilderness. Across the way was a coffee stall. Such a bright vision told him how sore was his need.

All the same he was not hungry. He drank two cups of coffee, but he was too excited to eat. That was odd, because there was nothing to excite him. But when he turned away from the stall and started to walk he didn't know where, something curious, and terrible had begun again to lay hold of his brain. Nevertheless, he went on and on through streets interminable, fully determined to free himself of that eerie, horrible feeling.

Had it not been for the face of Ginger perhaps all would have been well. But it was lurking everywhere amid the gloom and byways of the night. The place he was in was endless; it was a waste of bricks and mortar. Even Liverpool and the waterfront at Frisco could not compare with it. Then it suddenly came upon him that he was a guy. This place was London. It was the only place it could be.

There was something in the mere thought which fired the imagination of the Sailor. The Isle of Dogs had been London in a manner of speaking, but this was surely the heart of the city. He could not remember to have seen such houses as he was passing now. Liverpool and Frisco had had them no doubt. But in his present mood the mass and gloom of these great bulks addressed him strangely. This vastness immeasurable, debouching upon the lamps at the corners of the streets, was instinct with the magic of the future. It was as if this world of bricks and mortar towering to the night was girt with fabulous secret riches.

Symbols of opulence spoke to the Sailor as he walked. Somehow he felt he could claim kinship with them. He had his store of riches also. No, it was not contained in the belt around his body. That was only a very little between him and the weather; a man like Klondyke would soon have done it in. But Henry Harper could now read and write, that was the thought which nerved him to meet the future, that was his store of secret and fabulous wealth.

God knew he had paid a price for Aladdin's lamp. A week ago that night he had seen performed at the Blackhampton Lyceum the first play of his life, "Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp." He had sat in the pit, Dinkie Dawson one side of him, Ginger the other. He had now his own wonderful lamp. It was glowing and burning, a mass of dull fire, in the right-hand corner of his brain. It was a talisman which had come to him at the cost of blood and tears; a magic gift of heaven that he must guard with life itself.

On and on he went. Now and again the face of Ginger tried to overthrow him, but the presence of the talisman meant much to him now....

After weary hours his pace began to fail. There were no more houses as far as he could tell. Grass was under his feet; bushes of furze and a clean smell of earth enveloped him. The darkness was less, but everything was very still. Suddenly he felt strangely tired. And then an awful feeling crept upon him.

A low wooden seat was near, and he sat on it. It was still dark, and the weather was particularly chill February. As he drew his overcoat across his knees, he was overmastered by a sense of terror. Somehow it seemed more subtle and more deadly than all the fear he had ever known; of Auntie, of Jack the Ripper, of the Chinaman, of the Old Man, of the Island of San Pedro, of Duckingfield Britannia, of even that blood-stained visage of which he could still catch glimpses in the darkness. It was a stealthy distrust of Aladdin's lamp, the wonderful talisman glowing like a star in the right-hand corner of his brain.

Long he sat in the February small hours. He would wait for the light, having neither inclination nor strength to continue his journey into regions unknown. It grew very cold. And then a new fear crept over him. He felt he was going to become very ill.

However, he determined to use all the force of his will. This feeling was pure imagination, he was sure. He would put it out of his mind. It was a matter of life and death not to be ill now. And not for a moment must he think of dying, now a wonderful talisman had been given him which was about to unlock the doors of worlds beyond his own.

With fierce determination he rose from the seat unsteadily. And as he did so he saw the cold, cold light of the morning paling the tops of the distant trees. He began to move forward again. He would have to keep going somehow if he was not to be overtaken by darkness and eclipse. Whatever he did, he must hold on to his identity. Whatever he did, he must keep secure the treasure rare and strange that was now within himself.

Suddenly in the light of the dawn, he made out a man's figure coming towards him. It was a policeman.

"What place do they call this, mister?"

"Barnes Common."

They moved on slowly in their opposite ways.

BOOK III

BEING

I

Barnes Common seemed a very large place. The Sailor was afraid he would not be able to keep on much longer, but he had learned endurance in his six years before the mast. Weeks and months together he had just kept on keeping on while he had sailed the terrible seas. At that time there was no magic talisman to hold him to his course, there was neither hope nor faith of the world to be. But now it was otherwise. Surely he had no reason to give in, just as a new heaven and a new earth were opening before his eyes.

He came presently to a row of houses. A road was beyond and traffic was passing along it. The hope of a coffee stall sprang to his mind. He walked doggedly along the road, until at a point where it was merged in an important thoroughfare he came upon a cabman's shelter. And there within, in answer to his faith, were the things he sought. Through the open door was a fire, a smell of steaming fluids, of frying meats, and an honest bench on which to enjoy them.

He asked no leave, but stumbled in and at the beck of his powerfully stimulated senses ordered a kingly repast, and spread both hands before the fire. Sausages and mashed potatoes were brought to him and he sat down to eat, just as a very cheerful looking cabman entered with a face of professional red, and wearing apparel not unworthy of an arctic explorer.

The cabman ordered a cup of cocoa and a "doorstep," and that justice might be done to them sat on the bench by the young man's side. A little while they ate in silence, for both were very hungry. Then under the influence of food and a good fire the cabman talked. His sociability enabled the Sailor to ask an important question.

"Can you tell me, mister, of lodgings, clean and decent, for a single man?"

"What sort o' lodgings are you wantin', mister?" The cabman was favorably impressed by the young man's air of politeness.

"Lodgings clean and decent," said the Sailor.

"I know that," said the cabman urbanely, "but what do you want to pay fur 'em?"

The Sailor reflected. There were nineteen sovereigns and twelve half-sovereigns in his belt; all the same, he was enough of a landsman to know the value of money.

"I want to live cheap," he said, with extreme simplicity. "Just as cheap as I can, and be clean and decent, too."

The cabman let his large wise eyes flow over the Sailor, and quietly took his measure as became a veteran of the town.

"Ever tried Bowdon House?"

The Sailor shook his head.

The cabman ruminated.

"Tizzey a day fur your cubicle an' the use o' the kitchen fire."

The young man was not insulted, although the cabman feared he might have been, so good were his clothes, so gravely courteous his aspect.

"O' course," said the cabman, "it ain't Buckingham Palace, it's no use purtendin' it is."

"So long as it's clean and decent," said the Sailor.

"I give you my word for that. Never stayed there myself, but I know them as has."

The Sailor nodded.

"O' course, it ain't the Sizzle. I don't say that all on 'em moves in high circles, that would be tellin' a lie, but if you don't mind all sorts there's wuss homes, they tell me, in this metropolis, than Bowdon House."

The young man said he would try it, anyway, if it wasn't far.

"It's at the back o' Victoria," said the cabman. "Can't miss it if you go sharp to the left at the

second turnin' past the station."

Henry Harper had to confess that he didn't know the way to Victoria Station.

"It's quite easy," said the cabman. "Buss 14 that goes by here will set you down at Victoria. Then do as I say, or ask a bobby to put you right."

Armed with these instructions, Henry Harper presently set out for Bowdon House. Feeling much better for a good meal and human intercourse, he found it without difficulty. Bowdon House was a large and somber building. Its exterior rather abashed the Sailor. But a sure instinct warned him that now he could not afford to be abashed by anything. Therefore he entered and boldly paid the sum of sixpence for a vacant cubicle.

The beds might not be equal to the Sizzle, but they were clean and decent undoubtedly, and not too hard for a sailor. You could have a bath for a penny, you could keep your own private frying pan, you were allowed the use of the kitchen range to cook any food you liked to buy, and a comfortable place was provided where you could sit and eat it. The company was mixed, it was true, as the cabman had said, but these were solid advantages, and the chief of them at the moment, in the opinion of Henry Harper, was that you could go to bed when you liked and stay there forever if only you continued to pay your six-pence a night.

The first thing the young man did was to have a hot bath. He then hired for a penny a nightgown, as clean and decent as his cubicle, and within a very short time was in a sleep so long and deep that it banished entirely the new fear that had crept into his brain.

About five o'clock in the evening he awoke a new man. After a toilet as careful as the absence of a razor and a hairbrush would permit, he found his way to the common room. He felt extremely hungry, but the outlay of another six-pence, brought him a pot of tea, some brown bread and butter, and a slice of meat pie.

There was only one other patron in the common room, and he at once attracted Henry Harper's curiosity. This individual was engaged in toasting a muffin at the large and clear fire, and even with the Sailor's experience of Miss Foldal in this kind, he had never seen one of these delightful articles dealt with in a manner of such sacerdotal delicacy.

A blue china plate was warming before the fire, and the muffin was presently placed on it, soaked in butter in true Miss Foldal style, and brought to table piping hot. The young man had chosen a place as near the fire as he could get, and the muffin expert took a place opposite, poured out a brew of tea from his own blue china teapot, and to the Sailor's amazement squeezed a little lemon juice into it.

This Sybarite was eating his first piece of muffin with an air of feminine elegance when he suddenly caught the young man's eye. The limpid glance seemed to stimulate his own blue orb to a mild and calm curiosity. The Sybarite looked the young man up and down, but continued to eat his muffin with a kind of apostolic pleasantness, which somehow recalled to Henry Harper the Reverend Rogers and a certain famous tea-party at the Brookfield Street Mission Hall in his distant youth.

Presently, to Henry Harper's grave surprise, the muffin eater was pleased to discourse a little of men and things.

The Sailor in his genuine modesty was flattered, moreover he was charmed. Never in all his wanderings had he heard a man discourse in this way. It might have been Klondyke himself—at times there was an odd resemblance to that immortal in the occasional grace notes of the Sybarite. Yet it was a suggestion rather than a resemblance. This was a kind of composite of Klondyke and the Reverend Rogers, a Klondyke raised to a higher intellectual power.

Of course, this was only one aspect of the Sybarite, and that the least important, because with every allowance for the sacred memory of the Reverend Rogers, the person opposite was quite the most wonderful talker Henry Harper had ever heard in his life.

Had the Sailor heard the music of Palestrina, which at that period was a pleasure to come, he might have imagined he was listening to it. The voice of the Sybarite was measured yet floating, his phrases were endless yet perfectly rounded and definite, there was a note of weariness, older than the world, yet there was a charm, a lucidity, a mellow completeness that was perfectly amazing. The Sailor, with a wonderful talisman now burning bright in his soul, was enchanted.

This remarkable person owned, with a sort of frankness which was not frankness at all, that there were just two things he could do of practical utility. One, it seemed, was to toast a muffin with anybody, the other was to make the perfect cup of tea. Here he ended and here he began. He had also the rather unacademic habit of quoting dead languages in a manner so remarkably impressive as to bewilder the Sailor.

Henry Harper listened with round eyes. He devoured the Sybarite. His talisman seemed to tell him that he was on the verge of worlds denied to the common run of men. This remarkable person had even a private language of his own. He used words and phrases so charged with esoteric meanings that they somehow seemed to make the Aladdin's lamp burn brighter in the

Sailor's soul. He had a knowledge of books comprehensive and wonderful, of all ages and countries apparently, yet when the young man ventured to ask timidly, but with a sort of pride in his question, whether he had read the "Pickwick Papers," the answer overthrew him completely.

"God forbid," said the Sybarite.

Henry Harper was utterly defeated. And yet he was charmed. Here was a depth far beyond Miss Foldal, who had suggested that he should get a ticket for the Free Library in order to be able to read Charles Dickens.

"I suppose, sir"—the "sir" would have had the sanction of Ginger, the perfect man of the world—"I suppose, sir, you don't think much of Charles Dickens?"

After all, that was what the Sybarite really meant.

"Not necessarily that. He is simply not in one's ethos, don't you know."

The Sailor was baffled completely, but in some way he was a shrewd young man. He had soon decided that it would be wiser to listen than attempt to talk himself.

The Sybarite was fastidious but he was not shy. He liked to speak out of the depths of his wisdom to a fit audience if the spirit was on him. He knew that he talked well, even beautifully; the immortal flair of the artist was there; and in this strange young man with the deep eyes was the perfect listener, and that was what the soul of the Sybarite always demanded.

The Sailor listened with a kind of fascinated intensity; also he watched all that the Sybarite did with a sense of esthetic delight. His lightest movements, like his voice, were ordered, feline, sacramental. It made no difference whether he was toasting muffins, buttering them, or merely eating them; whether he was pouring out tea or conveying it in a blue china cup to his lips, it was all done in a manner to suggest the very poetry of motion. And when it came to a matter of rolling a cigarette, which it presently did, the almost catlike grace of the long and slender hands that were so clean and kept so perfectly, touched a chord very deep in the Sailor.

The name of this wonderful person, as the Sailor learned in the course of the next two days, was Mr. Esme Horrobin. He had been formerly a fellow and tutor of Gamaliel College, Oxford; he let out much pertaining to himself in the most casual way in an exegesis which was yet so neutral that it seemed to be more than wisdom itself. Also he did not shrink from impartial consideration of an act which circumstances had imposed upon him.

"It was one's duty to resign, I assure you." As the enchanted hours passed, the discourse of the Sybarite grew more intimate, so rapt and so responsive was the young man with the deep eyes in his elemental simplicity. "It was most trying to have to leave one's warm bed in the middle of winter at eight o'clock, to breakfast hastily, merely for what? Merely to sustain an oaf from the public schools in a death grapple with an idyll of Theocritus. There's a labor of Sisyphus for you. We Horrobins are an old race; who knows what mysteries we have profaned in the immortal past! I hope I make myself clear."

Mr. Horrobin was not making himself at all clear, but the Sailor was striving hard to keep track of him. The Sybarite, a creature of intuitions when in the full enjoyment of "his personal ethos," was ready to help him to do so.

"We Horrobins are what is called in the physical world born-tired. We are as incapable of continuous effort as a dram drinker is of total abstinence. This absurd cosmos of airships and automobiles bores us to tears. A mere labor of Sisyphus, I assure you, my dear fellow. The whole human race striving to get to nowhere as fast as it can in order to return as quickly as possible. And why? I will tell you. Man himself has profaned the mysteries. The crime of Prometheus is not yet expiated on our miserable planet. Take my own case. I am fit for one thing only, and that is to lie in bed smoking good tobacco with my books around me, translating the 'Satyricon' of Petronius Arbiter. It seems an absurd thing to say, but given the bed, the tobacco, the books, and the right conjunction of the planetary bodies, which in these matters is most essential, and I honestly believe I am able to delve deeper into the matchless style of Petronius than any other person living or dead."

The Sailor was awed. The "Satyricon" of Petronius Arbiter was whole worlds away from Miss Fordal.

"Whether I shall ever finish my translation is not of the slightest importance. Personally, I am inclined to think not. That is one's own private labor of Sisyphus. It won me a fellowship and ultimately lost it me. Let us assume that I finish it. There is not a publisher or an academic body in Europe or America that would venture to publish it. Rome under Nero, my dear fellow, the feast of Trimalchio. And assuming it is finished and assuming it is published, it will be a thing entirely without value, either human or commercial. And why? Because there is no absolute canon of literary style existing in the world. It is one labor of Sisyphus the more for a man to say this is Petronius to a world for whom Petronius can never exist. Do I make myself clear?"

The Sailor was silent, but round eyes of wonder were trained upon the blue-eyed, yellow-bearded face of Mr. Esme Horrobin. The Sybarite, agreeably alive to the compliment, sighed

deeply.

"It may have been right to resign one's fellowship, yet one doesn't say it was. It may not have been right, yet one doesn't say it was not. At least, a fellowship of Gamaliel in certain of its aspects is better than bear-leading the aristocracy, and a person of inadequate resources is sometimes driven even to that."

The next morning, the Sailor retrieved his bag from the cloak room at Marylebone Station, to which he went by bus from Victoria without much difficulty. He felt wonderfully better for his day's rest, and much fortified by the society of Mr. Esme Horrobin. Friendship had always been precious to Henry Harper. There was something in his nature that craved for it, yet he had never been able to satisfy the instinct easily. But this inspired muffin eater opened up a whole world of new and gorgeous promise now that he had Aladdin's lamp to read him by. Mr. Esme Horrobin was what Klondyke would have called a high-brow. But he was something more. He was a man who had the key to many hidden things.

When the Sailor had brought his bag to Bowdon House, the first thing he did was to find Marlow's Dictionary. Miss Foldal had presented him with her own private copy of this invaluable work, and the name Gwladys Foldal was to be seen on the flyleaf. "Ethos" was the first word he looked up, but it was not there. He then sought "oaf," whose definition was fairly clear. Then he went on to "bear-leading" and to "aristocracy." These proved less simple. Their private meanings were plain, more or less, but to correlate them was beyond the Sailor's powers, nor did it fall within the scope of Marlow's Dictionary to explain what the Sybarite meant when he spoke of bear-leading the aristocracy.

II

Henry Harper's acquaintance with Mr. Esme Horrobin had important consequences. That gentleman's interest deepened almost to a mild liking for the young man. He was a type new to the Sybarite; and he might have taken pleasure in his primitive attitude to life had it been possible for such a developed mind to take pleasure in anything.

The company at Bowdon House was certainly mixed, but Mr. Esme Horrobin was a miracle of courtesy to all with whom he came in contact. He had a smile and a nod for a bricklayer's laborer, a bus conductor out of a billet, a decayed clerk or a reformed pickpocket. No matter who they were, his charming manners intrigued them, but also kept them at their distance. When he fell into the language of democracy, which he sometimes did for his own amusement, it was always set off by an access of the patrician to his general air. By this simple means he maintained the balance of power in the body politic. He had grasped the fact that every man is at heart a snob. Even the young man who had followed the sea accepted Mr. Esme Horrobin's estimate of Mr. Esme Horrobin.

Indeed, the Sailor was absorbing Mr. Esme Horrobin at every pore. He felt it to be a liberal education to sit at the same table, and when he went to his cubicle there were at least half a dozen carefully remembered words to look up in Marlow's Dictionary. But it would not do to linger in the land of the lotus. He must find a means of earning a living.

It occurred to the Sailor on the morning of his third day at Bowdon House, that he might ask Mr. Horrobin for a little advice on the matter. But he did not find it easy to do so. The young man was very shy. It was one thing to listen to Mr. Horrobin, but quite another to talk to him. However, after tea on the third evening, when no one was by, he screwed up courage and boldly asked whether Mr. Horrobin knew of a billet for a chap who didn't mind hard work, or how such a thing could be obtained.

Frankly Mr. Horrobin did not. It was the first time in his life that he had been met by any such problem. The problem for Mr. Horrobin had always been of a very different kind. His tone seemed to express the unusual when he asked the young man if he had any particular form of occupation in view.

"I'd like something to do with literature, sir," said Henry Harper, venturing timidly upon a new word.

"Ah." Mr. Horrobin scratched a yellow-whiskered chin. It was very ironical that a young man who had asked whether he read Dickens should now seek advice upon such a matter.

"Do you mean reading literature, my dear fellow, writing literature, or selling literature?"

The young man explained very simply that it was the selling of literature he had in mind.

"Ah," said Mr. Esme Horrobin gravely. But he had a kind heart. And if he really took to a

person, which he very seldom did, he had the sort of disposition that is mildly helpful. And he had taken to this young man, therefore he felt inclined to do what he could for him.

Mr. Horrobin rolled and lit a cigarette. After five minutes' hard thought inspiration came. Its impact was almost dramatic, except that in no circumstances was Mr. Esme Horrobin ever dramatic.

"I really think," he said, "I must give you a line to Rudge, my bookseller, in the Charing Cross Road. He is a man who might help you; at least he may know a man who might help you. Yes, a little line to Rudge. Pray remind me tomorrow."

The young man was filled with gratitude. But he allowed his hopes to run too high. Even a little line to Rudge the bookseller was not a thing to compass in this offhand way. Tomorrow in the mouth of Mr. Esme Horrobin was a very comprehensive term. It was Tomorrow that he was going to complete his translation of the "Satyricon" of Petronius; it was Tomorrow that he would return to the world in which he was born; it was Tomorrow that he would rise earlier and forswear the practice of smoking and reading in bed. Therefore, with the promised letter to Rudge the bookseller burning a hole in his mind the young man spent a very anxious tomorrow waiting for Mr. Esme Horrobin to emerge from his cubicle.

"No use asking for Mr. Orrobin," he was told finally by the groom of the chambers, a man old and sour and by nature the complete pessimist. "It's one of his days in bed. He'll not put his nose outside his cubicle until tea time."

That discreet hour was on the wane before Mr. Horrobin was to be seen at work with a kettle, a caddy, and a toasting fork. Even then he was in such conversational feather that it was nearly three hours later before the young man was able to edge in a timid reminder.

"I have not forgotten," said Mr. Horrobin, all charm and amenity. "But remind me tomorrow. I will write most gladly to Rudge. He is quite a good fellow."

The Sailor grew desperate. It seemed impossible to live through a second tomorrow of this kind.

"If I get a bit of paper and an envelope and a pen and ink, will you have any objection to writing the letter now, sir?"

"My dear fellow"—the grace notes were languid and delicate—"I shall be delighted. But why tonight? It hardly seems worth while to trouble about it tonight."

But the young man rose from the common room table with almost a sensation of fear upon him, and ran to his cubicle, where all the materials for a little line to Rudge the bookseller had been in readiness since eight o'clock that morning.

Mr. Horrobin smiled when they were brought to him, a smile half weariness, half indulgent patronage. Even then it was necessary to consume two more cigarettes before he could take the extreme course of addressing Rudge the bookseller. Finally, he was addressed as follows:

Mr. Esme Horrobin presents his compliments to Mr. Rudge, and will be glad if he can find employment on his staff, or on that of any bookselling friends, for the bearer, whom he will find clean, respectful, obliging, and anxious to improve himself.

The letter was composed with much care and precision, and written in a hand of such spiderlike elegance as hardly to be legible, notwithstanding that every "t" was crossed and every comma in its place. Then came the business of sealing it. Mr. Horrobin produced a tiny piece of red sealing wax from some unsuspected purlieu of himself; a prelude to a delicately solemn performance with a wax vesta, which he took from a silver box at the end of his watch chain, and a signet ring which he gracefully removed from a finger of his right hand.

III

The next morning, before nine o'clock, armed with a red-sealed document addressed in a kind of ultra-neat Chinese, "To Mr. Rudge, Bookseller, Charing Cross Road," the Sailor set out upon one phase the more of an adventurous life.

It was not easy to find the Charing Cross Road, and when even he had done so, Mr. Rudge was not there. Booksellers were in abundance on both sides of the street. Mr. Hogan was there,

Messrs. Cook and Hunt, Messrs. Lewis and Grieve; in fact, there were booksellers by the score, but Mr. Rudge was not of these. In the end, however, patience was rewarded. There was a tiny shop on the right near the top of the long street, which bore the magic name on its front in letters so faded as to be almost undecipherable.

Only one person was in the shop, a small and birdlike man to whom Henry Harper presented Mr. Horrobin's letter. The recipient was apparently impressed by it.

"Mr. Horrobin, I see," said Mr. Rudge the bookseller—the small and birdlike man was not less than he—in a tone of reverence as he broke the seal.

A man of parts, Mr. Rudge was proud of an acquaintance which might almost be considered non-professional. When out of funds, Mr. Horrobin would sell Mr. Rudge a classic at a very little below its original cost, and when in funds would buy it back at a price somewhat less than that at which he had sold it. Mr. Rudge did not gain pecuniarily by the transaction, but in the course of the deal Mr. Horrobin would discourse so charmingly upon the classics in general that Mr. Rudge felt it was as good as a lecture at the Royal Institution. Although not a scholar himself in the academic sense, he had a ripe regard for those who were. In the mind of his bookseller, Mr. Horrobin stood for Culture with a very large letter.

Mr. Rudge was not in urgent need of an assistant. But he had felt lately that he would like one. He was getting old. It seemed a special act of grace that Mr. Horrobin should have sent him this young man.

Perhaps it was Mr. Rudge's reverence for Mr. Horrobin which committed him to a bold course. It was stretching a point, but Mr. Horrobin was Mr. Horrobin, and in the special circumstances it seemed the part of homage for pure intellect to do what he could for the bearer. Thus, after a few minutes' consideration of the matter, Henry Harper was engaged at a salary of twenty-five shillings a week to be in attendance at the shop from eight till seven, and eight till two Saturdays.

This was a stroke of real luck. A special providence had seemed to watch over the Sailor ever since he had left the *Margaret Carey*. The situation that had been offered was exactly the one he would have chosen. The mere sight of a shop crammed with treasures ancient and mysterious was like a glimpse of an enchanted land. The previous day he had bought a copy of the "Arabian Nights" for a shilling. Such facility had he now gained in reading that he had dipped into its pages with a sharp sense of delight. No. 249, Charing Cross Road, was a veritable Cave of the Forty Robbers.

These endless rows of shelves were magic casements opening on fairyland. The Sailor felt that the turning point of his life had come. A cosmos of new worlds was spread before him now. Moreover, it was his to enter and enjoy.

He had come, as it seemed, miraculously, upon a period of expansion and true growth. His duties in the shop were light. This was one of those quiet businesses that offer many intervals of leisure. Also Mr. Rudge, as became one with a regard for the things of the mind, gave his assistant a chance "to improve himself" in accordance with Mr. Horrobin's suggestion. Perhaps that happy and fortunate phrase had a great deal to do with the new prosperity. Mr. Rudge had been flattered by such a request coming from a man of such distinction; he felt he must live up to it by allowing Henry Harper to improve himself as much as possible.

The Sailor had entered Elysium. But he had the good sense to walk warily. He knew now that it was over-reading, the danger against which Ginger had solemnly warned him, that had brought about the Blackhampton catastrophe. He must always be on his guard, yet now the freedom was his of all these magic shelves, it was by no means easy to stick to that resolve.

Mr. Rudge dwelt at the back of the shop. Most of his time was passed in a small, dark, and stuffy sitting-room, where he ate his meals and applied himself to Culture at every reasonable opportunity. Now that he had an assistant, he was able to bestow more time than ever upon the things of the mind. He spent half his days and half his nights taking endless notes, in a meticulous hand, for a great work he had conceived forty-two years ago when he had migrated from Birmingham to the metropolis. This *magnum opus* was to be called "A History of the World," and was to consist of forty volumes, with a supplementary volume as an index, making forty-one in all. Each was to have four hundred and eighty pages, which were to be divided into twenty-four chapters. There were to be no illustrations.

Four decades had passed since the golden hour in which this scheme was born. In a spare room above the shop were a number of large tin trunks full of notes for the great work, all very carefully coded and docketed. These were the fruits of forty-two years' amazing industry. Every year these labors grew more comprehensive, more unceasing. But the odd thing was that only the first sentence of the first volume of the opus was yet in being. It ran, "'In the beginning,' says Holy Writ, 'was the Word.'" And even that pregnant sentence had yet to be put on paper. At present, it lay like the text of the History itself, in the head of the author.

With Henry Harper to mind the shop, the historian was able to devote more time to the work of his life. This was a fortunate matter, because Mr. Rudge was already within a few months of

seventy, and forty volumes and an index had yet to be written. As a fact, considerable portions of the index were already in existence; and during Henry Harper's first week in the front shop it received a valuable accession in the form of "Bulrushes, Vol. IX., pp. 243-245. Moses in, Vol. III., p. 120." Careful and voluminous notes upon Bulrushes, based upon an unknown work that had lately arrived in a consignment of second-hand books from Sheffield, went to line the bottom of yet another large trunk which had been added recently to the attic above the shop.

IV

The day soon came when Henry Harper said good-by to Mr. Horrobin and Bowdon House. Mr. Rudge took a fancy to him from the first. It may have been his high credentials partly; no one could have been equipped with a better start in life than the imprimatur of such a scholar and such a gentleman as Mr. Esme Horrobin. But at the same time there was much to like in the young man himself. He was diligent and respectful and his heart was in his work; also, and perhaps this counted more with Mr. Rudge than anything else, he was very anxious to improve himself. And Mr. Rudge, who was an altruist as well as a lover of Culture, was very anxious to improve him.

Sometimes Mr. Rudge had a feeling of loneliness, notwithstanding the immense labor to which he had dedicated his life. This was due in a measure to the fact that a nephew he had adopted had taken a sudden distaste for the Charing Cross Road, and had now been twelve months at sea. A bedroom he had occupied above the shop was vacant; and the use of it was presently offered to Henry Harper.

The young man accepted it gratefully. It was one more rare stroke of luck; he was now free to dwell in the land of faërie all day and all night. It seemed as if this was to be a golden time.

In a sense it was. Aladdin's lamp was fed continually and kept freshly trimmed. The Sailor began to make surprising progress in his studies, and his kind master, when not too completely absorbed in his own titanic labors after supper, would sometimes help him. In fact, it was Mr. Rudge who first introduced him to grammar. Klondyke had never mentioned it. Miss Foldal had never mentioned it. Mr. Horrobin had never mentioned it. Mr. Rudge it was who first brought grammar home to Henry Harper.

Reading was important, said Mr. Rudge, also writing, also arithmetic, but these things, excellent in themselves, paled in the presence of grammar. You simply could not do without it. He could never have planned his "History of the World" in forty volumes excluding the index, let alone have prepared a concrete foundation for such a work, without a thorough knowledge of this science. It was the key to all Culture, and Culture was the crown of all wisdom.

On the shelves of the shop were several works on the subject. And Mr. Rudge soon began to spare an hour after supper every night from his own labors, in order that Henry Harper might acquire the key to the higher walks of mental experience.

The young man took far less kindly to grammar than he did to reading, writing, arithmetic, or even geography, which Miss Foldal considered one of the mere frills of erudition. He could see neither rhyme nor reason in this new study; but Mr. Rudge assured him it was so important that he felt bound to persevere.

Moreover, these efforts brought their reward. They kept him certain hours each day from the things for which he had a passion, so that when he felt he could turn to them again his delight was the more intense.

The books he read were very miscellaneous, but Mr. Rudge had too broad a mind to exercise a censorship. In his view, as became a bookseller *pur sang*, all books were good, but some were better than others.

For instance, works of the imagination were less good than other branches of literature. In Volume XXXIX of the "History of the World" a chapter was to be devoted to Shakespeare, pp. 260-284, wherein homage would be paid to a remarkable man, but it would be shown that the adulation lavished upon one who relied so much on imagination was out of all proportion to that received by Hayden, the author of the "Dictionary of Dates." Without that epoch-making work the "History of the World" could not have been undertaken.

Ill-assorted the Sailor's reading might be, but this was a time of true development. Day by day Aladdin's lamp burned brighter. There was little cause to regret Blackhampton, dire tragedy as his flight must ever be. When he had been a fortnight with Mr. Rudge he tried to write Ginger a letter.

To begin it, however, was one thing; to complete it another. It seemed so light and callous in

comparison with his depth of feeling that he tore it up. He was disgraced forever in the sight of Ginger and his peers.

Therefore he decided to write to Miss Foldal instead. But when he took pen in hand, somehow he lost courage. He could have no interest for her now. It would be best to forget Blackhampton, to put it, if possible, out of his life.

Still he felt rather lonely sometimes. Mr. Rudge was wonderfully kind, but he lived in a world of his own. And the only compensations Henry Harper now had for the crowded epoch of Blackhampton were the books in the shop which he devoured ravenously, and the daily visits of the charlady, Mrs. Greaves.

For many years she had been the factotum of Mr. Elihu Rudge. Every morning she made his fire, cooked his meals, swept and garnished his home, and "did for him" generally. She was old, thin, somber and battered, and she had the depth of a bottomless abyss.

Mrs. Greaves was a treasure. Mr. Rudge depended upon her in everything. She was an autocrat, but women of her dynamic power are bound to be. She despised all men, frankly and coldly. In the purview of Mrs. Caroline Agnes Greaves, man was a poor thing. Woman who could get round him, who could walk over him, who could set him up and put him down, merely allowed him to take precedence in order that she might handle him to better advantage. She had a great contempt for an institution that was no "use any way," and to this law of nature it was not to be expected that "a nine pence to the shilling" creature like Mr. Henry Harper would provide an exception.

V

One evening the Sailor made a discovery. At first, however, he was far from grasping what it meant. Like many things intimately concerned with fate, it seemed a trivial and commonplace matter. It was presently to change the current of his life, but it was not until long after the change was wrought that he saw the hand of destiny.

After a week of delight he turned the last page of "Vanity Fair" by the famous author, William Makepeace Thackeray, the rival and contemporary of Charles Dickens, the author of the "Pickwick Papers." It was within a few minutes of midnight, and as Mr. Rudge, engaged upon copious notes of the life of Charles XII of Sweden, made no sign of going to bed, Henry Harper determined to allow himself one more hour.

Therefore he took a candle and entered the front shop with a sense of adventure. First he put back "Vanity Fair," Volume II, on its shelf, and then raising his candle on high, with the eagle glance of stout Cortez, he surveyed all the new worlds about him. With a thrill of joy he stood pondering which kingdom he should enter. Should it be "The Origin of Species," by Charles Darwin, which his master said was an important work and had been laid under contribution for the History? Should it be the "Queens of England," by Agnes Strickland, also several times to be quoted in the History? Or should it be Volume CXLI of *Brown's Magazine*, 2s. 9d., re-bound with part of the July number missing?

By pure chance the choice fell upon *Brown's Magazine*, incomplete as it was, and in its outward seeming entirely commonplace. He took the volume from its shelf, beat the dust out of it, and carried it into the sitting-room.

He began to read at the first page. This happened to be the opening of a serial story, "The Adventures of George Gregory; A Tale of the High Seas," by Anon. And the tale proved so entrancing that that night the young man did not go to bed until it was nearly time to get up again.

Without being aware of it he had found his kingdom. Here were atmosphere and color, space and light. Here was the life he had known and realized, set forth in the vicarious glory of the printed page. For many days to come he could think of little save "The Adventures of George Gregory." This strange tale of the high seas, over which his master shook his head sadly when it was shown to him, declaring it to be a work of the imagination and therefore of very small account, had a glamour quite extraordinary for Henry Harper. It brought back the *Margaret Carey* and his years of bitter servitude. It conjured up Mr. Thompson and the Chinaman, the Old Man and the Island of San Pedro. With these august shades raised again in the mind of the Sailor, "The Adventures of George Gregory" gained an authority they could not otherwise have had. In many of its details the story was obviously inaccurate. Sometimes Anon made statements about the *Belle Fortune*, the name of the ship, and the Pacific Isles, upon one of which it was wrecked, that almost made Henry Harper doubt whether George Gregory had ever been to sea at all. However, he soon learned that it was his duty to crush these unworthy suspicions and to yield entirely to the wonderful feast of incident spread before him.

Charles Dickens, and even W. M. Thackeray, for all his knowledge of the world, were poor things compared with Anon. It was a real misfortune that the part of the July number of *Brown's Magazine* which was missing contained an installment of "The Adventures," but there was no help for it. Moreover, having realized the fact, the gift of the gods, Aladdin's lamp, came to the assistance of the Sailor.

With the help of the magic talisman it was quite easy to fill in the missing part which contained the adventures of poor George when marooned, not on the Island of San Pedro, but on an island in the southern seas. There would certainly be serpents, and for that reason he would have to keep out of the trees; and although the July number was not able to supply the facts, once you had Aladdin's lamp it was a very simple matter to make good the omission.

One thing leads to another. "The Adventures of George Gregory," imperfect as they were, fastened such a grip on the mind of Henry Harper, that one dull Monday afternoon in March, when he sat in the shop near the oil-stove waiting for an infrequent customer, a great thought came to him. Might it not be possible to improve upon George Gregory with the aid of the talisman and his own experience?

It was a very daring thought, but he was sustained in it by the conclusion to which he had come: the work of Anon, exciting and ingenious as it certainly was, was not the high seas as the Sailor had once envisaged them. The color, the mystery, the discomfort, the horror were not really there. Even the marooning of poor George upon the Island of Juan Fernandez did not thrill your blood as it ought to have done. True, it could be urged that the part containing the episode was missing; but in no case would it have been possible to equal in horror and intensity the marooning of Sailor upon the Island of San Pedro with serpents in every tree around him, although with equal truth it might be urged by the skeptical that the incident never took place at all.

"Never took place at all!" lisped Aladdin's lamp in magic syllables. "Pray, what do you mean? It certainly took place in your experience, and in the opinion of your learned master who is writing a history of the world in forty volumes, that is the only thing that matters."

A flash of the talisman was soon to raise a bottle of ink and a quire of foolscap. Therefore one evening after supper, Mr. Rudge, still at Charles XII of Sweden, was startled painfully when "The Adventures of Dick Smith on the High Seas," by Henry Harper, Chapter One, was shown to him. It was a fall, but his master was too kind to say so. These misspent hours could have been used for a further enrichment of the mind. He might have added to his knowledge of grammar. He might have ventured upon the study of shorthand itself, a science of which Mr. Rudge never ceased to deplore his own ignorance. However, he said nothing, and went on with the great work.

Thus, not realizing the true feelings of his master, the young man continued to supplement the entrancing but incomplete "Adventures of George Gregory" with his own experience. The strange tale grew at the back of the genie who tended the lamp, and with it grew the soul of Henry Harper. In this new and wonderful realm he had entered it seemed that the Sailor had surely found his kingdom. Deep down in himself were latent faculties which he had not known were there. They were now springing forth gloriously into the light.

All his life he had been a dreamer of dreams; now the power was his of making them come true, he had a world of his own in which to live. He was only half awake as yet to the world around him; and this arrest of growth was for a time his weakness and his strength. It is impossible, it is said, to touch pitch and not be defiled. The worth of that aphorism was about to be tried by the clairvoyant soul of Henry Harper.

At this time, while he was drawing very painfully and yet rapturously upon his inner life, he was like an expanding flower. All his leisure was not spent in the back parlor at No. 249, Charing Cross Road. There were hours when he walked abroad into the streets of the great city.

Much was hidden from his eyes as yet. The truth was it was not his own great city in which he walked. He gazed and saw, listened and heard in a mirage of fanciful ignorance. A life of unimaginable squalor and hardship had not been able to slay the genie sleeping in that elemental soul. But it had yet to get its range of values in the many worlds around it.

One Sunday morning in the spring, in one of his enchanted walks about the city in the pursuit of knowledge, he chanced to enter Hyde Park. It was the hour when the churches of the neighborhood disgorged their fashionable congregations. Here, as he sat near the statue of Achilles and watched the brilliant throng pass by, a feeling of awe and bewilderment overcame him. He had never realized before that his fellow occupants of the planet could be so wonderful. Here was a significance, a beauty, a harmony of aspect beyond anything he had imagined to be possible. The fine-ladyhood of Miss Foldal was nothing in comparison with that queening it all around him. Even the quality of Mr. Esme Horrobin paled in luster. This was a very remarkable world into which he had strayed. He had almost a sense of guilt at finding himself there. With such clothes as he wore and such a humility of heart as he had, he had clearly no right of entry to this paradise. But there he was with every nerve alive, and the scene burned itself vividly into his heart and brain.

These gorgeous beings with their kingliness of mien, these children of the sun who spoke

with the accent of the gods meant much more to the primitive soul of Henry Harper than as yet it could understand. In the intoxication of the hour, with the sun and the birds, the trees, the green earth, the bright flowers paying their homage to the grace and beauty of his countrywomen, he felt like an angel who has fallen out of heaven, who after aeons of time in a bottomless hell is permitted to see again a fair heritage that once was his.

The genie had unlocked another door. Henry Harper was now in a world of romance. In order to know what these wonderful beings truly were he listened eagerly for fragments of their talk as they passed by. All of a sudden there came miraculously a voice that had a tang of ocean in it. There and then was he flung out of Hyde Park to the deck of the *Margaret Carey*.

Leaping at the sound of a laugh, a full-chested music the Sailor could never forget, he saw, a few yards off, the oncoming figures of a man and a girl. Both were tall and young and splendid; both seemed to be dressed in the last cry of fashion. Moreover they bore themselves with the assured grace of a sweet ship under canvas.

The pair were clearly brother and sister, and the figure of the man, at least, was extraordinarily familiar to Henry Harper. Yet almost before he had realized them, they were level with him. It was not until they were actually past the seat on which he sat that there came a flash of recognition. The man was Klondyke.

For an instant the heart of the Sailor stood still. The immortal had almost touched his knee, yet he was yards away already. But Klondyke it was, laughing his great note and rolling out his rich and peculiar dialect. It was Klondyke in a top hat and a tail coat, looking as if he had come out of a bandbox. Who could believe that such faultless magnificence had been washed habitually out of its berth in the half-deck of the *Margaret Carey*?

He did not look a bit older than when the Sailor had seen him last, that unhappy six years ago when his friend shook him by the hand, told him to stick to his reading and writing, and then started to walk across Asia. And in that time Klondyke did not appear to have changed at all. He had the same brown, large-featured face, the same keen and cheerful eye, the same roll in his gait, and that cool, indefinable, you-be-damned air that was both admired and resented aboard the *Margaret Carey*.

By the time the Sailor had recovered from his surprise, Klondyke was out of sight. A strong impulse then came upon Henry Harper to go after his friend and declare himself. But a feeling of timidity defeated him. Besides, he understood more fully at this moment than ever before that there were whole continents between such a man as Klondyke and such a man as Henry Harper.

VI

The emotions of the Sailor were many and conflicting as he made his way back to Charing Cross Road to the homely meal which Mrs. Greaves provided for his master and himself. A long afternoon and evening followed in which *Dick Smith* and the brigantine *Excelsior* roamed the high seas.

Infinite pains had now brought the narrative to Chapter Six. But for some days progress was very slow. The figure of Klondyke held the thoughts of the Sailor. Surely it was cowardice not to have made himself known. It was treason to assume that his friend, in spite of the wonderful girl by his side, would not have been glad to see him again. Yet was it? That was the half formed fear which tormented him. Klondyke had forgotten his existence: so much was clear because he had almost touched his knee as he went by. And why should he remember him? Who was he that he should be remembered by such a man as Klondyke? The tale of the high seas had a bad week. The Sailor was held in thrall by an emanation from the past. How Klondyke would have roared had he known what he was at! Somehow it set the blood tingling in Henry Harper's ears to reflect that it was he who a few brief years ago had first introduced him to reading and writing.

Do as he would, it was not a propitious hour for the story of *Dick Smith* and the brigantine *Excelsior*. And when the next Sunday came he had to decide whether or not to go to Hyde Park in the hope of seeing the immortal. Finally, in a state of utter misgiving, he went. This time, although he sat a long hour on a seat near the statue of Achilles, there was never a sign of him. Yet he was content to be disappointed, for the longer he sat the more clearly he knew that cowardice would defeat him again should Klondyke and his attendant nymph appear.

Henry Harper was coming now to a phase in which ladies were to play their part. Mrs. Greaves had a niece, it seemed. From brilliant accounts furnished from time to time he learned that she was a strikingly gifted creature, not only endowed with beauty, but also with brains in a very high degree.

"Miss Cora Dobbs," in the words of her aunt, "was an actress by profession, and she had done

so well in it that she had a flat of her own round the corner in the Avenue. Toffs as understood Cora's merit thought 'ighly of her talent. She could dance and she could sing, and she earned such good money that she had a nest-egg put by."

Henry Harper was at first too absorbed in his work to pay much attention to the charlady's discourses upon her niece. Besides, had he not known Miss Gwladys Foldal who had played in Shakespeare and been admitted to an intimacy of a most intellectual kind? The indifference of Mr. Harper seemed to pique Mrs. Greaves. She often recurred to the subject of Miss Dobbs; moreover, she seemed anxious for the young man to realize that "although she was the niece of one as didn't pretend to be anythink, Cora herself was a lady."

Such statements were not really necessary. In the eyes of Mr. Harper every woman was a lady more or less, even if to that rule there must always be one signal exception. He had a deep-rooted chivalry for Mrs. Greaves' sex. He even treated her, flat-chested, bearded and ferret-like as she was, with an instinctive courtesy which she at once set down as weakness of character.

For a reason Mr. Harper did not try to fathom—just now he was far too deep in his task to give much thought to the matter—Mrs. Greaves seemed most anxious that he should make the acquaintance of Miss Cora Dobbs. One reason, it is true, she gave. "Mr. Arper was a snail as was too much in his shell. He wanted a bright and knowing girl like Cora to tote him around a bit and teach him not to be afraid of life."

Mrs. Greaves had such a contempt for Mr. Harper's sex that her solicitude was rather strange. As for its two specimens for whom she "did" daily, the emotion they inspired was one of deadly cynicism. In her razor-like judgment they were as soft as pap. It was therefore the more remarkable that she should now take such an interest in the welfare of the younger man.

What was he writing? Lips of cautious curiosity were always asking the question. A book! She was greatly interested in books and had always been since she had "done" for a gentleman who got fifty pounds for every one that he wrote. What did Mr. Harper expect to get by it?

It had not occurred to Mr. Harper that he would get anything by it.

"Why write it then?" she asked with acrid surprise. Why get up so early and sit up so late? Why use all that good ink and expensive paper if he didn't expect to get something out of it?

The young man was writing it because he felt he must.

"I sometimes think you must be a reg'lar soft-biled un," said Mrs. Greaves, with an air of personal affront. "I do, honest. Wasting your time like that ... and mine as well!"

At that moment, however, the Sailor was far too deep in Chapter Eighteen to attend to the charlady. His total lack of interest sent her in a huff to the back kitchen. Yet she was not cast down altogether. He was more of a half-bake than she had guessed, that was all.

VII

Next morning a lady walked into the shop. She was tall and stout, beaming and fashionable. The first detail of a striking, even resplendent personality which caught the young man's eye was her boots. These were long, narrow, perilously high in the heel, they had black and white checked uppers, and a pair of fat feet had been buttoned into them.

"I want 'Etiquette for Ladies,' please. It's in the window. A shilling. Yellow cover."

It was not the voice the young man had heard in Hyde Park, nor was it the voice of Miss Foldal; on the contrary, it was direct, searching, rather aggressive in quality. There was ease and confidence in it, there was humor and archness. It was a voice of hyper-refinement, of Miss Foldal receiving company, raised to a higher, more dominant power.

"Yes, that's the one. By a Member of the Aristocracy. At least it says it is. And if it isn't, I get my money back, don't I?"

The flash of teeth and the smile that followed startled the young man considerably. He blushed to the roots of his hair. This was a new kind of lady altogether and he didn't know in the least how he was going to cope with her.

"Thanks very much." Elegantly the sum of one shilling was disbursed from a very smart reticule.

That, however, was not the conclusion of the incident.

"Excuse me," said the lady, "but you are Mr. Harper, aren't you?"

Blushing again he admitted very humbly that he was.

"Yes, you look clever. I'm Cora Dobbs. You know Auntie, I think."

With a blush deepening to a hue that was quite nice the young man said he knew Miss Dobbs' aunt.

"She's a rum one, isn't she?" The sudden friendliness was overpowering.

The young man, not knowing what to say, said nothing. Thus far he had been on the high seas with *Dick Smith* and the brigantine *Excelsior*, but he was quickly coming to dry land, to London, to the Charing Cross Road. So this was the niece of whom Mrs. Greaves thought so much. Henry Harper could understand the charlady's pride in her, but it was very surprising that she should be the niece of Mrs. Greaves. She was something totally different. In manner she was even more refined than Miss Foldal herself, although in some ways she had a slight resemblance to his good fairy. But Miss Dobbs had a candor, a humor and a charm quite new in Henry Harper's very limited social experience. She was really most agreeable; also her clothes, if not exactly Hyde Park, were so fine that they must have cost a great deal of money.

So much for Miss Dobbs in the sight of Mr. Harper. As for Mr. Harper in the sight of Miss Dobbs, that was a very different matter. He was not bad looking; he was tall, well-made, clean, his eyes were good. But their queer expression could only mean that he was as weak as water and as green as grass. Evidently he hardly knew he had come on to the earth. Also he was as shy as a baby and his trousers wanted ironing badly.

"I have heard quite a lot about you, Mr. Harper, from my aunt."

It was a little surprising that a creature so fashionable should own an aunt so much the reverse. Even Mr. Harper, who had hardly begun to get a sense of perspective, felt the two ladies were as wide asunder as the poles. Not of course that Mrs. Greaves was an "ordinary" char, he had her own assurance of that. She was a kind of super-charlady who "did" for barristers and professional gentlemen, cooked their meals, supervised their bachelor establishments, and allowed them to share her pride in a distinguished niece.

Had Mr. Harper been a more sophisticated young man he must have felt the attitude of the niece to be admirable. There was not a shade of false shame when she spoke of her aunt. Miss Cora Dobbs was too frankly of the world to suffer any vicarious embarrassment. She was amused with a relationship thrust upon her by an ironical providence, and that was all.

"I hear you are writing a book."

That was a false move. Mr. Harper was only able to blush vividly and to make a kind of noise at the back of his throat.

"I have a great friend who is writing one." Miss Dobbs hastened to repair a tactical mistake. "Hers is reminiscences. I am helping with a few of mine. I dare say Auntie has told you I have been on the stage?"

Mr. Harper had been told that.

"Don't you think it's a good idea? My friend gives her name because she married a lord, but I'm to do the donkey work. It would be telling if I told you her name, but don't you think it's business?"

Mr. Harper thought, not very audibly, that it was.

"One of our girls at the Friv., Cassie Smallpiece, who married Lord Bargrave, you know..."

... Mr. Harper did not know, but Miss Dobbs had already struck such a note of intimacy that he somehow felt he ought to have known....

"... Made quite a pot of money out of hers. Of course there was scandal in Cassie's. Cassie was rather warm pastry. But there'll be none in ours, although I expect that'll be money out of our pockets."

Mr. Harper hoped such would not be the case.

"Bound to be," said Miss Dobbs. "That's the worst of being a clean potato, you are always missing your share of the cake."

Mr. Harper was completely out of his depth. He had no reply to make to this very advanced remark.

Miss Dobbs watched his perplexed face with a narrow-lidded wariness, behind which glittered the eyes of a goshawk. But she was too wise to force the pace unduly. With a suddenness that was almost startling, she said, "Well, ching-a-ling. I'll look in again when you are

not so busy, Mr. Harper. One of these days perhaps you will give me advice about my reminiscences." And with a smile and a wave of her muff of excruciating friendliness, Miss Cora Dobbs gave a trip and a waddle, and the high heels and the black and white check uppers were on the pavement of the Charing Cross Road.

For at least three minutes, however, after they had gone, *Dick Smith* and the brigantine *Excelsior* were left in a state of suspended animation. The author had to make a great effort before he could proceed with Chapter Eighteen. A glamour had passed from the earth; at least from that part of the earth contained by the four walls of No. 249, Charing Cross Road.

VIII

Miss Cora Dobbs was as good as her word. She looked in again; indeed she formed quite a habit of looking into the shop of Elihu Rudge, bookseller, whenever she was passing. This seemed to work out on an average at one morning a week. Her reminiscences could hardly have induced this friendliness because, strange to say, she never mentioned them again.

On a first consideration, it seemed more likely due to her deep interest in the book Mr. Harper was writing, of which her aunt had told her. Whenever Miss Dobbs looked in she never failed to ask, "How is it going today?" and she declared she would not be satisfied until a chapter had been read to her.

Mr. Harper was rather embarrassed by the attentions of Miss Dobbs. He was a very shy young man, and in regard to his new and strange and sometimes extremely painful labors he was unreasonably silent. But so determined was the interest of Miss Dobbs that in the end Mr. Harper yielded to its pressure. At last he let her see the manuscript. But even that did not content her. She was set, it seemed, on having some of the choicest passages read aloud by the author when there was no one in the shop.

In a way the determination of Miss Dobbs was rather a thorn. Yet it would have been idle and ungracious for Mr. Harper to pretend that he was not flattered by this remarkable solicitude for the story of *Dick Smith* and the brigantine *Excelsior*. He was very flattered indeed. For one thing, Miss Dobbs was Miss Dobbs in a way that Miss Foldal had never been Miss Foldal. She was a force in the way that Ginger was; her elegance was positive, it meant something. She had a subtle air of "being out for blood," just as Ginger had when they had paid their first never-to-be-forgotten visit to Blackhampton. Deep in his heart the Sailor was a little afraid of Miss Cora Dobbs. Yet he did not know why he should be. She was extraordinarily agreeable. No one could have been pleasanter to talk to; she was by far the wittiest and most amusing lady he had ever met; it was impossible not to like her immensely; but already a subtle instinct told him to beware.

As for Miss Dobbs, her state of mind would be difficult to render. Just as Mr. Harper was very simple, Miss Dobbs was extremely complex. In the first place, there seemed no particular reason why she should have come into the shop at all. It may have been curiosity. Perhaps her aunt had aroused it by the statement that Mr. Rudge had "set up a nice-looking boy as wrote books," and it may have been that the bearing of the nice-looking boy gave warrant for a continuance of Miss Dobbs' friendly regard.

On the other hand, it may have been the nature of Mr. Harper's calling which inspired these punctual attentions. It certainly had possibilities. Among the friends of Miss Dobbs was a certain Mr. Albert Hobson who was reputed to earn several thousands a year by his pen. Again, it may have been the statement of her aunt that the young man "had follered the sea and had a nest-egg put by." Or again it may have been the young man himself who appealed to her. His clean simplicity of mind and of mansion may have had a morbid attraction for a complexity that was pathological. Of these hypotheses the last may seem least probable, but the motives of a Miss Cora Dobbs defy analysis; and in a world in which nothing is absolute she is perhaps entitled to the benefit of any doubt that may arise concerning them.

In spite of Miss Dobbs, whose attentions for the present were confined to a few minutes one morning a week, the story of *Dick Smith* began to make excellent progress. All the same it was uphill work. The Sailor was a very clumsy craftsman using the queerest of tools, but oddly enough he had a remarkable faculty of concentration.

At last came the day when the final chapter was written. And a proud day it was. In spite of many defeats and misgivings, he was able at three o'clock of a summer morning to write the magic words, "The End." Yet it was far from being the end of his labors. He little knew that he had merely come to Mount Pisgah, and that for many days he must be content with no more than a glimpse of the Promised Land.

In telling the story of his early years the Sailor had no particular object in view. Certain mysterious forces were craving expression. Such a task had not been undertaken at the call of

ambition. But now it was done ambition found a part to play.

On the very morning the story was finished, by an odd chance Miss Dobbs came into the shop. In answer to her invariable, "Well, what of it?" she was gravely informed that the end had been reached.

"My! you've been going some, Mr. R. L. Stevenson. Run along and fetch the last chapter and read it to me and then I'll tell you honestly whether I think it's as good as Bert Hobson."

Miss Dobbs had the habit of command. Therefore Chapter the Last, telling of the hero's miraculous deliverance from the Island of San Pedro, was at once produced. Moreover, it was read to her with naïf sincerity in a gentle voice.

"Hot stuff!" Miss Dobbs dexterously concealed a yawn with a dingy white glove. "It's It."

The author blushed with pleasure, although he could hardly believe the story was as good as all that.

"And what are you going to do with it now you've written it?"

To her intense surprise it had not occurred to him to do anything with it.

"Oh, but that's potty. That's merely potty. Of course you are going to bring it out as a book."

The author had not thought of doing so.

"Anyhow, it is just the thing for a magazine."

Even a magazine had not entered his mind.

"What are you going to do with it, then?" demanded Miss Dobbs, with growing incredulity.

This was a question Mr. Harper was unable to answer.

"You are going to do nothing with it?" gasped Miss Dobbs.

"No."

"But it's 'some' story, I assure you it is. If you send it to the *Rotunda* or the *Covent Garden* it may mean big money."

Quite absurdly the financial aspect had not presented itself.

"Well, you're potty," said Miss Dobbs, with despondency. "Don't you know that Bert Hobson, who writes those stories for the *Rotunda*, makes his thousands a year?"

Mr. Harper, who had never heard of Bert Hobson or of the *Rotunda*, seemed greatly surprised.

"Why, you are as green as green," said Miss Dobbs reproachfully. "It's such a nugget of thrills, you ought to see that it gets published. You ought really."

But in spite of her conviction it was some time before he felt able to take her advice. Such unpractical reluctance on the part of genius gave her pain. It seemed to lower its value. He must be a genius to have written a book, but it was a great pity that he should confirm the world's estimate of genius by behaving like one.

Why had he taken so much trouble if he was not going to get a nice fat check out of it?

He had written it because he felt he must.

It's a very sloppy reason, was the unexpressed opinion of Miss Dobbs.

After such a hopeless admission on the part of the young man with the queer eyes, Miss Dobbs felt so hurt that she did not appear in the shop for three weeks. And when at last she came again, she learned that the story of *Dick Smith* and the brigantine *Excelsior* was still in its drawer and had yet to be seen by anyone.

"You beat Banagher," said Miss Dobbs. And then she suddenly exclaimed, "Look here, Mr. Harper, give me that story and I'll send it myself to the *Rotunda*."

Very gently and politely, but quite firmly, Mr. Harper declined to do so. But in order to appease Miss Dobbs, who was inclined to make this refusal a personal matter, he solemnly promised that he would send it to the *Rotunda* himself, or some other magazine.

Henry Harper took a sudden resolve that night to send the story to the home of its only true begetter, *Brown's Magazine*. Why he chose that periodical in preference to the *Rotunda* was more than he could say. It may have been a feeling of reverence for the dilapidated Volume CXLI with part of the July number missing. Some high instinct may have been at work since the gods

must have some kind of machinery to help them in these matters. At least the material fact was beyond dispute. He packed the story that evening in neat brown paper, and before taking down the shutters of the shop the next morning, went out and posted it, although sure in his own mind that he was guilty of a foolish proceeding.

Still, there was a lady in the case. But when in the course of the following day Miss Dobbs looked in again, by some odd perversity she was inclined to share this view to the full. She had never heard of *Brown's Magazine*. The *Rotunda* and the *Covent Garden* were her stand-bys. She never read anything else. But she dared say that Brown's money would be as good as other people's, although *Brown's Magazine* certainly would not have the circulation of the *Rotunda*.

Several weeks passed. Miss Dobbs looked in now and again to ask if Mr. Harper had "had any luck." To this inquiry one invariable answer was given, and after a time Miss Dobbs seemed to lose something of her faith. Her interest in the story of Dick Smith and in Mr. Harper himself began to wane. She had said from the first that *Brown's* was a mistake. It should have been the *Rotunda* or nothing. Miss Dobbs was a firm believer in beginning at the top; in her opinion it was easier to come down than it was to go up.

When the fourth week of silence on the part of *Brown's Magazine* had been entered upon, she suggested that Mr. Harper should stir them up a bit. With surprising inconsequence he asked for one more week of grace. For his own part, he could not help thinking it was a good sign. Miss Dobbs did not share his view. *Brown's* had either mislaid the manuscript, they had not received it, or they had destroyed it; and in a state verging upon sarcasm she withdrew from the shop with the final and crushing remark, "that Mr. Harper was a rum one, and she doubted very much whether he would ever make good."

However, Miss Dobbs, in spite of her knowledge of the world, had to admit, a week later, that Mr. Harper knew more about *Brown's Magazine* than she did. For when she looked in on the morning of Saturday to inquire for news of the ill-fated *Dick Smith* she was met triumphantly with a letter which had come by the last post the previous evening.

With quite a thrill she took the letter out of its neatly embossed envelope and made an attempt to read the following:

12B, Pall Mall,
September 2.

DEAR SIR,

Your story has now been read twice, and the conclusion very reluctantly come to by the writer is that it would be impossible to use it in *Brown's Magazine* in its present form. It bears many marks of inexperience, but at the same time it has such a strikingly original quality that the writer would be very glad to have a talk with you about it. In the meantime the MS is being returned to you.

Yours very truly,
EDWARD AMBROSE.

"I don't call that writing," said Miss Dobbs, who had been utterly defeated by the hand of the editor of *Brown's Magazine*. "It is just a fly walking across the paper without having wiped its feet. Read it to me, Mr. Harper."

Mr. Harper, who had spent nearly an hour the previous evening in making out the letter, and now knew it by heart, enforced her respect by reading it aloud as if it had been nothing out of the common.

"Marks of inexperience!" was her comment. "Like his impudence. I wonder who he thinks he is. You take my advice, Mr. Harper, and send it to the *Covent Garden*. See what they've got to say about it."

However, before taking that course, Henry Harper felt it would be the part of wisdom to get in touch with the real live editor who had expressed a wish to see him. Besides, there had been something in the letter signed "Edward Ambrose" which had set a chord vibrating in his heart.

IX

In order to pay a visit to 12B, Pall Mall, Henry Harper had to ask for leave. This was readily

granted by his master, who was even more impressed by the letter from the editor of *Brown's Magazine* than was its recipient.

As became one who had a practical acquaintance with editors and publishers, Mr. Rudge knew that for more than a century *Brown's Magazine* had been a Mecca of the man of letters. Great names were enshrined in its history. These began with Byron and Scott, and flowed through the Victorian epoch to the most gifted and representative minds of the present. Mr. Ambrose himself was a critic of some celebrity; moreover, *Brown's Magazine* was still half a crown a month as it always had been, so that even its subscribers had a sense of exclusiveness.

Henry Harper was so shy that when the hour came for him to set forth to 12B, Pall Mall, his one desire was to take the advice of Miss Dobbs and not pay his visit at all. But Mr. Rudge was adamant. Henry must go to Pall Mall if only for the sake of the firm. Just as the young man was about to set out, his master emphasized the immense importance of the matter by appearing on the scene, clothes brush in hand, in order to give a final touch to his toilet. No discredit must be done to 249, Charing Cross Road. An unprecedented honor had been conferred upon it.

The reception of Mr. Harper in Pall Mall was of a kind to impress a sensitive young man of high aspiration and very limited opportunity. To begin with, Pall Mall is Pall Mall, and No. 12B in every chaste external was entirely worthy of its local habitation. After a much bemedaled commissionaire of incredibly distinguished aspect had ushered the young man into the front office, he was received by a grave and reverend signior in a frock coat whom Mr. Harper instinctively felt was the editor himself. Such, however, was not the case. The grave and reverend one was a trusted member of the staff, whose duty it was to usher contributors into the Presence, and in the meantime, if delay arose, to arrange for their well-being.

Before Mr. Harper could be received, he spent some terrible minutes in a tiny waiting-room, in which he felt he was being asphyxiated. During that time it was borne in upon him that he would not be equal to the ordeal ahead. Every minute he grew more nervous. He could never face it, he was sure. Far better to have taken the advice of the wise Miss Dobbs, and have been content with the *Covent Garden*.

Before the fateful moment came he was in a state of despair. Why he should have been was impossible to say. What was Pall Mall in comparison with the forecastle or the futtock shrouds of the *Margaret Carey*? What were the commissionaire and the frock-coated gentleman in comparison with Mr. Thompson and the Old Man? Yet he came within an ace of flying out of that waiting-room into the street.

The cicerone reappeared, led the young man up a flight of stairs, opened a door, and announced, "Mr. Harper."

Seated at a writing table in a bay of the large, airy, well-appointed room, was a gravely genial man, whose face had that subtle look of power which springs from the play of mind.

He rose at once and offered a welcome of such unstudied cordiality that Henry Harper forgot that he had ever been afraid of him. The editor of *Brown's Magazine* placed a chair for the young man and asked him to sit down. He then returned to his writing table, leaned back in his own chair, and half turned to face his visitor.

"Your story interested me enormously." The editor studied very closely the young man opposite without appearing to do so; and then he said, in a slightly changed tone, as if a theory previously formed had been confirmed, "I am sure you have had experience of the sea."

The Sailor knew already that he was going to like Mr. Ambrose immensely. In a subtle way he was reminded of Klondyke, and more remotely of Mr. Horrobin, but yet he felt that Mr. Ambrose was not really like them at all.

As for Edward Ambrose, he had at once fixed in his mind a picture of great simplicity, of eager intensity, of an earnestness pathetic and naïf. Strange to say, it was almost exactly the one he had been able to envisage beforehand. If ever a human document had ascended to the first floor of 12B, Pall Mall, it was here before his eyes.

The Sailor began presently to forget his shyness in a surprising way. Mr. Ambrose differed from Mr. Horrobin inasmuch that he was ready, even anxious, to listen. He seemed quite eager that the Sailor should speak about himself. The story had interested him very much. He felt its power, and saw great possibilities for a talent, immature as it was, which could declare itself in a shape so definite.

After a while the Sailor talked with less reserve than perhaps he ought to have done. But such a man was very hard to resist—impossible for certain natures. He had a faculty of perception that was very rare, he was amazingly quick to see and to appreciate; and with this curious power of realizing all that was worthy there was a knack of overlooking, of perhaps even blinding himself, to things less pleasing.

The Sailor's speech, queer and semi-literate as it was, exactly resembled his writing. Here was something rare and strange. The shy earnestness of the voice, the neat serge suit, well tended but of poor quality, the general air of clean simplicity without and within; above all, the

haunted eyes of this deep-sea mariner, which had seen so much more than they would ever be able to tell, fixed towards a goal they could never hope to attain, were much as Edward Ambrose had pictured them.

"I want to use your story," said the editor; "but please don't be offended by what I am going to say."

The look in the face of the Sailor showed it would be quite impossible for Mr. Ambrose to offend him.

"There are little things, certain rules that have to be learned before even Genius itself can be given a hearing. And it is vital to master them. But you are so far on the road, that in a short time, if you care to go on, I am convinced you will have all the tricks of a craft which too often begins and ends in trickery and once in a lustrum rises to power. At least that's my experience." And Mr. Ambrose laughed with charming friendliness.

"Now," he went on, "I will let you into a secret that all the world knows. We declined *Treasure Island*. Not in my time, I am glad to say, but *Brown's Magazine* declined it. The story is told against us; and if we can we want to wipe the blot off our escutcheon. And I feel, Mr. Harper, that if you will learn the rules of the game and not lose yourself, one day you will help us to do so."

It took the editor some time to explain what he meant. But he did so at considerable length and with wonderful lucidity. The personality of this young man appealed to him. And he felt that the author of *Dick Smith* had had an almost superhuman task laid upon him. Here was a competitor in the Olympian games starting from a mark so far behind his peers that by all the laws he was out of the race before he started to run it. But was he? Somehow Edward Ambrose felt that if this dauntless spirit, already many times defeated, but never completely overthrown, could find the courage to go on, the world would have cause one day to congratulate *Brown's Magazine*.

The editor took a cordial leave of his strange visitor. "Keep on keeping on, and see what comes of it. Don't be afraid to use the knife, but be careful not to cut yourself. That's the particular form of the eternal paradox assumed by the absolute for the overthrow of the writing man! It's a riddle each must read in his own way. But instinct is the master key. Trust it as you have done already, and it will unlock every door. However, we will talk of that another time. But you might bear in mind what a great writer said to me here in this room only last week. 'When you feel anything you may have written is really fine it is a golden rule to leave it out.' Clear away a few of the trees, and then we may begin to see the wood. But this doesn't apply to the Island of San Pedro. Not a word of *that* can be spared."

The Sailor walked on air as far as the National Gallery. But as he turned the corner into Charing Cross Road he was brought to earth by a violent collision with an elderly gentleman. He was not brought literally to earth because he suffered less than his victim.

Before the elderly gentleman had ceased to blaspheme the young man came within an ace of an even more emphatic reminder of earth's realities: at the end of Cranbourn Street an omnibus nearly ran over him. Still, it is the part of charity to cover his sins, because up till then, Tuesday, September the fifth had been the day of his life.

X

This mood did not last very long. He was now up against the stern facts of authorship. The story of *Dick Smith* would have to be written again and written differently. In the reincarnation would be little of the creative rapture of the primal birth. And so little faith had the Sailor in his powers that he could not help feeling that too much had been asked of them.

To add to his doubts, he was beset by conflicting advice. Miss Dobbs was quite angry when she learned the result of the interview with Mr. Ambrose, which she did the day after it had taken place.

"Wants you to write it again, does he?" she said with a glow of indignation. "I call that the limit! Now, if you'll be guided by me, Mr. Harper, which, of course, you ought to have been from the first, you'll do nothing of the kind. Send it to the *Rotunda* or the *Covent Garden*."

Miss Dobbs was so firm and Henry Harper was so oppressed by the magnitude of his task, that he came very near taking her advice.

It was the intervention of the author of "A History of the World" in forty volumes with an index that saved the situation. Mr. Rudge was horrified when he learned that Henry Harper

thought of trying his luck with the *Rotunda*. It was nothing less than an act of *lèse-majesté*. There could be so little ground of comparison between that upstart and *Brown's* that in the opinion of Mr. Rudge it was better to be damned by the fountain of honor, which had published Byron and Scott, than be accepted and even tricked out with illustrations—there would be no illustrations in the "History of the World"—by a cheap and flashy parvenu which bore a similar relation to literature to that a toadstool bore to horticulture.

Miss Dobbs had force of character, but she was no match for Mr. Rudge when it came to a question of *Brown's Magazine* v. the *Rotunda*. He even went to the length of telling her that she didn't know what she was talking about. The grave spectacled eyes of the historian flashed to such purpose that Miss Dobbs was fain to admit "that she never would have thought the old fool had it in him." But great issues were at stake. All that he stood for was in the scale. Such an affront should only be offered to Culture over the dead body of the author of the "History of the World."

Finally, Henry Harper sat down to rewrite the story of *Dick Smith* and the brigantine *Excelsior*. As a fruit of victory, Mr. Rudge ordained that the young man should return to the study of grammar. It was more than ever necessary now. He was sure that had he been as well up in grammar as he ought to have been, the question of rewriting the story of *Dick Smith* could never have arisen.

These were trying days. But the Sailor stuck gallantly to his guns. In spite of the pessimism of Miss Dobbs, who still looked in now and again, he grappled with an extremely difficult task. Moreover, he did so very thoroughly. Mr. Ambrose had given him only general rules to go by; yet these, few and succinct as they were, seemed to cut into the woof and fabric of his mind.

As the days passed, and the end of Henry Harper's labor seemed farther off than ever, Miss Dobbs grew more gloomy, but her regard for his welfare was still considerable. He might have been grateful had it become less, but he was far too chivalrous to admit such a thought. Besides, it was not a little surprising that a lady of the standing of Miss Dobbs should take an interest in such a person as himself.

One day, she invited him to tea at her flat. He *must* come tomorrow afternoon, to meet her great friend, Zoe Bonser, who was a Maison Perry girl, and very nice and clever. Had there been a way of evading this point-blank invitation, he would certainly have sought it. Unfortunately there was not. Before issuing her invitation Miss Dobbs had already taken the precaution of asking casually whether "he was doing anything Sunday afternoon?"

Mr. Harper grew quite alarmed as soon as he realized what he had done. The mere thought of the society of promiscuous ladies, however nice and clever, was enough to frighten him. Miss Dobbs herself, who was niceness and cleverness personified, had never really broken through the ice. They were old friends now, but even she, with all the arts of which she was mistress, had never been able to penetrate the reserve of this odd young man. If he had not been incapable of deliberately wounding the feelings of a lady who had shown him such kindness, he would have boldly refused to meet the nice and clever Miss Bonser, which with all his soul he longed to do.

Therefore, on Sunday afternoon, he sadly abandoned a chapter of *Dick Smith*, which was now in a tangle so hopeless that it seemed it would never come right. After infinite pains had made him as presentable as a very limited wardrobe allowed, he went to No. 106, King John's Mansions, the whereabouts of which had already been explained to him very carefully.

Miss Dobbs' flat was right at the top of a very large, very gloomy, and very draughty building. Its endless flights of stone stairs—there was no lift, although it was clearly a case for one—seemed not to have been swept for a month at least. But this was in keeping with a general air of cheapness and discomfort. By the time Mr. Harper had climbed as far as No. 106, and had knocked timidly with a decrepit knocker upon an uninviting door, he was in a state of panic and dejection.

Miss Dobbs opened the door herself. As she stood on an ungarnished threshold, cigarette in hand, flashing rows of fine teeth in welcome, the young man's first thought was how different she looked without her hat. His second thought was that its absence hardly improved her. She looked older, flatter, less mysterious. Even the fluffy and peroxidized abundance, which came low on the forehead in a quite remarkable bandeau, somehow gave a maturity to her appearance that he had not in the least expected.

Miss Dobbs had all the arts of gracious hospitality. She took his overcoat and hat away from him, and then hustled him genially into what she called her "boo-door," into the alert but extremely agreeable presence of the nice and clever Miss Bonser.

Miss Bonser was not exactly what you would call beautiful, but she had Chick—to adopt the picturesque language of her oldest and dearest friend in rendering her afterwards to Mr. Henry Harper. She had the appearance of a thoroughly good sort, except that her eyes were so terribly wary, although hardly so wary perhaps as those of her hostess, because that would have been impossible. Still, there was Chick and refinement, and above all, great cordiality in Miss Bonser. Cordiality, indeed, was the prevailing note of No. 106, King John's Mansions. Miss Dobbs addressed Miss Bonser as "dear," Miss Bonser addressed Miss Dobbs as "dear," and then Miss

Dobbs covered Mr. Harper with confusion by suddenly and unexpectedly calling him "Harry."

"Take a pew, Harry," said Miss Dobbs.

Mr. Harper knew that he alone was intended, because no other gentleman was there. Nervously he sat down in a creaking and rickety cane chair. The "Harry" had flattered him a goodish bit, since Miss Dobbs was quite as much a lady in her home as she was out of it; also she had for a friend another lady, a very nice and clever one, with a refined voice, smart clothes, and a great amount of jewelry. She had also the air and the manners of Society, of which he had learned in the works of the famous novelist, W. M. Thackeray. The way in which Miss Bonser produced a private case and offered it to him after choosing a cigarette for herself, somehow reminded him of "Vanity Fair."

"Harry don't smoke, do you, Harry?" said the hostess, covering Mr. Harper's extreme confusion with rare tact and spontaneity.

Miss Dobbs then made tea, and by the time Mr. Harper had had two large and cracked cups of a weak brew and had eaten one piece of buttered cake, being too shy to eat anything else in spite of great pressure, he was able to collect himself a little.

"Cora tells me you are writing a book, Harry," said Miss Bonser conversationally.

Mr. Harper admitted this, although again startled by the Harry.

"You don't mind, do you," said Miss Bonser, in answer to his face. "'Mister' is so formal. I'm all for being friendly and pleasant myself. What was I saying? Oh, about the book you are writing. My best boy, Bert Hobson, the novelist, makes simply pots of money. He's got a serial running now in the *Covent Garden*. You've read it, I daresay."

It appeared that Mr. Harper had not read the story.

"Well, you ought reelly." Mr. Harper noticed that Miss Bonser pronounced the polite word "reelly" exactly as Miss Foldal did, although a much more fashionable lady in other respects than the good fairy of Blackhampton. "Start at once. Do it now. It's Albert's top notch." To Miss Dobbs: "Don't you think so, dear?"

Miss Dobbs was quite of Miss Bonser's opinion.

"What's the name of your book?" asked Miss Bonser.

"The Adventures of Dick Smith," said Mr. Harper nervously.

"It's a very good title, don't you think so, dear?" Miss Dobbs thought so too.

"I suppose you'll dedicate it to Cora," said Miss Bonser, "as she has taken such an interest in it."

Mr. Harper had to admit rather shamefacedly that it had not occurred to him to do that. Miss Bonser was surprised; but Miss Dobbs said she couldn't think of it. She didn't look for a reward. Miss Bonser said she was sure of that, yet Mr. Harper felt very uncomfortable because it was borne in upon him that he had been guilty of a sin of omission. An awkward silence followed, at least so it appeared to Mr. Harper, but it was very tactfully terminated by Miss Bonser, who suddenly asked Miss Dobbs about Harold.

Harold, it seemed, was very keen on Miss Dobbs; in fact, he was her best boy. He was an architect who lived at Wimbledon, but had just taken rooms in town. He was a Cambridge man, had a commission in the Territorials, and was a regular sport. However, this seemed to convey so little to Mr. Harper that the conversation soon appeared to languish in regard to Harold.

After this, the young man sat very anxiously in the cane chair, wanting sorely to get out of it, yet with not enough knowledge of society to be able to do so. "The Adventures of Dick Smith" were calling him loudly, yet he had too little courage and too much politeness to venture upon the headlong flight which above all things he now desired. Presently, however, his air of mute misery appealed to his hostess, who suddenly said with great good nature. "Now, don't you be staying, Harry, a moment longer than you think you ought. I know you want to get back to your writing." And Miss Dobbs rose and shook hands with him gravely. Miss Bonser then sat up in her wicker chair and offered her hand at a very fashionable angle, but said good-by with real friendliness, and then Mr. Harper made a very awkward exit without either self-possession or dignity.

"Chase me," said Miss Bonser, as soon as the smiling Miss Dobbs had returned from letting the young man out of the front door.

"Priceless, isn't he?" Miss Dobbs flung herself with a suppressed giggle into a wicker chair.

"Well, well," reflected Miss Bonser. "One of these days he may be useful to bring you in out of

the rain."

"If he begins to make good," said Miss Dobbs sagely. "You never know your luck."

"Cruelty to children, isn't it?"

Miss Dobbs smiled thoughtfully. "Don't you think his eyes are rather nice?" she said.

"He's got a lot in his face," said Miss Bonser. "That's a face that's seen things. And I'm not so sure, dear, that he is such a juggins as we fancy."

"We'll hope not at any rate," said Miss Dobbs coolly.

"Still, I like a man with a punch in him myself."

"Perhaps I'll be able to improve him a bit. He hardly knows he's born at present."

"That's true, dear," said Miss Bonser, with a rather indiscreet gurgle.

"It's nothing to laugh at, Zoe." To the surprise of her friend, Miss Dobbs seemed a little hurt.

"Well, well." Miss Bonser flung away the end of her cigarette.

XI

"The Adventures of Dick Smith" continued to make progress. Still, it was uphill work. But Henry Harper had a tenacity truly remarkable—"the angelic patience of genius," in the phrase of Balzac. Not that it ever occurred to the Sailor himself that he was a genius, or for that matter to Mr. Rudge, who did not believe in genius; yet, a little ironically, Miss Dobbs informed her friend Miss Bonser more than once that she would not be surprised if he turned out a bit of one.

Mr. Harper's first visit to King John's Mansions was not his last. Miss Dobbs saw to that. He was so odd that she was tempted to ask herself whether this particular game was worth the candle; also her friends were continually asking each other a similar question on her behalf. Nevertheless, "Harry" unconsciously formed quite a habit of going to tea round the corner in the Avenue on Sunday afternoons.

He was chaffed rather unmercifully at times by several of the ladies he found there, in particular by a certain Miss Gertie Press, by nature so witty and sarcastic that the young man was genuinely afraid of her. Still, it was a very valuable experience to have the *entrée* to this dashing circle, and often when he did not wish to go he forced himself to do so by sheer power of will, he had such a strong, ever-growing desire to improve himself and to increase his knowledge of the world.

Miss Gertie Press was a knut. It was about the time that portent was coming into vogue. She was one of the rather primitive kind to be found in the second row of the Frivolity chorus of which she was an ornament. She was extremely good-natured, as all these ladies seemed to be, at least in Mr. Harper's presence; but could he have heard their comments when he had returned to his "masterpiece," about which they were always chaffing him, he might have held other views. "Greased Lightning" was Miss Press's name for him, he was so extraordinarily quick in the uptake! "He's got the brains of my boot," said she. "Your money is on the wrong horse, Cora."

These ladies were really sorry for poor Cora. She must be potty to trouble herself with a thing like that. But the time came when Cora's friends began to think differently.

At the end of April, after nearly eight months' hard toil, in the course of which the "Adventures" had been cut down one half, and the half that remained had been remodeled and rewritten, and then written all over again, the Sailor packed up the manuscript, without any particular emotion except a vague one of simple despair, and sent it to the editor of *Brown's Magazine*, from whom he had not heard a word since September 5.

Mr. Rudge, after reading the revised version in a very conscientious manner, thought the grammar decidedly weak, and felt the thing must always suffer from being a work of the imagination. In his eyes nothing could soften that cardinal defect; but he was a liberal-minded man, and if *Brown's Magazine* was really interested in that sort of thing—well, it was no business of his to decry it. There was no accounting for taste after all, and *Brown's* was certainly the best magazine of its kind in existence.

A week passed, and then one evening the replica of a certain envelope which would ever remain upon the tablets of his memory was dropped through the slit in the shop door. It was addressed to "Henry Harper, Esquire," and ran as follows:

DEAR MR. HARPER,

Come and see me as soon as you can and let us have another little talk about "The adventures of Dick Smith."

Very sincerely yours,
EDWARD AMBROSE.

Henry Harper did not understand the significance of those few and simple words. Mr. Rudge had a fair juster appreciation of the three barely legible lines signed "Edward Ambrose." But the next morning, after further ministrations of his master's clothes brush, the young man went courageously forth to 12B, Pall Mall.

The bemedaled commissionaire and the bald-headed gentleman had no terrors for him now. Had he not walked and talked with Zeus himself? These Olympian sconce bearers could not eat him, and there is always comfort in that reflection for an imaginative mind. Even a ten minutes' wait in the room below did not matter.

Mr. Ambrose greeted him with a grip of the hand which seemed to utter a volume.

"It's a very fine thing," said the editor, without a word of preface, as if there could be only one thought for either just then. "At least that's my opinion." He laughed a little at his own vehemence. "Some people will not agree with me. They'll say it's too crude, they'll say the colors are laid on too thick. But that to me is its wonderful merit; it convinces in spite of itself, which is almost the surest test of genius, although that's a big word. But you've a great faculty. I'm so glad you've been able to make such a fine thing." His eyes shone; the charming voice vibrated with simple enthusiasm. "How one envies a man who can make a thing like that!"

"You needn't, sir," said the Sailor, hardly knowing that he had spoken.

Edward Ambrose fell to earth like an exploded firework. In spite of an eagerness of temperament which amused his friends, he was not a vaporiser. He, too, had been in deep places, although the strange kingdoms he had seen were not exactly those of this young man, this curious, awkward, silent, unforgettable figure.

"No, I expect not," said Mr. Ambrose in a changed tone, after a short pause. And then he added abruptly, "Now, suppose we sit down and talk business."

They sat down, but the Sailor had no better idea of talking business than the table in front of him.

"I want very much to run it as a serial in the magazine," said the editor.

"I'll be very proud, sir."

"Well, now, what do you think we ought to pay for it? Just for the serial rights, you know. Of course I ought to explain that you are a new and untried author, and so on. But to my mind that's cheating. Either a thing is or it isn't. I dare say I'm wrong ... in a world in which nothing is certain ... however ... what do you think we ought to pay for the serial rights?"

"I'll leave it to you, sir."

"Well, the magazine can afford to pay three hundred pounds. And we will talk about the book rights later."

Such a sum was beyond the Sailor's wildest dreams. Truth to tell he had dreamed very little upon that aspect of the matter. He knew the value of money, therefore it had never occurred to him that it would be within the power of a pen and a bottle of ink to bring it to him in such fabulous quantities. He seemed just now to be living in a dream.

"Three hundred pounds, then," said Mr. Ambrose. "And I wish the magazine could have paid more without injustice to itself. But its audience is small, though select—as we hope—at any rate."

The Sailor's manner showed very clearly that no apology was called for. Such a sum was princely. Gratitude was the emotion uppermost, and he did his best to express it in his queer, disjointed way.

"I'll always remember your kindness, sir," he said huskily. "I'd never have been able to make anything of it at all if it hadn't been for you."

"Oh, yes, you would. Not so soon, perhaps, but it's all there. Anyhow, I'm very glad if I've been a bit of use at the first fence."

The cordial directness of Edward Ambrose made a strong appeal to the Sailor. He had knocked about the world enough to begin to know something of men. And of one thing he was already convinced. The editor was of the true Klondyke breed. He said what he meant, and he meant what he said. And when this fortunate interview was at an end and the young man returned to the Charing Cross Road, it was not so much the fabulous sum which had come to him that made him happy, as the sure knowledge that he had found a friend. He had found a friend of the kind for which his soul had long craved.

XII

"Now that Greased Lightning is beginning to make good," said Miss Gertie Press, "I suppose you'll marry him, my Cora?"

"Shouldn't wonder. Have a banana."

This was persiflage on the part of Miss Dobbs. She meant have a cigarette.

Miss Press lit the cheap but scented Egyptian that was offered her, and lay back in the wicker chair with an air of languor which somehow did not match up with the gaminlike acuteness of her comically ill-natured countenance.

"That's where long views come in," philosophized Miss Press. "Wish I could take 'em. But I can't. I haven't the *nous*. We all thought you was potty to take up with him. But you won't half give us the bird now he looks like turning out a good investment."

Miss Dobbs smiled at the frankness of her friend. Miss Press was noted throughout the length and the breadth of the Avenue for her habit of thinking aloud.

Miss Zoe Bonser, who was eating a tea cake, also smiled. It was Sunday afternoon, and these three ladies were awaiting the arrival of Mr. Henry Harper in a rather speculative frame of mind. The previous Sunday Mr. Harper had not appeared.

It was no longer possible to laugh at the mere name of Greased Lightning and to pull Cora's leg and chaff her unmercifully. It seemed that Miss Bonser, having mentioned casually to Mr. Albert Hobson that she had a friend who had a friend who knew a young fellow whose first serial was just beginning in *Brown's*, the admired Albert had inquired immediately:

"What's the name of your young fellow?"

"He's not my young fellow," said Zoe the cautious. "But his name's—Lord, I've forgotten it!" This was untrue. "But we all think he's potty."

"His name is not Henry Harper, by any chance?"

Miss Bonser nodded discreetly. She was a little surprised at the set of the wind.

"But, of course, he's barmy."

"Whatever he is, he's no slouch," said the judicial Mr. Hobson. He himself was no slouch either, in spite of the company which in hours of ease he affected. "He'll go far. He's another Stevenson and with luck one of these days he might be something bigger."

"Don't care if he's a John Roberts or a Dawson," said Zoe; "he's not fit to be out without his nurse." If the latter part of Mr. Hobson's statement had meant little to that astute mind, the first part meant a good deal.

Miss Bonser bore the news to King John's Mansions on the following Sunday afternoon. It made quite a sensation. Bert Hobson was the nearest thing to "the goods" which had yet impinged on that refined circle. He was something more than the average harmless fool about town; in the opinion of Miss Dobbs and Miss Press, he knew his way about; and if Albert had really said that Harry was the coming man, he could not have such a great distance to travel.

"I hope he is not going to give us a miss in baulk now he's got there. That'll be swank if he does, won't it, Bonser?" Miss Press winked at Miss Bonser in a serio-comic manner.

"It will, Press," said that lady.

"He'll come. You'll see," said Miss Dobbs, with reasoned optimism. "He's here now."

In fact, at that moment a mild assault was being delivered by the decrepit knocker on a faintly responsive front door.

"What was the check that *Brown's* gave him?" Miss Press asked Miss Bonser, as Miss Dobbs went forth to receive her guest.

"Three hundred—so she says."

"Do you believe it?"

"Why not?"

"But he's barmy."

"All these writing men are."

"Except Bert."

"Oh, he's barmy in a way, else he wouldn't have taken up with me."

"Yes, that's true, dear. But did he say that about It?"

"Ye-es."

"Well, it's time she had a bit of luck ... if she's really going to have it. She wants it badly."

"Yes, by God."

At this moment Mr. Henry Harper came into the room. He entered very nervously with his usual blush of embarrassment. The truth was, although he had yet to realize it clearly, the undercurrent of sarcasm, never absent from this refined atmosphere, always hurt him. Mr. Henry Harper was a very sensitive plant, and these fashionable and witty ladies did not appear to know that.

"He's a swanker," was the greeting of Miss Press, as she offered her hand and then withdrew it playfully before Mr. Harper could take it. "And I never shake hands with a swanker, do I, Bonser?"

"But he's so clever," said Miss Bonser, politely offering hers. "He's Bert Hobson at his best."

Mr. Harper was so overcome by this reception that he had the misfortune to knock over the teapot, which had been placed on a small and ill-balanced Japanese table.

"Damn you!" The voice of the hostess came upon the culprit like the stroke of a whip. For a moment Miss Dobbs was off her guard. She was furious at the ruin of her carpet and her hospitality, although the latter was really the more important as the carpet was ruined already. "However, it doesn't matter." She hastened to cover the "Damn you" with a heroic smile. "Take a pew, Harry, and make yourself comfy. I can easily get some more; it's the slavey's Sunday out." The hostess, teapot in hand, withdrew from the room with a winning air of reconstituted amenity.

"If you had been a little gentleman," said Miss Press, as the hostess left the room, "you would have shot out of your chair, opened the door for her, carried the teapot to the kitchen, and held the caddy while she put in more tea. And then you'd have fiddled about with the kettle while she held the teapot, and poured boiling water over her hand. After that you'd have gone down on your knees, and then you'd have kissed it better. At least, that's how you'd have behaved if you had been a mother's boy in the Guards. Wouldn't he, Bonser?"

"Shut up, Press," said Miss Bonser. "It's a shame to rag as you do."

"But he's a swanker," said Miss Press. "And I don't like swankers."

Mr. Harper was in a state of extreme misery and feeling very pink about the ears, when the smiling Miss Dobbs reappeared with a fresh pot of tea. The way in which she contrived to efface the tragic incident was admirable. She poured out gracefully a cup of tea for Mr. Harper, a terribly weak cup of tea it was, and pressed half a buttered scone upon him and smiled at him all the time, perhaps a little anxiously, with her wonderful teeth. But in spite of these winning attentions, it was not certain that the young man was going to enjoy himself. That honest and forthright "Damn you" had brought with it somehow the taste of Auntie's whip, and he could feel it still. Then, too, these clever and witty ladies had a way of making him feel ridiculous. Also, they spoke a language he didn't understand. Moreover, he knew that Miss Press meant it when she said he wasn't a gentleman. To tell the truth, that was a fact of which he was growing daily more conscious, and the jesting remark of Miss Press hurt almost as much as the "Damn you."

"If I was clever, and had a three-hundred-pound serial running in *Brown's Magazine*," said Miss Press, "I'd be so set up with myself that I wouldn't give a word to a dog when I came out to a bun-worry. Would you, Bonser?"

"Shut up, Press," said the benign Miss Bonser. "Little girls should be seen but not heard—at least, that's what my dear old governess taught me in the long ago."

"Yes, I knew you was brought up a clergyman's daughter," said Miss Press, returning stoutly

to the charge. "And so was Pressy and so was Dobby, and so was all of us."

"Play cricket, Pressy," said the hostess, rather plaintively.

For all that he knew, Mr. Harper might have been listening to a dead language. This may have relieved his mind a little. All the same, it made it very difficult to take a hand in the conversation, which these ladies clearly felt to be the duty of a gentleman, whether he was in the Guards or not.

Suddenly Miss Press caused a portion of Mr. Harper's buttered scone "to go the wrong way" by placing one of his hands in that of his hostess, who had taken a seat rather near him.

"Allow me," said Miss Press, rising gallantly from her chair, and dealing Mr. Harper a succession of hearty buffets in the middle of the back. "You really are the limit, Eney. You might never have been in love before."

"Chuck it, Pressy," said Miss Dobbs. "Let my Harry alone. My Harry's very clever, and his Cora's very proud of him. Aren't I, Harry?" Miss Dobbs flashed upon the unhappy young man a glance of very high candle power. She also sighed seraphically.

When Mr. Harper had swallowed his tea, of which one cup sufficed, and after abandoning any further attempt to deal with his buttered scone, the hostess gathered the tea things with the aid of her friends. She then took them to the back premises, declining further help. In spite of the protests of her guests, Miss Dobbs insisted on this self-denying course. She left Mr. Henry Harper in their care, and hoped they would do their best to amuse him during her absence.

XIII

"Harry," said Miss Press, with a dramatic change of tone as soon as the hostess had retired with the tea things, "Zoe and I have to talk to you very serious. Haven't we, Zoe?"

Miss Bonser nodded impressively.

"You are not playing fair with Cora, Harry."

During the slight pause which followed this statement, a look of fawnlike bewilderment flitted across the eyes of the Sailor.

"You are breaking her heart," said Miss Press, with tragic simplicity.

"Yes, dear," came the thrilling whisper of Miss Bonser.

"That's true."

"We are telling you this, Harry," said Miss Press, "because we think it is something you ought to know. You think so, don't you, dear?"

"I do, dear," said Miss Bonser.

"Cora is one of the best that ever stepped," said Miss Press. "She has a heart of gold, she is a girl in a thousand. It would be a black shame to spoil her life. You think that, don't you, dear?"

"Yes, dear," said Miss Bonser emotionally.

Mr. Harper was completely out of his depth. He didn't know in the least what they were talking about.

"Forgive us, Harry, for taking it upon ourselves in this way," said Miss Bonser, in a kind, quiet voice. "We are all for a bit of fun, but we can't stand by and see a good girl suffering in silence, can we, Gertie?"

"No, dear," said Gertie, with pathos.

Both ladies eyed him cautiously. He was so innocent, he was such a simple child that they could almost have found it in their hearts to pity him.

"We feel bound to mention it, Harry," said Miss Press. "Poor Cora can't take her oats or anything. She has to have a sleeping draught now."

"And she's getting that thin, poor thing," chimed the plaintive Miss Bonser.

The Sailor's perplexity grew.

"If you ask me," said Miss Press, suddenly taking a higher note, "it's up to you, Harry, to play the gentleman." Watching the color change in his face, she knew she was on the target now. "A gentleman don't play fast and loose, if you ask me."

"At least, not the sort we are used to," whispered Miss Bonser, in a superb pianissimo.

"It's Lord Caradoc and Pussy Pearson over again," said Miss Press. "But Caradoc being the goods married Pussy without making any bones about it. Harry, it's up to you to follow the example of a real gentleman. Forgive us for speaking plain."

Henry Harper glanced nervously from one lady to the other. A light was just beginning to dawn upon him.

"Cora's a straight girl," said Miss Bonser, taking up the parable. "She's one of the plucky ones, is Cora. It's a hard world for lonely girls like her, isn't it, Gert?"

"It is, dear," said Gert. "And one like Cora, whose position, as you might say, is uncertain, can't be too careful. You see, Harry, you have been coming to her flat for the best part of a year. You've been with her to the theater and the Coliseum; two Sundays ago she was seen with you on the river, and—well, she's been getting herself talked about, and that's all there is to it."

"Cora's a girl in a thousand," chimed Zoe the tactful. "She worships the ground you walk on, Harry."

A painfully startled look came suddenly into the eyes of the young man. Both ladies felt the look rather than saw it, and gave another sharp turn to the screw.

"Of course, you haven't known it, Harry," said Miss Press. "She wouldn't let you know it. But that's Cora."

"She would rather have died," said Zoe. "You will not breathe a word, of course, Harry. She would never forgive us if she knew we had let on."

"That's her pride," said Miss Press.

"And the way that poor thing cried her eyes out when you didn't turn up at tea time last Sunday as usual, the first time for nearly a year, well——" Language suddenly failed Miss Bonser. "A pretty job we had with her, hadn't we, Gert?"

So cunningly had the screw been applied, that Mr. Harper felt dazed. Suddenly Miss Bonser raised a finger of warning.

"Shush!" It was half a whisper, half a hiss. "Not a word. Here's Cora."

Miss Dobbs came in so abruptly that she nearly caught the injunction. And hardly had she entered, when Miss Press and Miss Bonser rose together and declared that they must really be going.

The hostess made a polite and conventional objection, but both ladies kissed her effusively and hustled her out into the passage.

"Dobby," Miss Press whispered excitedly, as soon as they had reached that dark and smelly draught distributor, "we've fairly put the half Nelson on him. Now go in and fix him up."

Miss Bonser and Miss Press tripped down the many unswept stone stairs of King John's Mansions, and Miss Dobbs closed the front door of No. 106. She then returned to Mr. Harper in the "boo-door."

"Well, Harry," she said, "why didn't you come last Sunday?"

Had the Sailor been true to his strongest instinct he would have fled. But he stayed where he was for several reasons, and of these the most cogent was quite a simple one. There was a will stronger than his own in the room just then.

Miss Bonser and Miss Press, as became a long experience of the chase, had done their work with efficiency. The Sailor had not guessed that this friendly and amusing and very agreeable lady—in spite of the "Damn you"—was so very much in love with him. It was a wholly unexpected issue, for which the young man was inclined to blame himself bitterly.

"Well, Harry," said Miss Dobbs, breaking suddenly upon a whirl of rather terrifying thoughts, "why didn't you come last Sunday?"

He was in a state of mental chaos, therefore to attempt to answer the question was useless.

"Why didn't oo, Harry?" Miss Dobbs suddenly felt that it was a case for *force majeure*. Very unexpectedly she flung her arms round his neck. Risking the rickety cane chair she sat heavily upon his knee, yet not so heavily as she might have done, and with a she-leopard's tenderness drew his head to her ample bosom.

A thrill of repugnance passed through Henry Harper, yet he was so fully engaged with a very pressing problem as hardly to know that it had.

"Kiss your Cora, Harry."

But his Cora kissed Harry instead. And as she did so, the unfailing instinct given to woman told her that that kiss was a mistake.

In the next instant, the fat arms had disengaged themselves from the young man's neck, and Miss Dobbs had slipped from his knee and was standing looking at him.

Her gesture was striking and picturesque; also she had the air of a tragedy queen.

"Harry," she said, with a catch in her voice, "you are breaking my heart."

The Sailor had already been informed of that. He had tried not to believe it, but facts were growing too strong for him. A superb tear was in the eyes of Miss Dobbs. The sight of it thrilled and startled him.

Twice before in his life had he seen tears in the eyes of a woman, and with his abnormal power of memory he vividly recalled each occasion now. The first time was in the eyes of Mother, the true woman he would always reverence, when she took off his clothes after his first flight from Blackhampton, and put him into a bath; the second time was in the eyes of Miss Foldal, and she also was a true woman whose memory he would always honor, when she said good-bye on the night of the second departure from the city of his birth. But the tears in the eyes of Mother and Miss Foldal were not as the superb and terrible tear in the eye of Miss Cora Dobbs.

"Don't think I blame you, Harry," said that lady with a Jocasta-like note, trying to keep the bitterness out of her tone. "I'm only a lonely and unprotected girl who will soon be on the shelf, but that's no fault of yours. Yet, somehow, I thought you were different. Somehow, I thought you was a gentleman."

Miss Dobbs had no illusions on that point, but she well knew where the shoe was going to pinch.

"I'll be a mark and a laughing stock," said the tragic Cora, "as poor Pussy was before Caradoc made up his mind to marry her. While he was plain Bill Jackson nothing was good enough for Pussy. Used to take her to the Coliseum and on the river in the summer, and used to come to her flat a bit lower down the Avenue to take tea with her and her friends every Sunday of his life. And then suddenly Bill came into the title, and poor Pussy got a miss from my lord. We all thought at first she would go out of her mind. She worshiped the ground that Bill walked upon. Besides, she couldn't bear to be made a mark of by her friends; and being nothing but a straight girl there was always her reputation to consider. Poor Pussy had to take a sleeping draught every night for months. But Caradoc played cricket in the end as he was bound to do, being a gentleman by birth, and Pussy is now a countess with two children, a boy and a girl, and only last summer she invited me to go and spend a fortnight with her at her place in Ireland, but, of course, I couldn't, because I hadn't the clothes. Still, I'm glad for Pussy's sake. She was always one of the best, was Pussy. All's well that ends well, isn't it?" And Miss Jocasta Dobbs very abruptly broke down.

It was a breakdown of the most nerve-shattering kind. The tears streamed down her face. She struggled almost hysterically not to give way, yet the more she struggled, the more she did give way.

"Miss Dobbs," he gasped, huskily—he had known her a long and crowded year, but he had never ventured on Cora—"Miss Cora"—he had done it now! "I didn't mean nothing."

Better had he held his peace.

"You didn't mean anything!" There was a change in the voice of Jocasta. "You didn't mean anything, Mr. Harper? No, I suppose not."

The young man drew in his breath sharply. The tone of Miss Dobbs was edged like a knife.

"It was only a poor and unprotected girl with whom you might play the fool until you had made good. It was only a girl who valued her fair name, a girl who would have died rather than be made a mark of by her friends. I suppose now you are a big man and earning big money, you will take up with somebody else. Well, I'm not the one to grudge any girl her luck."

The sudden fall in the voice of Miss Dobbs and the half veiled look in her eyes somehow took Henry Harper back to the Auntie of his childhood. And it almost seemed that she also had in her hand a weapon which she knew well how to use.

"I thought I had a gentleman to deal with," said Miss Dobbs, brushing aside a tear, "but it was my mistake. However, it's never too late to learn." Her laugh seemed to strike him.

"I didn't mean to mislead you," mumbled the young man, who felt like a trapped and desperate animal. Yet when all was said, the emotion uppermost was not for himself. This woman was hurting him horribly, but it was the fact, as he thought, that he was hurting her still more

without any intention of evil towards her, which now took possession of his mind. He would do anything to soften the pain he was unwittingly causing. It was not in his nature to hurt a living thing.

"I beg pardon, Miss Cora," he said, faintly, "I didn't mean nothing like that."

She turned upon him, a tigress, and rent him. Nor did he shrink from the wounds she dealt. It was no more than he deserved. He should have learned a little more about ladies and their fine feelings and their social outlook, before daring to go to tea at their private flats and to meet their friends; before daring to be seen with them at a public place like the Coliseum or in a boat on the river. He was receiving a much needed lesson. It was one he would never forget.

XIV

Henry Harper did not go to tea at King John's Mansions on the next Sunday afternoon. And on the following Sunday he stayed away too. Moreover, during the whole of that fortnight Miss Cora Dobbs did not call once at No. 249, Charing Cross Road.

This was a relief to the young man. He would not have known how to meet her had she come to the shop as usual. He was so shattered by the bolt from the blue that he didn't know in the least what to do.

Happily there was his work to distract him. Mr. Ambrose had suggested that he should write another tale for *Brown's Magazine*. He was to take his own time over the new story, bearing ever in mind the advice given him formerly, which he had turned to very good account; and in the meantime, his fancy could expand in the happy knowledge that the "Adventures of Dick Smith" were attracting attention in the magazine. Mr. Ambrose had already arranged for the story to appear as a book when its course had run in *Brown's*, and he was convinced—if prophecy was ever safe in literary matters—that real success awaited it.

Could Henry Harper have put Miss Cora Dobbs out of his thoughts, he might have been almost completely happy in planning and writing the "Further Adventures of Dick Smith." Aladdin's wonderful lamp was making his life a fairy tale. An incredible vista of fame and fortune was spreading before his eyes. Even Mr. Rudge had been stricken with awe by the check for three hundred pounds.

Yet, at the back of everything just now was a terrible feeling of indecision. There could be no doubt that the great world of which he knew so little, clearly looked to him "to act the gentleman." The phrase was that of the elegant and refined Miss Bonser and the dashing Miss Press, who mixed habitually with gentlemen, and therefore were in a position to speak with authority on such a delicate matter. And so plain was his duty that it had even percolated to Mrs. Greaves, who, in ways subtle and mysterious, seemed to be continually unbosoming herself to a similar tenor.

In the course of the third week of crisis, Mr. Harper's perplexities were greatly increased by a brief but emotional note, written on elegantly art-shaded notepaper, which had the name "Cora" with a ring round it engraved in the left-hand corner. It said:

DEAR HARRY,

Why haven't you been or written? I am feeling so low and miserable that unless you come to see me Sunday, the doctor says I shall have a bad breakdown.

Yours, CORA.

Somehow, this letter, couched in such grimly pathetic terms, seemed to leave the young man with no alternative. Therefore, on the following Sunday afternoon, at the usual hour, he was just able to screw up courage to knock at the door of No. 106, King John's Mansions.

He was rather surprised to find Cora in good health; certainly the tone of her letter had implied that such was not the case. She had no appearance of suffering. In tone and manner she was a little chastened, but that was all.

Miss Bonser and Miss Press were also there when Mr. Harper arrived. But their reception of him was so much more formal than was usual that a feeling of tension was at once created. It was as if these experienced ladies understood that some high issue was pending.

Each of them treated him in quite a different way from that which she had used before. In her own style, each was lofty and *grande dame*. It was no longer Harry, but Mr. Harper; and they shook hands with him without cordiality, but with quiet dignity, and said, "How do you do?"

Strange to say, Mr. Harper found this reception more to his liking than the less studied manner in which he was received as a rule. Now that he had not to meet persiflage and chaff, he was fairly cool and collected. The stately bow of Miss Press and the archly fashionable handshake of Miss Bonser were much less embarrassing than their habitual mode of attack.

This afternoon, Mr. Harper was treated as a chance acquaintance might have been by three fashionable ladies who knew the world better than they knew him. There was a subtle note of distance. This afternoon, Miss Press talked books and theaters, and talked them very well, although, to be sure, rather better about the latter than the former. Yet in Mr. Harper's judgment, her conversation was more improving than her usual mode of discourse. Had he not been in such a state of turmoil it would have been quite a pleasure to sit and listen, she talked so well about the things that were beginning to interest him intensely; also her manner of speaking was extremely refined.

Miss Bonser talked mainly about the Royal Academy of Arts. She knew a good deal about art, having studied it, although in what capacity she didn't state, before she went to the Maison Perry. Nevertheless, she had both fluency and point; she didn't like Leader so much as she liked Sargent; she spoke of values, composition, brushwork, draughtmanship, and it was really a pity that Mr. Harper was not easier in his mind, otherwise he could not have failed to be edified. As it was, Miss Press and Miss Bonser rose considerably in his estimation. He could have wished that they always hoisted themselves on these high subjects.

Both ladies, wearing white gloves and looking very *comme il faut*, went soon after five, as they had promised to go on to Lady Caradoc's. Mr. Harper felt quite sorry. They had talked so well about the things that interested him that somehow their distinguished departure left a void. As they got up to go, Mr. Harper, remembering a hint he had received from Miss Press, touching the behavior of a gentleman in such circumstances, sprang to the door, and with less awkwardness than usual, contrived to open it for them to pass out.

The ordeal he dreaded was now upon him. He was with Cora alone. However, much to his relief, there was no sign at present of "a bad breakdown."

For three weeks he had been living in a little private hell of indecision. But now there was a chance of winning through. His duty was not yet absolutely clear, but he was not without hope that it would become so. In that time he had been thinking very hard and very deep. And by some means, he had added a cubit to his stature since he stood last on that tea-stained hearthrug in the quasi-comfort of that overfurnished "boo-door." It was a new and enlarged Mr. Harper who now confronted a more composed and dignified Miss Dobbs.

"Well, Harry," said Miss Dobbs, "it is nice to see you here again."

He was touched by such a tone of magnanimity. Somehow, he felt that it was more than he deserved.

"How's the new story getting on?" There was not a sign of the breakdown at present. "Will it be as good as the old one?" This was a welcome return to her first phase of generous interest; to the Miss Dobbs of whom he had memories not wholly unpleasant.

"I think it is going to be better," he said gravely. "Much better. Anyway, I intend it to be."

"That's right. I like to hear that. Nothing like ambition. I suppose you'll get another three hundred for this one?"

"Five," said the young man. "That's if the editor likes it."

"My!" said Miss Dobbs, with an involuntary flash of the wary eyes. "And that's only for the serial."

"Yes."

"And, of course, you'll be able to bring it out as a book as well?"

"The editor has arranged for that already. For the present one, I mean."

"But you'll get paid for it extra, of course!"

"Oh yes."

"How much?" Miss Dobbs spoke carelessly, but her eyes were by no means careless.

"I'll get a shilling for every copy that's sold."

"And how many will they sell?"

"Nobody knows that," he said, and from his tone it seemed that aspect of the matter was unimportant.

"No, I expect not." Her tone coincided readily with his. "But I suppose a man like Stevenson or Bert Hobson would sell by the hundred thousand?"

"No idea," said the young man.

"But you ought to have an idea, Harry. It's very important. What you want is somebody with a head for business to look after your affairs."

He was inclined to accept this view of the matter, but there would be time to think of that when he really was selling in thousands, which, of course, could not be until the book was published.

"When will it be published?"

"Next week."

"Next week! And you are going to get a sure five hundred, apart from the book, for the story you are writing now?"

"If Mr. Ambrose likes it."

"Of course he'll like it. You must make it so good that he can't help liking it."

"I'll try, anyway."

Miss Dobbs grew thoughtful. She was inclined to believe, having regard to all the circumstances, that she had a difficult hand to play. Therefore, she began to arrange two or three of the leading cards in her mind. To be perfectly candid with herself, she could not help thinking, and her two friends had confirmed her in that view, that she had shown lack of judgment in the cards she had played already. For one thing, it was agreed that they might have a little underrated the size and the weight of the fish that had to be landed.

Miss Dobbs was a trifle uncertain as to what her next move should be. There was much at stake, and one blunder in tactics might be fatal. However, she was about to receive assistance of a kind she had felt it would no longer be wise to expect.

"Miss Dobbs ... Cora," said the young man, with an abruptness that startled her. "There's something ... something particular I want to say to you."

Cora was on guard at once. But she was able to make clear that whatever he might have to say to her, she was prepared to listen.

"I've been thinking a goodish bit," said Henry Harper, with a quaint stiffening of manner as the gruff words found a way out of him, "about that talk we had the last time I come here."

Miss Dobbs listened with eyes half shut. Her face was a mask.

"I don't pretend to know much about what's due to ladies," he said, after a pause so long and so trying that it seemed to hypnotize him. "I've not mixed much in Society"—W. M. Thackeray, in whose works he was now taking so much interest, had a great belief in Society—"but I should like to do what's straight."

Silence still seemed the part of wisdom for Miss Dobbs.

"If I've done wrong, I'm sorry." There was another very awkward pause to navigate. "But I didn't see no harm in what I've done, and that's the truth."

A very slight sniff from Miss Dobbs ... a very slight sniff and nothing more.

"If I never speak again, Miss Cora, it's a solemn fact."

The sniff grew slightly more pronounced.

"If I had known a bit more about Society, I might not have come here quite so often."

"What's Society got to do with it, anyway?" suddenly asked Miss Dobbs, who was getting a trifle bored by the word.

"I don't know," said the young man, "but I thought it had."

"Why should you think so?"

"Hasn't it, Miss Cora?"

At this point, it seemed necessary for Miss Dobbs to regard the situation as a whole. A wrong move here might be fatal.

"Yes, I suppose it has," said she, trying very hard to keep from laughing in his face. "If you put it that way."

Again there was a pause. Henry Harper seemed to be overawed by this admission on the part of a lady of great experience.

"I make no claim"—Miss Dobbs felt that a little well-timed assistance was called for—"if that's what you mean. My reputation's gone, but as I am only a girl, without a shilling, who has to fight her own battle, of course it's not of the slightest consequence."

"That's just what I want to talk to you about," he said, with a simplicity that made her lip curl in spite of the strong will which ruled it. Zoe was right, it was cruelty to children.

"Talk away, then," said Miss Dobbs, with dreary and tragic coldness.

"I just want to do right. I admit I've done wrong. But what I've done, I've done in ignorance. I didn't know it would be against your reputation for me to come here constant, and to take you on the river, and go with you to the theater and the Coliseum."

"No, I don't suppose you did," said Cora, holding her hand very carefully now that he had been such a fool as to put a weapon in it. "No, I suppose not, Mr. Harper."

The "Mr." was stressed very slightly, but she felt him flinch a little.

"Well, Miss Cora," he said huskily, "it's like this. I just want to do right by you as any other gentleman would."

"Oh, do you, Mr. Harper." She fixed him with the eye of a basilisk.

"Yes," he said, and the sweat broke out on his forehead. "Whatever it's got to be."

She sensed the forehead rather than saw it. Every nerve in her was now alert. Yet the desire uppermost was to spit in his face, or to dash her fist in it with all the strength she had, but at such a moment she could not afford to give rein to the woman within. She must bide her time. The fish was hooked, but it still remained to land it.

"Well, Mr. Harper, I am sure you are most kind. But you know better than I can tell you that there is only one thing you can do under the circumstances." And Miss Dobbs suddenly laughed in Mr. Harper's face, in order to show that she was not such a fool as to treat his heroics seriously.

"What's that, Miss Cora?" he asked, huskily.

"What's that, Mr. Harper? What innocence! I wonder where you was brought up?"

"Don't ask that, Miss Cora." He could have bitten out his tongue almost before the words had slipped from it.

But Miss Cora was not going to be sidetracked at this critical moment by a matter so trivial as Mr. Harper's upbringing.

"You take away a straight girl's reputation, you as good as ruin her, and then you come and ask her what you should do about it. What ho, she bumps!" And Miss Dobbs, with an irrelevance fully equal to her final remark, suddenly flung herself down to the further detriment of the broken-sprung sofa.

Mr. Harper, however, was able to recognize this as a cry of the soul of a lady in agony.

"If you think I ought to marry you," he said, with dry lips, "I'll do it."

Miss Dobbs, flopping on the sofa, sat up suddenly with a complete change of manner.

"It's not what I think, Mr. Harper," she said. "That don't matter. It's what you think that matters. If a man is a gentleman, he don't ask those sort of things."

"No, I suppose he doesn't," said Mr. Harper, who suddenly felt and saw the great force of this. "Miss Dobbs ... Cora.... I ... I ... will you marry me, Miss Cora?"

The answer of Miss Cora was to rise from the sofa in the stress of feminine embarrassment. But she did not fall into his arms, as some ladies might have done; she did not even change color. She merely said in an extremely practical voice—

"Harry, you've done right, and I'm glad you've acted the toff. There was those who said you wouldn't, but we'll not mention names. However, all's well that ends well. And the sooner we get married the better."

He made no reply. But a slow, deadly feeling had begun to creep along his spine.

"Do you mind where we are married, Harry?"

"No," he said, gently, with faraway eyes.

"I'm all for privacy," said Miss Dobbs, in her practical voice. "I hope you are."

"Whatever's agreeable to you is agreeable to me." He seemed to feel that that was good W. M. Thackeray.

"Very well, then, Harry, tomorrow morning at eleven I'll call for you, and we'll toddle round to the Circus and see what the Registrar has to say to us."

"If that's agreeable to you, it's agreeable to me," he said, sticking doggedly to his conception of the man of the world and the English gentleman.

"And now, Harry—" But Cora suddenly stopped in the very act of advancing upon him. He had read her purpose, and she had read his eyes; moreover, she had read the look which those eyes had been unable to veil. With the sagacity upon which Miss Cora Dobbs prided herself—if she happened to be perfectly sober—she decided to postpone any oscular demonstration of regard for Harry until the next day.

XV

It was not until Tuesday evening that Henry Harper informed the old man who had treated him with such kindness that he had decided to give up his situation. Mr. Rudge was not surprised. Now that the young man's time had become so valuable his master disinterestedly approved this step, although he would regret the loss of such a trustworthy assistant. Henry Harper then felt called upon to explain that he had married Cora that afternoon, and that he was about to transfer his belongings to No. 106, King John's Mansions.

"You don't mean to say you have gone and got married?" said Mr. Rudge.

"Yes, sir. But Cora wanted it to be kept very quiet, else I should have told you before."

"Cora who?" asked his master, pushing up his spectacles on to his forehead.

"Cora Dobbs."

"Do you mean that niece of Mrs. Greaves?"

"Yes, sir."

"Goodness gracious me!" Mr. Rudge was never moved to this objurgation except under duress of very high emotion. "Goodness gracious me ... why, she's not respectable!"

"Beg your pardon, sir, but there you are wrong." The young man addressed his master with an independence and a dignity that twenty-four hours ago would not have been possible. "Cora is quite respectable and ... and Cora's a lady. If there's those who think otherwise, it's my fault for ... for compromising her." To Mrs. Henry Harper belonged the credit for the word "compromising," although it was worthy of W. M. Thackeray himself.

"Goodness gracious me!" Mr. Rudge mopped his face with a profuse red handkerchief. "Didn't I most strongly warn you against her when I found her that morning in the shop?"

"You have never once mentioned Cora to me, sir," said Henry Harper respectfully. "And I'm very glad you haven't, because a great wrong's been done her."

"Didn't I tell you she was up to no good, and that you had better be careful?"

"No, sir, you never said a single word to me."

"I certainly meant to do so ... but that's my unfortunate memory. I remember I had Charles XII. of Sweden in my head at the time; practically three hundred pages of Volume XXXIII. But it's no excuse. I'll never be able to forgive myself for not having warned you. It's a pity she's Mrs. Greaves' niece, but I'm as sure as Tilly sacked Magdeburg that that girl Cora is not respectable."

"You are quite mistaken in that, sir," said Henry Harper, with a dignity of an entirely new kind, "because she is now my wife."

"I beg your pardon, Henry." Mr. Rudge had begun to realize that he was letting his tongue run away with him. "I'd forgotten that. I dare say I have been misinformed."

"Yes, sir, I am quite sure of that. You have no idea how careful she is in that way. It is because she is so careful that I've married her."

"Goodness gracious me!" said Mr. Rudge.

"She is most particular. And so are all her lady friends. And it's because I've been going to her flat and getting her talked about and going to the Coliseum with her, that I thought I ought to act the gentleman."

"Goodness gracious me! I wouldn't have had this happen for a thousand pounds."

"I wouldn't, either, sir," said Henry Harper.

XVI

When, at the instance of the lady who was now his wife, the young man removed his few belongings to No. 106, King John's Mansions, his first feeling was that he had entered quite a different world. He was very sorry to leave Mr. Rudge, who had been a true friend and to whom he had become deeply attached. Also he was sorry to leave that comfortable sitting-room with all its associations of profitable labor which embodied by far the best hours his life had known. As for the books in the shop, he would miss them dreadfully.

It was a wrench to leave these things. But at the call of duty it had to be. Cora regarded the change as inevitable, and she saw that it was made at once. From the very hour of their marriage, she took absolute charge of him. It was due to her infinitely greater knowledge of life and of the world that one who was so much a child in these matters should defer to her in everything. He was expected to do as he was told, and for the most part he was perfectly willing to fulfil that obligation.

Almost the first question she asked him, as soon as they were man and wife, was what he had done with the check for three hundred pounds? Her highly developed business instinct regarded it as more or less satisfactory, that at the suggestion of Mr. Rudge he had opened an account at a bank. It was a very sensible thing to have done, but it would be even more sensible if the money was paid over to her. She also felt that all sums he earned in the future should be banked in her name. There were many advantages in such a course. In the first place, only one banking account would be necessary, and she always favored simplicity in matters of business. Again, their money would be much safer with her: she understood its value far better than he. Again, it would be wise if she made all financial arrangements; a man who had his head full of writing would naturally not want to be bothered with such tiresome things, and he would have the more time to use his pen.

These arguments were so logical that Harry felt their force. There was no doubt that Cora's head was much better than his. Besides, as she said, with a penetration which was flattering, he lived in a world of his own, and she was quite sure he ought not to be worried by things of that kind.

Up to a point, this was true. The world Henry Harper lived in at present was largely of his own creation; and he was content that the wife he had married should take these trite burdens from his shoulders. Moreover, at first he did not regret Mr. Rudge and the old privacy as much as he thought he would. Cora was by no means deficient in common sense, and having had what she knew was a great stroke of luck, she determined to show herself worthy of it by doing her best "to settle down."

There was prudence and wisdom in this. Mrs. Henry Harper had been a scholar in a very hard school, and she now hoped to profit by its teaching. Therefore, she tried all she knew to make the young man comfortable, not merely because she liked him as much as it was possible for her to like any man, but also for the more practical reason that he might begin to like her.

At first his work, which meant so much more to him than ever Cora could, suffered far less than he had feared. To be sure, he missed the books terribly. He had not realized the value of those serried rows in the shop until the time had come to do without them. But Mr. Rudge, in saying good-by to him with distress in his honest eyes, had promised that the run of the shelves should always be his.

Now there was no longer the bookshop to look after, he had more time for reading and writing, and for gaining general knowledge. Also Cora had the wisdom to trouble him little. She stayed in bed most of the morning, and as Royal Daylight had strict instructions to walk delicately in going about her household duties, Henry Harper with his habit of rising early was always able to count on a long and uninterrupted morning's work.

In the afternoon, Cora generally went forth to visit her friends. And as she showed no desire for Harry to accompany her, there were so many more precious hours in which he could do as he liked, in which his fancy could expand. In the evening, however, his trials began. After the first

few days of matrimony, Cora developed a passion for restaurants, whither she expected him to accompany her. As a rule they dined at the Roc at the bottom of the Avenue, where there was music and company, and here they sometimes fell in with one or another of Cora's circle. Then about twice a week they would go on to a theater or a music hall, and have supper at another restaurant. The young man soon grew aware that if Cora's attention was not fully occupied, she became restless and irritable.

These evenings abroad gave Henry Harper a feeling of profound discomfort. But he did not complain. It would not have been fair to Cora, who, as she proudly said, gave him a free hand for the rest of the day. And even the publicity of restaurant life, against his deepest instinct as it was, had compensations quite apart from the performance of duty. There was much to be learned from these places. The Sailor had a remarkable faculty of minute observation. The genie within never slept. Other worlds were swimming into his ken. Golden hours were being stolen from his labors, but he was gaining first-hand knowledge of men and things.

These early days of married life were in some respects the most valuable the Sailor had yet known. He was no longer living entirely in his dreams. So much was coming into his purview which he could not grasp, to which he had hardly a clue, that he had an overmastering desire for more exact information.

For example, the talk of Cora's numerous friends was almost a foreign language, which left him as a rule with a sense of hopeless ignorance and inferiority. But this merely increased the wish to catch up. Just as a surprisingly brief four years ago he had been tormented with an almost insane desire to read and write and to learn geography and arithmetic, so now he had a terrible craving to enter a world in which Cora moved with such ease and assurance.

The chief difficulty now was the multiplicity of worlds around him. There was his own private world which none could enter but himself. That was a thing apart. It was made up of the awful memories of his youth: of Auntie, of the slushy streets of Blackhampton, of special editions, of the police, of a December night on the railway, of Mother, of Mr. Thompson, of the Old Man, of the half-deck of the *Margaret Carey*, of the Island of San Pedro, of the Chinaman, of Klondyke, of Ginger, of Auntie again, of Miss Foldal, of the final catastrophe; all these memories lay at he back of the world he inhabited—these memories and the wonderful books he was always studying. Yet enthroned above them all was the Aladdin's lamp that glowed like a star in the right-hand corner of his brain. But even that seemed to be related to other strange, ineluctable forces which lay deep down at the root of his being, in the center of which was the thing he called himself.

This private cosmos, however, wide as it was, was only an imperceptible speck of the whole. Yet it was all important, because he felt it was the only one he would ever really know. As for this world of Cora's, it was quite outside his experience. Even the simplest objects in it did not present themselves at the same angle of vision. They were man and wife and went about together, but the worlds they inhabited were so diverse that he soon felt it would never be possible to merge them in one another.

Then, too, there was the cosmogony of Mr. Rudge. That was a vastly different matter from his own and Cora's, and the great world of the Roc and the Domino where there was continual music and people drank things called liqueurs and wore evening clothes. Again, there was the world of his friend Mr. Ambrose, and beyond this again was the world of those wonderful people whom he used to watch with such solemn delight and curiosity when he paid his Sunday morning pilgrimages to Hyde Park.

XVII

Early in November "The Adventures of Dick Smith on the High Seas" was published by a firm with which Mr. Ambrose was connected. It was clear from the first that it was going to succeed. The progress of the story through the chaste pages of *Brown's* had brought many new readers to that old and respected periodical. The editor made no secret of the fact that it was the best serial story the magazine had had for years, and as soon as "Dick Smith" appeared as a book it had many friends.

The notices in the papers, which Mr. Ambrose took the trouble to send to Henry Harper from time to time, were kind to the verge of indiscretion. Almost without exception they summed up the modest and unpretending story in the same way: it was a thing entirely new. The writer saw and felt life with extraordinary intensity, and he had the power of painting it with a vivid force that was astonishing. The effect was heightened by a quaintness of style which seemed to give the impression of a foreigner of great perception using a tongue with which he was unfamiliar. Yet, allowing for every defect, there was a wonderful power of narrative, not unworthy of a Bunyan or a Defoe. A spell was cast upon the reader's mind, which made it very difficult for those who began the book to lay it down until the last page had been read.

Henry Harper was quite unconscious of the stir he had begun to make in literary circles. One aspect only of a literary success had anything to say to him at first, and that was purely monetary. Moreover, Edward Ambrose, unaffectedly proud of being the sponsor of "the new Stevenson"—a generalization so crude as to be very wide of the mark—was wise enough to stand between the personality of this half formed but rapidly developing man of genius and the curiosity of his admirers.

The young man was more than content that Edward Ambrose should take charge of his literary affairs and "dry nurse him" through these early and in some ways very critical months of his fame. And child of nature as the Sailor was, it was a task that could only have been carried through by a man of tact and liberality of mind.

One day, at the beginning of December, when Henry Harper had been married nearly six weeks—the visit to the Registrar round the corner in the Circus had coincided almost exactly with the book publication of the "Adventures of Dick Smith on the High Seas"—he received a letter from his friend. It said:

Bury Street,
Tuesday.

MY DEAR HARPER,

If you are free, come and dine here on Friday next at eight. There will be two or three men (no ladies!), old friends, and your humble admirers, who would like very much to meet you. Do come if you can.

Yours ever,
EDWARD AMBROSE.

The Sailor's first instinct, in spite of his confidence in Mr. Ambrose and a liking for him that now amounted to affection, was to decline this invitation. He was well aware that he was not fitted by education and by social opportunity to take his place as the equal of Mr. Ambrose and his friends. Therefore, a summons even in these siren terms, worried him a good deal. It seemed disloyal to deny such a friend for such a reason; but he had learned that the genie who now accompanied him day and night wherever he went, had one very sinister quality. It had a power of making him morbidly sensitive in regard to his own deficiencies.

In order to end the state of uncertainty into which the letter had thrown him, he showed it to Cora. She advised him to accept the invitation. This Mr. Ambrose, as she knew, had helped him very much, and it would be wise, she thought, for Harry to meet these friends of his, who no doubt would be literary men like Mr. Ambrose himself.

Cora having made his mind up for him, the young man determined to do his best to lay his timidity aside. After all, there was nothing of which to be ashamed. He was what he was; and it would be the part of loyalty to a true friend to believe that no harm could come of dining with him.

All the same, the evening of Friday, December 13, was in the nature of a great ordeal for Henry Harper. Why he should have had this feeling about it was more than he could say. But having duly written and posted his acceptance, he knew no peace of mind until that ominous day was through.

The evening itself, when it came, began badly. Cora, whom he left at the door of the Roc at a little after half past seven, told him exactly how to get to Bury Street. He would have plenty of time to walk as he had not to be there until eight. But either he did not follow her instructions as carefully as he ought to have done, or he was in a chaotic state of mind, for things went hopelessly awry. He took several wrong turnings, had twice to be put right by a policeman, began to wish miserably, when it was too late, that he had taken a taxi, and in the end arrived nearly twenty minutes after eight at Edward Ambrose's door.

It was a flustered, guilty, generally discomposed Henry Harper who was admitted by Mr. Ambrose's servant, whom he addressed as "Sir." The host and his two other guests were waiting patiently to begin dinner.

"Here you are," said Edward Ambrose, coming forward to greet the young man almost before he was announced. "I know what has happened, so don't apologize. No good Londoner apologizes for being late, my dear fellow." He then introduced Henry Harper to his two friends, and they went in to dinner.

The young man was so much upset at first by the absence of a dinner jacket, that he felt he must take an early opportunity of apologizing for that also. This he accordingly did with the greatest simplicity, and excused himself on the plea that he had no evening clothes at present, but was intending to get some.

Before Edward Ambrose could make any remark, his servant, of whom Henry Harper was really more in awe than of anyone else—he looked so much more imposing than either his master or his master's guests—was asking whether he would have sherry.

"No, thank you, I'm teetotal," he said to the servant in answer to the invitation. "At least, I'm almost teetotal." For he suddenly remembered that since his marriage he had rather fallen away from grace, yet not to any great extent.

"Have just half a glass," said Ambrose. "I'm rather proud of this sherry, although that's not a wise thing to say." The host laughed his rich note, which in the ear of Henry Harper was even finer than Klondyke's, if such an admission was not sacrilege; and his two friends, to whom the latter part of his remark was addressed, echoed his laugh with notes of their own that were almost equally musical.

"A simple beverage, warranted harmless," said the host as he raised his glass, making a rather feeble attempt to secure his line of retreat.

"Plutocrat," said his friend Ellis, who was in the Foreign Office, and who dignified his leisure with writing plays.

"It's very nice indeed, sir," said Henry Harper, speaking as he felt. He was convinced that this was the nicest wine he had ever tasted—to be sure, he had tasted little—and that it called for sincere commendation.

This evening was a landmark in the Sailor's life. Nervously anxious as he had been at the outset, the ease and the simplicity of his three companions, their considered yet not too obviously considered kindness towards him, the discreet pains they took to establish him on a basis of equality, could hardly fail of their effect. Very soon Henry Harper began to respond to this new and subtly delightful atmosphere as a flower responds to the sun.

He had never imagined that any dinner could be so agreeable as this one. He had never dreamed of food so choice or cooked so deliciously, or wines of such an exquisite flavor. He had never seen a room like that, or such beautiful silver, or such flowers as those in the bowl in the center of the table. All these things addressed a clear call to the soul of Henry Harper, a call it had never heard before.

Mr. Ambrose was a delightful host, and not less delightful were his friend Mr. Ellis and his other friend Mr. Barrington, yet perhaps Mr. Portman, the servant, who bore himself with apostolic calm and dignity, was really the most wonderful of all.

Somehow, these three gentlemen, Mr. Ambrose, Mr. Ellis, and Mr. Barrington, continually recalled, by little things they said and the way in which they said them, no less a person than Mr. Esme Horrobin. And to recall that gentleman was to evoke the even more august shade of the immortal Klondyke.

By an odd chance, Mr. Esme Horrobin was to be brought to the mind of Henry Harper in a manner even more direct before dinner was over. By the time they had come to the apples and pears and Mr. Ambrose had persuaded him to have half a glass of port wine, they were all talking freely and frankly together—Henry Harper a little less freely and frankly than the others, no doubt, but yet having settled down to enjoy himself more thoroughly than he could ever have thought to be possible—when the name of Mr. Esme Horrobin was suddenly mentioned. It was either Mr. Ellis or Mr. Barrington who mentioned it. The young man was not sure which; indeed, throughout the evening he was not quite sure which was Mr. Ellis and which was Mr. Barrington. Anyhow, after the host had told an anecdote which made them laugh consumedly, although the Sailor was not quite able to see the point of it, Mr. Ellis-Barrington made the remark, "That story somehow reminds one of Esme Horrobin."

"Alas, poor Esme!" sighed Mr. Ellis-Barrington with mock pathos. "It's odd, but this story of Ned's, which really seems to handle facts rather recklessly, recalls that distinguished shade. Alas, poor Horrobin!"

All three—Mr. Ellis, Mr. Barrington, and their host—laughed at the mention of that name, but to the acute ear of Henry Harper it seemed that their mirth had suddenly taken a new note.

"You never met Horrobin," said Mr. Ellis-Barrington to the Sailor. "We were all at Gamaliel with him."

Mr. Ellis-Barrington was wrong to assume that Mr. Harper had never met Mr. Esme Horrobin. Mr. Harper had not been with Mr. Horrobin at Gamaliel, but he had been with him at Bowdon House.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Harper, feeling honorably glad that he could play this part in the conversation. "I have met a Mr. Horrobin of Gamaliel College, Oxford." Somehow, the young man could not repress a thrill of pride in his excellent memory for names and places.

"Not the great Esme?" cried Mr. Ellis-Barrington with serio-comic incredulity.

"Yes, Mr. Esme Horrobin," said Henry Harper stoutly.

"Do tell us where you met the great man?" The voice of Edward Ambrose was asking the question almost as if it felt that it ought not to do so.

"I met him, sir, when I was staying at Bowdon House. He was staying there, too, and he used to talk to me about the 'Satyricon' of Petronius Arbiter and the Feast of Trimalchio."

For one brief but deadly instant, there was a pause. The odd precision with which the carefully treasured words were spoken was uncanny. But the three friends who had been with the great Esme Horrobin at Gamaliel somehow felt that an abyss had opened under their feet.

Edward Ambrose was the first to speak. But the laugh of gay charm was no longer on his lips. There was a look almost of horror in those honest eyes.

"That's very interesting, my dear fellow," he said, with a change of tone so slight that it was hardly possible to detect it. "Interesting and curious that you should have met Horrobin." And then with a return to carelessness, as though no answer was required to a merely conventional inquiry: "What's he doing now, do you know?"

The Sailor's almost uncanny power of memory was equal even to that question.

"He's bear-leading the aristocracy," said the young man, with a proud exactitude of phrase.

"Oh, really!"

But in spite of the adroitness of the host, the tact of Mr. Ellis, and Mr. Barrington's feeling for the nuances, another pause followed. For one dark instant it was by no means clear to all three of them that their legs were not being pulled rather badly. This rare and strange young sea monster with a primeval simplicity of speech and manner, who had just absentmindedly quenched his thirst from his finger bowl, might not be all that he appeared. It seemed hardly possible to doubt the *bona fides* of such a curiously charming child of nature, but....

For another brief and deadly moment, silence reigned. But in that moment, Mr. Henry Harper, with his new and rather terrible sensitiveness, was beginning to fear that he had committed a solecism. He remembered with a pang that Marlow's Dictionary had been unable to correlate "bear-leading" and "aristocracy." Clearly he had done wrong to make use of a phrase whose significance he did not fully understand, even though it was the phrase most certainly used by Mr. Esme Horrobin. It was pretending to a knowledge you didn't possess, and these gentlemen who had all been to college and to whom, therefore, pretence of any kind was entirely hateful....

"It's so like him!" The rare laugh of Edward Ambrose had come suddenly to the young man's aid. But the question for gods and men was: did Mr. Ambrose mean it was so like Mr. Esme Horrobin to be bear-leading the aristocracy, or so like Mr. Henry Harper to be using a phrase whose meaning was beyond him?

"Alas, poor Esme!" sighed Mr. Ellis-Barrington.

The Sailor echoed that sigh. His relief was profound that after all a pause so deadly had not been caused by himself.

XVIII

Henry Harper at this period of his life was in the grip of a single passion; the passion to know. Already he had learned that books, wonderful, enchanting as they were, formed only one avenue to the realms of truth. He had now come to realize that there are many secrets in earth and heaven which books, even the wisest of them, are not able to disclose.

Of late, he had begun to reinforce the thousand and one volumes placed at his disposal by Mr. Rudge with the daily and weekly newspapers, and those contemporaries of *Brown's* which came out once a month. He had been quite confounded by the reception given to "Dick Smith" by the public press. A thing so trivial seemed unrelated to the life of incomprehensible complexity in which he lived. Besides, he was convinced that the merit of the story had been exaggerated, as it no doubt had, in accordance with a generous custom of giving a newcomer a fair chance. Still, the author felt in his own mind that whatever the reviewers found in "Dick Smith" to admire was to be laid to the door of the friend who had made it possible for the story to reach the world.

One of the first fruits of this new craving for exact knowledge was to prove bitterly embarrassing. The Sailor had been haunted for several weeks by a report, which he had found among Mr. Rudge's miscellaneous collection, of the royal commission which sat to inquire into

the terrible case of Adolf Beck. He became obsessed by the thought that the apparatus of the criminal law in a free country could fasten bonds on an entirely innocent person, could successfully resist all attempts to cast them off, and when finally pinned down and exposed to public censure could easily evoke a second line of defense, which, under juridical forms, freed it of blame in the matter.

To such an extent did the affair react upon the Sailor's mind that when he called one afternoon upon Edward Ambrose in Pall Mall, he had to make a sad confession. He had been so much troubled by it that he had not been able to work.

"Ah, but there we come to the core of official England," said Edward Ambrose. "Such miscarriages of justice happen in every country in the world, but the commission which solemnly justifies them on the ground of indisputable common sense could only have happened in this land of ours."

The young man was grateful for the tone of indignation. It was something to know there was one man in the world who agreed in sum with a certain trite formula which was all he had to work by. It had come to him by accident on the *Margaret Carey*.... Right is right, and wrong is no man's right.

"You should go to the Old Bailey one day and hear a trial," said Edward Ambrose. "All things that are concerned with reality might help you just now. I dare say it will hurt you horribly; but if you are not unlucky in the judge, it may help to restore your faith in your country."

"Yes, sir, I'll go there one day, as you advise me to," said Henry Harper, as a boy in the fourth form who was young for his age might have said it; and then with curious simplicity: "But I won't much fancy going by myself."

"I'll come with you," said Edward Ambrose, "if that is how you feel about it."

Thus it was that one evening, about a fortnight later, Henry Harper received a postcard, which said:

Meet me outside O. B. 10.30 tomorrow. Murder trial: a strange and terrible drama of passion for two students of the human comedy! E. A.

On the following morning, the Sailor had already mingled with the crowd outside the Old Bailey when, punctual to the minute, he was joined by his friend.

"It's brave of you to face it," was his greeting.

Mr. Ambrose little knew the things he had faced in the course of his five and twenty years of life, was the thought that ran in the mind of the Sailor.

They made their way in, and became witnesses of the drama that the law was preparing to unfold.

The judge began the proceedings, or rather the proceedings began themselves, with a kind of grotesque dignity. After the jury had been sworn, the prisoner was brought into the dock. Henry Harper gazed at him with an emotion of dull horror. In an instant, he had recognized Mr. Thompson, the mate of the *Margaret Carey*.

There could be no doubt it was he. Alexander Thompson was the name given in the indictment; besides, the Sailor would have known anywhere that shaggy and hirsute man who had cast such a shadow across his youth. There he was, that grim figure! He had changed, and yet he had not changed. The long, lean, angular body was the same in every awkward line, but the deadly pallor of the face was horrible to see. It was Mr. Thompson right enough, and yet it was not Mr. Thompson at all.

A surge of memories came upon Henry Harper as he sat in that court. They were so terrible that he could hardly endure them. He did not hear a word that was being spoken by the barrister who, in even and impartial tones, was reciting the details of a savage but not ignoble crime. The Sailor was thousands of miles away in the Pacific; the groves of the Island of San Pedro were rising through the morning mists; he could hear the plop-plop of the sharks in the water; he could hear the Old Man coming up on deck.

"That man looks capable of anything," whispered Edward Ambrose.

The Sailor had always been clear upon that point. There was the drive to the docks in a cab through the rain of the November night in his mind. Again he was a helpless waif of the streets seated opposite Jack the Ripper. He almost wanted to scream.

"Would you rather not stay?" whispered his friend.

"I'm not feeling very well," said Henry Harper; thereupon they left the court and went out into the street.

They walked along Holborn in complete silence. To the Sailor the fellowship, the security, the friendliness of that crowded street were a great relief. His soul was in the grip of awful memories. Even the man at his side could not dispel them. Mr. Ambrose was much farther away just now than the Old Man, the Island of San Pedro, and the savage and brutal murderer to whom he owed his life.

For days afterwards, the mind of the Sailor was dominated by Mr. Thompson. He learned from the newspapers that the mate of the *Margaret Carey* was condemned to death, and that he awaited the last office of the law in Dalston Prison. One day, an odd impulse came upon him. He bought some grapes and took them to the prison, and with a boldness far from his character at ordinary times, sought permission to see the condemned man.

As Mr. Thompson had only one day more to live, and not one of his friends had visited him for the simple reason that he had not a friend in the world, the governor of the prison, a humane man, gave the Sailor permission to see the mate of the *Margaret Carey*.

Behind iron bars and in the presence of a warder, Henry Harper was allowed to look upon Mr. Thompson, to speak to him, and to offer the grapes he had brought him. But a dreadful shock awaited the young man. He saw at once that there was nothing human now in the man who was ranging his cell like a caged beast.

"Don't you know me, Mr. Thompson?" cried Henry Harper feebly, through the bars.

The mate of the *Margaret Carey* paid no heed to his voice, but still paced up and down.

"Don't you know me, Mr. Thompson? I'm Sailor."

For a fraction of time, the condemned man turned savage, unutterable eyes upon him. They were those of a wild beast at bay.

"There's no God," he said.

He dashed his head against the wall of his cell.

XIX

Henry Harper was now in a universe of infinite complexity. The genie who lived in the wonderful lamp in his brain had taught him already that he knew nothing about whole stellar spaces in this strange cosmos that he, the thing he called himself, inhabited. Moreover, it presented many problems. Of these the most instant and pressing was Cora.

It was no use mincing the matter: Cora and he were not getting on. There was no bond of sympathy between them. His work and all that went with it were far more to him than the woman he had married. And when this fact came home to her, she began to resent it in a contemptuous way. It made it more difficult for both that his work only appealed to her in one aspect, and that the one which least appealed to him. The hard and continuous labor it involved meant nothing to her; the hopes and the fears of an awakening artistic sense were things beyond her power to grasp; if his work had not a definite commercial value, if it could not be rendered in pounds and shillings, it was a waste of time and worse than meaningless. Everything apart from that was a closed book as far as she was concerned. She began to despise his timidity and his ignorance, and the time soon came when she did not hesitate to sneer at him before her friends.

For one thing, she was bitterly resentful. It was useless to disguise that he was not merely indifferent to her physical charms, he positively disliked and even dreaded that aspect of their life together. Within a very short time after their marriage, he made the discovery that she drank.

Even before that knowledge came he had discerned something unwholesome about her. The blackened eyebrows, the rouged cheeks, the dyed hair, the overfine presence, the stealthy, cloying color of scent she exuded, the coarse mouth, the apathetic eyes, had always been things that he dared not let his mind rest upon in detail even before he had taken them unto himself. And now that he had done so at the call of duty, and with even that to sustain him, he foresaw that he must come to dislike them more and more. It hardly needed a pervading reek of brandy in her bedroom to read the future.

Unluckily for Cora, the monotony of a "straight" life with such a humdrum young man was more than she could stand for any length of time. The old fatal habit was soon upon her again. Years of yielding had weakened her will; and now she was beginning to grow contemptuous of her husband—perhaps as a requital of his apathy towards her—she began to assume a defiant

carelessness, first of manner and then of conduct.

Disaster was foreshadowed by several quarrels. None of these were serious, but they showed the inevitable end towards which matters had begun to drift. Henry Harper was not the sort of man with whom it was easy to quarrel; he had no aptitude for a form of reflex action quite alien to his nature. All the same, there were times when he was almost tempted to defend himself from Cora's perpetual sneers at his dullness, not only in her company, which was bad enough, but in that of her friends, which was worse.

Her chief complaint was his bearing in restaurants and public places. He had not a word to say for himself; he let "the girls" and "the boys"—Cora included her whole exceedingly numerous acquaintance in these terms—"come it over him"; he took everything lying down; and she couldn't understand why a man who was as clever as he was supposed to be "didn't let himself out a bit now and again."

Harry's social maladroitness became a very sore subject. It annoyed Cora intensely that the boys and the girls should so consistently "make a mark of him." His inability to hit back seemed to be a grave reflection upon her judgment and good taste in marrying him. The time soon came when she told him that if he couldn't show himself a little brighter in company, he could either stay at home of an evening or go his way, and she would go hers.

As a fact, neither alternative was irksome to Henry Harper. But the ultimatum hurt him very much. The odd thing was that in spite of the nipping atmosphere to which his sensitiveness was exposed, it seemed to grow more acute. He had a very real sense of inferiority in the presence of others. Not only did he suffer from a lack of any kind of social training, but even the few counters he was painfully acquiring in a difficult game he had not the art of playing to advantage. Thus he was only too glad to accept Cora's ukase. It was a merciful relief to sit at home in the evening and eat the meager cold supper that Royal Daylight provided, and then go on with his work to what hour he chose, instead of being haled abroad at the heels of a superfashionable and therefore hyperdisdainful Cora to public places, where he was always at a miserable disadvantage.

She thus formed a habit of sallying forth alone in the evening. Although she sometimes returned after midnight in a slightly elevated condition, or in her own words, "inclined to be market merry," her husband had too little knowledge of life to be really suspicious or even deeply resentful.

Under the new arrangement, which suited the young man so well, he was able to attend public lectures at various places, the Polytechnic in Regent Street, the British Museum, the London Institution, the South Kensington Museum, and other centers of light. These helped him in certain ways. He was no dry-as-dust. Already his eyes were set towards the mountain peaks, yet with a humility that was perhaps his chief asset, he felt it to be in the power of all men to help him upon his journey.

Twice a week, now, after an early supper, he would go to a lecture. When it was over, he would often take a stroll about the streets in order to observe the phantasmagoria around him of which he knew so little. Yet his eager mind was looking forward to a time when all should be made clear by the play of the light that shines in darkness.

As a rule, he would finish his evening's excursion with a cup of coffee and a sandwich at Appenrodt's in Oxford Circus. And then thinking his wonderful thoughts, he would take a final enchanted stroll homewards to the Avenue, to No. 106, King John's Mansions, where his work and his books awaited him. Sometimes, however, he was greatly troubled with the thought of Cora. It was idle to disguise the ever growing sense of antagonism that was arising between them. But she went her way and he went his. The financial arrangement they had now come to was that he should pay the rent of the flat and all household expenses, and as Cora had apparently no money of her own, he also allowed her half of what remained of his income.

One evening in the summer, as he was walking slowly down Regent Street, a man and a woman passed him in an open taxi. The woman was Cora, and the man, who was in evening dress, appeared to have his arm around her waist. The sight was like a blow in the face. And yet it was a thing so far outside his ken that it was impossible to know exactly what it meant. For a moment he was dazed. He did not know how to regard it, or in what way to deal with it. To begin with, and perhaps oddly, it did not make him particularly angry. Why he was not more angry, he didn't know. No doubt it was because he was growing to dislike Cora so intensely. But as he walked slowly to King John's Mansions he still had the curious feeling of being half stunned by a blow.

He went to bed without awaiting her return. She had recently taken to coming home very late. Partly because of this, and partly in consequence of the condition in which she often returned, he had insisted for some little time past upon a bedroom of his own. This she had been very unwilling to concede, but he had fought for it and had in the end won; and tonight as he turned in and locked the door, he determined that no power on earth should cause him to yield the spoils of victory. He got into bed with hideous phantoms in his mind. But the thought uppermost was that he had turned yet another page of experience. And there suddenly in the midst of the flow and eddy of his fancies, the awful face of Mr. Thompson emerged at the foot of the bed. He could almost hear the mate of the *Margaret Carey* dash his head against the wall of

his cell.

He put forth all his power of will in the hope of inducing sleep, but before it showed signs of coming, he heard Cora's latchkey fumbling at the front door of the flat. She opened it with a rattle, and closed it with a bang; and then he heard her come stumbling along the passage, her fuddled voice uplifted in the mirthless strain of a music hall ditty.

With a sensation of physical nausea, he heard her try the handle of the bedroom door. And then there came a knock.

"Let me in, ducky."

He didn't answer, but pulled the bedclothes over his head.

"Let me in, ducky. I want to kiss you good night."

In spite of the bedclothes, he could still hear her.

Receiving no answer, she beat upon the door again.

"Don't then"—he could still hear her—"You are no good, anyway."

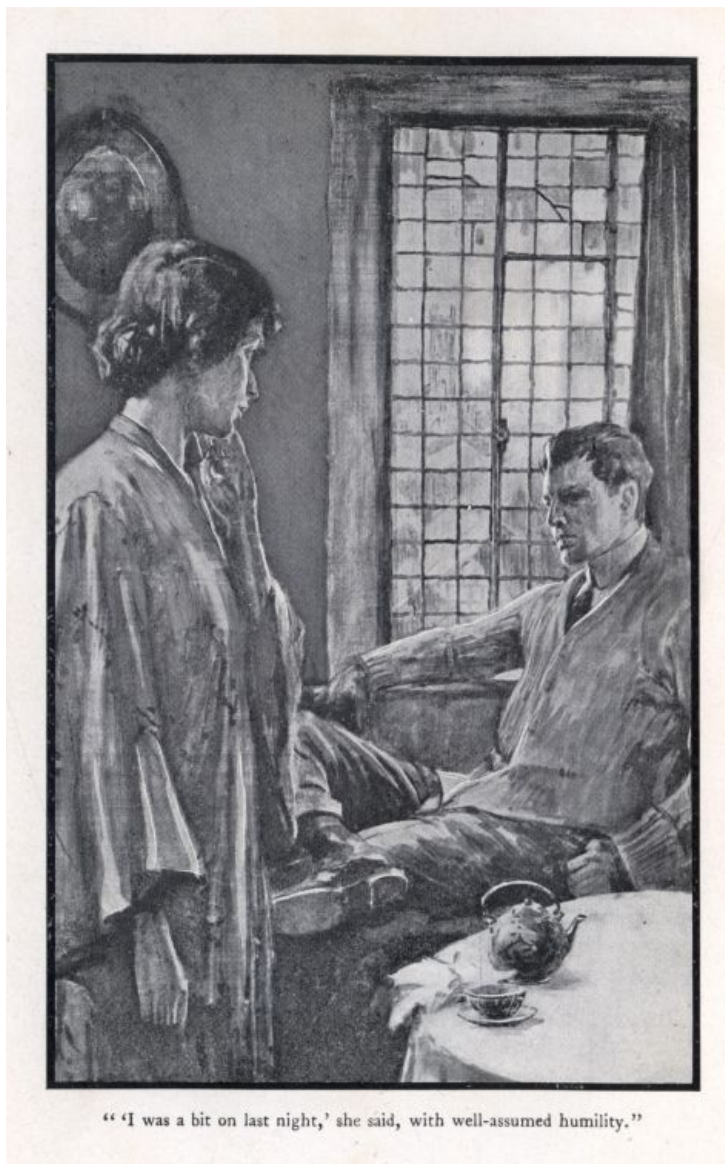
XX

The next day Cora was not visible until about two o'clock, which was now her invariable rule. They lunched together. He could hardly bring himself to eat the comfortless meal with her. But, after all, he had taken her for better or for worse. He must keep his part of the contract, therefore it was no use being squeamish.

He waited until the meal was over and Royal Daylight had cleared the table, and had also cleared away herself, before he mentioned the taxi. And then very bluntly, and in a tone entirely new to her as well as to himself, he demanded an explanation.

Cora, it seemed, was in a rather chastened mood. For one thing, she was now sober, and when she was sober she was not exactly a fool. She was not really repentant. He was too poor a thing to make a self-respecting woman repent. But now she was again herself, she was both shrewd and wary; after all, this double-adjectival idiot was the goose that laid the golden eggs.

"I was a bit on last night," she said, with well-assumed humility.



“ ‘I was a bit on last night,’ she said, with well-assumed humility.”

“ ‘I was a bit on last night,’ she said, with well-assumed humility.”

"Yes, I heard you was when you come home," he said, with the new note in his voice that she didn't like.

"Oh, so you *did* hear." She suddenly determined to carry the war into the enemy's country. "Why didn't you open it, then?"

The cold impudence stung.

"I'd rather have died than have opened it to a cow like you." He hardly knew the words he used. They had seemed to spring unbidden from the back of beyond.

She half respected him for speaking to her in that way, and in such a tone; there was perhaps a little more to the double-adjectival one than she had guessed. And as the cards were dead against her now, she decided on a strategic grovel of pathos and brandy.

"Call yourself a gentleman?" Tears sprang reluctantly to the raddled cheek.

The sight of a lady in tears, even a lady who drank, was a little too much for Henry Harper.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I oughtn't to have said that." He had remembered that the word "cow" as applied to the female sex was a Blackhampton expression and a favorite with Auntie.

The lady could only weep a little more profusely. This mug was as soft as butter.

He stood looking at her with tight lips and with eyes of sorrowful disgust.

"But you've no right to drink as much as you do," he said, determinedly. "And you've no right to ride in taxis with gentlemen and to let them put their arms round you."

"And you've no right to call your own lawful wife a cow," she said, tearfully.

"I've apologized for that," he said. "But you've given me no explanation of that gentleman."

"Didn't I say I was a bit on," she said aggrievedly.

"It's no excuse. It makes it worse."

"Yes, it does," said Mrs. Henry Harper, with a further grovel, "if it happened. But it didn't happen. You was mistaken, Harry. I'm too much the lady to let any gentleman, whether he was in evening dress or whether he wasn't, put his arm around me in a taxi. I wouldn't think of it now I'm married. Now, you kiss your Cora, Harry, for calling her a name."

She approached him with pursed lips. In spite of the shame he felt for such a lapse from his official duties, he retreated slowly before her.

"It's no use denying it," he said, as soon as the table had been placed successfully between them. "I saw his arm round you."

"You are mistaken, Harry." She did not like the look or the sound of him. She was beginning to be alarmed at her own folly. "I may have been a bit on, but I was not as bad as that. Honest."

"I saw what I saw," he persisted; and then feeling no longer able to cope with her or the situation, he slipped out of the room and out of the flat.

He had now to look forward in a dim way to the time when he would have to leave her. The time was not yet, but he was beginning to feel in the very marrow of his bones that it was near. Now that her secret was out and a hopeless deterioration had begun, there was something so revolting in the whole thing that he foresaw already their life together could have only one end. But in the meantime, he must be man enough to keep with a stiff upper lip a contract he ought never to have made.

Apart from his domestic relations, things were going very well indeed with him. He had completed the "Further Adventures of Dick Smith" to the satisfaction of Mr. Ambrose, and it was on the point of starting in the magazine. Moreover, the first series had won fame on both sides of the Atlantic. It was felt, so rare was its merits, that if Henry Harper never wrote anything else his reputation was secure for twenty years.

This, of course, was an amazing piece of fortune. Edward Ambrose, who had had no small share in bringing it about, and whose discriminating friendship had made it possible, compared it, in his own mind, with the success of Dickens, who, after a life of poverty and hardship, gained immortality at five and twenty. It was far too soon as yet to predict such a crown for Henry Harper, but he had certainly burst upon the world as a full-fledged literary curiosity. His name was coming to be in the mouth of all who could appreciate real imagination.

One of the first fruits of this success was his election to the Stylists' Club. This distinguished and esoteric body met on the afternoon of the first Tuesday of the autumn and winter months at Paradine's Hotel in Upper Brook Street, Berkeley Square, to discuss Style. Literary style only was within the scope of its reference; at the same time, the members of the club carried Style into all the appurtenances of their daily lives. Not only were they stylists on paper, they were stylists in manner, in dress, in speech, in mental outlook. The club was so select that it was limited to two hundred members, as it was felt there was never likely to be more than that number of persons in the metropolis at any one time who could be expected to possess an authentic voice upon the subject. Happily, these were not all confined to one sex. The club included ladies.

That the Stylists' Club, of all human institutions, should have sought out Henry Harper for the signal honor of membership, seemed a rare bit of byplay on the part of Providence. For a reason which he could not explain, Edward Ambrose gave a hoot of delight when the young man brought to him the club's invitation, countersigned by its president, the supremely distinguished Mr. Herbert Gracious, whose charmingly urbane "Appreciations," issued biennially, were known wherever the English language was in use. Mr. Herbert Gracious was not merely a stylist himself, he was a cause of style in others.

Henry Harper had been a little troubled at first by the hoot of Mr. Ambrose, and the feeling of doubt it inspired was not made less by a rather lame defense. All the same, Mr. Ambrose so frankly respected the young man's intense desire to improve himself that he urged him to join the club, and to attend the first meeting, at any rate, of the new session, if he felt he would get the least good out of it.

In response to a basely utilitarian suggestion, Henry Harper said he would do so. He was not in a frame of mind to face such an ordeal. But he must not let go of himself. Miserable as he was, he felt he must take such advice if only to prove his courage. He would attend the first meeting of the Stylists' Club on the ground of its being good for the character, if on no higher.

"I suppose you'll be there, sir?"

"No," laughed Mr. Ambrose. "I'm not a member. It's a very distinguished body."

Henry Harper looked incredulous. It did not occur to him that anybody could be so distinguished as to exclude such a man as Edward Ambrose.

"I don't think I'll go, then," said Henry Harper. "It will be a bit lonesome-like."

"Please do. And then come and tell me about it. Your personal impression will be valuable."

It was for this reason that the Sailor finally decided not to show the white feather.

XXI

Henry Harper found the Stylists' Club of far greater interest than he thought it would be. To one as simple as he it was a very stimulating body. Moving precariously towards fresh standards of life, he knew at once that he was in a strange new world. He knew even before a powdered footman had led him across the parqueted floors of Paradine's Hotel, and a personage hardly less gorgeous had announced him to the congeries of stylists who had assembled to the number of about sixty.

"It is such a pleasure, Mr. Harper," said a large, florid, benign and beaming gentleman, seizing him by the hand. "You will find us all at your feet."

Mr. Harper was overawed not a little by the size and the distinction of the company, but the benign and beaming gentleman, who was no less a person than Mr. Herbert Gracious himself, took him in charge and introduced him to several other gentlemen, most of whom were benign but not beaming, being rather obviously preoccupied with a sense of Style. Indeed, Mr. Herbert Gracious was the only one of its members who did beam really. The others were far too deeply engaged with the momentous matters they had met to consider.

When Mr. Henry Harper had been allowed to subside into a vacant chair in the midst of six stylists, four of whom were female and two of whom were male, he was able to pull himself together a little. He knew already that he was in very deep waters indeed: Mr. Esme Horrobins and Mr. Edward Ambroses were all around him. And these ladies ... these ladies who waved eyeglasses stuck on sticks were not of the Cora and the Miss Press and the Miss Bonser breed; they were of the sort that Klondyke put on a high hat and a swallowtail to walk with in Hyde Park. Yes, even for a sailor, he was in very deep waters just now, and he was obliged to tell himself once again, as he always did in such circumstances, that having sailed six years before the mast there was nothing in the world to fear.

All the same, at first he was very far from being happy. A dozen separate yet correlated discussions upon Style had been interrupted by his entrance. The announcement, "Mr. Henry Harper," had suspended every conversation. For a moment all the Mr. Esme Horrobins were mute and inglorious. But then, having glutted their gaze upon one whom Mr. Herbert Gracious himself had already crowned in the Literary Supplement of the *Daily Age and Lyre*, the Mr. Esme Horrobins and the Mrs. Esme Horrobins—the mere male was not allowed to have it all his own way in this discussion upon Style—took up the theme.

It was the part of Mr. Henry Harper to listen. The public press of England and America had compared his own style to that of Stevenson, Bunyan, Defoe, the Bible, Shakespeare, Lætitia Longborn Gentle, Memphis Mortmain Mimpriss, finally Dostoievsky, and then Stevenson again. In a true analysis Stevenson would have defeated all the other competitors together, leaving out Dostoievsky, who was a bad second, and excluding the Bible, Shakespeare, and Memphis Mortmain Mimpriss, who, to their great discredit, were an equally bad third. Stevenson was first and the rest nowhere. And there that glorious reincarnation sat, in a modest blue suit, but looking very neat and clean, listening to every word that fell in his vicinity from the lips of the elect. At least, that was, as far as it was possible for one human pair of ears to do so.

"Tell me, Mr. Harper," said Miss Carinthia Small, with all Kensington upon her eyebrows, imperiously attacking with a stick eyeglass, which she wobbled ferociously, this very obvious young genius who didn't know how to dress properly, as soon as Mr. Marmaduke Buzzard—M.B. of the *Stylists' Review*—had allowed her, much against his will and for purely physical reasons, to get in a word. "Tell me, Mr. Harper, exactly how you feel about Dostoievsky? Where do you place him? Before Meredith and after Cuthbert Rampant, or before Cuthbert Rampant and after Thomas Hardy?"

It was a dismal moment for Mr. Henry Harper. Fortunately he hesitated for a fraction of an instant, and he was saved. That infinitesimal period of time had given Mr. Marmaduke Buzzard his chance to get in again. And stung by the public acclamation of Mr. Cuthbert Rampant, a well-nourished young man in a checked cravat, who was curving gracefully over Miss Carinthia Small, he proceeded to show with some little violence, yet without loss of temper, that in any discussion of style *qua* style, Turgenieff alone of the Russians could possibly count.

"But everybody knows," breathed the defiant Miss Carinthia in the charmed ear of Mr. Cuthbert Rampant, "that had it not been for Dostoievsky, the 'Adventures of Dick Smith' could

never have been written at all."

The considered reply of Mr. Cuthbert Rampant was lost in the boom and the rattle of Mr. Marmaduke Buzzard's heavy artillery.

Henry Harper might have sailed six years upon the high seas, but a flood of deep and perplexing waters was all around him now. Stylists to right of him, stylists to left of him, all discoursing *ex cathedra* upon that supreme quality. Never, since the grim days of the *Margaret Carey* had he felt a sterner need to keep cool and hold his wits about him. But with the native shrewdness that always stood to him in a crisis, he had grasped already a very important fact. It must be the task just now of the new Stevenson to sit tight and say nothing.

To this resolve he kept honorably. And it was less difficult than it might have been had not Style alone been the theme of their discourse, had not this been an authentic body of its practitioners, and had not "The Adventures of Dick Smith" been acclaimed as the finest example of pure narrative seen for many a year. All through the period of tea and cake, which Mr. Henry Harper contrived to hand about with the best of them, being honestly determined not to mind his inferior clothes and absence of manner, because, after all, these things were less important than they seemed at the moment, he kept perfectly mute.

Nevertheless he had one brief lapse. It was after he had drunk a cup of tea and the undefeated Miss Carinthia Small had drunk several, and Mr. Marmaduke Buzzard had retired in gallant pursuit of some watercress sandwiches, that the dauntless lady felt it to be her duty to draw him out.

"Tell me, Mr. Harper," said she, "what really led you to Stevenson?"

So much was the novice troubled by the form of the question that she decided to restate it in a simpler one, although heaven knew it was simple enough already!

"What is your favorite Stevenson?" she asked, looking Mr. Cuthbert Rampant full in the eye with an air of the complete Amazon.

The author of "The Adventures of Dick Smith" was bound to speak then. Unfortunately he spoke to his own undoing.

"I've only read one book by Stevisson," he said, in a voice of curious penetration which nervousness had rendered loud and strident.

"Pray, which is that?" asked Miss Carinthia Small in icy tones.

"It's the one called 'Virginibus Puerisk,'" said Mr. Henry Harper.

Miss Carinthia Small felt that a pin might have been heard to fall in Upper Brook Street, Berkeley Square. Mr. Cuthbert Rampant shared her emotion. Yet the area of the fatal silence did not extend beyond Mr. Marmaduke Buzzard, who had already reopened fire a short distance away, and was again doing immense execution.

Miss Carinthia Small and Mr. Cuthbert Rampant risked no further discussion of Stevisson with this strange young Visigoth from the back of beyond. Neither of them could have believed it to be possible. When he had been first ushered into the room by the benign Herbert, and had modestly sat down, he had looked so clean and neat, and anxious to efface himself that he might have been a product of some self-respecting modern university who was on a reconnaissance from a garden suburb. But how could that have been their thought! This was a cruel trick that somebody had played upon Herbert. There was malice in it, too. Dear Herbert, England's only critic, the British Sainte Beuve, had had his leg pulled in a really wicked manner! He had always prided himself upon being democratic and inclusive, but there was a limit to everything.

Happily the Sailor did not stay much longer. Many stylists were going already. It had been an interesting experience for the young man. If he had gained nothing beyond a cup of lukewarm tea and a cucumber sandwich, he certainly felt very glad that he had had the courage to face it.

"Good-by, ma'am," he said, squeezing a delicate white glove in a broad and powerful grip. "I'm very proud to have met you. What else ought I to read of Stevisson?"

Miss Carintha Small felt an inclination to laugh. But yet there was something that saved him. What it was she didn't know. She only knew it was something that Winchester and New College in the person of Mr. Cuthbert Rampant did not possess.

"Good-by." There was really very little of the stylist in her voice, although she was not aware of it, and would have been quite mortified had such been the case. "And you *must* read 'Treasure Island.' It is exactly your style, although 'Dick Smith' is very much deeper and truer and to my mind altogether more sincere."

Miss Carinthia Small had not meant to say a word of this. She had not meant to say anything. She had intended to efface this young man altogether.

The Sailor threaded his way through a perfect maze of stylists with almost a sense of rapture.

It had been a delightful adventure to converse on equal terms with a real Hyde Park Lady: a brilliant creature who had neither chaffed him nor hit him in the back, nor addressed him as "Greased Lightning," nor had rebuked him with "Damn you." He walked out on air.

As the author of "The Adventures of Dick Smith" was retrieving his hat from the hotel cloak room, he was suddenly brought to earth. Two really imperial stylists were being assisted into elaborate fur coats by two stylists among footman.

"My dear Herbert." An abnormally quick ear caught the half humorous, half indignant remark, in spite of the fact that it was uttered in a very low tone. "This man Harper ... I assure you the fellow hasn't an aitch to his name."

XXII

It was not until Henry Harper had escaped from Paradine's Hotel and had managed to find a way into Regent Street that the words he had overheard seemed to hit him between the eyes. His mind had been thrown back years, to Klondyke and the waterlogged bunk in the half-deck of the *Margaret Carey*. He recalled as in a dream the great argument he had dared to maintain as to the true manner of spelling his name, and how, finally, he had been compelled to give in. Ever since that time, he had always put in the aitch in deference to his friend's superior artillery, which included Greek and Latin and other surprising things.

It was clear, however, that it was not a bit of use putting the letter aitch in your name unless you included it in your speech as well. It was amazing that he had not grasped such a simple truth until that moment. He had known, of course, for some little time now, in fact, ever since he had met Mr. Esme Horrobin at Bowdon House that his manner of speaking only very faintly resembled that in vogue in college and society circles.

On the edge of the curb at Piccadilly Circus, waiting to make the perilous crossing to the Avenue, the crushing force of the remark he had overheard seemed to come right home to him. Moreover, as he stood there he saw in an almost fantastically objective way that the letter aitch should be attended to at once. He must not be content merely to improve his mind, he must improve himself in every possible manner.

It was here, as he stood in deep thought, that his old friend Providence came rather officiously to his aid. A derelict walked past him in the gutter, and on the back of the human wreck was fixed a sandwich board bearing the legend:

Madame Sadleir gives lessons daily by appointment in voice production, elocution, correct speaking, and deportment. Apply for terms at 12, Portugal Place, W.

This was very friendly of Providence. The young man knew that two minutes ago he had passed Portugal Place. He was strung up to the point of adventure. This too long neglected matter was so vital to one who desired to mix with stylists on equal terms, that it would be the part of wisdom to see about it now.

At this moment thought was action with Henry Harper. Therefore he turned almost at once and retraced his steps into Regent Street. Within a very short time he was assailing the bell pull of 12, Portugal Place, W., third floor.

Providence had arranged that Madame Sadleir should be at home. She was alone, moreover, in her professional chamber, and fully prepared to enter into the matter of the letter aitch.

Madame Sadleir was stout and elderly, she wore an auburn wig, she was calm and efficient, yet she also had an indefinable quality of style. In spite of a certain genial grotesqueness she had an air of superiority. Henry Harper, his vibrant sensibilities still astretch from an afternoon of stylists, perceived at once that this was a lady with more or less of a capital letter.

Experience of Cora and her friends had by this time taught the Sailor that there were "common or garden" ladies, to use a favorite expression of Miss Press, and there were also those he defined as real or Hyde Park ladies. He had little first-hand knowledge, at present, of the latter; he merely watched them from afar and marked their deportment in public places. But there was a subtle quality in the greeting of Madame Sadleir, almost a caricature to look at as she was, which suggested the presence of a lady with a capital letter, at least with more or less of a capital letter, a sort of Hyde Park lady relapsed. Henry Harper was aware, almost before Madame Sadleir spoke a word, that she had been born to better things than 12, Portugal Place, W., third floor.

Completely disarmed by the calm but forthcoming manner of Madame Sadleir, Mr. Henry Harper stated his modest need with extreme simplicity. He just wanted to be taught in as few lessons as possible to speak like a real college gentleman that went regular—regularly (remembering his grammar in time)—into Society.

Madame Sadleir's smile was maternal.

"Why, certainly," she said in the voice of a dove. "Nothing easier."

The young man felt reassured. He had not thought, even in his moments of optimism, that there would be anything easy in the process of making a Mr. Edward Ambrose or a Mr. Esme Horrobin.

"It will be necessary," said Madame Sadleir, "to pay very particular attention to the course of instruction, and also to practice assiduously. But first you must learn to take breath and to assemble and control the voice. Do you desire the Oxford manner?"

Mr. Henry Harper, with recollections of Mr. Edward Ambrose and Mr. Esme Horrobin, said modestly that he did desire the Oxford manner if it could be acquired in a few lessons, which was yet more than he dared to hope.

"The number of lessons depends entirely upon your diligence and, may I add"—and Madame Sadleir did add—"your intelligence and natural aptitude. But, of course, to remove all misunderstanding, the Oxford manner is an extra."

Somehow he felt that such would be the case.

"Personally, one doesn't recommend it," said Madame Sadleir, "for general use."

Mr. Harper was a little disappointed.

"It is not quite so popular as it was," said Madame Sadleir, "unless one is going into the Church. In the Church it is always in vogue, in fact one might say a *sine qua non* in its higher branches. Do you propose to take Orders?"

Mr. Harper had no thoughts of a commercial life.

"Personally," said Madame Sadleir, speaking with the most engaging freedom and ease, "one is inclined to favor a good Service manner for all round general use. There is the A manner for the army subaltern, the B manner for the company officer, either of which you will find admirable for general purposes. There is also the Naval manner, but excellent as it is, I am afraid it is hardly to be recommended for social life. The Civil Service manner, which combines utility with a reasonable amount of ornament, might suit you perhaps. I am recommending it quite a good deal just now. And, of course, there is the Diplomatic or Foreign Office manner for advanced pupils, but it may be early days to talk of that at present. One does not like to raise false hopes or to promise more than one can perform. Now, Mr. Harper, kindly let me hear you read this leading article in the Times on 'What is Wrong with the Nation?' paying particular attention to the vowel sounds."

With grave deliberation, Mr. Henry Harper did as he was asked. Having painfully completed his task, Madame Sadleir, in a remarkably benign way, which somehow brought Mr. Herbert Gracious vividly to his mind, proceeded to deal with him with the utmost fidelity.

Said she: "It is my duty to tell you that for the present a good sound No. 3 Commercial manner is earnestly recommended. If you are diligent, it may be possible to graft a modified Oxford upon it, but I am afraid it would be premature to promise even that."

This was disappointing. But, after all, it was to be foreseen. Mr. Edward Ambroses and Mr. Esme Horrobins were not made in a day. And when he came to think the matter over at his leisure he was sincerely glad that they were not. It would have taken a mystery and a glamour from the world.

XXIII

About this time, Henry Harper became a member of a society which met once a week at Crosbie's in the Strand. This step was the outcome of a course of lectures he had attended at the London Ethical Institution, in Bloomsbury Square. They had been delivered by the very able Professor Wynne Davies, on that most fascinating of all subjects to the truly imaginative mind, the Idea of God.

During these lectures, and quite by chance, Henry Harper had made the acquaintance of a

certain Arthur Reeves, a young journalist, who suggested that he should join the Social Debating Society, which met at Crosbie's every Tuesday. This he accordingly did; and being under no obligation to take an active part in the proceedings until he felt he could do so with reasonable credit, he was able to enjoy them thoroughly. Moreover, he was in full sympathy with these alert minds which for the most part were owned by young and struggling men.

Some of the discussions Henry Harper heard at Crosbie's made a deep impression upon him. All the members seemed to have a turn for speculative inquiry. The majority of those who took an active part in the debates spoke very well. Now and again, it is true, the pride of intellect raised its head. Some of its members were young enough to know everything, but there was also a leaven of older minds which saw life more steadily, and in as rounded a shape as it is possible for the eye of man to perceive it.

There was one man in particular who attracted Henry Harper. His name was James Thorneycroft, and he was in his way a rare bird, a bank manager with a strong ethical and sociological bias. He was one of the graybeards of the society, a man of sixty, who had the worn look of one who had been fighting devils, more or less unsuccessfully, all his life. For Henry Harper there was fascination and inspiration in James Thorneycroft. His was a mind capable of delving deep into spiritual experience, and of rendering it in terms which all could understand.

At the third meeting which Henry Harper attended at Crosbie's, his friend and introducer, Arthur Reeves, under the spell cast by the brilliant Professor Wynne Davies, ventured to combat a certain skepticism in regard to the scope and function of the Deity, which some of the advanced members had put into words at the previous meeting.

The performance of Arthur Reeves was crude and rather unphilosophical, and yet it was stimulating enough to bring James Thorneycroft on to his legs.

"My own view about God is this," he began in that curiously unpremeditated and abrupt way which made an effect of absolute sincerity. "There is a form of inherited belief that will overthrow the most fearless and independent mind if it ventures to disregard it. I suppose most men who think at all are up against this particular problem some time in their lives. But it all comes back to this: it is absolutely impossible for any man to banish the idea of God and continue as a reasoning entity. Of the First Cause we know nothing, of the Ultimate Issue we know even less, but my own faith is that as long as the idea of God persists, Man himself will not perish. I know there are many who will say that science is against me. They will say that there is nothing inherent in the mere idea of God which will or can prevent an earthquake banishing all forms of organic life from this planet in sixty seconds. Well, it is my faith that if that came to pass Man would still persist in some other form. Science would at once rejoin that he would cease to be Man, but to my own psychic experience that is not at all a clear proposition. Science is based upon reason which states as an absolute fact that two and two make four. The idea of God is based upon the fact that two and two plus One make five, and all the science and all the clear and exact thinking in the world can't alter it. Man is only a reasoning animal up to a point. He has only to keep exclusively to reason to bring about his own defeat. Every thinking mind, I assume, must oscillate at some period of its development between Reason on the one hand (two and two make four) and Experience (two and two make five) on the other. Well, if it won't bore you" ... "Go on, go on!" cried the meeting, not out of politeness merely, since all felt the fascination of the unconventional and childlike personality of James Thorneycroft.... "I will give you in as few words as I can the experience that happened to me nearly thirty years ago, which laid at rest all doubts I might ever have had on this point.

"At that time I was a clerk in a bank at Blackhampton. Employed at the bank was a young porter." ...

For a reason he could never explain, a strange thrill suddenly ran through Henry Harper.

"... And this young chap was one of the best and most promising fellows I ever met. He belonged to the working class, but he was tremendously keen to improve himself. When I met him first he couldn't even read—it makes one smile to hear people talk about the good old days!—but he very soon learned, and then he began to worry things out for himself. I lent him one or two books myself ... John Stuart Mill, I remember, and that old fool Carlyle, who ruled the roast at that time."—Here a bearded gentleman at the back had to be called to order.—"Then we both began to get into deeper waters, and with assistance from Germany, soon found ourselves in a flood of isms, although I am bound to say without being able to make very much of them.

"The time came, however, when this young man, who was really a very fine fellow, took the wrong turning. He somehow got entangled with a woman, a thoroughly bad lot I afterwards found out, a person of a type much below his own. He was an extraordinarily simple chap, he had the heart of a child. From a mistaken, an utterly mistaken sense of chivalry, he finally married her.

"If ever a man was imposed upon and entrapped it was this poor fellow. Of course he didn't know that at first. But from the hour of his marriage deterioration set in. Ambition and all desire for self-improvement began to go. Then he lost his mental poise, and he became cynical, and no wonder, because that woman made his life a hell. Even when the truth came to him he stuck to her, really I think out of some quixotic notion he had of reforming her. Certainly he stuck to her

long after he ought to have, because slowly but surely she began to drag him down. At last, when the full truth came home to him, he killed her in a sudden fit of madness.

"Now, there was no real evil in that man. There were one or two soft places in him, no doubt, as there are in most of us, but it is my firm belief that had he married the right woman he would one day have been a credit to his country. He was in every way a very fine fellow—in fact, he was too fine a fellow. It was the vein of quixotic chivalry in his nature that undid him. That was the cruelest part of the whole thing. And I am bound to say that the doubts the higher criticism had put into my mind were very much assisted by the fact that it was this poor chap's real nobility of soul which destroyed him.

"From the point of view of reason, any man was wrong to marry such a woman, even allowing for the fact that he was ignorant of her real character and vocation when he married her. From the point of view of ethics he was wrong; that is to say, he had not even infringed the code of conventional morality, and was therefore under no obligation to do so. And where he was doubly wrong in the sight of reason and ethics, and where, in the sight of the Saviour of mankind, he was so magnificently right, was in sticking to her in the way he did.

"And yet that man came to the gallows. For years afterwards I could never think of him without a feeling of inward rage that almost amounted to blasphemy. But to return to Reason *v.* Experience, I am merely telling this story for the sake of what I am going to say now. I went to see that poor man in prison after his trial, when he had only one day to live, and I shall never forget the look of him. He was like a saint. He looked into my eyes and took my hand and he said, and I can hear his words now, 'Mr. Thorneycroft, you can take it from me, there is a God.'

"I have never forgotten those words. And many times since they were spoken I firmly believe it has only been the words of my poor friend, Henry Harper, spoken on the brink of a shameful grave, which have saved me." The name fell unconsciously from the lips of James Thorneycroft.

XXIV

The Sailor never went again to the meetings of the Social Debating Society at Crosbie's in the Strand, Somehow he had not the courage. The simple unadorned story of James Thorneycroft had taken complete possession of his mind.

Without making any researches into the subject, some instinct which transcended reason, which transcended experience itself, told him that the Henry Harper of the story was his own father. Moreover, he was prepared to affirm that it was his own presence in that room—unknown as he was to James Thorneycroft to whom he had never spoken a word in his life—which had been responsible for the story's telling.

This clear conviction brought no shame to Henry Harper. No man could have been more amply vindicated in the sight of others than his father had been by him who had given his story with a poignancy which had silenced all criticism of the deductions he had ventured to draw from it.

The feeling uppermost in the mind of Henry Harper was that one world more had been revealed. At various times in his life he had had intimations of the Unseen. There was something beyond himself with which he had been in familiar contact. But up till now he had never thought about it much.

The story he had heard seemed to alter everything. In a subtle way his whole outlook was changed. The fact that his father had died such a death brought with it no sense of ignominy. It was too remote, too far beyond him; besides, the man who had told the story had been careful to show his father's true character.

It was almost inconceivable that he did not apply the logic of this terrible event to his own case. By now it should have been clear that he was literally treading the same path. Perhaps the voice of reason could not argue with the overwhelming forces which now had Henry Harper in their grip. Once they had driven him into an identical position they forced him to act in a similar way. Just as the father had made the disastrous error of setting himself to reform his wife when he had found out what she was, the son was now preparing to repeat it.

He determined upon a great effort to win Cora from drink.

Since the quarrel over the man in the taxi, which had occurred nearly two months ago, they had drifted further apart. Cora had behaved with great unwisdom and she was aware of the fact. But she was not going to risk the loss of the golden eggs if she could possibly help it. She had been shaken more than a little by her own folly, and if Harry had not been a dead-beat fool it must have meant a pretty decisive nail in her coffin. Even as it was, and in spite of the softness

for which she despised him, his tone had hardened perceptibly since the incident. Not that she cared very much for that. She did not believe he had it in him to go to extremities. And yet now he had taken this new tone she was not quite sure. Perhaps he was not quite so "soppy" as her friends always declared him to be.

Be that as it may, Cora accepted it in good part when Harry took upon himself to beg her earnestly to check her habit of drinking more than she ought. She was even a little touched; she had not expected a solicitude which she knew she didn't deserve. Instead of "telling him off," as she felt she ought to have done, she promised to do her best to meet his wishes.

He was so grateful that he tried to find a way of helping her. He must let her see that he was ready to assist any effort she might make by every means in his power. Therefore, several evenings a week he accompanied her to the Roc and sometimes they went on, as formerly, to a play or a music hall.

When, after an absence of many months, Henry Harper reappeared in these haunts of fashion, he had to run the gantlet of the girls and the boys. But Cora was secretly gratified to find that he was much better able to take care of himself now. Those months of sequestration, unknown to her, had been a period of very remarkable development. He had been mixing on terms of equality with a class much above hers, he had been enlarging the scope of his observation, he had been deepening his experience. Moreover, he had discovered the letter aitch, and with the help of the indefatigable Madame Sadleir, who was a skillful and conscientious teacher, was now making use of the new knowledge.

Yes, there was a great improvement in Harry. In the opinion of his critics he was much more a man of the world; callow youths and insipid ladies of the town could no longer "come it over him" in the way that had formerly delighted them. Even Miss Bonser and Miss Press had to use discretion. The new knowledge did not make him a prig, but it seemed to give his character an independence and a depth which called for respectful treatment.

He disliked these evenings as much as ever. The Roc and Cora's friends could never have any sort of attraction for Henry Harper. But there was now the sense of duty to sustain him. He was making a heroic effort to save Cora from herself, yet he sometimes felt in his heart that such a woman was hardly worth the saving.

The fact was, it was no use disguising it now, she jarred every nerve in his soul. The more he developed the more hopeless she grew. He knew now that she was very common, sordid clay. It was not in her to rise or to respond. She was crass, heavy-witted, coarse-fibered; his effort had to be made against fearful, and as it seemed with the new perceptions that were coming upon him, ever increasing odds.

By this he had learned from the new and finer world into which his talent had brought him that Cora had but a thin veneer of spurious refinement after all. He knew enough now to see how hopelessly wrong she was in everything, from the heart outwards. It began to hurt him more and more to be in her company in public places. Sometimes he could hardly bear to sit at the same table with her, so alien she was from the people he was meeting now on terms approximating to equality.

Edward Ambrose, realizing how the young man was striving to rise with his fortunes, was doing all that lay in his power to help him. At this time, the name of Mrs. Henry Harper had not been mentioned to him. Several times the Sailor had been at the point of revealing that sinister figure in the background of his life. More than once he had felt that it was the due of this judicious friend that he should know at least of the existence of Cora. But each time he had tried to screw his courage to the task a kind of nausea had overwhelmed him. The truth was Edward Ambrose and Cora stood at opposite poles, and whenever he tried to speak of her it became impossible to do so.

Henry Harper had been present at several of the very agreeable bachelor dinner parties in Bury Street, and on each occasion his host had noted an honorable and increasing effort on the part of the neophyte to rise to the measure of his opportunity. There could be no doubt he was coming on amazingly. The rough edges were being smoothed down and he was always so simple and unaffected that it was hardly possible for liberal-minded men whom fortune had given a place in the stalls at the human comedy to refrain from liking him.

"Henry," said his friend when the young man looked in one afternoon in Pall Mall, "what are you doing tomorrow week, Friday, the twenty-third?"

Henry was doing nothing in particular.

"Then you must come and dine with me," said Edward Ambrose.

"I'll be delighted."

"Wait a minute. That's not the important part. You'll have to take somebody in to dinner. And she's about the nicest girl I know, and she wants very much to meet the author of 'Dick Smith,' and I promised that she should. There will be two or three others ... Ellis and his fiancée ... I told you Ellis had just got engaged ... but we shall not be more than ten all told. Will you face it,

Henry, just to oblige a friend?"

A dinner party of ten with ladies was rather a facer for Mr. Henry Harper, in spite of the fact that his social laurels were clustering thicker upon him.

"I suppose I'll have to if you've promised her," he said with not ungracious reluctance.

"I'm sure you'll like her as much as she'll like you," said Edward Ambrose.

That remains to be seen was the mental reservation in the mind of the Sailor.

XXV

Friday week soon came, but very unfortunately it found Cora "in one of her moods."

The first intimation she had of the dinner party was the arrival of a parcel of evening clothes, which Harry had purchased that morning in the Strand. As ladies were to be present, his sense of the fitness of things had led him at last to incur this long-promised expense. Indeed, Cora herself had said that sooner or later this would have to be. But now that the clothes had actually arrived and she insisted upon being told for what purpose they were required, she flew into a tantrum.

In Cora's opinion, there had been too much dining already with this Mr. Ambrose, and now that Harry was being invited to meet ladies, had Mr. Ambrose been a true gentleman she would have been invited as well. It did not occur to her that he was not aware of her existence. But in any case Harry ought not to be going to meet other women without his wife.

Cora became very sulky. And she mingled unamiability with abuse. The sad truth was, and her husband realized it with intense bitterness in the course of that afternoon, she had begun drinking heavily again in spite of all that he could do to check her. It was a failure of the will. There was no doubt life bored her. The restraints she had recently put upon herself, not in regard to drink alone, had become more than she could bear. For a week past she had known that another "break-out" was imminent.

She was now inclined to make this dinner party to which she was not invited a pretext for it.

"I see what it is," she said with ugly eyes. "Your lawful wife is not good enough for my lord Ambrose and his lady friends."

This stung, it was so exactly the truth.

"But don't think for a moment I am going to take it lying down. If you go to this party I'm coming too."

"You can't," said her husband quietly—so quietly that it made her furious.

"Oh, can't I!"

"No, you can't," he said with a finality that offered no salve. He was angry with his own weakness. He knew that it had caused him to drift into a false position. And yet what could he do—with such a wife as that?

"You're ashamed of me," she said, with baffled rage in her voice.

"You've no right to say that." It was a feeble rejoinder, but silence would have been worse.

"I am going to give you fair warning, Harry. If you go to this party and meet other women while I am left at home, I shall...."

"You'll what?" he said, recoiling from her heavy breathing ugliness.

"I shall go a good old blind tonight, I warn you."

She spoke with full knowledge of the effort he had made to help her and all that it had cost him.

"It won't be half a blind, I'm telling you," she said, reading his eyes. "I've done my best for weeks and weeks to please you. I've hardly touched a drop—and this is all the thanks I get. I'm flesh and blood like other people."

She saw with malicious triumph that she had him cornered.

"Look here, Cora," he said, "it's too late to get out of this now. It wouldn't be fair or right for

me to break my word to Mr. Ambrose. But I'll promise this. If you will only keep sober tonight, I'll never go to another party without ... without your permission."

"Without my permission!"

"Without you, then, if that's what you want me to say."

"Oh, yes! I don't think!"

"I don't ever break my word," he said simply. "You know that. If I say a thing I try my best to act up to it."

"Well, it's not good enough for me, anyhow," she said, with a sudden and jealous knowledge of her own inferiority. "If you leave me tonight, so help me God, I'll get absolutely blind."

She saw the horror in his eyes and was glad. It gave her a sense of power. But it brought its own Nemesis. She forgot just then that he alone stood between her and the gutter.

"Be reasonable, Cora," he said weakly. There did not seem to be anything else he could say.

"I've warned you," she said savagely. "Leave me tonight and you'll see. I'll not be made a mark of by no one, not if I know it."

In great distress he retired to his bedroom in order to think things out. He felt that he was much in the wrong. Somehow he did not seem to be keeping to the terms of the bargain. Up to a point Cora had reason and justice on her side. Yet beyond that point was the duty to his friends.

In a miserable state of mind he sat on the bed. He was desperately unwilling to undo all the good work of the past six weeks, but it was certain that if he left Cora in her present mood something would happen. Twice he almost made up his mind not to go, but each time he was over-powered by the thought of his friend. It was really impossible to leave him in the lurch without a shadow of excuse.

At last, with a sense of acute misery, he came to a decision, or rather the swift passage of time forced it upon him. Suddenly he got off the bed, opened the parcel and spread out the new clothes.

BOOK IV

DISINTEGRATION

I

The process of dressing for Henry Harper's first dinner party was not a very agreeable operation. No man could have undertaken it in a worse state of despair. The new links he had bought could only be persuaded with difficulty into the cuffs of the boiled shirt; further trouble presented itself with the collar, and finally, when all the major operations were complete, he had to solve the problem of a white tie or a black one. In the end he chose a black one on the ground that it would be more modest, although he was not sure that it was right.

When at last he was complete in every detail, he returned to the sitting-room where his wife still was. She was smoking a cigarette.

"Cora," he said quietly and politely, "I am only going because I must. I couldn't look Mr. Ambrose in the face if I let him down without a fair excuse. But I'll promise this. I'll never go to another party without you, and I give you my solemn word I wouldn't go now if there was a way out."

She made no answer. Without looking at him, but with sour rage in her eyes, she threw the end of the cigarette she was smoking into the fire and lit another.

The young man was rather short of time, and remembering a former excursion to Bury Street which was yet quite easy to find from the top of the Avenue, he took a taxi. Driving in solitary state he was very nervous and strangely uncomfortable. The evening clothes felt horribly new and conspicuous, and they didn't seem to fit anywhere. Then again he knew this was an adventure of the first magnitude. The bachelor parties of two or three intimate friends were on a different plane from an affair of this kind. However, he determined to thrust unworthy fears aside. There could be no doubt he was far better equipped than he had been before Madame Sadleir took him in hand. Besides, when all was said, the feeling uppermost in his mind just now, outweighing even the black thought of Cora, was a sense of exhilaration. Somehow he felt, as his

swift machine crossed Piccadilly Circus, in spite of Cora, in spite of new clothes, in spite of bitter inexperience, that for the first time in his life he was entering the golden realm whose every door had been double-locked, thrice-bolted against him by the dark and evil machinations of destiny.

Even when the taxi stopped before the now familiar portals in Bury Street and he had paid the driver his fare, he still had a sense of adventure. And this was heightened by what was going on around him. The magic door was open wide to the night, the august form of Portman, the butler, was framed in it, and at that very moment the Fairy Princess was descending from her chariot.

How did he know it was she? Some occult faculty mysteriously told him. She was tall and dark and smiling; a bright blue cloak was round her; he saw a white satin slipper. It was She. Beyond a doubt it was the real Hyde Park lady he was going to take in to dinner.

He hung back by the curb, a whole discreet minute, while Mr. Portman received her. She made some smiling remark that Henry Harper couldn't catch. He could only hear the beautiful notes of her voice. They were those of a siren, a low deep music.

The Sailor came to the door just as another chariot glided up. He greeted Portman, his old friend, of whom he was still rather in awe, and doffed his coat and hat in the entrance hall without flurry, and then went slowly up the stairs where he found that the butler had already preceded him. Moreover, he was just in time to hear him announce: "Miss Pridmore."

The name literally sang through the brain of the Sailor. Where had he heard it? But he had not time then to hunt it down in his memory.

"Mr. Harper." With a feeling of excitement he heard the rolling, unctuous announcement.

For a brief instant the vigorous grip and the laughing face of his host put all further speculation to flight. Edward Ambrose was in great heart and looking as only the Edward Ambroses of the world can look at such moments. But he merely gave Henry Harper time to note, with a little stab of dismay, that the tie he had chosen was the wrong color, when he was almost hurled upon Miss Pridmore.

"This is Mr. Harper, Mary, whom you wanted to meet." And then with that gay note which the Sailor could never sufficiently approve: "I promised him one admirer. He wouldn't have come without."

Where had he heard that name? The question was surging upon the Sailor as he stood looking at her and waiting for her to speak. A moment ago it had been uttered for the first time, yet it was strangely familiar to him. And that face of clear-cut good sense, with eyes of a fathomless gray, where had he seen it?

"I should love to have been a sailor." Those were her first words. That voice, where had he heard it? It seemed to be coming back to him out of the years, out of the measureless Pacific. A Hyde Park lady was speaking in Bury Street, St. James', but at that moment he was not in London, not in England, not in Europe at all. He was on the high seas aboard the *Margaret Carey*, he was in his bunk in the half-deck. In one hand he held a sputtering candle; in the other a torn fragment of the *Brooklyn Eagle*. It was Klondyke who was speaking. The Fairy Princess was speaking with the voice of his immortal friend.

"I have a brother who has sailed before the mast."

In a flash he remembered the inscription in Klondyke's Bible: "Jack Pridmore is my name, England is my nation." The mystery was solved. This was Klondyke's sister. There was no mistaking the resemblance of voice, of feature; this was the unforgettable girl he had seen with Klondyke in Hyde Park.

He suddenly remembered that he must say something. It would hardly be proper to stand there all night with his mouth open, yet with not a word coming out of it.

"I think I know your brother," were his first words. They were not the result of deliberate choice. Some new and strange power seemed to have taken complete possession of him.

"You've met my brother Jack?"

"Yes. We were aboard the same craft pretty near two years. We used to call him Klondyke."

A delightful laugh rang in his ears.

"What a perfect name for him! I must tell that to my mother. It was because he had been in the Klondyke, I suppose."

"Yes, that was it. He had been in the Klondyke. He used to yarn about it on the *Margaret Carey*. We were both berthed for'ard in the half-deck. His bunk was under mine."

"Isn't it odd that we should meet like this!"

"Yes, it's queer. But there are many queer things in the world, ain't there? At least I've seen a goodish few and so has Klondyke. But he was a grand chap."

Mary Pridmore, who felt rather the same about her brother Jack, although he was not a brother to be proud of, but quite the reverse, as the members of his family always made a point of explaining to him whenever they had the chance, was somehow touched by the tone of reverence with which his shipmate spoke of him.

"He's the black sheep of the family, of course you know that," she said, feeling it necessary to take precautions against this delightful young sailorman who had already intrigued her.

"He used to say so," said the Sailor, with the simplicity of his kind. "He used to say his mother was fearfully cut up about him. She thought he was a rolling stone and he would never be any good at anything. But you don't think so, Miss Pridmore, do you?" The eyes of the young man delighted her as they looked directly into hers. "No, I can see you don't. You think Klondyke's all right."

"Why should you think, Mr. Harper, that I think anything of the kind?" The voice was rebuking, but the eyes were laughing, and it was the eyes that mattered.

"You can't deny it!" he said with a charming air of defiance. "And if I was Klondyke's sister I wouldn't want to."

"As long as mother never hears anyone speak of him like that it really doesn't matter what we think of him, you know."

This wonderful creature, who in the sight of the Sailor was perfection from head to heel, whose very voice he could only compare to John Milton whom he had lately discovered, let her hand rest on his arm very lightly, yet with a touch that was almost affectionate. And then they went downstairs to dinner.

II

Politeness forbade that they should talk all the time to each other during that enchanted meal. Mr. Ellis was at the other side of Miss Pridmore, and an unknown lady of great charm and volubility was at the other side of Mr. Harper. These very agreeable people had to have a little share of their conversation, but during the major part of a delightful affair, Henry Harper was talking as he had never talked in his life before, not even to Klondyke himself, to Klondyke's sister.

It was not only about Klondyke that they talked. They had other things in common. Miss Pridmore was a perfectly sincere, a frankly outspoken admirer of "The Adventures of Dick Smith." She had never read anything like it; moreover she was quite fearless and nobly unqualified in her admiration of that fascinating tale of adventure, for the most part murderous adventure, on the high seas.

"We all have great arguments at home," she said, "as to which volume is the best. I say the first. To me those island chapters are incomparable. The Island of San Pedro. I say that's better than 'Robinson Crusoe' itself, which makes Uncle George furious. He considers it sacrilege to say anything of the kind."

"It is so," said the author with a little quiver of happiness.

"But you are bound to say that, aren't you?"

"I wouldn't say it if I didn't think it, Miss Pridmore."

The quaint solemnity delighted her.

"Uncle George says the Island of San Pedro is an imitation of 'Robinson Crusoe,' but nothing will ever make me admit that, so you had better not admit it either. Please say it isn't, to save my reputation for omniscience."

"I had not read 'Robinson Crusoe' when I wrote the Island, and I suppose if I had I should have written it differently."

"It's a very good thing you hadn't. There's nothing like the Island anywhere to my mind. You can see and feel and hear and smell and taste that Island. It is so real that when poor Dick was put ashore by the drunken captain of the brigantine *Excelsior* I literally daren't go to bed. And my brother Jack says—and I always quote this to Uncle George—that no more lifelike picture of a windjammer—it is a windjammer, isn't it?—"

"That's right."

"And of an island in the Pacific could possibly be given."

"Well, I wouldn't quite say that myself," said the sailorman, with the blood singing in his ears.

"Of course not. It wouldn't be right for you to say it."

"Where is Klondyke now, Miss Pridmore?" he asked suddenly.

"No one knows. He probably doesn't know himself. The last letter my mother had from him arrived about two months ago. He was then in the middle of Abyssinia. But he has moved since. He never stays long anywhere when the wanderlust is on him. But we don't worry. He'll turn up one of these days quite unexpectedly, looking rather like a tramp, and will settle down to civilization for a short time; and then one morning he'll go off again to the most outlandish place he can think of, and we may not see or hear anything of him for months or even years."

A dull period followed the dessert. Miss Pridmore and the other ladies went and the Sailor had to remain with four comparatively flat and tame gentlemen who smoked very good cigars and talked of matters which the young man did not feel competent to enter upon.

It was an irksome twenty minutes, but it had to be endured. And it was not really so very difficult because he was in heaven.

At last when the four other gentlemen had solemnly smoked their cigars, and he had smoked the mild cigarette which contented him, they went upstairs. And as they did so he felt the hand of Edward Ambrose on his shoulder and he heard a laughing voice in his ear. "Henry, you are going great guns."

That was quite true. He felt wonderful. There is no doubt people do feel wonderful when they are in heaven. And there was his divinity sitting in the middle of the smaller sofa, and as soon as he entered he was summoned with a gesture of charming imperiousness which the boldest of men would not have dared to disobey. And as he came to her she laughingly made room for him. He sat by her side and fell at once to talking again of Klondyke. From Klondyke, whom she would not admit was quite the hero the author of "Dick Smith" considered him to be, they passed to the High Seas, and then to Literature, and then to the Drama, and then to Life itself, and then to the High Seas again, and then to Edward Ambrose, whom she spoke of with great affection as a very old friend of hers and of her family, and then once more to Life itself. After the flight of a winged hour she rose suddenly and held out her hand. But as she did so she also said one memorable thing.

"Mr. Harper"—her fingers were touching his—"promise, please, you will come to tea one afternoon soon. No. 50, Queen Street, Mayfair. I am going to write it on a piece of paper if you will get it for me, so that there will be no mistake."

The Sailor got the piece of paper for Miss Pridmore. As he did so the eternal feminine rejoiced at his tall, straight, cleanly handsomeness, in spite of the reach-me-down which clothed it.

"Now that means no excuse," she said, with a little touch of royal imperiousness returning upon her. "No. 50, Queen Street. One of those little houses on the left. About half past four. Shall we say Wednesday? I want to hear you talk to my mother about Klondyke."

She gave him her hand again, and then after a number of very cordial and direct good-bys which Klondyke himself could not have bettered, she went downstairs gayly with her host.

"Tell me, Mary," said Edward Ambrose on the way down, "who in the world is Klondyke?"

"It's Jack," she said. "They were together on board the brigantine *Excelsior*—although that's not the real name of it."

"How odd!" said Edward Ambrose. "But what a fellow he is not to have said so. When one remembers how he gloated over the yarn one would have thought——"

"But how should he know? It must have been years ago. Yet the strange thing is he remembers Jack and he knew I was his sister because we are so exactly alike, which I thought very tactless."

"Naturally. Did you like him?" The question came with very swift directness.

"He's amazing." The answer was equally swift, equally direct. "He is the only author I have ever met who comes near to being——"

"To being what?" Mary Pridmore had suddenly remembered that she was being escorted downstairs by a distinguished man of letters.

"Do you press the question?"

"Certainly I press the question."

"Very well, then," said Mary Pridmore. "Wild horses will not make me answer it. But I can only say that your young man is as wonderful as his books. He's coming to tea on Wednesday, and it will be very disappointing if you don't come as well. Good-by, Edward. It's been a splendid evening." And she waved her hand to him as she sped away with an air of large and heroic enjoyment of the universe, while Edward Ambrose stood rather wistfully at the door watching her recede into the night.

III

"My friend," said Edward Ambrose, as he helped the last departing guest into his overcoat, "I suppose you know you have made a conquest?"

The Sailor was not aware of the fact.

"Mary Pridmore is ... well, she is rather ... she is rather..."

"We talked a lot," said the young man, with a glow in his voice. "I hope she wasn't bored. But as she was Klondyke's sister, I couldn't help letting myself go a bit. She's—she's just my idea of what a lady ought to be."

The young man, who was still in heaven, had the grace to blush at such an indiscretion. His host laughed.

Said he: "Had I realized that you were such a very dangerous fellow, I don't think you would have been invited here tonight. I mean it, Henry." And to show that he didn't mean it in the least, Edward Ambrose gave the Sailor a little affectionate push into Bury Street.

As the night was fine and time was his own, Henry Harper returned on foot to King John's Mansions. He did not go by a direct route, but chose Regent Street, Marylebone Road, Euston Road, and other circuitous thoroughfares, so that the journey took about four times as long as it need have done. Midnight had struck already when he came to the top of the Avenue.

By that time he was no longer in heaven. As a matter of fact, he had fallen out of paradise in Portland Place. It was there he suddenly remembered Cora. For several enchanted hours he had completely forgotten her. He had been in Elysium, but almost opposite the Queen's Hall he fell out of it. It was there the unwelcome truth came upon him that he had been surrendering himself to madness.

He clenched his teeth as if he had received a blow in the face. He was like an ill-found ship wrenched from its moorings and cast adrift in mid-ocean. God in heaven, how was he to go home to that unspeakable woman after such a draught of sheer delight!

For a moment, standing dazed and breathless in the middle of the road, he almost wanted to shriek. He had been drinking champagne, not with undignified freedom, yet for unseasoned temperaments it may be a dangerous beverage even in modest quantities. He had really drunk very little, but he felt that in the situation he had now to face it would have been better to have left it alone.

How was he going to face Cora now he had seen the péri, now he had looked within the Enchanted Gates?

There was only one possible answer to the question. And that had come to him as he had crossed, quite unnecessarily, the Marylebone Road, and had fetched up against the railings of Regent's Park. He must accept the issue like a man. Setting his teeth anew, he moved in an easterly direction towards the Euston Road.

He allowed himself to hope, as he turned the latchkey in the door of No. 106, King John's Mansions, that Cora had not carried out her threat. But he was not able to build much upon it. As he climbed up slowly towards the roof of the flats there seemed something indescribably squalid about the endless flights of bleak, iron-railed stone stairs.

When the door of No. 106 opened to his latchkey, the first thing he perceived was a stealthy reek of alcohol. A light was in the passage; and then as he closed the outer door, he caught an oddly unexpected sound of voices coming through the half open door of the sitting-room. He stood and listened tensely. One of the voices was that of a man.

It was not necessary to enter the sitting-room itself to confirm this fact. A man's hat, one of the sort called a gibus, which he knew was only worn with evening clothes, was hanging on one of the pegs in the passage. An overcoat lined with astrachan was under it.

He could hear a strange voice coming from the sitting-room. It was that of a man of education, but it had a sort of huskiness which betrayed the familiar presence of alcohol. Involuntarily, he stood to listen at the half open door.

"Cora, old girl, you are as tight as a tick." After all, the tones were more, sober than drunk. "I'll be getting a move on, I think. I'll soon be as bad as you, and then I won't be able to, I expect."

"Don't go yet, ducky. I am just beginning to like you." It was the voice of Cora—the voice of Cora drunk.

"I will, if you don't mind. That second bottle has been a mistake. And you are not so very amusing, are you?"

"Speak for yourself." And the voice of Cora subsided into some far and deep oblivion.

There was a silence. In the midst of it, the young man suddenly entered the room.

The visitor, who was tall and powerful and well dressed, had the look of a gentleman. Perhaps a gentleman run a little to seed. He was standing on the threadbare hearthrug, his hands in his pockets, in a rather contemptuous attitude, while Cora, unmistakably drunk, had subsided on the sofa. Several bottles with glasses beside them were on the table.

As Henry Harper entered the room, the man looked at him in utter astonishment. His surprise seemed too great to allow him to speak.

"Ullo, Harry," muttered Cora from her sofa. She did not attempt a more formal or coherent greeting.

He did not know what to say or how to act. He was wholly taken aback by the man's air of cool surprise; indeed his attitude expressed grim resentment for the intrusion of a third person.

"Who is this gentleman, Cora?" at last the young man was able to ask.

"Go to hell," Cora muttered.

"Yes, go to hell," said the man, apparently grateful for the lead.

Harper stood nonplused, defeated. But he managed to say, feebly enough as it seemed to himself, "I don't know who you are, sir, but I'll thank you for an explanation."

The man laughed insolently. "It's the limit," he said.

At this point, Cora, by an effort verging upon the superhuman, sat up on the sofa.

"Charlie." Her voice was a wheeze. "I want you to set about this beauty—to oblige me."

"My God, I've a good mind to," said Charlie, who as he became more sober seemed to grow more dangerous. "I don't know who you are, my friend, but if you'll take advice you'll clear out."

As the man spoke, his eyes looked particularly ugly. But among the things the Sailor had learned aboard the *Margaret Carey* was the art of keeping cool in a crisis.

"You've no right here at all, sir," said the man. "You ought to know that."

"No right!" said Henry Harper, in astonishment.

"If you are a wise man, you will go away. I was here first."

"What do you mean?"

"I came at the invitation of this lady, Miss Cora Dobbs, who is a very old friend of mine."

The man turned towards the sofa. Cora nodded. But she was now bordering on a state of coma.

"Who are you, sir?" Harper tried hard to keep his temper in spite of the man's calculated insolence. "Are you a relation of hers?"

"A relation!" The man was taken aback. "We are both here for the same object, I presume."

"I don't know what you mean, but this is my flat and I'll be very thankful if you'll quit."

"Your flat!" A light seemed to dawn. The man turned to Cora: "Why didn't you tell me? I thought you were on your own, as you were before I went to Canada."

To the man's clear annoyance, Cora had now reached a phase which forbade her to answer this question. He then addressed Henry Harper with a sudden change of voice.

"She's not played the game," he said, half apologetically.

"I don't know what you mean by that. I don't understand you."

The man looked at him in astonishment. He then looked at Cora, who was half lying upon the sofa, mute, fuddled, and indifferent.

"Come outside," said the man, in a lower tone, "and I'll explain."

Feeling completely bewildered, Harper accompanied him into the passage.

"I apologize," said the man, as soon as they got there. "But Cora is entirely to blame. There's no need to say she never told me she was living with you."

"I don't understand," said Henry Harper.

The man stared at him. He was at a loss.

"Of course, I've known Cora Dobbs for years." He lowered his voice. "But I've been away in Canada. Before I went, I used to come here pretty regularly."

As the man spoke, light came to Henry Harper. All at once, a chill ran in his veins.

"But ... but she's ... she's my wife," he gasped, leaning heavily against the wall of the passage.

"She's your *what!*" the man almost shouted.

"She's my wife."

Again the man stared at him, but now with a look of consternation and pity.

"You mean to say you didn't know?"

The young man, still leaning against the wall, was unable to speak. A glance at the ashen face convinced the older man that there was no need to repeat the question.

"Well, I'm sorry, and I can only apologize," he said, after a moment's pause, and in a tone of good feeling. He then took his hat and coat from the peg, and suddenly darted out of the flat. The door closed after him with a bang.

IV

The Sailor continued to lean against the wall. An abyss had opened. The look on the face of Mr. Rudge, his late master, and the strange words he had used were returning upon him with awful force.

With this discovery came surprise, bewilderment, self-disgust. It hardly seemed possible that a man in his senses could be so blind, so ignorant, so gullible. Where had been his wits, that he should have allowed the creature at the other side of the passage wall, and her associates, to dupe him so completely?

As the feeling of amazement at his own folly deepened, a gust of fury swept through him like a storm. An overmastering desire came upon him to enter that room, to deal once and for all with this bird of prey. Let the world be rid of a foul thing. Let his be the hand to efface it in its infamy.

He would go in at once and make an end of her. A surge of inherited forces, a flood of old, unhappy, far-off things were whirling him like a piece of driftwood into the maëlstrom. He was in the grip of a terrible power ... a power beyond his control. It was not merely that she had entrapped him, or that he had been incredibly blind to the drab and sordid world in which she lived; in the light of a widening knowledge, the fact which now drove him to frenzy was that a creature so common and unclean should have found it so easy to make him her victim.

He did not return to the room at once. There were other forces, it seemed, vibrating in the air around him. There came a sudden reminder from the talisman that he bore continually in the right-hand corner of his brain. He heard a voice.

"Henry Harper, is she worth it? Remember, if you destroy her, you destroy yourself utterly, body and soul."

The words sank into him. The issue was joined, and there came the shock of battle. A will half wrenched asunder seemed about to be overthrown. The desire to enter the room was overmastering; a sense of duty was reinforced by the passion of revenge. There was madness in the thought that he was the dupe of a common woman of the streets.

Shaken with a fury that was awful, he still leaned against the wall of the passage. The voice of the genie was no longer heard. The talisman shone no more. The old, unhappy, far-off things had overwhelmed them.

"Kill her, kill her," they whispered savagely. "It is the only thing to do."

He was half down already. The forces of destiny were crushing out his life.

"Kill her. Kill her." The very walls were breathing commands in his ears. "It is a duty to others to avenge yourself."

There was subtlety in the demand. But this was a strong, not a subtle nature. It did not practice self-deception lightly. Aladdin's lamp was quick to reveal the sophist; moreover, it had its own answer ready. Suddenly it flashed before the mind of Henry Harper the elemental figure of the man James Thorneycroft simply relating his story. By a curious trick of the brain, the words of the condemned man were again in his ears.

"You can take it from me that there is a God."

He hardly knew what those words meant even as he heard them now. But he knew they had a significance beyond any which had previously touched his life. Then a miracle happened. The powers which had him in their grip began to relax. It was as if his whole being was translated. He was again his own man. Broken and shattered he was able to stagger to his own room and light the gas.

The battle was not decided yet. But a new power had come to him. Therefore Henry Harper's first act was to do that which he had never done before in his life. He kneeled by the side of his bed and prayed.

Presently he rose, and went out again into the little lobby, past the half open door through which could be heard a succession of drunken snores. He snatched his coat and hat from the peg and went hurriedly down into the street.

It was one o'clock. The Avenue and its environs were almost deserted, save for an occasional policeman and a few returning revelers. He had no idea as to the way he should go. His one desire was to get as far as he could from King John's Mansions in the shortest possible time.

Walking about the streets of the city hour after hour, he could not measure the abyss which had engulfed him. He was completely cast away, he had lost track of himself, he didn't know where he was, he had no chart by which to go.

Ceaseless wandering through remote and unknown places brought the dawn at last, and then he found that the spot he had reached was Camberwell Green. Overcome with fatigue, he sat on a public seat near a tram terminus for a little while. Then he tried to shape his thoughts, but the mind refused to act.

V

The longer he sat the more confused he became. At last it occurred to him that the best thing he could do was to seek the advice of Edward Ambrose. Indeed, in his present state that seemed the only course to take. Almost mechanically, he began to make his way in the direction of Bury Street, St. James'.

He had a long way to go, and the road was obscure, but as there was not the least need for hurry, he followed the tram lines as far as the Embankment. By the time he had reached Whitehall, it was about eight o'clock. Less than half an hour afterwards he had entered Bury Street, and was back in that house which a few short hours ago had given him his first glimpse of paradise.

"Why, Henry!" His friend gave a cry of surprise. And then to cover it he said: "You are just in time for breakfast. Another knife and fork, Portman. Take off your overcoat."

The young man had no wish to do so. He remembered that his evening clothes were under it. Nor had he any desire for breakfast.

As soon as the servant had retired, Edward Ambrose compelled him firmly but kindly to eat.

Ambrose had noted already that the Sailor was in a decidedly overwrought state. The ashen face, the wild eyes, the disheveled appearance was not pleasant to see.

"Tell me what has happened."

"Before I do that," said the young man, in a voice unlike his own, "I want you to consider this a secret between us."

"Yes ... of course."

"To begin at the beginning of a rotten story." There was a queer break in the voice. "You didn't know that I was married, did you?"

"No," said Ambrose, impassively.

"I dare say I ought to have told you. Several times I made up my mind that I would. I am very sorry now I didn't."

"You were under no obligation to do so."

"There wouldn't be so much to tell you now if I had," said the Sailor, with horror in his eyes. He then told his story at length, with detail and with difficulty, but concealing nothing.

Edward Ambrose was much affected. He somehow felt, as a generous mind was likely to feel in such a case, that it should have been his part to shield this lamb from the wolves. Yet he knew that blame did not lie at his door.

Still, he was deeply grieved. He accepted the story without question as it was told him. There could be no doubt that all the essential facts were exactly as they had been related. Harper, in his curious ignorance of the world, had fallen into a trap.

The young man ended the story with a pathetic appeal for advice. He made it clear that he could never go back to this woman; he dared not even venture to see her again lest he do her violence. He must get free of her at all costs. Could his friend tell him how such a thing must be managed?

"One feels it ought not to be very difficult in the circumstances," said Edward Ambrose, "if we go the right way to work. But the first thing is to consult a lawyer."

Accordingly, before he had finished a greatly interrupted meal, Ambrose went to the telephone and arranged to see his own solicitor as soon as that gentleman should arrive at his office in Spring Gardens. When he returned to the dining-room, he found Henry Harper striding up and down it. A sort of determined rage had taken possession of him. The hereditary forces that had so nearly overthrown him a few hours before had returned upon him.

"I'll never be so near murder as I was between twelve and one last night," he said, huskily, with a clenched and deadly look.

"She wouldn't have been worth it," said Edward Ambrose. He then turned abruptly from the subject. "You will want rooms, won't you—somewhere to go?" He had a fund of very practical kindness. "And you'll want clothes. And your papers and books. But I think we had better send one of Mortimer's clerks to collect those. As for rooms, perhaps Portman may know of some."

Upon due interrogation, Portman, it seemed, knew of some rooms that might be vacant. Thereupon he was sent on a diplomatic mission; the scale of charges must be strictly moderate. He must not show his nose, which prided itself on a resemblance to that of a certain very eminent statesman, in Bury Street again until his errand had been carried out successfully.

Presently, the solicitors, Messrs. Mortimer, Groves, Pearce, Son and Mortimer, rang up to say that Mr. Daniel Mortimer had arrived at the office, and would be glad to see Mr. Ambrose. Accordingly, Henry Harper went at once with his friend in a taxi to Spring Gardens.

Mr. Daniel Mortimer was the kind of man who would have greatly impressed the Sailor on an ordinary occasion. Mr. Mortimer was by nature very impressive. He could not help being so. Even when he was quite alone and merely warming his hands at the fire, he was impressive. In fact, it was a quality which was worth several thousands a year to him.

Mr. Mortimer had the reputation of being a very sound lawyer. He certainly looked a very sound lawyer. His geniality was most engaging, and there was a shrewd and knowledgeable personality beneath.

He greeted Mr. Ambrose less as a client than as a rather irresponsible nephew received by a preternaturally wise yet jovial uncle. Ambrose had been his fag at school.

"Well, Edward, what can we do for you?" was the pontifical greeting.

"Allow me to introduce Mr. Harper—Mr. Mortimer—and you can prepare to speak out of the depths of your wisdom after the ancient manner."

"Certainly," said Mr. Mortimer, with the air of one very well able to do so. "Won't you sit down?" He placed two chairs with innate and almost oriental magnificence. "We are now at your service." It was less a trick of speech than sheer pressure of human character which caused Mr. Mortimer always to refer to himself in the plural.

"I think you had better tell the story, Henry," said Edward Ambrose. "Tell it to Mortimer exactly as you have told it to me."

That gentleman assumed his armchair of state, and for the second time that morning Henry Harper told his strange story.

"And you never guessed!" was the solicitor's brief comment when it had been told.

"I can't think why I didn't," said the young man.

Mr. Mortimer frowned tremendously. He then took up a pencil and began with great freedom of style to draw on his blotting pad a portrait of no one in particular.

"Edward," he said, after he had continued to do this for several minutes, "I am afraid this is a difficult business."

"I am afraid so," said Edward Ambrose gravely. "And we have come to a very wise man to set it right for us. It oughtn't to be beyond your powers, ought it, having regard to the acknowledged character of the lady?"

"I fear," said Mr. Mortimer, "the character of the lady is too much acknowledged if the question of a divorce is running in your mind."

"Well, of course it is," said Edward Ambrose, with an air of deep disappointment as he looked at Henry Harper.

"I'll have a divorce if I can possibly get one," said the young man. "And I don't care what trouble I take or what it costs."

Mr. Mortimer continued to draw very spirited pictures on his blotting pad.

"Don't you advise it?" asked Edward Ambrose.

"Yes, I do, if we can get one. But in the special circumstances, it is going to prove uncommonly difficult, in fact, one might say impossible."

"You don't mean that, sir," said Henry Harper.

"It is only my opinion." Mr. Mortimer spoke as if there could be no other. "But let me be quite candid, as I am sure you want me to be. I am perfectly certain you will never get a British jury to believe the first part of your story."

"But you believe it?" said Henry Harper, with wild eyes.

"I most certainly believe it, I believe every word you tell me. But we have to deal with a British jury, and in any question affecting what it calls 'morality,' a British jury is a very difficult proposition. At least, that's my experience."

Both Henry Harper and his friend were so dismayed by the force of Mr. Mortimer's conviction, that at first they did not say anything. Soon, however, Edward Ambrose, who was looking particularly unhappy, remarked: "Then you don't advise him to fight it?"

"I don't. I am sorry to say I don't. There is not a dog's chance without very strong direction from the Bench, and there is little hope of that in a case of this kind. His Majesty's judges are quite as bad as a British jury when they are out on the 'morality' racket."

"The good bourgeois, in fact, without a spark of imagination?"

"Quite so. Of course, we might try, but really one doesn't advise it. There would be unwarrantable expense, and even if we were lucky enough to get a verdict, it would still be a very serious matter for a young and rising man. At least, that's my view."

"I don't doubt you are right," said Edward Ambrose, with a groan of sheer vexation.

"You mean, sir, I can't get free of her?" said the Sailor.

"Only with great difficulty, I am afraid. And in any event, the issue is uncertain. As I understand, you are in a position to prove very little. Conjecture will not satisfy a jury, and even that must be based on a set of circumstances that will not help your case."

"Well, what do you advise?" asked Edward Ambrose.

"I should be inclined to let matters take their course for the present. As she appears to be drinking heavily, it is not unreasonable to hope that in time things may adjust themselves automatically."

"But in the meantime how can she be kept from making herself objectionable?"

"If you care to leave that to us, I think a way may be found."

"By paying her a sum weekly?" suggested Edward Ambrose. "And by threatening to withdraw it if she doesn't behave herself?"

"I don't think it will be necessary to do that."

However, the young man felt it to be his duty to keep her from the gutter, which seemed to be her present destination.

"That is for you to consider," said Mr. Mortimer. "In my judgment, you are under no obligation to provide for her, but if on grounds of humanity you wish to do so, let no one dissuade you."

Edward Ambrose agreed.

The upshot of a painful matter was that it was left in Mr. Mortimer's hands. He undertook to deal in such a way with Mrs. Henry Harper that there should be no fear of molestation from her. Also, he would have inquiries made into her past history and her present mode of life; and if a subsequent reconsideration of the case should make a final appeal to the law seem in any wise expedient, then would be the time to invoke it. In the meantime a sum would be paid to her weekly. Mr. Mortimer undertook to send a clerk to the flat in order to collect Henry Harper's papers and other belongings.

It was an unhappy state of affairs, but the young man realized that for the present it would be the part of wisdom to leave the matter in the prudent hands of Mr. Mortimer.

VI

The Sailor found sanctuary at Bury Street until late in the afternoon. By that time a member of Mr. Mortimer's staff had retrieved his chattels from King John's Mansions; also the admirable Portman had returned from his quest "for lodgings, clean and decent, for a single man." Moreover, success had crowned it, as Edward Ambrose had been confident that it would.

Portman, it appeared, had found very nice rooms for a single gentleman in Brinkworth Street, Chelsea. They were kept by a friend of his who had been butler in the service of the Honorable Lady Price, relict of the late Sir O'Gorman Price, K.C.M.G., a former governor of the Bowerman Islands, who had given him an excellent character. It was also fortified by the fact that he had married the cook lately in the service of that lady. Portman was sure that Mr. Harper would find everything very comfortable.

Half an hour later, Henry Harper was on his way to Brinkworth Street with his few belongings. Before taking leave of Portman, he presented him with half a sovereign. This was a princely emolument in the eyes of the Sailor, but he felt that nothing less could meet the case.

On his arrival at Brinkworth Street, the young man knew at once that he would be in good hands. The air of respectability which hovered round his rooms was a little portentous, perhaps, but at least it was in welcome and vivid contrast to the cheap and dismal tawdriness of King John's Mansions. Mr. Emerson Paley, the proprietor of No. 14, and Mrs. Paley also, had something of Portman's impressiveness. It was clear that they had their own standard of taste and conduct. Moreover, Henry Harper welcomed it. To him it meant a fixing of social values. The atmosphere of No. 14, Brinkworth Street, was wholly different from that which had enveloped any home he had ever known before.

The Sailor found a stimulus in these new surroundings. Brinkworth Street, its outlook and its ideals, was a cosmos he had yet to traverse and explore. Mr. Paley was in his own way surprisingly a gentleman, as Mrs. Paley in hers was surprisingly a lady; not, of course, in the way that Edward Ambrose and his new friend, Mary Pridmore, were, but still they undoubtedly stood for something—a curious, indefinable something wholly beyond the *ménage* he had lately left, with its air of make-believe refinement which was not refinement at all.

Mr. Paley and also Mrs. Paley treated him with great consideration. And it was no second-hand or spurious emotion. It seemed to be their nature to pay respect, they seemed to have a craving to pay it, just as a person there was no need to name and that person's friends had a craving to be always what they called "pulling your leg." Not only was Mr. Harper treated with deference, but solid comfort, well cooked food and punctual attention were lavished upon him, so that for his own part he was bound to honor the source whence these blessings sprang. The august shade of the relict of Sir O'Gorman Price, K.C.M.G., might have been a little too much in evidence now and again for the plain and unvarnished taste of a sailor, but an ever deepening perception showed him that the very things he was inclined to despise and to laugh at—as most of the people with whom his life had been passed would undoubtedly have done—were of real importance if you were able to look at them from the right point of view.

From the moment he invaded its rather oppressively respectable precincts, No. 14, Brinkworth Street, by some alchemy of the spirit of place, began to work sensibly upon the Sailor. A rapidly expanding life had been in peril of being torn asunder, but Providence, which owed him so much, had found him a harbor of refuge.

From the very first evening in his new quarters reconstruction began. An air of ordered calm seemed to pervade the carefully laundered pillow as he laid his head on it that night. He was miserably weary, for one thing, but his physical state was not alone the cause of his sleeping in a way that had not been possible at No. 106, King John's Mansions, in all the months he had known it. Somehow, that sleep in those clean sheets, in that well-aired room, seemed to be the prelude to a new phase of being.

It was Sunday morning when the Sailor awoke. The first thing he knew was that the noiseless Mr. Paley was in the room, that he had placed a tiny tray on a small table at the side of his bed, that he had said, in his discreet voice, "Eight o'clock, sir," and that he was now in the act of drawing up the blinds and letting in the light of February.

"Do you desire a warm bath or a cold, sir?"

It might have been Portman himself who was asking that considered question.

"Cold, please," said the Sailor, rubbing his eyes with a feeling of pleasure.

Mr. Paley spread a mat and then produced from a chastely curtained recess a large, yellow-painted bath. Shortly afterwards, he evolved two cans of water from outside the bedroom door.

"Your bath is quite ready, sir."

"Thank you. Much obliged."

The Sailor sprang out of bed. Yes, it was another new world he had entered.

Half an hour later, he had descended to the dining-room, feeling perhaps a stronger and more composed man than he had ever been in his life. A well cooked rasher and two poached eggs and crisp toast and butter and the best Oxford marmalade awaited him. He sat near the pleasant fire, with his back to the enlarged photograph of the late Sir O'Gorman Price, K.C.M.G., the last portrait taken by Messrs. Barrett and Filmer, of Regent Street, and at Brighton, before the country and the empire endured its irreparable loss. He ate steadily for twenty minutes by the marble and ormolu clock in the center of the chimney piece, presented by the Honorable Lady Price (a daughter of Lord Vesle and Voile) in recognition of the faithful and valued service of Miss Martha Handcock, on the occasion of her marriage with Mr. Emerson Paley. He also contrived to hold a brief conversation with Mr. Emerson Paley in regard to the weather. In a word, the Sailor's first breakfast in Brinkworth Street was a memorable affair.

After his meal, beginning to feel more and more his own man, and with this new world of order, of respect for established things, unfolding itself around him, he proceeded to unpack the books which the surprisingly efficient member of Messrs. Mortimer's staff had collected in three large parcels. He felt a little thrill of delight as he laid out carefully each beloved volume on the well polished writing table with its green baize top, and then arranged them with precision and delicacy on a row of empty shelves that had been freshly papered to receive them.

When this had been done and the litter had been carefully removed, the Sailor chose the volume which had had the most to say to him of late. In fact, it was the book which up till now had meant more to him than any other. Then he sat luxuriously before the fire, bravely determined to forget the world he had left and to envisage the new one opening around him.

Two hours passed, whose golden flight it was not for him to heed, when all at once he was brought to earth.

"Mr. Ambrose," announced Mr. Paley.

"I thought I'd like to see if you had moved in in good shape," said his friend, as he entered briskly and cheerfully. "Sorry I couldn't come with you last night, but I should have been hopelessly late for a very dull dinner party, which might have made it longer for others. What are you reading? Milton?"

"It simply takes my head off," said the Sailor. "I almost want to shout and sing. It's another new world to me."

"We can all envy any man who enters it," said Edward Ambrose, with his deep laugh.

VII

Three days later, at the punctual hour of half past four in the afternoon, Mr. Henry Harper was at the threshold of No. 50, Queen Street, Mayfair. He had been at pains to array himself as well as a limited wardrobe allowed, which meant that neatness had been set above fashion. In spite of all he had been through since his glimpse of paradise, the coming of this present hour had been a beacon in his mind. And now as he stood on the doorstep of No. 50, waiting for his echoing summons to be heeded, he felt so nervous that he could hardly breathe.

The magic portals of the Fairy Princess were drawn back by another Mr. Portman, a bland and spreading gentleman who bore himself with the same authentic air of chaste magnificence. He took charge of Mr. Harper's coat and hat and then took charge of Mr. Harper himself as though he had clearly expected him. As the young man followed him upstairs to the drawing-room his heart beat with a violence wholly absurd.

Mary came forward to greet him as soon as he appeared in the room, her eyes alight, her hand outstretched. It was a reception of pure unstudied friendship.

There was only one other person in the large room just then, a lady of quiet, slightly formidable dignity, who was enthroned before a massive silver tea service on a massive silver tray.

"Mr. Harper—my mother," said Mary.

The young man took the offered hand timidly. The lady of the silver tea service, kindly and smiling though she was, had none of the impulsive accessibility of her daughter. The Sailor knew in a moment that she belonged to another order of things altogether.

She was large and handsome, sixty, perhaps, and her finely modeled face was framed in an aureole of extremely correct white hair. Indeed, in spite of her smile and an air of genuine kindness, correctness seemed to be her predominant feature. Everything about her was so ordered, so exactly right, that she had the rather formal unimaginative look to which the whole race of royalties is doomed by the walls of the Royal Academy of Arts.

It is not certain that Lady Pridmore felt this to be a hardship. Mary roundly declared that nothing would have induced her mother to part with it. She had often been mistaken for this or that personage, and although much teased on the subject by her daughters, it was an open secret that such resemblances were precious in her sight.

To this lady's "How do you do?" Mr. Harper responded with incoherency. But the watchful Mary, who knew "the effect that mother had on some people," promptly came to the young man's aid and helped him out with great gallantry and success.

With the laugh peculiarly hers, Mary fixed the sailorman in a chair at a strategic distance from her mother, gave him a cup of tea and a liberal piece of cake, also thoughtfully provided him with a plate and a small table to put it on, because this creature of swift intuitions somehow felt that he had not quite got his drawing-room legs at present.

"You have a whole volume of questions to answer presently, Mr. Harper," said Mary, "so take plenty of nourishment, please. One of the pink is recommended. They've got maraschino." She took one herself and bit it in half with a gusto that rather amazed the young man; somehow he had not looked for it in a real Hyde Park lady.

"Mmm—I told you—mmm—Klondyke." The real Hyde Park lady was speaking with her mouth full. "Klondyke is the black sheep of the family. My mother is simply dying to talk to you about him."

This was not strictly true. Lady Pridmore was not of the kind that simply dies to talk of anything to anybody. Before she married Sir John, she had been a Miss Colthurst, of Suffolk. At the time of her union with that gentleman, then plain Mr. Pridmore, *chargé d'affaires* at Porocatepetl, and afterwards Her Britannic Majesty's representative in several European capitals, her standard of conduct had been rigidly fixed. She had seen much of life since, but nothing had ever caused her to modify it. She was greatly interested in the perennial subject of her eldest son, but to her mind, as it would have been to the collective mind of the Colthursts of Suffolk from immemorial time, it was merely an abuse of language for Mary to state that she was simply dying to hear about Klondyke. She was always *much* interested, nevertheless, in the doings of poor dear Jack.

However, a disappointment was in store for Lady Pridmore. This rather strange looking young man with the shy and embarrassed manner was not so communicative on the subject in conversation with her as he had been when Mary had met him at dinner. He had really very little to tell her. For one thing, it was by no means so easy to converse with her as it had been with the altogether delightful daughter who knew exactly when and how to lend a hand.

The mother of Klondyke had therefore to do most of the talking about that unsatisfactory young man. She certainly did it very well. That is to say, she talked about him in a very even,

precise, persistent, Hyde-Park-lady tone. And the Sailor, as he sat listening with awe to a conversation in which he did not feel in the least able to bear a part, could only marvel that Klondyke had had such a mother as Lady Pridmore and that Lady Pridmore had had such a son as Klondyke.

It had always been Lady Pridmore's wish that her eldest son should enter his father's profession. In the first place, he would have had Influence to help him, and if there was anything more precious in the sight of Lady Pridmore than Influence, it would have been very hard to discover it. Again, he was the offspring of two diplomatic families; at least, it was recorded in Burke, where each family's record was set out at considerable length and no doubt with reasonable veracity, that diplomacy was one of the callings which adorned two supremely honorable escutcheons.

In the opinion of Mary, also in that of Silvia, who ought to have been back from Mudie's by now, and also, but in a less degree, in the opinion of Otto—named after his godfather, a certain Prince Otto von Bismarck—who generally got home from the Foreign Office about five, their mother exaggerated the importance of the Pridmores of Yorkshire and the Colthursts of Suffolk. No doubt they were two fairly old and respectable families; Burke could certainly show cause for setting store by them; each family ran to two full pages, fairly bristling with peers and baronets and Lady Charlottes and Lady Sophias; and yet, to their mother's grief, these three heretics, Mary, Silvia, and Otto, generally known as the Prince, took pleasure in developing the theory that it was mere Victorianism for Burke or anyone else to flaunt such a pride in the Colthursts and the Pridmores.

"Because," said Mary, "it is not as though either family has ever produced anybody at all first-rate in anything."

The intrusion of Burke reveals a certain attitude of mind in Lady Pridmore. It was really surprising—three of her progeny always maintained it, and a fourth would undoubtedly have done so had he ever felt called upon to express an opinion in the matter—that one who had seen as much of the world as their mother, who had dined and supped and danced and paid calls in the most famous European capitals, who had been intimate with Crowned Heads, who had been whirled by them across ballrooms, who had the entrée to the great world and had cut a very decent figure in it, according to the memoirs of the time, should have such obsolete ideas in regard to the value of the Colthurst family of Suffolk and in slightly modified degree of the Pridmore family of Yorkshire. As Mary said, it was funny.

At present, however, Mr. Henry Harper did not share any such view of Lady Pridmore. She and all that went with her seemed too important to be contemplated in the light of levity. She had a dignity beyond anything the Sailor had known or up till then had conceived to be possible. Therefore, it made her relationship to Klondyke a crowning wonder.

"I shall always think, Mr. Harper," said Lady Pridmore, "that if they had only given Jack his Eleven during his last term at Eton, it would have made a great difference in his life. I don't say he ought to have played against Harrow, but I certainly think they might have played him against Winchester for his bowling. Had they done that, I am convinced it would have steadied him, and then, no doubt, he would have settled down and have followed in the footsteps of his father."

This was the tragedy of Lady Pridmore's life, yet it said much for the callousness of youth that Mary, Silvia, and the Prince were unable to approach the subject with reverence.

The Sailor kept up his end as well as he could, but his awe of Lady Pridmore did not grow less. Therefore he could do himself no sort of justice. Mary, who had taken him completely under her wing, was always on the watch to render well-timed assistance. She helped him out of one or two tight places, and then Silvia came in, with three books in a strap.

She was of a type different from Mary's, but Mr. Harper thought she was very good to look at. She had the same air of directness that he liked so much in the elder sister. An amused vivacity made her popular with most people, yet behind it was a cool, rather cynical perception of men and things.

Mary introduced Mr. Harper, and Silvia shook hands with him in her mother's manner, but with an eye of merriment which made quite a comic effect.

"I've just come from Mudie's," she said, "where they say everybody is reading your book. It is wonderfully clever of you to have written it. Sailors don't write as a rule, do they? Something better to do, I suppose."

"I don't know about that," said Henry Harper. Somehow he felt already that Silvia was disarmingly easy to get on with. "Myself, I'd rather be John Milton than the master of any ship that ever sailed the seas."

"Yes, but that's because you were a sailor before you were a writer, isn't it?"

"It's what every writer that's worth his salt has got to be," said the young man, quaintly. "John Milton was a sailor, too. A master mariner."

"Yes, of course," said Silvia. "I see what you mean."

She had decided already that she very much liked this strange, wistful, rather fine-drawn young man. He was quite different from any other young man she had ever met. Somehow, he was exactly like his book.

"It is odd you should have been on the same ship as my brother."

"Yes," said the Sailor. "And yet it isn't. Nothing is really queer if you come to think about it. It seems very much more strange to me that I should be in this beautiful room talking to you ladies, than that I should have been in the port watch with Klondyke aboard the *Margaret Carey*."

"The sea is more familiar to you than London," said Silvia, completely disarmed by his naïveté, as Mary had been.

Otto now came in. His general aspect was not unlike Klondyke's, his air was frank and manly, yet his bearing was more considered than that hero's. All the same he had a full share of the family charm.

"Otto," said Mary, "this is Mr. Harper, who knows Jack."

"What, you know old Fly-up-the-Creek! Heaven help you!"

Mr. Harper had already made the discovery that these people had a language of their own, which he could only follow with difficulty. It was a language which Madame Sadleir didn't teach, a language that Mr. Ambrose didn't use, although he understood it well enough; in fact, it was a language he had never heard before, and he somehow felt that Lady Pridmore was rather pained by it.

"Mr. Harper," said Mary, "this is our respectable brother. He is true to type."

"For the love of heaven, be quiet!" said Otto, gulping his tea.

"Here's your book on Nietzsche," said Silvia. "Mr. Harper, what do you think of Nietzsche?"

Mr. Harper had never heard of Nietzsche, and he didn't hesitate to say so. Lady Pridmore alone, of the four people present, failed to respect his frankness. To her mind, it was inconceivable that an author by profession and one reputed to be successful should not have heard of Nietzsche. It was almost as if he had not heard of Lord Tennyson.

Yet Mary and Silvia and even the Prince honored this candor. This chap was a queer freak in the eyes of the budding diplomatist, but he had been told by people who knew about such matters that all writing chaps were, if they were at all first rate. All the same, he liked him. One felt he was straight and decent, in spite of his outlandishness. Somehow this quaint bird did not seem to be following the usual line of country of the soaring eagles of the moment whom his sisters brought to the house from time to time.

The Prince took not unkindly to the sailorman, who had written two very curious books about the sea. They were much overrated, in the Prince's opinion. The style was uncertain, and the colors were laid on too thick for anything, but people who knew Ted Ambrose, for instance, thought a good deal of them. Personally, the Prince believed in style. Stevenson, for example, wrote like an educated man. This man's writing in its crude force had somehow the air of the lower deck. Ambrose said there was greatness in it, all the same. Personally, the Prince preferred polished mediocrity, and was not ashamed of the fact, not that one could call a chap like Stevenson mediocre. But this man Harper lacked something, although it was to his credit to admit that he had never heard of Nietzsche. But obviously he hadn't.

VIII

Mary's enthusiasm for the sailorman was shared by Silvia, although not perhaps in an equal degree. Lady Pridmore was inclined to be a little distressed by it, in the way that she was inclined to be a little distressed by so many things. The Prince merely thought there was no harm in the chap, but that he was a freak.

Edward Ambrose, who had discovered what Lady Pridmore considered this rather odd young man, had many questions to answer when next he appeared in Queen Street. As a particular friend of the house, he turned the tables by adroitly chaffing Lady Pridmore and the Prince, and by ministering gaily to Mary's and Silvia's tempered ecstasies.

In the meantime, the Sailor was indulging little private ecstasies of his own. The visit to a Mayfair drawing-room had marked one more epoch in a strange career. He had entered another

new and wonderful world. It was a world whose language was a closed book to him at present. Perhaps it always would be; at any rate, it seemed to lie out of the range even of Madame Sadleir, whose instruction he still courted diligently.

It was a world of peculiar grace, of external harmony and beauty. The trained minds marching with the trained movements of these people lent the quality of poetry to all they said and did. And they took what he could only call their refinement so much for granted, that they seemed almost to apologize for the sheer niceness in which they had so completely enveloped themselves. He had not known that such people existed in mass and bulk, at least that they had a corporate life of their own. The glamour they had for him was extraordinary. It would have been impossible to think without a thrill of his friend Miss Pridmore, even if she had not been the sister of the immortal Klondyke.

Mary herself found so much in common with the Sailor that she began to show him the sights of the town. She was quite a modern girl in her breadth and independence, happily inoculated against every sort of ism, but at the same time capable of following any line she marked out for herself. The Sailor had soon begun to interest her very much, and instinctively divining something of his handicap, she wished to help him all she could.

About a week after the first visit to Queen Street, she led the young man to the National Gallery to see the Turners. They spent a very profitable morning holding high communion before them. His unstudied comments seemed to give her a juster view not of art merely, but of life as well. The depth of his intoxication as he stood before these seascapes, sensing them, drinking them in, filled her with wonder.

"God!" he muttered once. She saw his eyes were full of tears, and she felt a stab of pity.

Life had not been kind to this man. A thousand subtle, half apprehended things had already told her that. He had said in his odd way, which was yet so poignant, that he "had started a long way behind scratch." Indeed, it was the sight of these very Turners which had wrung the admission from him.

After this, they went one day to Manchester Square to see the Wallace collection, and to concerts on several Sunday afternoons, but the climax of esthetic delight was reached for Henry Harper when one evening he was taken to the Opera to hear "Tristan." Edward Ambrose, who it seemed numbered the super-rich among his friends, had been lent a box on the grand tier. And nothing would content him save that others should share the blessings which attend acquaintance with plutocracy.

The box was able to accommodate six persons, and those whom Edward Ambrose lured into honoring it and being honored by it were the three ladies, the Prince, Henry Harper, and himself. Lady Pridmore and the Prince were a little bored undoubtedly. She had the lowest opinion of Wagner and thought the Germans overrated generally. The Prince was more discreet in his condemnation, but he certainly thought the Prelude was too long. Edward Ambrose, Mary, and Silvia had heard it so often that it was almost ceasing to be an excitement for them: a frame of mind, it is said, which connotes the amateur. As for Mr. Harper, that was an ever-memorable night.

From this time on he was in a state of growing ecstasy which threatened to become perilous. Existence was now an enchanted thing. A veritable Fairy Princess had come into his life. In speech, in manner, in look, in deed, she was of royal kin. In all the Sailor's wanderings, in all his imaginings, no mortal woman had assumed the significance of this sister of the immortal Klondyke.

O goddess rare and strange! He was already in her thrall. She was gray-eyed Athena of whom his reading had lately been telling him, she was Wisdom herself come to earth in the disciplined splendor of her spirit. Already he was prostrate at the shrine. It was for Her that he had sailed the multitudinous seas, it was for Her that he had traversed noisome caverns measureless to man.

Aladdin, with a flash of the wonderful lamp, had shown him a reason for many things. Strange and dreadful burdens had been laid upon him, every inch of his endurance had been tested in Fate's crucible, that in the end he might win through to a high destiny. Was it for nothing that, shoeless and stockingless, he had cried, "Orrible Crime on the Igh Seas," in the slush of a Blackhampton gutter? Was it for nothing that he had looked on the Island of San Pedro? No; there was purpose behind it all. At the chosen hour the goddess Athena was to appear in order that he might be healed with the divine wisdom.

Life was touched to very fine issues for the Sailor now. And yet so swift was the change that he did not realize its peril. The sister of Klondyke meant much to him already. Sometimes he read his work to her. When they discussed it afterwards her comments would reveal a depth of knowledge that astonished him, and raised the whole matter of the argument to a higher plane. Many an enchanted talk they had together. So miraculously were their minds in tune that it almost seemed they must have conversed through unnumbered ages. Then, too, in the most tactful and delicate way, she was his guide amid the elusive paths of this new and divine world he was entering. Yet she asked so little and gave so much, such a change was wrought in his life by

subtle degrees, that he was blind to the terrible danger.

It was in late spring, when they had known each other nearly three months, that the Sailor had a first intimation of coming disaster. By that time he had yielded completely to a state of bliss. Moreover, he was now in the thrall of Athena's counterfeit and epitome as imaged by other sailormen who had held communings with her. She had sent to Brinkworth Street on three successive Mondays, recking nought of her deed, certain magic volumes in which she herself was mirrored by the mind of a poet: "Richard Feverel," "Beauchamp," and "The Egoist." And then as he felt the sorcery of Renee, Clara, Lucy, and other adumbrations of Athena herself, something happened.

It was merely that she went out of town for a fortnight. But that fortnight was enough to tell the Sailor one tragic thing. A glamour had gone from the earth. The grass of May was no longer green; Chelsea's river was no longer a vindication of Turner; the birds no longer sang in Middlesex.

A strange thing had come to pass. The Sailor had suffered one sea change the more. But at first, had his life depended on it, he could not have said what it was. He only knew that he was losing appetite for the magic food on which he had been waxing lately: it was no longer possible to devour poetry and wisdom in the way he had done. Moreover his pen no longer flew across the paper. It took him a whole week to do that which he now expected to accomplish in a morning, and then the result pleased him so little that he tore it up. He was bitterly disconcerted by this mystery. But one day, the eighth of her absence, the truth came to him, like a ghost in the night. Life was no longer possible without Mary Pridmore.

It was about four o'clock of a morning in June when this fact overtook him. As he lay in bed, facing it as well as he could, it seemed to submerge him. He sprang forth to meet the cold dawn creeping from the Thames, flung up the blind and opened the window. In the grip of the old relentless force he turned his eyes to the east. The faint flecks of orange across the river were the gates of paradise, yet the Sailor hardly knew whether the sinister gloom beyond was a bank of cloud or the trees upon the Island of San Pedro. In an exaltation of the spirit which he had only known once before in his life, he seemed to hear a particular name being twittered by the birds in the eaves. Mary Pridmore! Mary Pridmore!

It was fantastic, it was ridiculous, it was perhaps a form of mania, but there was the fact. And a policeman, passing along Brinkworth Street at that moment, seemed to tread out that magic name upon its echoing pavement!

She had given him her address: Miss Pridmore, at Greylands, near Woking. He must write, she had said, but not before he had finished "The Egoist," and had made up his mind about it; thereby revealing, as became a properly conventional Miss Pridmore, that it was not so much the sailorman who was of consequence as his opinion on a highly technical matter!

In the innocence of his heart he had already written and posted a letter. His views were expressed with a naïveté at the opposite pole from Box Hill on these high epistolary occasions. It was not in this wise that the mage addressed his own particular goddesses.

No answer had yet come to this letter. Therefore in the half light of dawn he sat down to write a second and more considered one. Vain endeavor! It was not for the pen of mortal to unlock the heart of the true prince, unless the genie willed it. And this morning, alas, the genie was not amenable. For it suddenly addressed the Sailor, not with the voice of a magician, but with rude horse sense.

"Get into bed, you fool," said the genie. "Cease making an idiot of yourself. Athena is as far beyond you as the stars in their courses which have just gone back into heaven."

The Sailor returned to his bed, to dream. He did his best to be rational, but the task was hopeless. "Mary Pridmore! Mary Pridmore!" twittered the sparrows in the eaves of Chelsea.

IX

A little after five had struck by the church of St. Clement at the bottom of Brinkworth Street, he rose again from his bed. He flung on his clothes, draped a scarf round his neck in lieu of a collar, crept downstairs and out of the front door of No. 14 into the streets of the metropolis.

This morning there was a coolness in the air. And as soon as he felt it he was able to think more clearly. A sharp thrill ran through his brain. It was hardly three months since he had roamed the streets of London in the morning hours with tumult in his heart.

Since that night he had explored whole continents; hardly anything remained of many former

worlds he had inhabited; but there was a spear in the side of Ulysses, and he must always remember that none could pluck it out.

As he reached the bottom of the street and Thames in his majesty smiled grimly upon him, he knew that he was in terrible case. He was no more than a frail mortal, caught in the toils of irresistible forces. What hope had such a one of outfacing the decrees of fate?

It was not until he had walked for an hour by the waters of Thames that he returned to Brinkwater Street, to breakfast. A letter with the Woking postmark was at the side of his plate. It said:

Greylands.
Thursday.

MY DEAR MR. HARPER,

Your view of 'The Egoist' is a new light to me on a most wonderful book. It is not exactly how I see it myself, but I somehow feel you are very near the truth. But when you say that a man such as Willoughby is not quite sane there is a point for argument. You are also too severe, I think, in your judgment of the author of his being. You say he could never really have known what life is. There I frankly don't agree with you, but of course we look at things so differently, and that is the great charm of your long letter. This is a very stupid one, but I won't apologize for it, because it is the best I can write, and I shall not have the presumption to try to meet you on your own ground. You have sailed the High Seas, whereas I have only read about them. Looking back on the conversations we have had I see you as a master mariner. This is not an idle compliment. You have not yet gained your full stature, you have yet to declare yourself in your power, but believe me you have the strength of a giant, and if such a wish is not an impertinence I hope you will have the courage to achieve your destiny.

Yours always most sincerely,
MARY PRIDMORE.

This letter was like a draft of wine to the Sailor. He read it many times before that day was out, but he turned to it again and again long after he knew every word by heart. It gave him a new zest for his work. He had quite a good day with the pen. Under these high auspices he took new courage to go on. Much was asked of him by this sacred intimacy. By deeds alone could he show himself worthy.

In reply to this letter he wrote a very long one to Miss Pridmore, at Greylands, near Woking. It was not so discreet and carefully considered as the one he had intended to write; he let himself go far more than he felt he ought to have done. And the reply he received the day before the fortnight was up was similarly expansive and just as entrancing as the former one. But the whole effect was marred by a grievous disappointment. Instead of returning from Greylands on the morrow, which was Saturday, she was going to stay another week.

How could he bear the burden of existence for such an intolerable length of time without a sight of her? It was asking more of flesh and blood than flesh and blood thought reasonable.

The next day, Saturday, was a time of gloom. He could not work at all, and it was no use making a pretence of it. But in the evening, sadly smoking a pipe after so meager a dinner that Mr. Paley was quite disconcerted, there came an inspiration.

Why not pay a visit to Woking on the morrow? Why not make his way to Greylands—wherever Greylands might be—and without revealing an unsanctioned presence, gaze upon Athena in all her glory as she came out of church, which he knew she attended every Sunday?

The idea at once took possession of him. And presently it flamed so hot in his mind that he borrowed a Bradshaw from Mr. Paley and found, as he had surmised, that there was no lack of trains to Woking on the morrow. He decided that the one which arrived at 9.20 would be the best for his purpose. That would give him plenty of time to locate Greylands, and ample opportunity, no doubt, to reach it.

Sunday came, a fair June day, and the Sailor, having made an early, but in the circumstances surprisingly efficient, breakfast, set forth to Waterloo Station. Such an adventure could receive no sanction from men or gods, but after all, reflected Henry Harper as he went his way, no possible harm can come of it if I don't let her see me!

The train arrived at Woking only five minutes late, which was really not bad for the Sabbath. Only one porter was to be seen on the deserted platform, and he, with the gruffness of a martyr ill resigned, had "never heard on it," that is to say, had never heard of Greylands.

This was a rebuff. The clerk in the booking office, suffering also from a sense of injustice, was equally unhelpful. However, outside the station was a solitary flyman in charge of a promiscuous

vehicle, and he, it seemed, had heard of Greylands, moreover, scenting a fare, knew how to get there.

"It's afore you come to Bramshott, just off the Guildford Road. How far? All out three mile. But I shan't ask more than four shilling."

The Sailor declined this offer with politeness. He would have plenty of time to walk, which was what he wanted to do. The flyman, in spite of a keen disappointment, received such a sincere and cordial "Good morning," that he returned it without discourtesy.

The first thing to enkindle the senses of the Sailor was the smell of the fresh country earth. A very little rain had fallen in the night, but enough to renew with a divine cleanliness these wide spaces, these open heaths.

The bracken, young and green and a mass of shining crystals, was uncurling itself on each side of the road. The birds were in full choir, the trees were near the pomp of midsummer, the sun of June made a glory of the distant hills. It was a noble world. Long before the Sailor came to Greylands he was like a harp strung and touched to ecstasy by the implicit hand of nature.

He knew he was speculating on the bare chance of a sight of Athena. There was nothing to tell him that she would go that morning to Bramshott parish church. The only guide he had was that she went to church at least once every Sunday, and sometimes twice, but whether this would involve attendance at the local service must be the part of faith to answer.

At any rate, whether he set eyes on her or not, he was trudging to Greylands through the bracken in ease of mind and high expansion of spirit. He might not see her, yet he was giving himself the glorious opportunity. It was on the knees of the gods, but already he felt stronger, braver, saner, for having put it to the touch.

A little after ten he came to Bramshott village. It was a small place of quaint timber-framed houses, and in the middle was a church. But it all seemed commonplace enough. There was nothing here to minister to an intense emotion; nothing but the sun, the birds, the sky, the bracken, the perfumed loveliness of mother earth.

He was not such a fool as to fear his ecstasy. Come what might he would live his hour. The towers of Greylands, he was told in the village, could be seen from the church porch. There they were, sure enough, banked and massive, cutting across the sun with their importunate red brick. This, at any rate, was her local habitation. It was his to gaze upon even if no other guardon rewarded him.

As became a true sailorman, who had sailed six years before the mast, he had brought home a pocket of horse sense from his wanderings. Therefore, as soon as he had drunk his fill of those flanked towers, he went inside the church and found a decrepit pew-opener who was full of information.

The service began at eleven. Reverend Manson was the vicar and also the squire of the parish, although Greylands was the rich folk, and they always came of a Sunday morning, whatever the weather, if the Fambly was at home. Their name was Ellis, and they were very rich.

Armed with this knowledge, the Sailor decided upon a bold course. He took up a position in a corner of the church some way behind the Greylands pew, which had been duly pointed out to him. Here he sat unseen with one solid pillar to conceal him. But he had taken care that in spite of the pillar a clear sight of the Greylands pew should be his.

It seemed a long time to eleven. But it came at last, and with it, or rather shortly before it, by the courtesy of the gods, came Mary Pridmore. She entered before the Sailor, counting the seconds in his fastness, realized that she was there.

She wore a simple dress of soft gray and a black hat. But in no particular had she abated a whit of her regality. In that fine outline was a quality that made his pulses leap. As she went down the aisle with two white-spatted, ultra-princelike cavaliers, and two ladies, older than she, yet in garb more fanciful, the Sailor caught just a glimpse of her face. Yes, this was Athena herself, a creature altogether splendid yet restrained, who drew the Sailor's very soul and held it, while she knelt on her hassock, with an air of gravest submission and dignity.

Suddenly he realized that she was praying. With a rather irrational impulse of shame he fell on his knees. The knowledge abased him that he had neglected this obvious duty, but yet he had the excuse, such as it was, that this was the very first time in his life he had entered a church.

Hitherto—if the Sailor must face the truth—the whole of his intercourse with religious things had been confined to two tea and bun fights with addresses to follow, under the ægis of that light of his youth, the Reverend Rogers, at the Brookfield Street Mission Hall. Therefore he didn't know in the least what to do. However, let him keep his eyes in front of him. When Athena got up he must get up, when she sat down he must sit down. And kneeling as she kneeled, he devoutly hoped that he was rendering homage to the same God as she, although with far less whole-hearted allegiance than hers at the moment.

It was hard to know what use to make of the Book of Common Prayer that the verger had given him. He had never opened such a volume before. To the best of his recollection one had been lent him at the Brookfield Street Mission Hall, but certainly it had not been opened. It would have been no use to do so, seeing that he could not read a word of it then. But he could read it now, and he desired to render thanks for that miraculous, that crowning mercy.

The service was long, but to the Sailor it was entrancing. The imperial outline of Athena was ever before him; and yet in despite of her he had at least a part of a devout mind to spare for an ancient mystery. Reverend Manson in his dual role of vicar and squire of Bramshott was something of a patriarch. It was a fine face, and to the Sailor it was a symbolical presence. He was simple and sincere, and whatever his learning may have been he wore it like a flower. Somehow, Reverend Manson spoke to the heart of the Sailor. During that enchanted hour he followed him into an unknown kingdom. Yet as he did this the young man was thrilled by the thought that he did not journey alone. Athena was with him at every step he took.

The prayers passed and the singing, which affected him strangely; then came the sermon, and after that more singing, and then came the verger with the collection plate. The Sailor put in half a sovereign; anything but gold seemed a profanation of a most solemn rite. And then he did an immensely wise thing. He glided swiftly, in the midst of the hymn, out of the church, and out of Bramshott village into the lanes of Surrey.

X

More than one long and golden hour the Sailor wandered through bracken and heather. He didn't know in the least where he was going, and there seemed no reason why he should care. He had a wonderful sense of adventure. Here was something real. This was the noble and gorgeous life to which the streets of Blackhampton, the deck of the *Margaret Carey*, the sojourn at King John's Mansions were the dreadful but necessary prelude.

After a long beat across country, and away, away he knew not where, he struck a path which carried him into a charming village tucked away under a hill. It then occurred to him that he was very hungry. The sign of "The Chequers" in the village street brought the fact home. At this neat hostelry with a roof of thatch he was able to declare himself a *bona fide* traveler, and was rewarded with a noble chunk of bread and cheese and a glass of beer, a thin and tepid brew whose only merit was the quality of wetness. But such fare and an hour's rest on a wooden bench in a cool parlor with a sanded floor was Elysium.

After that again the road—but only the road in a manner of speaking. The Sailor, roaming now the high seas of his desire, was in no mood at present for the ordered routes of commerce. Let it be the open country. Let him be borne across multitudinous seas on the wings of fancy. Therefore, as a bird flies, he struck across the pathless heather. The bracken rose waist high, but wherever it ran he followed it, now through the close-grown woods, now across furzy common and open spaces.

On and on he wandered all the golden afternoon. And then quite suddenly came evening and an intense weariness which was not made less because he didn't know where he was. He only knew that he was in Surrey and very tired. But, all at once, Providence declared itself in an unexpected way. Straight ahead among the trees was a tiny opening, and threading it a hum of telegraph wires.

This could only mean that a main road was at hand. Quickened to new life by such a rare piece of luck he pushed on, thanking his stars. Evidently he could not be far from a town or a railway. As a fact, he had struck the Guilford Road, and a hundred yards or so along it the friendliest milestone he had ever met assured him that he was three miles from the country town of Surrey.

Those three miles, honest turnpike as they were, proved a test of endurance. But they ended at last. Footsore and limping now, he crossed a bridge and entered a railway station where the lamps were lit already. And then Providence really surpassed itself! The last train to London was due in twenty minutes.

The Sailor flung himself down on a seat in the station in a state of heavenly fatigue. It had been such a day as he had never known, and his final gracious act of fortune was a fitting climax. It was true the last train to London was twenty minutes late, but it sufficed to know that it was surely coming.

Finally it came, and the Sailor entered it. Moreover, he had the carriage to himself, and was able to lie full length on the cushions in an orgy of weariness. He dozed deliciously all the way to Waterloo, which he reached at something after eleven. It was striking midnight by St. Clement's Church as he turned the latchkey in the door of No. 14 Brinkworth Street. At a quarter past that

hour the Sailor was in his bed too deeply asleep even to dream of Athena.

XI

One of Mary Pridmore's first acts upon her return from Greylands was to summon the sailorman to dine in Queen Street. She was a little peremptory. That is to say, she could take no refusal; it seemed that a certain Mr. Nixon, a Cabinet Minister, had expressed a wish to meet the author of "Dick Smith."

Miss Pridmore was a little excited by this desire on the part of Mr. Nixon. In her opinion, if you were a member of the Cabinet, it was important you should be met; yet Henry Harper did not attach as much significance to the matter as perhaps he ought to have done. In fact, he was a little vague upon the subject. He knew that the newspapers talked mysteriously about the Cabinet, and abused it fearfully every morning with the most devoted and courageous persistency; also he remembered that one of Auntie's temporary husbands was said to have been a cabinetmaker when he was in work, but neither this fact, nor the attitude of the public press, seemed to afford any reason why he must in no circumstances disappoint the President of the Board of Supererogation.

"Please don't be so cool to the Cabinet, Mr. Harper," Athena pleaded, while the young man sought a way out of the impasse. "When such a man as Mr. Nixon asks to meet you, it means that you have *really* arrived. Not that it matters. You have arrived without any help from Mr. Nixon. But he is an old friend of mother's, and he is greatly interested in your book."

The Sailor wanted very particularly, but as delicately as he could, to escape the ordeal of dining in Queen Street, Mayfair. Instinct warned him that this would prove a different matter from a party in Bury Street. The truth was, he had not been able to overcome an unreasonable awe of Lady Pridmore. Then, too, he had an uneasy feeling that he was a little out of his depth with the Prince. Yet again, Miss Silvia, friendly and amusing as she was, gave him a slight sense of hidden, invisible barriers which he could never hope to surmount.

Mary, however, would take no denial. Her mother would be much disappointed, and so would Mr. Nixon, and so would Uncle George, who had also expressed a desire to be present. In Lady Pridmore's opinion this really "ranged" Mr. Harper, and with such a person as Lady Pridmore, that was an operation of the first magnitude, not, of course, that her daughter confided that to the Sailor in so many words.

"I am talking nonsense," said Mary, with that sharp turn of frankness which the Sailor adored in her. "If you don't want to meet people, there is no reason why you should. I sometimes feel exactly the same myself. Mr. Nixon is a bore, and Uncle George—well, he's Uncle George. It will be a tiresome evening for you, but Edward is coming and Jack Ellis, whom we both like, and his fiancée who is quite amusing, and if you really decide to come, I am sure it will please mother."

The Sailor saw, however, that it would please Mary. And that was reason enough for him to accept the invitation after all.

When the day came, it was in fear and trembling that he put on his new evening clothes, with which he had been provided by Edward Ambrose's own tailor. Upon a delicate hint from his friend, he discarded his first suit, which he now realized was a little too crude for a growing reputation. Yet, rather oddly, he could hardly be brought to understand that he had such a thing as a reputation. Indeed, it was only in Queen Street, Mayfair, that a reputation seemed to matter.

A dinner party at No. 50 was a serious affair. He had to begin by shaking hands with Lady Pridmore, who looked like a lady from the walls of Burlington House. A week ago he had been with Mary to the Royal Academy of Arts. Then, also, formidable looking strangers abounded. Foremost of these was Uncle George.

Uncle George was an elderly admiral retired. Among the younger members of the family he was known as "Old Blunderbore." His voice, once of great use on the quarterdeck, was really a little too much for a drawing-room of modest dimensions. Also, his opinions were many and they were unqualified, his stories were long and quite pointless as a rule, he was apt to indulge in a kind of ventriloquial entertainment when he ate his soup, he drank a goodish deal, and was not always very polite to the servants; yet being Uncle George, his sister-in-law seemed to feel that he was a person of immense consequence, and he did not disguise the fact that he considered her a sensible woman for thinking so.

Uncle George seized the hand of the Sailor in marine style, and said, in his loud voice, "Good book you wrote, young man. 'Adventures of Paul Jones.' Good book. Some of it's true, I'm told, and, of course, that makes it much better."

At this point, Mary the watchful led the Sailor gently but firmly out of the range of Uncle George.

That warrior, baffled of his prey, fell like a sea leopard upon Edward Ambrose, who, however, countered him quietly and with frank amusement.

"Never made a bigger mistake in your life, Ambrose, than to compare 'Paul Jones' with 'Robinson Crusoe.'"

Ambrose did not consider it necessary to point out that he had never once mentioned "Paul Jones," and that he was too wise a man ever to compare anything with "Robinson Crusoe." Instead, he laughed the note that was quite peculiar to himself, and mildly asked Uncle George what he thought of the latest performance of the First Lord of the Admiralty.

In the meantime, the Sailor was having to sustain the shock of a first meeting with the President of the Board of Supererogation. His mentor had already described this pillar of the Government as a bore. But the Sailor was not yet sufficiently acquainted with things and men to regard the Right Honorable Gregory Nixon with this measure of detachment.

The impact, however, of the Front Bench manner was less severe than was to have been expected. The voice of Mr. Nixon was nothing like so formidable as his appearance.

"A great pleasure, a great pleasure." Mr. Nixon had a trick of repeating his phrases. "Pray, how did you come to write it all? Angrove thinks"—to the profound and morbid horror of the public press, Mr. Angrove at that moment was the Prime Minister of the realm—"Angrove thinks..."

Happily, the butler informed his mistress that dinner was served, and for a time Mr. Nixon had to postpone what Mr. Angrove thought.

It was only for a time, however, that it was possible to do so. The President of the Board of Supererogation did all his thinking vicariously in terms of Mr. Angrove. But there was just one subject on which Mr. Nixon had opinions of his own. That was the subject of divorce, and it may have been for the reason that it was not a cabinet matter. Before the evening was over, it was tolerably certain that the President of the Board of Supererogation would identify himself publicly and at length with the minority report.

This cheerless fact had to be taken for granted. Divorce in its various aspects was a constant preoccupation of the right honorable gentleman. He had never been married himself, and was never likely to be. Had this not been the case Mr. Gregory Nixon must have felt bound to defer to any opinion that Mr. Angrove might or might not have expressed upon the matter.

"We are in for it now," whispered Mary to the Sailor, who was eating the entrée, sweetbreads with white sauce, and wishing he could use a knife as well as a fork. "But it's Uncle George's fault. He's given him a chance with his silly and pointless story, which is a mere perversion of a very much better one. There, what did I say?"

It was tragically true, that Mr. Nixon was already in the saddle.

"If he would only say something sensible! He is like that character in Dickens—but his King Charles's head is the minority report."

Still, this may have been a woman's thrust, because Mary did not happen to be an admirer of Mr. Nixon's personality. Yet he was a very agreeable man, and on the subject of divorce he talked extraordinarily well, perhaps quite as well as it is possible for any human being to talk on such a vexed and complicated subject.

Mr. Nixon knew that, no doubt. The fact was, that just as one man may have a genius for playing chess, another for shooting clay pigeons, a third for hitting a golf ball or casting a fly, so this eminent politician had a genius for discussing divorce. He may have felt that on that topic no human being could stand against him at a small dinner party where the conversation was general. Lady Pridmore seemed grieved when her hero began to expose this flaw in the armor of a Christian gentleman, Uncle George became furious and was suddenly rude to the butler, Mary and Silvia and the Prince looked the picture of misery, and Edward Ambrose came within an ace of choking himself.

All the same, the discussion which followed was of breathless interest to one person at that table. Henry Harper hung on every word of it.

Mary herself was the first to take up the gage of battle. And she took it up gallantly. She didn't think for a moment that divorce ought to be made more easy. In her opinion, it ought to be made more difficult.

"Why?" asked Mr. Nixon. He asked no more than that, but there was the weight of several royal commissions in the inquiry.

But Mary had the flame of war in her eyes. She knew what Mr. Nixon's opinions were, and

she was heartily ashamed of them. On this subject she could make a very good show for herself, because she happened to feel strongly upon it.

Mr. Nixon was a latitudinarian. He would have divorce brought within the reach of all classes of the community. It should be equally accessible to the poor and the well-to-do. He would greatly amplify the grounds for obtaining it, and even went the length of affirming that the mutual consent of the contracting parties should alone suffice. Moreover, he saw no reason why marriage should not be a contract like any other for a period of years.

Mary bluntly considered these were abominable heresies, and several other women, not to mention Mr. Ellis and Uncle George, shared her opinion. Even Lady Pridmore, who in her heart was horrified by her hero's fall, was moved to remark that it would be impossible to carry on society on any such basis.

"Of course it would," said Mary, with a vehemence that was startling. "For better for worse, for richer for poorer, that's my view. I dare say it's old-fashioned, but I'm sure it's right."

"There I dissent," said Mr. Nixon. "It isn't right at all. Our marriage laws are out of date. They can no longer meet the needs of the community. They are as far behind the twentieth century as a stage coach or a two-horse omnibus. Untold misery and hardship have been inflicted upon the population, and it is high time there was practical legislation upon the subject."

"Marriage," said Mary, with charming pugnacity, "is the most sacred contract into which it is possible for any human being to enter. And if it is not to be binding, I really don't know what contract is or can hope to be. What is your view of the question, Mr. Harper?" she asked, suddenly, of the young man at her side.

The Sailor had been listening with an attention almost painful. But he felt quite unequal to taking a part in the argument. Therefore he contented himself with the general statement that it ought to be easier to get a divorce than it was at present.

"I am grieved to hear you say that," said Athena, with a note in her voice which startled him. "I know I am rather a fanatic, but I really don't see how there can be two opinions upon the matter."

Feeling very unhappy, Henry Harper did not try to contest the point. But this was a subject upon which she felt so strongly that she could not leave it in such a very unsatisfactory state.

"Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder," said Athena. "How is it possible to go beyond that! I would even abolish divorce altogether."

The young man felt a sudden chill.

"Suppose a man had been divorced through no fault of his own?" he said in a far-away voice.

"I don't think a divorced person ought ever to remarry."

"That might hit some people very hard," said Henry Harper, perhaps without a full understanding of the words he used.

"There are bound to be cases in which it would work very cruelly. One realizes that. But ought it to make a difference? There must always be those who have to be sacrificed for the sake of the community."

Henry Harper appreciated the strength of that argument. At the moment, in the strangeness of his surroundings, he was not able to grapple with it. But he was dimly aware that almost unknown to himself he had come to the border of another perilous country.

XII

As the June night was ablaze with stars Edward Ambrose and the Sailor walked some of the way home together.

"I hope you enjoyed yourself," said Ambrose.

Was it possible for a man to do otherwise with gray-eyed Athena sitting beside him nearly the whole evening!

"I enjoyed myself very much," said the Sailor simply.

"The Pridmores are very old friends of mine. An interesting family, I always think."

They walked on in silence for a little time, and then the Sailor said suddenly:

"Mary seems to have strong ideas about divorce." As he spoke he felt a curious tension.

"Surprisingly so," said Edward Ambrose, in his detached way, "for such a modern girl. Somehow one doesn't quite expect it."

"No," said the Sailor.

"It is the measure of her genuineness." Edward Ambrose seemed at that moment to be addressing his words less to the young man at his side than to the stars of heaven. "But she is very complex to me. I've known her all her life.... I've watched her grow up." A whimsical sigh was certainly addressed to the stars of heaven. "It is rather wonderful to see all that Pridmore and Colthurst crassness and narrowness, that has somehow made England great in spite of itself—if you know what I mean..."

The Sailor didn't know in the least, but that was of no consequence to Edward Ambrose in the expression of his mood.

"... touched to finer issues."

The Sailor knew now, but his companion gave him no chance to say so.

"She's so strong and fine, so independent, so modern!" Edward Ambrose laughed his rare note, yet for some reason it was without gaiety.

The truth was he had long been deeply in love with Mary Pridmore, but it was only in certain moments that he realized it.

"I suppose you knew Klondyke?" said the Sailor, wistfully.

"Her brother Jack? Oh, yes. He's thrown back to some Viking strain. One can hardly imagine his being the brother of Otto and the son of his mother or the son of his father."

"I can imagine Mary being the sister of Klondyke," said the Sailor.

"Really! I never see her at quite that angle myself. He's a funny chap." Edward Ambrose was really not thinking at all of any mere male member of the Pridmore family. "Might have done well in diplomacy. Son of his father. Ought to have gone far." Again Edward Ambrose loosed his wonderful note, but it had nothing to do with Jack Pridmore. "And what does he do? And yet, the odd thing is he may be right."

"Klondyke's a white man from way back," said the Sailor abruptly.

The phrase was new to Edward Ambrose, who, as became a man with a keen literary sense, turned it over in his mind. And then he suddenly remembered that he owed it to his friends, the Pridmores, to be a little more guarded in his utterances concerning them.

"Good night, Henry," he said, offering his hand at the corner of Albemarle Street.

In the same moment, a human derelict fastened upon the Sailor, who had to send him away with the price of a bed before he could return his friend's good night.

Thinking their thoughts they went their ways. Edward Ambrose crossed in a black mood to St. James Street. For a reason he could not explain a sudden depression had come upon him. A sharp sense of life's tragic complexity had entered his mind. In order to correct its dire influence he lit a pipe and started to read a manuscript which had come to him that morning. It was called, "A Master Mariner," Book the First.

"Damn it all," he thought a few minutes later. "There can be no possible doubt about that boy. If he can only put the whole thing through in this style, what a book it will be!"

XIII

In the meantime, the Sailor was walking home to Brinkworth Street, distributing largesse.

"Poor, broken mariners," he said, when his pockets were finally empty. "Poor marooned sailormen. I expect all these have seen the Island of San Pedro. I expect some of them are living on it now."

He went to bed, but not to sleep. He had begun to realize that he was getting into very deep waters. The truth was, he was growing a little afraid. He had been a little afraid ever since that

magical Sunday in the wilds of Surrey. And now tonight, as he lay tossing on his pillow, a very definite sense of peril was slowly entering into him. If he was not very careful, the tide of affairs would prove too much, and he would find himself carried out to sea.

As he lay awake through the small hours, the sinister truth grew clear that grim forces were closing upon him again. His will was in danger of being overpowered, if it was not overpowered already. Mary Pridmore had come to mean so much to him that it seemed quite impossible to hold life on any terms without her. Yet it was morbidly weak to admit for a single moment anything of the kind.

During the week that followed, Mary and "the sailorman" undertook several harmless little excursions. One afternoon she called for him with Silvia in her mother's car and drove by way of Richmond Park to Hampton Court. For the Sailor that was a very memorable day. He had a walk alone in the palace garden with Athena, while Silvia, with a keen sense of the fitness of things, paid a call upon some friends of hers in what she impudently called the Royal Workhouse.

This enchanted afternoon, Mary and the Sailor didn't talk divorce. Many things in earth and heaven they talked about, but that subject was not among them. They scaled the heights together, they roamed the mountain places. She told him that the first book of "A Master Mariner," which she had been allowed to read in manuscript, had carried her completely away, and she most sincerely hoped that he would be able to sustain a soaring eagle flight through the hundreds of pages of the two books to follow.

"But you will," she said. "I am convinced of it. I have made up my mind that you must."

As she spoke the words the look of her amidst a glory of color set his soul on fire. It was as much as he could do to refrain from taking the hand of Athena. He wanted to cry aloud his happiness. She looked every inch of royal kin as thus she stood amid flowers, a high and grave wisdom enfolding her. She was indeed a daughter of the gods, tall, slender, virile, an aureole of purest poetry upon her brows that only John Milton could have hymned in their serenity.

"Edward Ambrose thinks as I do about it," she said. "He dined with us last night, and afterwards we had a long talk. I hardly dare tell what hopes he has of you. And, of course, one oughtn't. But, somehow, I can't help it ... I can't help it...."

She spoke to herself rather than to him. The words fell from her lips involuntarily, as if she were in a dream.

"You are so far upon the road that last night Edward and I willed it together that you should go to the end of your journey. We both feel, somehow, that you must ... you must ... you must!"

Again the Sailor wanted to cry out as he looked at her. He thought he could see the tears leap to her eyes. But that may have been because they had leaped to his own.

He could not trust himself to speak. He dare not continue to look at her.

"What a life you must have had!"

It was the first time that note had been on the lips of Athena. The sound of it was more than music, it was sorcery.

"You must have had a wonderful life. And I suppose in some ways..." The beautiful voice sank until it could not be heard, and then rose a little. "In some ways, it must have been ... rather terrible."

He did not speak nor did he look at her. But had he been a strong man armed, he would have fled that magician-haunted garden. He would have left her then, he would never have looked on her again.

"... Rather terrible." In an odd crescendo those words fell again from the lips of Athena. "Edward thinks so. But it's an impertinence, isn't it? Except that some lives are the property of others ... of the race. You are not offended?"

"No," he said. And then feeling that it might have the sound of yes, he gathered defiantly all that remained of his will. "My life has not been at all like what you and Mr. Ambrose think. It has been just hell."

"That is exactly what we imagined it had been," said Athena, with divine simplicity. "And perhaps that is why"—her eyes were strangely magnetic—"Edward and I have willed it that your life to come..."

A surge of wild blood suddenly darkened the wonderful lamp of Aladdin in the right-hand corner of his brain.

"... shall be crowned with more than thorns."

She seemed almost to shiver.

"I beg your pardon," she said, suddenly applying the curb of a powerful will. "It is impertinence. But there is always something about this old garden which seems to carry one beyond oneself. It was wrong to come."

"Don't say that..." The Sailor hardly knew that he was speaking. "We are running a risk ... but ... but it's worth it. Let us sit on that seat a minute. Shall we?"

"Yes, and wait for Silvia." She was using the curb with a force that was almost brutal, as many a Pridmore and many a Colthurst had used it before her.

The Sailor was shattered. But new strength had come to Athena. All the jealous, inherited forces of her being had rallied to the call of her distress.

"By the way." It was not Athena who was speaking now, but Miss Pridmore, whose local habitation was Queen Street, Mayfair. "I nearly forgot to tell you"—it was a clear note of gaiety—"a great event has happened. You shall have one guess."

There was not so much as half a guess in the sailorman.

"There's news of Klondyke. My mother had a letter from him this morning. It's his first word for nearly a year. He sent a postcard from Queenstown to say he will be home tomorrow, and that I must clean out of his own particular bedroom. Whenever he turns up and wherever he comes from, I have always to do that at a moment's notice."

"Where's he been this time?" asked the Sailor.

"Round the whole wide world, I believe."

"Working his passage?"

"Very likely. As soon as he arrives, you will have to come and see him. We are going to keep you as a surprise. Your meeting will be great fun, and you are to promise that Silvia and I will be allowed to see it. And you are to behave as if you were aboard the brigantine *Excelsior*—it will always be the brigantine *Excelsior* to me—and greet him in good round terms of the sea. Now promise, please ... and, of course, no one will mind if you swear. It will hardly be as bad as Uncle George in a temper."

XIV

"Here you are." It was the gay voice of the returning Silvia. "So sorry I've been so long. But I've had to hunt for you. One might have known you would choose the coolest and quietest spot in the whole garden."

As the sailorman was handing them into the car, Silvia said:

"By the way, have you remembered to tell Mr. Harper about Klondyke?"

"Yes, I have," said Mary.

"It will be priceless to see you and Klondyke meet," said Silvia. "We shall not say a word about you. You are to be kept a secret. You have just got to come and be sprung on him, and then you've got to tell him to stand by and go about like the sailormen in Stevenson."

Henry Harper tried very hard to laugh. It was so clearly expected of him. But he failed rather lamentably.

"I don't suppose he'll remember me," was all he could say. "It's years and years since we met. I was only half-grown and half-baked in those days."

"Of course, he'll remember you," said Silvia, "if you really sailed round the world together before the mast. But you *will* let us hear you talk? And it must be pure brigantine *Excelsior*, mustn't it, Mary?"

"He's already promised."

In the Sailor's opinion, this was not strictly true; at least he had no recollection of having gone so far as to make a promise. He could hardly have been such a fool. Mary, in her enthusiasm, was taking a little too much for granted.

"I beg your pardon," he said, desperately, "but I don't remember having said so."

"Oh, but you did, surely, as we sat under the tree."

"No hedging now," said Silvia, with merry severity. "It will be splendid. And the Prince wants to be in at it."

"I don't think we can have Otto," said Mary.

"But I've promised him, my dear. It's all arranged. Mr. Harper is to come to dinner. And not a word is to be said to Klondyke."

"I dare say Mr. Harper won't want to come to dinner?" Mary looked quizzically across at the sailorman through the dim light of a car interior passing under a Hammersmith archway. "One dinner per annum with the *famille* Pridmore will be quite enough for him, I expect."

"That cuts off his retreat, anyway," said Silvia. "And I think, as the Prince is going to be there, it will only be fair to have Edward Ambrose. Of course, Mr. Harper, you fully realize what you have to do. To begin with, you enter with a nautical roll, give the slack of your trousers a hitch, and as soon as you see Klondyke, who, I dare say, will be smoking a foul pipe and reading the *Pink Un*, you will strike your hand on your knee and shout at the top of your voice, 'What ho, my hearty!'"

"How absurd you are!" said Mary, with a rather wry smile. She had just caught the look on the Sailor's face.

"Well, my dear, that's the program, as the Prince and I have arranged it."

Henry Harper was literally forced into a promise to dine in Queen Street on an appointed day in order to meet Klondyke. There was really no escape. It would have been an act of sheer ungraciousness to have held out. Besides, when all was said, the Sailor wanted very much to see his hero.

Nevertheless, grave searchings of heart awaited him now. His sane moments told him—alas! those in which he could look dispassionately upon his predicament seemed to be few—that a wide gulf was fixed between these people and himself. In all essentials they were as wide asunder as the poles. Their place in the scheme of things was fixed, they moved in a definite orbit, while at the best of it he was a mere adventurer, a waif of the streets whom Klondyke had first taught to read and write.

The fact itself was nothing to be ashamed of, he knew that. It was no fault of his that life had never given him a chance. But a new and growing sensitiveness had come upon him, which somehow made that knowledge hard to bear. He did not wish to convey an impression of being other than he was, but he knew it would be difficult to meet Klondyke now.

This, however, was weakness, and he determined to lay it aside. Such feelings were unworthy of Klondyke and of himself. The price to be paid might be heavy—he somehow knew that far more was at stake than he dared think—but let the cost be what it might, he must not be afraid to meet his friend.

All too soon, the evening came when he was due at Queen Street. He arrayed himself with a care almost cynical in his new and well cut clothes, brushed his hair very thoroughly, and took great pains over the set of his tie. Then giving himself doggedly to a task from which there was no escape, he managed to arrive in Queen Street on the stroke of the hour of eight.

An atmosphere of veiled amusement seemed to envelop him as soon as he entered the drawing-room, but the hero was not there. The Sailor was informed by Silvia in a gay aside that Klondyke always made a practice of being absolutely last in any boiled-shirted assembly. The Prince, however, was on the hearthrug, wearing his usual air of calm proprietorship, and with an expression of countenance even more quizzical than usual. Edward Ambrose was also there, looking a trifle perplexed and a little anxious. Lady Pridmore in white satin and really beautiful black lace had that air of regal composure she was never without, but Mary and Silvia were consumed with frank amusement.

"Klondyke is still struggling," said Silvia, "but he won't be long."

It was easy to see that the hero and his boiled shirt were a standing jest in the family circle. He was really a figure of legend. Incredible stories were told of him, all of which had the merit of being based upon truth. He would have been a source of pure joy for the things he had done could he ever have been forgiven for the things he hadn't done.

Dinner had been announced a full five minutes, and a frown was slowly submerging the Prince, when Klondyke sauntered in, his hands deep in his pockets, looking extremely brown and *soigné* and altogether handsome. By some miracle he was even better turned out than his younger brother.

"Here he is!" cried Silvia.

But the Sailor had no need to be told it was he. This was a Klondyke he had never known and hardly guessed at, but after a long and miraculous nine years he was again to grasp his hand. Somehow, at the sight of that gay and handsome face, the room and the people in it passed away.

He could only think of Klondyke on the quay at Honolulu starting to walk across Asia, and here was his hero brown as a chestnut and splendidly fit and cheerful.

Silvia, with a display of facetiousness, introduced Mr. Harper, the famous author, while the others, amused yet strangely serious, watched their greeting. The Sailor came forward shyly, once again the ship's boy of the *Margaret Carey*. But in his eyes was a look which the eyes of that boy had never known.

The first thing Klondyke did was to take his hands out of his pockets. He then stood gazing in sheer astonishment.

"Why ... why, Sailor!"

For the moment, that was all.

The Sailor said nothing, but blind to all things else, stood looking at his friend. It was the old note of the good comrade his ears had cherished a long nine years. Yes, this was Klondyke right enough.

The hero was still gazing at him in sheer astonishment. He was taking him in in detail: the well cut clothes, the air of neatness, order, and well-being. And then a powerful fist had come out square to meet that of Henry Harper. But not a word passed.

It was rather tame, perhaps, for the lookers-on. It was part of the Klondyke tradition never to take him seriously. An utterly comic greeting had been expected between these two who had sailed before the mast, a greeting absurdly nautical, immensely grotesque. It seemed odd that there should have been nothing of this kind in it.

Those two commonplace words of Klondyke's were all that passed between them—before they went down to dinner, at any rate. And throughout the meal, the eyes of the two sailormen were continually straying to each other to the exclusion of everything else. Somehow, to Henry Harper it was like a fantastic dream that he should be seated in Elysium with the goddess Athena by his side and the immortal Klondyke looking at him continually from the head of the table.

All through dinner, Klondyke was unable to overcome a feeling of astonishment that Henry Harper should be sitting there. He couldn't help listening to all that he said, he couldn't help watching all that he did. It was amazing to hear him talk to Mary and his mother about books and plays and to watch his bearing, which was that of a man well used to dining out. To be sure, Klondyke was not a close observer, but as far as he could see there was not a single mistake in anything Sailor said or did, yet nine years ago, when he left him in tears on the quay at Honolulu, he was just a waif from the gutter who could neither write nor read.

When the women had returned to the drawing-room and Klondyke and Edward Ambrose and the Prince sat smoking their cigars, while Henry Harper was content with his usual cigarette, it suddenly grew clear to one of the four that these two sailormen very much desired to be left together.

"Prince," said Edward Ambrose, "let us go and talk Shakespeare and the musical glasses."

As soon as the door had closed Klondyke said: "Now, Sailor, you must have a little of this brandy. No refusal." He filled two liqueur glasses with the fastidious care of one who knew the value of this magic potion. "Sailor"—Klondyke had raised his own glass and was looking at him as of old, with eyes that had traversed all the oceans of the world as well as all its continents—"I'm very glad to see you here."

As soon as the glass touched the lips of Henry Harper, something within him seemed to beat thickly, and then an odd sort of phrase began to roll through his brain. Somehow it brought with it all the sights and the sounds and the odors of the *Margaret Carey*. It was a phrase he had once heard a Yank make use of in the forecabin of that hell-ship, and it was to the effect that Klondyke was a white man from way back.

That was quite true. Klondyke was a white man from way back. Not that Sailor had ever doubted it for a moment.

XV

To the disappointment of the drawing-room, Klondyke and the sailorman sat a long time together. They had much to say to one another.

It was Klondyke, however, who did most of the talking. He had not changed in the least, and he was still the hero of old, yet the Sailor felt very shy and embarrassed at first. But after a while,

the magic of the old intercourse returned, and Henry Harper was able to unlock a little of his heart.

"Life is queer," said Klondyke. "And the more you see of it, the queerer it seems. Take me. If I had been born you, I'd have been as happy as a dead bird swabbing the main deck and shinning up the futtock shrouds and hauling in the tops'ls. And if you had been born me, you'd have been as happy as a dead bird going great guns and doing all sorts of honor to the family. I wanted to go into the Navy, but my mother and the old governor wouldn't stand for it. It must be diplomacy, because the governor had influence, and I was the eldest son and I ought to make use of it. What a job you would have made of that billet! And how you hated the *Margaret Carey*. It was hell all the time, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said the Sailor, "just hell."

"Still, it helped you to find yourself."

"Yes—if I was worth finding."

"Of course you were."

"Anyhow, I took the advice you gave me," said the Sailor, with his odd simplicity.

"You'd have given it yourself in the end without any help of mine. But it's strange that when I read your book I never guessed that you were the author, and that you were writing about our old coffin ship and the Old Man and the mate ... what was his name?"

"Mr. Thompson."

"Since deceased, I hear."

"Yes."

"One always felt he was a proper cutthroat."

"I'd not be sitting here now, but for Mr. Thompson. I'll tell you."

Klondyke's eyes began to shine.

In a few words and very simply, the Sailor told the story of the Island of San Pedro.

"I've sometimes thought since," was his conclusion, "that they were just guying me, knowing they could frighten me out of my wits."

"Of course they were," said Klondyke. "That's human nature. But you had rotten luck ever to come to sea. However, you are in smooth waters now. You'll never have to face the high seas again, my boy."

"I don't know that," said the Sailor, with a sudden sickness of the heart.

"No fear. The wicket's going to roll out plumb. You are the most wonderful chap I have ever met. Now I suppose we had better join the others."

They went upstairs and had a gay reception.

"I wish you would dance a hornpipe or something," said Silvia, "or cross talk as they did on the brigantine *Excelsior*, else we shall none of us believe that either of you have ever been before the mast at all."

"I tell you, Sailor, what we might do," said Klondyke. "If we can remember the words, we might give 'em that old chantey that was always so useful round the Horn. How does it go?"

Klondyke sat down at the piano and began to pick out the notes with one finger of each hand.

"'Away for Rio!' I'll sing the solo, if I can remember it, and you sing the chorus, Sailor!"

Such stern protests were raised by those who knew the capacity of Klondyke's lung power that very reluctantly he gave up this project, yet the very indifferent backing of his shipmate may have carried more weight with him than the pressure of public opinion.

When Edward Ambrose and the Sailor had gone their ways and the others apparently had gone to bed, Klondyke doffed the coat of civilization in favor of a very faded and generally disreputable Ramblers' blazer, lit his pipe, and then, in the most comfortable chair he could find, began to read again "The Adventures of Dick Smith on the High Seas."

"Yes, he's a wonderful chap," he kept muttering at intervals. After he had been moved to this observation several times, he was interrupted by the reappearance of the Prince, who looked uncommonly serious, in an elaborate quilted silk smoking jacket that he affected in his postprandial hours.

"This chap Harper," suddenly opened the Prince. "I want to have a word with you about him."

The look on the face of the elder and less reputable brother seemed pretty clearly to show that this desire was not shared. But duty had to be done, and the Prince seated himself doggedly on the high fender, his back to the fire.

"Tell me," he said, "what you know about this chap Harper."

Somehow, Klondyke hardly felt inclined. For one thing, the slow but sure growth of the Foreign Office manner, which he was able to detect in his younger brother every time he returned from his wanderings, always seemed to rattle him a bit. Of course Otto was a first-rate chap according to his lights; still, Klondyke was the elder, and if questions must be asked he did not feel bound to answer them.

A mild but concentrated gaze conveyed as much.

"Ted Ambrose brought him here," said the Prince, with a nice feeling for these nuances. "A good chap, I dare say ... quite a good chap ... but..."

The mild gaze was still concentrated, but if possible more limpid.

"... but somehow a little ... Mother thinks so, anyway."

"Oh, yes, I dare say," said Klondyke, with a casualness that rather annoyed the Prince.

"Fact is ... I might as well tell you..." The tone of the Prince implied nothing less than a taking of the bull by the horns. "We all think Mary is inclined to ... to..."

With nice deliberation, Klondyke laid "The Adventures of Dick Smith" on the hearthrug.

"Mother thinks," said the Prince plaintively, after a pause, "it would be better if he didn't come to the house so much."

Klondyke frowned heavily and tapped his pipe on a fire-dog.

"How long's he been coming here?" he asked.

"Some little time now."

Klondyke still frowned.

"Mother thinks," said the plaintive Prince, "that Mary sees far too much of him. And I rather agree with her."

"Why?" asked Klondyke stolidly.

"Why?" repeated his younger brother, looking at him with wary amazement. "Well, to start with, he ain't a gentleman."

Klondyke tapped his pipe again.

"I don't mind telling you," said the Prince, "we all think she is making a perfect idiot of herself."

"What's Ted Ambrose think?"

"I've not asked him, but I believe mother has mentioned the matter."

"What did he say?"

"She thought he seemed a good deal worried."

Klondyke's frown had assumed terrific dimensions.

"She's old enough to take care of herself, anyway," he said, beginning abruptly to refill a fowl briar from a small tin box that he unexpectedly evolved from the pocket of his trousers.

"That's hardly the point, is it?" said the Prince, with a deference he didn't feel.

"What is the point?" asked Klondyke, striking a wooden match on the sole of his shoe.

"Mother has mentioned the matter to Uncle George, and he thinks the chap ought not to come here."

"Oh, that's rot," said Klondyke coolly. "That's like the old fool."

"I'm afraid I agree ... with Uncle George, I mean ... and so does Silvia."

"What's Ted Ambrose think about it? He generally knows the lie of a country."

"He'd give no opinion to mother. But he was certainly worried."

Klondyke resumed his frown. He felt rather at sea. He was, in spite of birth and training, a man of primal instincts; he looked at things in an elemental way. Either a man was a good chap or he was not. If he was a good chap, no matter where he may have started from in the race of life, he was fitted by nature to marry his sister. If he was not a good chap, no matter what else he was or might be, he didn't count anyway.

"You see"—the plaintive voice of the Prince broke in upon Klondyke's unsubtle analysis of the situation—"no one knows anything about him. Ambrose sprang him on us from nowhere, as you might say. Of course, he's a man with a sort of reputation ... in his own line ... but he's not one of us ... and it wouldn't have so much mattered if he had been a gentleman."

"There I don't altogether agree," said Klondyke with conviction, but without vehemence. "I always think with Ted Ambrose on that point. Gentlemen are not made. They are born, like poets and cricketers."

"That's rot," said the Prince, with a sudden deepening of his tone of courtesy which made it seem excessive. "You are mixing, I think—aren't you—two entirely different things?"

"No, I don't think so," said Klondyke. "Harper is not a chap who would ever go back on a pal, and that's all that matters."

The Prince suddenly became so deeply angry that he decided to go to bed at once, and accordingly did so.

XVI

For a number of people there followed anxious days. Mary's friends made no secret of their belief that she was losing her head. They were much troubled. She was a universal favorite, one of those charming people who seem to have an almost poetic faculty of common sense. But she was thought to be far too wise ever to be carried away by anything.

The Pridmores, at heart, were conventional. They were abreast of the times, were lively and intelligent, and could be at ease in Bohemia, but up till now Bohemia had known the deference due to Queen Street, Mayfair.

Lady Pridmore had always thought—and Silvia, Uncle George, and the Prince had agreed with her—that Mary was predestined for Edward Ambrose. For one thing, Edward, when his father died, would be very well off—not that the Pridmores were in the least mercenary. They simply knew what money means to such a being as man in such a world as the present. Then Edward was liked by them all. It had long been a mystery why Mary had not married him. He was always her faithful cavalier, and a rather exceptional man. And now she had suddenly gone off at half cock, as Uncle George expressed it.

During this period, tribulation was rife at other places also. Edward Ambrose was in no enviable frame of mind. The woman he loved and the friend he served were cutting deeply into his life. But of one thing he was convinced—neither of them realized their danger.

He was a sufficient judge of his kind to know that Henry Harper was not a man willfully to practice deceit. Ambrose was aware of the skeleton in the cupboard. It was ever present to his mind. And his position was rendered painfully difficult by the fact that he was under a pledge not to reveal it. The root of the matter, as far as Harper was concerned, was that his inexperience of the world might cause him to drift into a relationship which he did not intend and could not foresee.

Ambrose was tormented by a desire to tell Mary Pridmore all he knew. Surely it was his duty. Her ignorance of certain facts, which Harper most unwisely withheld, was a very real and grave danger. Ambrose realized how quickly such a woman, almost unknown to herself, could sweep a man off his feet. He also felt that Henry Harper, with his atmosphere of mystery, and his remarkable powers which needed the help of a strong and stable intelligence, might make an irresistible appeal to a girl like Mary Pridmore.

Ambrose felt that he alone knew the peril which beset his friends. Yet he could not warn one without treason to the other. His regard for both seemed to preclude all interference. He had a sincere affection for a brave-spirited man; for Mary he had long cherished something more than affection; yet in circumstances such as these an untimely word might do mischief untold.

For the present, therefore, he had better remain silent. In the meantime, the Sailor had descended once more into the pit. He had been cast again, by that grim destiny which had never failed to dog him from the outset of his life, into the vortex of overmastering forces. He felt the

time was near when without the help of Mary Pridmore he could not keep on.

One day, worn out with anxiety, he called at Spring Gardens and had an interview with Mr. Daniel Mortimer. That gentleman could give little solace. The woman drew her allowance every week. There was reason to believe that she had had bouts of drinking, but Mr. Mortimer was still unable to advise a petition for divorce. The whole matter was full of difficulty, there was the question of expense, also it would be wise not to ignore the consequences to a rising reputation.

Henry Harper felt the force of this reasoning. It was no use attempting to gainsay the view of an expert in the law. Moreover, he had a clear knowledge of Mary's opinion on the subject of divorce. In any event she would never consent to marry him.

The young man took leave of the kindly and wise Mr. Mortimer, and with despair in his heart walked slowly back to Brinkworth Street. Every yard of the way he wondered what he should do now. He felt like an animal caught in a trap. For more than a week he had not been able to think of his work.

He had not seen Mary for some days. He was trying to keep her out of his thoughts. But the more he denied himself the sight of her, the less power he had to fight the demon in whose grip he was now held. He was unable to work, he slept little, he had no appetite for food; for the most part, he could only walk up and down this wonderful and terrible city of London which had now begun to appall him.

He had outgrown his present strength. And, as only a woman can, she realized where and how she might help him. This deep-sea mariner should not call to her in vain. Athena, in her high maternal sanity, was ready to yield all.

Three days ago, when he had seen her last, and had sat with her in the shade of the park, her eyes, her voice had told him that. They had told him that, even when it had not been his to ask. It was this implicit declaration which had so gravely frightened him. The truth struck home that he was not treading the path of honor.

By the time he had returned to Brinkworth Street, he knew the necessity of a definite course of action. It was madness to go on in their present way. They had come to mean too much to each other; besides, a perception keenly sensitive had told him that her friends were beginning to regard him with a tacit hostility. It had not found expression in word or deed; he was always received with kindness; but except on the part of Klondyke, there was no real warmth of sympathy.

Circumstances had placed him in a terribly false position, and he must be man enough to break his fetters. He knew that there was still one way of doing that. The course was extreme, but honor demanded it.

He had been invited to tea the next day at the house of a friend they had in common. It was to be a large party, and he knew that if he carried out his original intention of going, he would see Mary and no doubt have a chance of talking to her. Much painful reflection that evening finally decided him. He would go prepared to tell everything. It must be their last meeting, for she would surely see how hopeless was the intimacy into which they had drifted.

Having quite definitely made up his mind, he was able to snatch a little more sleep that night than for some weeks past. Moreover, he got up the next day with his resolution strong upon him. Let the cost be what it might, he must accept a bitter and humiliating situation.

At half past four that afternoon he was one of many more or less distinguished persons filling the spacious rooms of a house in a fashionable square. The hostess, a quick-witted adroit woman, was very much a friend of both. She had a real regard for Mary, also a genuine weakness for a man of genius.

Athena was there already when the Sailor arrived. And as she sat on a distant sofa, nursing her teacup, with several members of her court around her, the young man was struck yet again, as he always was, by her look of vital power. She had in a very high degree that curious air of distinction which comes of an old race and seems to strike from a distance. The features were neither decisive nor regular, but the modeling of the whole face and the poise of the head no artist could see without desiring to render on canvas.

The Sailor had to steel his will. The thought was almost intolerable that at one blow he was about to sever his friendship with her. She was so strong and fine, she was a sacred part of his life, she was the key of those central forces that now seemed bent on his destruction.

Presently, amid the slow eddy of an ever changing crowd they came together. Her greeting was of a peculiarly simple friendliness. She seemed grave, with something almost beyond gravity. There was a shadow upon a face that hardly seemed to have known one in all its years of shelter and security.

"Is there anywhere we can talk?" he managed to say after a little while.

She rose from her sofa with the decision he had always lacked.

"Let us try the library," she said.

And with the assured skill of an experienced navigator of social waters, she led him there and found it empty.

XVII

Henry Harper's decision had been taken finally. But as soon as he entered this large and dull room, he felt the chill of its emptiness in an almost symbolical way. It was what his whole life was going to be, and the thought nearly wrung a groan out of him.

She was puzzled by a certain oddness in his manner, a feeling which of late had been growing upon her. It was hard to understand. She knew his need of help, his craving for it, yet now the time had come when he had only to ask in order to receive it he seemed at the mercy of a painful indecision which had the power to wound.

Here and now a subtle withdrawal of the highest part of himself seemed more than ever apparent. It was even in his face this afternoon, in the wonderful face of Ulysses that had all the oceans of the world in it. What did it portend? Was it that he was afraid?

What had he to fear? How could such a person as herself repel him? She had all to give if only he would demand it of her.

Of that he must be aware. The haunted eyes of the sailorman too clearly proclaimed his knowledge.

"How is 'A Master Mariner'?" she asked, in order to end the silence which had intervened as soon as they entered the room.

"It doesn't get on," he said, in a voice that did not seem to be his own.

"I'm very sorry." The deep note was sincerity itself.

"I don't know why," said the Sailor, "but it's too much for me now."

"Of course, it is all immensely difficult. The latter part particularly. Somehow, one always felt it would be."

"It's not that," said the Sailor. "Not the difficulty, I mean. That was always there, and I was never afraid of it. But I think I am losing grip."

She looked at him, a little disquieted. There was a note in his voice she heard then for the first time.

"That must not be," she said. "There's no reason for it."

"Ah, you don't know. I begin to feel now that I'll never be able to put it through."

"Why should you feel that? What reason can you have, a man of your wonderful powers, a man with all his life before him?"

"I just haven't the strength," he said in his quaint speech, "and that's all there is to it."

To her surprise, to her horror almost, he suddenly covered his face with his hands. Somehow, the sight of a weakness so palpable in a thing so strong and fine was unnerving.

"I'll never be able to put it through by myself."

As she stood facing him, she felt the truth of that.

"Is it necessary?" The words seemed to shape themselves in despite of her.

"Yes." Involuntarily, he drew away from her. A sure feminine instinct waited for the words that should follow. She read in those strange eyes that he must now speak. She could almost feel, as she stood so near him, a slow and grim gathering of the will. She could almost hear the surge of speech to his lips. But no words came, and the moment passed.

Now that he had to strike the knife into his heart, it could not be done. It was not cowardice, it was not a failure of the will, it was not even a momentary weakness of the soul. He was in the grip of ineluctable forces, of a power beyond himself. As he stood not three yards from her with the table supporting him, his whole nature seemed wrenched and shaken to the roots of being.

She couldn't help pitying him profoundly. There was something that had crept into his eyes which harrowed her. Poor mariner! For the first time in her life, she felt a curious sudden tightening of the throat. She could have shrieked, almost, at the sight of this tragic pain it was not to be hers to ease.

A moment later, she had regained control.

"You must keep on," said Athena. "You must keep on."

But he knew that he was down, and that the ineluctable forces were killing him.

She may have known it, too. No longer able to bear the look upon his face, she drew back, an intense pity striking her.

Was she upon the verge of some great tragedy? She did not dare to frame the question.

"Mary." ... She awoke to the sound of the Sailor's voice and of her own name on his lips.... "I've made up my mind to—to go away for a bit."

In the midst of these throes, an inspiration had come to him. It was no more than a miserable subterfuge, but it was all he could do.

"I somehow feel I'm on the rocks. I think I'll go a voyage. I'm losing myself. I'll perhaps be able to..."

A stifling sense of pity kept her silent.

"... to persuade Klondyke to come along with me."

"I wish I could have helped you." The words were wrung from her.

"You can't," he said, and he spoke with a gust of passion as one half maddened. "No one can help me."

She saw his wildness, and somehow her strength went out to him.

"You can't think what I've been through," he said, with something worse than rage entering his voice.

She knew she couldn't even guess, and was too wise to try. But again she was hurt by the sight of a suffering it could never be hers to heal.

"Henry," she said, "I would like you always to feel and always to remember that whatever happens to you, and wherever you are, I am your friend, if only I may be."

To this high and rare simplicity of Athena the goddess, he could make no response.

"And now I must go," she said, gathering the whole force of her resolution.

"Suppose I walk with you a little of the way?" he said.

She almost guessed that he meant it for their last stroll together.

It was a long step from the scene of the tea party to Mary's door, but no finer evening for a walk could have been desired. Neither knew why they chose to take it. For both it was a mere prolongation of misery. Perhaps it was that he still hoped, against hope itself, for the moment to return in which it would be possible to tell the secret that locked his lips.

Humiliated as he was, there may still have been that thought in his mind. But it was vain in any case. There could be no real intention now of telling her. By the time they had crossed the park, he had cast it entirely away. And now they fell to talking of other matters.

Unwilling to let her go, cleaving to her in his weakness to the very last second of the very last hour, he persuaded her to sit a few minutes on an empty bench under the trees ... under the trees within whose shade he had sat when he had seen her first. And there he had from her lips a definite expression of her faith.

It was with that they parted—finally, as he believed. He dared not put it to himself in a way so explicit, it was not a thing he could face in such bare, set terms, but in his brain the Aladdin's lamp was burning fitfully, and it was this that flashed the cruel light of truth.

"... If ever you want help!"

Those were the words of their parting, as the pressure of his fingers met the last touch of hers. And then she was gone, and he was gone ... and then a bleak, dull blindness came over him and he knew that more than life had gone with her.

XVIII

A rudderless ship in mid-ocean, he wandered long and aimlessly about the byways of the city. It was past midnight when he found himself back in Brinkworth Street. Without taking off his clothes, he flung himself face down on his bed.

After a while, he tried very hard to pull himself together. He must be a man, that was the whole substance of his thoughts. As ever, he knew that to be his simple duty. Throughout his overdriven life, he had always had to tell himself, and other people had always made a point of telling him, to be a man. Auntie had been the first to ask it of him when she had dragged him upstairs and tied him to the bed. "Enry Arper"—he had heard that shrill snigger above the roar of Knightsbridge—"what I shall do to you is going to hurt, but you must be a man and bear it." A jolly looking policeman had told him to be a man at the police station. Mr. Thompson had told him to be a man the night he carried him to sea. The Old Man had given him equally sound advice when he had gravely told him of the Island of San Pedro.

All his life, it seemed, he had not lacked good advice, and hell only knew he had always done his best to follow it. But as now he lay on his bed in Brinkworth Street in a cold summer dawn, he felt that he was done.

The plain fact was he was coming to believe that he had not had a square deal. Life was tolerable for some, no doubt; for people like the Pridmores, for instance, and his friend Edward Ambrose—he was not envying them meanly, nor was he merely pitying himself—for those who had been born right, who had had a fair start, who had been given a reasonably plumb wicket to play on, as Klondyke expressed it. But for gutter breeds such as himself, there was not one chance in a million of ever winning through. He had done all it was possible for a man to do, and now with a feeling of more than impotence, he realized that he was out.

He had learned a trick of praying this last year or two, but in this cold summer dawn he had no longer a use for it. What was the good? Somebody—it was not for him to say Who—had not played fair. Henry Harper, you must be a man and bear it! A sudden gust of rage swept through him as he lay. The voice of Auntie was coming back to him out of the years. And she was exhorting him to an inhuman stoicism in order that she might serve her private ends.

Some time between six and seven, in a state of awful dejection, he undressed and got into bed. He did not want Mr. Paley to find him like that when he brought the water for his bath at eight o'clock. It would not be right to wound the feelings of a good man. But if Henry Harper had had the courage to take a razor, well... Mr. Paley would not have found him in bed. Since that night on the railway, now many years ago, he had lost the nerve for anything of that kind. He had always thought that on that night something had snapped in the center of himself.

At eight o'clock, when the punctual Mr. Paley came with the water can, Henry Harper told him that he was not going to get up at present, and that he would not be in need of breakfast.

"Aren't you well, sir?" asked Mr. Paley, in his discreet voice.

"No, I'm not very well."

"I'm sorry, sir." Mr. Paley had the gift of expressing true sympathy in his tone and bearing. "You have been a little run down some days now, have you not, sir?"

"Longer than that," said the Sailor. "Ever since I've been born, I've been a poor sort of brute."

"Robust health is an untold blessing. I'm glad to say I've always enjoyed it myself, and so has Mrs. Paley. Would you like to see a doctor, sir? I'll go along at once to Dr. Gibb at the end of the street."

"A doctor is no use for my complaint."

Mr. Paley was grieved, but he wisely withdrew without further comment.

The Sailor turned his face to the wall with a vague sort of prayer that he might be allowed to die. But it was not to heaven; the deadly pressure of events had forced him in spite of a lifetime's hard and bitter fighting to accept Mr. Thompson's theory. The troll of Auntie, who was exuding gin and wickedness around his pillow, had been now reinforced by the mate of the *Margaret Carey*.

A pleasant pair they made, these trolls from his youth. And there were others. If only that delicate spring had not snapped, he must have jumped out of bed and settled the business out of hand. "Be a man," said the voice of Auntie. "There's the case on the dressing table straight before your eyes. Be a man, Enry Arper, and set about it."

Auntie was right. He got out of bed. He took up the case and stood an instant holding it in his

hand.

"Lay holt on it, bye." That was Mr. Thompson's gruff tone, and it was followed immediately by Auntie's shrill and peculiar snigger.

There was one other thing, however, on the dressing table: a comfortable, green-backed edition of the "Poems of John Milton." The Sailor didn't know why, but he took up the now familiar volume with his unoccupied hand. It may have been mere blind chance, it may have been one last cunning effort on the part of the genie, for by some means the book came open at a certain place in the middle. Suddenly the brown case fell to the carpet with a thud.

In spite of the trolls besieging him, the Sailor crept back to his bed with the book in his hands. What wonderful, wonderful worlds were these! And he was little more than twenty-eight. And the sun of Brinkworth Street had entered his chamber to tell him that this was a gorgeous morning of midsummer.

The battle was not over yet, however. Auntie and Mr. Thompson in the hour of their necessity had summoned to their aid the Old Man and Cora Dobbs. It was now all hell let loose.

"Chuck it, ducky." It was Cora's voice now. "You are not a man, you know, and never will be. You are no use, anyway. Get out of your little bed, now, and cut off the gas at the meter."

Time went on, but he made no attempt to reckon how much of it. He was too fiercely occupied in fighting the damned. Once or twice it seemed that they must surely down him. Their insane laughter hovered round his pillow continually, even in the broad light of a very glorious day. Sooner or later, he feared, there could only be one end to it all. John Milton or no John Milton, they almost had him out of bed again, when Mr. Paley came quite unexpectedly into the room.

"Mr. Pridmore, sir, has called. Shall I ask him up?"

Klondyke, however, had come up without waiting to be invited.

"Mary told me you were a bit below the weather," he said, "so I thought I'd come and see you. What's the matter?"

The Sailor could not answer the question. He could only gaze with wild eyes at his friend.

"You've been working too hard, I expect," said Klondyke, looking at him shrewdly. "Overdriving the buzz-box, my boy, with this new book that Ted Ambrose thinks is going to be great. You'll have to have rest and a change."

Klondyke perched on the edge of the bed, as if it had been Sailor's bunk in the half-deck of the *Margaret Carey*.

"Mary said you talked of going away for a bit, and she thought you might like me to come with you. Now what do you say to a little trip as far as Frisco, for the sake of old times? You can put me down there. I'm just beginning to feel, after a month here, that I shall be none the worse for another trek to Nowhere and back. And then you can come home by the next boat and finish your job, or go on a bit further round the coast, if you fancy it. What do you say, old friend?"

The Sailor, supine in his bed, was unable to say anything. But the trolls had no use for Klondyke. Hissing and snarling they had flown already to distant corners of the room.

"Shall we fix that? I'll go now to Cockspur Street and see if I can book a couple of saloon berths for tomorrow—there's a boat for Frisco most Wednesdays, and you are not up to roughing it at present. Besides, there's no reason why you should. Now, Sailor, what do you say?"

In spite of all the trolls there were in the universe, Klondyke was still Klondyke, it seemed. Perhaps he alone could have conquered them.

"That fixes it," he said. "Just get your gear together. You won't want much. And mine's ready any time. I'll go along at once, and come back and report."

Two minutes later, Klondyke was away on his errand, only too happy at the prospect of being in harness again.

For the time being, the trolls were overthrown. The battle was not yet won, but a staunch friend had given the Sailor new fighting power. He was by no means his own man; he felt he never could be again; all the same, when Klondyke returned about an hour later with the news that he had been able to secure two berths for the following day, Henry Harper was dressed, he was bathed and shaved, he was clothed in his right mind more or less.

XIX

On the following night, the Sailor put once more to sea. But it was very different faring from any he had known before. A craft of this kind was another new world to him. Indeed, so little did it resemble the *Margaret Carey*, that it was hard to realize at first that he was once more ocean bound. Even the tang of salt in the air and the wash of the waves against the sides of the great ship were scarcely enough to assure him that he was again afloat.

It was the presence of Klondyke which really convinced him.

"I never thought we should come to this," said his friend as they lingered in boiled shirts over an excellent dinner and a band the second day out. "It's better than having to turn out on deck at eight bells with your oilskins soaked and the nose of the Horn in front of you. You think so, Sailor, I know."

Henry Harper confessed that he did.

"How you stuck it all those years, I can't think," said Klondyke. "How any chap sticks it who doesn't really take to the sea passes me. But you were always a nailer for keeping on keeping on."

The case might be even as Klondyke said, but the Sailor had about reached his limit.

Klondyke himself, who was not a close observer, was struck by the change. He couldn't quite make him out. In his peculiar way, he had a great regard for the Sailor. He considered him to be a white man all through; and knowing so much of the facts of his life, he felt his grit was quite extraordinary. But now it had begun to seem that this gallant fighter was losing tenacity. There was something about him which suggested a boxer who has been knocked to the boards, who is trying to rise before he is counted out and sickly realizes that he can't.

What had happened? It was clear that he had had an awful facer. How had he come by it? Klondyke belonged to a type which strictly preferred its own business to that of anyone else, but it was impossible not to ask these questions, knowing as much of Henry Harper as he did.

Was Mary the cause? Had the blow been dealt by her? Somehow, he did not think that could be the case. And yet there was a doubt in his mind. He knew, at least, that Mary was fearfully upset. It was she who had come to him with a particular look in her eyes and had proposed a voyage for the Sailor on the plea that he had been working too hard. That certainly did not suggest any unkindness on her part. All the same, he knew that his family strongly disapproved of her intimacy with Henry Harper.

Putting two and two together, he was half inclined to believe that the Sailor had proposed to Mary, and that against her own wish she had refused him. But even that hypothesis did not account for the morbid and rudderless state he was in now.

Nevertheless, the Sailor had still a little fight left in him. About the third or fourth day out, he had begun to make an effort to pull himself together, and then it became clear that the voyage was doing him good. In a week he was a new man. He was still deeply mysterious, he was not keen and alert as he used to be, but to the unsubtle mind of Klondyke that implied a case of overwork.

Indeed, as far as he was concerned, that must always be the primary fact in regard to the Sailor. How the chap must have sapped in the nine years since last they had put to sea. It was almost incredible that a man who had made a reputation with his pen, who in speech and bearing could pass muster anywhere, should have been picked out of the gutter unable to write his own name, and set aboard the *Margaret Carey*.

Yes, this chap had enormous fighting power. There was not one man in a million who could have overcome such a start as that. It would be a tragic pity if he went under just as he was coming into his own.

When they reached Frisco the Sailor was so much more himself that Klondyke, who at one time had been disinclined to leave him, felt that now he might do so without any fear for his safety. In every way he seemed very much better. He was brighter, less silent. There was still a mysterious something about him which he could not account for, but he felt the worst was past and that there was no reason why Henry Harper should not go home alone.

Therefore, when they came to Frisco, Klondyke carried out his plan of trekking to nowhere and back, where boiled shirts would cease to trouble him, and where, with a rifle and a few cartridges, and one or two odds and ends in a makeshift carry-all which had accompanied him to the uttermost places of the earth, he would really feel that he was alive. He invited the Sailor to come with him, yet he knew that such a mode of life was not for Henry Harper. And the Sailor knew that, too. For one thing, he would be wasting precious time he could not afford to lose; again, now that fighting power was coming back to him, he must run his rede, must prepare to outface destiny.

Still, in taking leave of his friend, he was trying himself beyond his present strength.

The fact struck him with cruel force at the moment of parting on the waterfront at Frisco. Klondyke, wearing a fur cap the replica of one that would ever be the magic possession of Henry Harper, was on the point of going his way, and the Sailor had booked a return passage to Liverpool. It came upon him as they said good-by that it was more than he could bear.

"You'll win out," were the last words spoken in the familiar way. "You've not got so far along the course to be downed in the straight. Keep on keeping on, and you'll get through."

That was their farewell. But as soon as the Sailor was alone, the awaiting trolls were on him. He was in better shape now than in those hours in Brinkworth Street, but the conflict was grim. Every ounce of will was needed.

He went aboard feeling dazed. Even yet he had not grasped the worst. He did not know until the next day that England and Brinkworth Street were not yet possible, and that perhaps they never would be. Therefore, when they touched at the port of Boston he changed ship and put about, having suddenly determined to make the grand tour as a saloon passenger.

He was well off for money. Popularity had come to him as well as technical success. He could afford to sail round the world first class. And having reached this wise decision, he began in earnest to fight destiny.

He had made a pledge that he would not write to Mary, also, if his will endured, he would never see her again. It seemed the only course after that last failure.

John Milton was with him, also the Bible and Shakespeare and Shelton's "Don Quixote" and Boswell's "Life of Johnson," and a translation of Montaigne. Moreover, he had the Iliad and the Odyssey in English, also a Greek Lexicon. With the aid of this, he spent many an hour in quarrying painfully, but with a certain amount of success, in the original. This royal company did much to hold the trolls at bay. But in the evening they would hover round the lamp in the saloon; and during the night, when he awoke to the wash of the sea, expecting to hear eight bells struck and half wishing he was dead in consequence, because he would have to tumble out of his bunk and ascend shivering to the deck of the *Margaret Carey*, then was a time for the foe. But with John Milton and a greater than John by his elbow, and with Aladdin's wonderful lamp still burning fitfully through the night, although of late the genie had apparently forgotten to trim it, the demons for all their hissing and snarling were never really able to fasten their fangs upon him as they had done that morning in Brinkworth Street.

Weeks went by. He saw strange sights and many familiar ones, he touched at some unknown and some half remembered ports, he watched the sun gild many majestic cities. Once again he saw on the starboard bow the trees of the Island of San Pedro. Once again he saw the sharks with their dead-white bellies and heard their continual plop-plop in the water. Once again he heard the Old Man come up the cabin stairs. This time the heavens did not open, perhaps for the reason that there was no heaven to open for Henry Harper now.

About the third day out from Auckland on the homeward tack, he put forth a great effort to come to grips with "A Master Mariner," Book Three. But after a week of futile struggling he discovered that Aladdin's lamp was extinguished altogether.

The knowledge was bitter, but it must be accepted. Hope was the magic fuel with which the lamp was fed. If that priceless stuff should fail, the lamp could burn no more. Whatever he did now it seemed as clear as the glorious sun of the Antipodes that the mariner would never come into port.

Several times he changed ship. Mind and will steadily developed, but he was never captain of his soul. The demons of the past no longer besieged him, but Book Three was still becalmed. The hour was not yet in which he could return.

Months went by, but the future remained an abyss.

In the end, Ulysses came back to the shores of his native Ithaca for a prosaic but sufficient reason. It was merely that he was in need of money. After eleven months of wandering on the face of the waters, the liberal store he carried had almost disappeared. Quite suddenly one night, in the Mediterranean, he took the decision to return to London.

XX

The Sailor knew as soon as he stepped on the platform at Charing Cross that he had no wish to see again that city which had treated him with such unkindness. He left his gear in the station cloak room, and then by the time he had gone a few yards he regretted bitterly that he had ever come back at all. The mere sight of the omnibuses, of the names on the hoardings, of the

grotesquely miscellaneous throngs in the Strand, told him that eleven months of ceaseless wandering had done nothing, or at the best very little, to heal the wound he bore.

These streets brought an ache that, steel his will as he might, he could hardly bear. There to the right was the National Gallery. It was on just such a morning as this that she had led him to the Turners. Farther along were Pall Mall and Edward Ambrose.

Five minutes he stood on the curb at the top of Northumberland Avenue, trying to decide whether he should cross Trafalgar Square. Once more the old sense of disintegration was upon him. Once more he was asking himself what he ought to do.

Eleven months had passed, but things were as they were. In that time not a line had been added to the work he was trying to do. Yet he felt that his first duty was to go to see Edward Ambrose. Let him go now. It was no use shirking it. But a curious instinct was holding him back. It was illogical, he knew, but every moment that he stood there seemed to make the task more difficult.

In a state of irresolution he crossed the road as far as an island in the middle. The sense of familiarity was growing at every step. Within a very few yards was Spring Gardens. He could see two doors up the street the brass plate of Messrs. Mortimer mocking him through a weird substitute for the light of day.

In spite of all the months that had passed, the sight of that brass plate was like a knife in his body. He turned from the island to dash across a very dangerous road, and came within an ace of the death that would have been so welcome. A taxi avoided him by an almost miraculous swerve, for which, when he realized it, he did not thank the driver.

All at sea he crossed the Square and entered Pall Mall. In the process of time he came to the home of *Brown's Magazine*. Edward Ambrose gave him a welcome that nearly brought tears to his eyes.

"My dear boy!" he said. "Not one word in all these months! Anyhow you have come back to us."

It was impossible to doubt the friendship and the affection of this greeting. The Sailor felt a pang of shame. As a fact, he had been too modest to expect such loyalty.

"I'm ... I'm sorry."

"You had no right to forget your friends," said Edward Ambrose, a little resentfully. He knew the workings of this childishly open mind, and it hurt him that a sincere emotion should have been underrated.

"Yes," said the Sailor queerly. "It was rotten."

"You are looking splendidly brown and well," said Edward Ambrose as soon as it seemed the part of wisdom to speak. "You don't mean to say that Dick Smith has been sailing the high seas all these long months?"

"Not Dick Smith. Ulysses."

Ambrose gave a little start of pure pleasure.

"Then," he said, "a master mariner has really come into port?"

"No." He stifled a groan. "And never will, I'm thinking. That poor sailor man is still becalmed east by west of Nowhere, and never a sign of land on either bow."

"But you *must* put it through somehow. Tell me ... is there anything I can do to help you?"

The Sailor shook his head miserably.

"I can't accept that as final," said Edward Ambrose. "It's—it's—I hesitate to say what it may be if only you carry it out as you have conceived it. If you don't do that I some how feel the high gods will never forgive you ... or me."

If anything could have rekindled Aladdin's lamp in the Sailor's soul it would have been the enthusiasm of this friend. But it was not to be; the trolls had him captive.

"I'm sorry," he said gently, knowing the stab he dealt. "It is no fault of yours. It's you that's made me all I am ... and if any man could have helped me here you would have been that man. But I'm just a broken mariner. It's no use mincing it—I'm done."

The stark simplicity of the confession made Edward Ambrose gasp. He could say nothing. In the honest eyes was a look of consternation.

"A mariner has got to have a star to work by. Even old Ulysses had to have that. But there's not one for Henry Harper in all the firmament." He fell into a sudden, odd, and queer kind of

rage. "It's a black shame. If only I'd had a fair chance I'd have put this thing through. You might say"—the harsh laugh jarred worse than the baffled anger—"I'm a chap who has been handicapped out of the race. However..." The Sailor became silent.

Ambrose felt himself to be shaken. The impotent fury of this elemental soul was something beyond his experience. He hardened his heart. It must be his task to anchor this derelict adrift in uncharted seas until such time as help could come to him.

"Henry," he said suddenly, "does Mary Pridmore know you have returned?"

"No."

Edward Ambrose mustered his courage.

"If you don't bring the mariner into port it will be a heavy blow for her."

"What has it to do with her?" was the almost savage reply.

"She believes in you."

"Why should she?" There was almost a note of menace.

"She is your friend. We are both your friends."

The quiet tone somehow prevailed.

"Of course," he said queerly, "you are both my friends. And I'm not worthy of either."

"Suppose we leave her to be the judge of that."

The Sailor shook his head.

"She can't judge anything until ... until I've told her ... about Cora."

"She has not been told?" Ambrose spoke casually, impassively. Somehow he had allowed himself to guess that the Sailor had told her, and that she had sent him away. Why he should have come to that rather fantastic conclusion he didn't know, except that she had not had a line from Henry Harper in eleven months. But he saw at once that he was wrong.

He felt that he must use great care. The ice was even thinner than he had suspected. Moreover an acute perception told him that nothing would be easier than for ill informed well-meaningness to commit a tragic blunder.

"You don't mean to say you thought I had?" The Sailor put his question oddly, disconnectedly.

"The fact is," said Edward Ambrose jesuitically, "I have never been impertinent enough to think the matter out. I know nothing beyond the fact that Mary Pridmore is very much your friend."

"There's no use in saying that when I can never be hers."

"Ah, there I don't agree," said Edward Ambrose calmly.

"Why not look the facts in the face?"

"Yes, why not?"

"Friendship between us is impossible. That's why I went away. We ... we played it up too high. Friendship between a man and a woman is no use ... at least not to her and me ... although..."

"I'm not talking merely of friendship," said Edward Ambrose, very deliberately. "I'm talking of something else."

So charged with meaning were the words that the Sailor recoiled as if he had received a blow.

"What ... what are you saying!" he cried with a sudden blind rage in his face.

BOOK V

FULFILLMENT

"Why do you taunt me?" cried the Sailor after a pause hard to endure.

"I offer neither reason nor excuse for the words I have used," said Edward Ambrose calmly. "I can only say that she is more than your friend. You must remember that you have been away eleven months. In the meantime water still continues to flow under London Bridge."

"I don't follow you."

"Yes, of course—one assumes too much. One forgets that you have been away so long and that apparently you have not yet seen Mortimer."

"Mortimer!"

"Perhaps I ought to have told you ... yes ... I can see I ought to have. Mortimer has news."

"News!"

"Now I am going to put you out. Go at once and see him."

Henry Harper presently realized that he was again on the pavement of Pall Mall, but he was too bewildered to know how he had come there. He was in a kind of dream. But all he did had a specific purpose. For instance, he was going to see Mr. Mortimer. Yet he could not understand what lay behind his friend's desire that he should see the solicitor at once. The true explanation never occurred to him.

Mr. Mortimer had to tell him that his wife had died two months ago in the course of one of her bouts of drinking. At first the Sailor could not grasp the significance of the statement. It hardly seemed to make any impact upon him. He thanked Mr. Mortimer for all his services in a trying matter, and went out into the street, apparently giving very little thought to what had happened.

Here, however, he grew suddenly aware that the aspect of things had completely changed. Something had occurred which lay beyond his ken, but he knew already that the whole universe was different.

A new man in brain and heart, he collected his things from Charing Cross and drove to Brinkworth Street. His room was ready to receive him in spite of the fact that he had been away eleven months. He had written to Mr. Paley from time to time inclosing money and telling him that he hoped to be home presently. And home he was at last.

It was not at once that he could set his thoughts in order. But one fact was clear. He was free. He was free to enjoy the light of heaven, to breathe the breath of life.

In the height of the tumult now upon him he took a resolve. The barrier was down. He would put all to the touch. Somehow he had an implicit faith. A gulf was fixed, he knew, between Mary and himself. She belonged to a world far removed from the one in which he had been born, in which he had passed so much of his life. But he had that final pledge, "If ever you want help!" Well, there was only one way in which she could help him, and that she knew as well as he.

Soon after five he set out. If he went leisurely he would reach Queen Street about six, a propitious hour. She was generally at home at that time. It was hard to believe that he was the same man who had stood that morning on the curb at Charing Cross. He had absolutely nothing now in common with that broken mariner.

In those few brief hours he had suffered one sea change the more. The genie had relit the lamp. Again he was a forward-looking man. Nay, he was more. He was a prince of the blood approaching the portals of an imperial kingdom. Otto, a prince of that other kingdom, issued from the threshold of No. 50, while Venables, the butler, with polite surprise, was in the very act of receiving the Sailor.

"Hulloa, Harper," said the Prince. "Turned up again. We had all given you up for lost."

It might have been possible for a delicate ear to detect something other than welcome in the voice of his highness. But whether such was the case or not was a matter of no concern to the returned mariner.

Mary was at home and alone. At first he was a little unnerved by the sight of her, and she perhaps by the sight of him. The look of sadness in her face distressed him.

"Not one line," she said. But there was nothing of Edward Ambrose's half reproach in her voice.

"No."

"I was beginning to think I should never see or hear of you again." Her simplicity was the

exact counterpart of his own.

"I don't think I ever meant you to."

She waited patiently for him to add to his strange words and was slow to realize that he couldn't.

"That would have been cruel," she said at last.

"It would have been cruel either way. However, it is all done with now."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," she said, finding that speech had failed him again.

"I don't know whether I can tell you."

Ought he to tell her? A harrowing doubt arose. She knew that there had been some grave reason for his going away. But what the hidden cause had been, hers was not a nature that would ask. She only knew that if speech and bearing meant anything, he was deeply in love with her, and yet for some unfathomable reason he had shirked the issue.

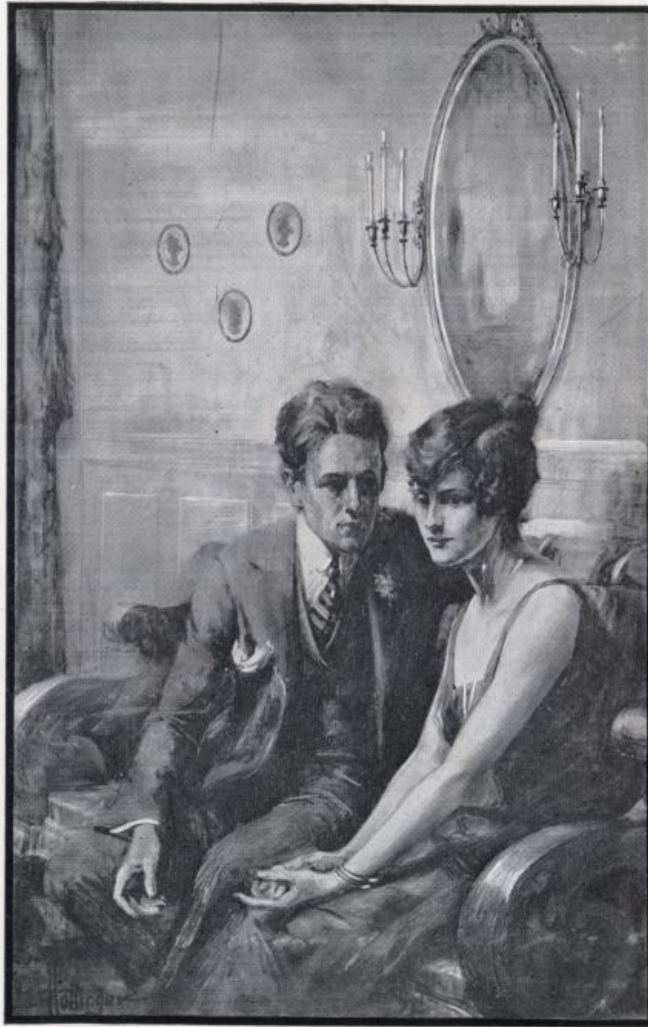
And now he had returned after these long months, which to her as well as to himself had been a time of more than bitterness, there was still this shadow between them. Yet it surely belonged to the past. There was no barrier between them now, except the memory of a secret which somehow he could not believe was vital.

In her immense desire to serve him she was ready to give all that he might ask. But there was still a reservation in his mind. In the sudden revelation, as it seemed to him, of the divine clemency, he was overwhelmed by a desire to confess all.

There may have been no need to do so, yet that was not a question to ask. She was his, he knew it; she would not be less, she would be doubly his, if she learned the circumstances of his life. Besides, so high was the revulsion of feeling now upon him that it seemed the course of honor. And was it not her right to know all concerning him before he demanded so great a sacrifice?

In this mood he never for a moment doubted that it would be a further bond. Let him tell his secret now that his lips had been unsealed.

"Mary," he said, "do you remember your words eleven months ago?"



“‘Mary,’ he said, ‘do you remember your words eleven months ago?’”

“‘Mary,’ he said, ‘do you remember your words eleven months ago?’”

"I remember them perfectly."

"Well, there was only one way in which you could help me then, and that was why I went away. And I never intended to return unless I could claim that which you offered me."

"Was it necessary?"

"Mere friendship is no use to you and me. But I couldn't ask you to marry me then, although I knew ... at least I thought I knew ... you'll tell me if I am wrong..."

She couldn't help smiling a little at this rather childlike confusion.

"... that you would marry me if I asked you. But I didn't, because I couldn't. Do you understand that? Do you still look at things in the way you did?"

The soul of a poor mariner might be tempest tossed on all the oceans of the world, but the soul of Mary Pridmore was the fixed star of his faith. The mere thought seemed to brace his courage for the task that honor laid upon him.

He took her hand. It was the only manifestation he would allow himself until he had told her.

"I could not ask you to marry me then," he said, "because I had a wife."

"You had a wife." She repeated the words numbly, incredulously.

"I had a wife," he said, doggedly. "She died two months ago."

"And ... and you never told me!"

"No."

There was an edge to her tone that had struck like a knife.

"Henry!"

"I tried," he said feebly. "God knows I tried."

"You don't mean you deceived me?" Her voice was hardening.

"No." A queer kind of faintness was coming over him. "I don't mean that. You never asked me and ... and I never told you."

"But you knew I took it for granted that you were not married."

The order and precision of her speech began to frighten him. He could give no answer.

"You knew that." Her voice was hurting him terribly.

"I don't say I didn't," he said. He had a sick feeling that he was already in the jaws of a trap. God in heaven, what madness had lured him to tell her when he had no need to do so!

"Then you deceived me." The voice was pitiless.

He looked at her with scared eyes.

"Don't say that," he said.

He saw there was a cold light blazing in her and he began to grow miserably afraid.

"I tried very hard not to deceive you," he said. "God knows I tried. And it was because I couldn't go on with it that I went away and ... and never meant to see you again."

"I don't quite think that is an excuse."

Somehow the words seemed to goad him on to unknown perils. But he was in a quicksand, the ground was moving under his feet.

"You don't know what my life has been," he said desperately. "You don't know what a wife I married, you don't know anything about me, else you wouldn't be so hard."

She realized while he was speaking, realized with a kind of nausea, which came suddenly upon her, that all he said was true. There was a peculiar note creeping into his voice that assailed her fastidious ears like a sudden descent to a subterranean region which she knew to exist, but of which she had never had first-hand knowledge. The subtle change of tone was telling her as nothing else could have done that it was perfectly true that she knew neither what his life had been nor anything about him.

"Mary." In spite of an intense feeling for him it was beginning to make her wince to hear her name on his lips. "If you don't mind I think I'll tell you one or two things about my life and ... and how I came ... to get married."

"I think perhaps I would rather not know." It was not she who said that. Long generations of Pridmores and Colthursts had suddenly taken charge and had answered for her.

It was a tone he had never heard her use, not even at the dinner party at which she had discussed the question of divorce. It was almost as if she had hit him a blow and yet without intending to deal one. By this time he had grown so dazed and frightened that he had begun to lose his head.

"The woman I married was not respectable, and that was why I didn't tell you."

She drew away from him a little. It was quite an involuntary action, but he felt it like a knife in the flesh. In sick desperation he floundered on, suddenly losing touch with all the small amenities of speech and manner he had so painfully imposed upon himself. Moreover, he realized the fact with pangs that were almost murderous. There were notes from the Blackhampton gutter beginning to strike through his voice.

"You don't know what my life has been," he said. "You don't know where I started from."

Again she made that involuntary movement, almost as if she felt that the mere tone was defiling her.

"You must let me tell you ... let me tell you all, if you don't mind. It'll help you understand."

"I would rather you didn't." Again the Pridmores and the Colthursts were speaking.

He looked at her with a wildness that made her shiver. An intense pity for this man had suddenly begun to do battle with the Colthursts and the Pridmores. There was something in those eyes, as there always had been, that was almost beyond her power to meet.

"I never had a chance," he said, holding her in thrall with the voice she no longer recognized as his. "I've been handicapped out of the race. I'm going to tell you, Mary. It's not that I want your pity ... I ask more than that. It's more than pity will bring a sailorman like me into port."

A kind of defiance of himself and of her had entered his tone. His words seemed to open a vein in her heart. She had a great compassion for this man, but with all her strength of soul, with all her independence, she knew and felt that voice had already told her that the facts of his life were going to prove more than she could bear.

In a dogged way, with many of the tricks of speech and manner of former phases of his life, which he had sloughed as a snake its skin, and had now reassumed in the stress of overmastering agony, he told her all. He spared her nothing, not even his comparatively recent knowledge that his father had been driven to commit a murder, which in Henry Harper's view accounted for the price the son had had to pay. Nothing was spared her of Auntie, of the police, of the night on the railway, of Mr. Thompson and the Old Man, of the *Margaret Carey* and the Island of San Pedro, of Ginger and Blackhampton, of the first meeting with Klondyke, of the first meeting with Edward Ambrose, and, finally, an account of his fall into the clutches of Cora Dobbs and how he made the horrible discovery concerning her on the night of their own first memorable meeting at the dinner party in Bury Street.

Some insane demon seemed to urge him on. In spite of the look of horror in her eyes, he told her everything. Somehow he felt it was the only reparation he could make to her for being as he was.

"Klondyke gave me my first start," he said finally. "He knows nearly as much as you—except about that woman—but he's stood to me all through. I don't ask your pity. I admit I deceived you, Mary, an' I done wrong, but it warn't because I didn't want to do right. I got to pay for it, I can see that. I dare say it's right, but I'll only say ... and this is final ... *Enry Arper, whatever 'is father done, don't deserve not a half, not a quarter of what's been done to him.*"

She had to hold on by the table. Something was stifling her. There were things in this elemental soul which the Pridmores and the Colthursts might once have known, but for long generations had forgotten.

She dare not look at him. An abyss had opened. She simply couldn't face it.

Somehow he knew that. It needed no words to tell him. Everything was lost. The mariner could never hope to come into port. Again that horrible sense of rage came on him, which a few hours ago had overthrown him in his interview with Edward Ambrose. It maddened him to think that he had been allowed to get so far along the road and that a subtle trick had defeated him when the goal was actually in sight.

Yet even at the last there was just one thing, and only one, that stood to him: if it was still possible he must be a man, a gentleman. He knew this woman was suffering cruelly, and he owed it to her and to his friends not to profane the God she worshiped. There was no God in heaven after all, it seemed, for Henry Harper, but for her, who had not the stain of a father's crime upon her, it was a different matter.

As he stood not three paces from her, clenched and incoherent, fighting not to strike her with the sudden awful blasphemies that were surging to his lips, he knew nothing of what was passing in her mind. Had he known she would have had his pity. All that her progenitors had stood for in the past had suddenly recoiled upon her. All those entries in Burke it had been her pleasure to deride, all the politicians and the landed proprietors, all the Lady Sophias and the Lady Carolines, all that flunkyfied reverence for concrete things of those generations of the Pridmores and the Colthursts, which had so long affronted her high good sense, were now having their word to say in the matter.

She had pledged her help to this man if ever he asked it, but now she found that help was not hers to give. Said the tart voice of her famous Aunt Caroline, it is not to be expected, my dear, of a sane Christian gentlewoman. Think of your father, my dear! By some strange irony, Mary Pridmore suddenly thought of him, that admired and bewhiskered servant of a generation which allowed his friend Bismarck to steal Schleswig and to murder France, but paid itself the tribute of building the Albert Memorial; the distinguished servant of a generation that had denied reading, writing, and arithmetic to its Henry Harpers and had turned them barefoot into its Blackhampton gutters.

Many things were coming home to the heart of Mary Pridmore in the awful silence of that room. She was no more to blame for the long line of her fathers whose governing abilities were commemorated in the England of the sixties than was their victim, Henry Harper, in whose bruised body and tormented soul had been commemorated his mother's murder. She was numb and dazed now she had heard his story, but she had nothing to give him.

The truth had come to him already. "Now, Enry, you must be a man and bear it," said the voice of Auntie, wheezing in the upper air. Well ... if his flesh and blood would only let him he must be a gentleman as long as he had the honor to converse with a real Hyde Park lady who believed in God ... that was all he knew at the moment. If there was a spark of manhood in him he must hold on to that.

"Miss Pridmore." ... He was able to pull himself together in a way that astonished even himself.... "I see it's all over with me and you. I'll never be able to get through without your help.

I'm fair done in. But I don't blame you. An' I just want you to say you don't blame me, an' then I'll quit."

She couldn't speak. Aunt Caroline in a hoop and elastic-sided boots was simply imploring her to behave with dignity.

"Say you don't blame me, Miss Pridmore, an' then I'll quit. It's not reelly my fault about my father." He laughed a little, but she didn't hear him. "I'm sorry, though, about the Mariner. If we could have brought *him* into port, you and me, Miss Pridmore, there'd been nothing like him outside the Russians. However ... say I'm not to blame ... and then I'll quit."

She was unable to hear what he was saying.

"Won't you, Miss Pridmore? I can't bear you should think I've played it low down. If I could ha' told you afore I'd ha' done it ... you can lay to that."

It was not a voice that she knew, and she could not answer it.

"Well, I'm sorry."

Suddenly he took her hand, and its coldness startled him.

"I'll say good-by," he said with a sort of laugh.

Aunt Charlotte primly informed her niece that Mr. Harper was taking leave.

"Oh," she said. "Good-by."

Without venturing again to touch the hand she offered, he stumbled headlong out of the room and down the stairs. He took his hat from a table in the hall and let himself out of the front door before the butler could get there. He closed the door after him with a sharp bang—it was a door with a patent catch and could only be closed in that way—and as he did this and the sound re-echoed along Queen Street, the lamp in the right-hand corner of his brain suddenly went out.

By the time he came to the end of the street it had grown very dark. And as he turned a corner and found himself in a street whose name he didn't know he was unable to see anything. And then all at once he realized that Aladdin's lamp was broken in a thousand pieces, and he gave a little wild shriek of dismay. The savage hunted eyes of Mr. Thompson were gazing at him from under the helmet of a passing constable.

The trolls had got him.

Nothing could help him now. It had grown so dark that he couldn't see anything, although it was hardly seven at present of an evening in June. He almost shrieked again as he heard the sniggering voice of Auntie ascend above the gathering noises of the town: "Now, Enery, you must be a man and bear it."

He didn't know where he was now amid the maze of the little-frequented streets of Mayfair. He had lost his way and he couldn't see. He was blind already with an ever growing darkness. He was losing all sense of time and place. But the voice of Auntie was ever in his ears, exhorting him, with that shrill and peculiar snigger of which she never seemed to grow weary, to be a man and bear it, as he stumbled on and on into the night.

II

One afternoon about a week later, Edward Ambrose rang up No. 50, Queen Street, on the telephone to ask if Mary was at home. In reply he was told by Silvia that Mary had gone for a few days to Greylands to the Ellises, but her mother would be very glad if Edward would come and see her as she wished particularly to have a little talk with him. Edward certainly did not wish particularly to have a little talk with Lady Pridmore at that moment, but there was no way out of it. Thus in no very amiable frame of mind he drove to Queen Street.

Lady Pridmore was alone in the drawing-room. She received Edward with the grave cordiality that she reserved for favorites.

"It is very nice of you to come, Edward. Ring for some tea."

That was like her, when she knew quite well he never took tea.

"We are dreadfully worried about Mary."

That was like her again. She was always dreadfully worried about something, although

nothing in wide earth or high heaven had the power really to upset her. But Edward for some reason was not feeling very sympathetic towards the Lady Pridmores of the world just now.

"And we blame you."

"Me?"

"Yes, we blame you. It was you who first brought that young man, Mr. Harper, to the house."

This was not quite in accordance with the facts. Still, there would be no point in saying so. Ambrose, therefore, contented himself with asking, "Well, what of him?" with as much politeness as he could muster in order to cover a growing impatience.

"It is not well, Edward, it is very far from well," said Lady Pridmore aggrievedly. "As I say, we are all dreadfully worried. Mr. Harper turned up here again one day last week, the first time for a year. And he saw Mary alone. Silvia and I were out—at—dear me!—but it doesn't matter—"

"Quite so," murmured the courteous Edward.

"Otto met him coming in as he went out."

"Well?"

"Well, as I say, Mary and Mr. Harper were together a long time and somehow—I'm sorry to tell you this—she has seemed quite ill ever since."

Edward expressed regret.

"And Dr. Claughton strongly advised a change."

"I am very sorry," he said gravely.

"She is so overstrung that she has had to have sleeping drafts. It is by Dr. Claughton's advice she has gone down to Woking."

"But what reason have you to connect all this with Mr. Harper?"

"The evening he saw her she didn't come down to dinner. Now I would like you to tell me a little more about—about Mr. Harper. You brought him here, you know. Otto says he is not altogether ... Do you think that?"

"Had I thought for a moment that he was not a desirable acquaintance I should not have brought him here." This was a shameless begging of the question; it was not he who had brought the young man there.

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said Lady Pridmore with feeling. "That is exactly what I said to Otto. I wish you would tell me all you know about this Mr. Harper."

"I am afraid I can only tell you one thing about him."

"Yes," said Lady Pridmore encouragingly!

"At the present moment he is very dangerously ill. The doctors take a very grave view of his case."

Lady Pridmore was grieved to hear that, but it fully confirmed what she had surmised.

What had she surmised?

"I am quite sure that something rather dreadful took place here a week ago."

Ambrose felt that was most probable.

"I wish you would tell me, Edward," said Lady Pridmore, "what in your opinion it was that happened."

The retort on the tip of Edward's tongue was, "How the devil should I know!" but fortunately he didn't allow it to pass. He contented himself with silence.

"I want to see Mary most particularly," he said, after a pause. "I think I'll send her a telegram to say that I am coming by the first train tomorrow."

"Do," said Lady Pridmore. "That will cheer her up."

III

He sent a telegram as he returned sadly to his rooms. He was in a miserable frame of mind. Somehow he was hating life, but he was now fully bent upon one thing, and no peace could be his until he had done it.

After dinner came an answer to say Mary would be very glad to see him. He sat smoking endless pipes, until he realized that it would soon be too late to go to bed if he was to catch an early train.

On arrival at Woking, Mary was at the station with her friend's car. She looked ill, he thought, but she seemed very glad to see him. At first they found little to say. Indeed, it was not until they had decided to use a fine morning in walking to Greylands, had sent on the car and taken to the road, that they were able to talk in the way they wished.

"I suppose you don't quite know why I've come?" said Ambrose.

"No, I frankly don't," said Mary, "but at least, Edward, it is always very, very good to see you."

Ever since she could remember, he had ranked as the chief of her friends, and that accounted, perhaps, for a certain attitude of mind towards him. But in all the years they had known each other, in all the hours they had spent in each other's company, never had they seemed so intimate as in this walk together. And there was a very clear reason why this should be so. Never had each felt such a need of the other's perceptiveness.

It was not for him to ask what had happened a week ago at that last interview in Queen Street. But she told him voluntarily.

"I had promised to help him," she said, growing pale at the recollection. "And he came to me and told me all ... all the facts and the circumstances ... things that not I and not you, Edward ... could ever have guessed."

"You were not able to do what he asked?"

"No, I simply was not. I simply couldn't. I meant to help him. I wanted to. Perhaps ... perhaps I ought to have ... but ... but it was an abyss he showed me ... you don't know..."

They walked on in silence a little way.

"... A year ago, I made a pledge. And he counted on it. I think that is why he told me the whole dreadful story. Had I not been a coward, I should never have..."

"You judge yourself too hardly. He asked too much."

"It should not have been too much. I ought to have been able to help him. At least ... I ought not to have sent him away as I did."

"Assuming it were not too late, do you think you could help him now?"

"But it *is* too late." She was evading the question.

"It is not the view I take myself. I saw both doctors yesterday, and they have very little hope of a recovery. But you and I are not bound to agree with them."

"What can we do ... in the face of such an opinion?"

"We can have faith."

"But the doctors?"

"It is a purely mental case. The mind is the key of the whole matter."

"Yes, I know ... I know."

"No doctor, however expert, can ever say anything positively in regard to the mind, provided the brain is not damaged."

"Isn't it bound to be?"

"They do not say that ... and there is our hope. It is a special case. We must always remember this man is different from other people. It is my firm belief that it is in your power to save him. The view may be entirely mistaken, but it is my own personal conviction."

A new Edward Ambrose was speaking. Here were a strength and a force which until that moment he had not known how to show her. It may have been that the occasion had never arisen, or perhaps the conventional timidity of his kind had never permitted it.

"I—I don't altogether understand," she said, faintly.

"You took away his belief. And I ask you to give it him back again."

She walked dully by his side, striving as well as she could to represent to herself the strange words he had used in a form she could accept.

"You do understand, Mary?"

"Isn't it too late?"

Tormenting fears were again upon her.

"It may be. Certainly the doctors think the balance of probability against it. But I firmly hold that such a view is not for those who know this poor sailorman. I cannot help thinking that no one is allowed to get so far along the road in the face of such paralyzing odds without there being still some hope of putting the thing through."

They stood in the middle of the road, looking at each other.

"I ... I think you are right. You understand him so much better than I."

"That we can neither of us believe." He spoke with a queer laugh. "But if I am asking you to give too much, you mustn't blame me. You have always taught me to ask too much." His voice tailed off in the oddest way. "But this time I don't ask for myself."

She was crying. "I was never the woman that you thought me. Or that I thought myself."

She stood a moment, the tears running down her cheeks.

"You must go to that poor mariner," he said, with odd suddenness, trying now for the first time in all the long years to impose his will upon hers. "He has a very wonderful cargo on board. You and I—we owe it to each other and perhaps to future generations—to see that it comes into port."

Such a tone was startling. She had never heard it before. A new and very potent voice was speaking.

"There is no time to lose." This was Edward Ambrose raised to a higher power. "Every hour is going to count. If it is still possible, go and offer him a refuge from the storm."

She stood irresolute. But already she had begun to waver. A masculine nature in its new and full expression was turning the scale.

"If we go back at once," he said, "there will be time to catch the twelve o'clock train from Woking. You can telegraph to your maid. And Catherine Ellis will understand. Or you can write and explain."

Either the call was stronger than her weakness, or she had underrated the forces within herself. For suddenly she turned round and they began to retrace their steps along the road they had come.

Good walking gave them time for the midday train to Waterloo. Upon arrival at that terminus, shortly before one, they drove to a nursing home in Fitzroy Square.

Permission had already been obtained by Ambrose for Mary Pridmore to see Henry Harper. It was felt that her presence at his bedside could do no harm, although there was very little hope that it could do good. At any rate, the nurse who received them made no difficulties about admitting her. Ambrose took leave of Mary on the doorstep in the casual rather whimsical way he affected in all his dealings with her, and then drove heroically to his club.

IV

The Sailor lay breathing heavily. He was still just able to keep on keeping on. But in spite of the darkened room and the blindness of his eyes, he knew at once that she had come to him ... the incarnation of the good, the beautiful, and the true ... gray-eyed Athena, with the plumes in her helmet.

His prayer had been heard, his faith had been answered. He knew she had come to him, this emanation of the divine justice and the divine mercy, even before her lips had breathed his name ... that name which through eons of time, as it seemed, he had been striving to fix in the chaos that once had been his brain.

V

It was rather less than a year later that Edward Ambrose, seated in his favorite chair in his rooms in Bury Street, knocked out the ashes of a last pipe before turning in. He had already given a startled glance at the clock on the chimney piece, and had found it was a quarter past three in the morning.

The truth was he had been oblivious of the flight of time for a good many hours. And the cause of this lapse was a bulky bundle of manuscript which was still on his knees. It had come to him from abroad with a letter the previous day. And having read the last page and having cleared the debris from his pipe, he yet returned the pipe, empty as it was, to his mouth and then read the letter again.

It said:

MY DEAR EDWARD,

In praying you to accept the dedication of what to you and none other I venture to call an epic of that strange and terrible thing, the unsubduable soul of Man, I make one more demand on your patience. I feel that only a very brave man could father such a thing as this poor mariner. It is not that he has not proved to be a stouter fellow than could ever have been hoped. To say otherwise would be black ingratitude to those who sought him out on the open sea and brought him safely into port. If his book is more than was to have been expected, it is yet less than the future promises now that other new, or shall we say *recovered* worlds, are continually opening to the gaze of the astonished sailorman as with Athena by his side he roams the shores of his native Ithaca.

Drink deep, O muse, of the Pierian spring,
Unlock the doors of memory.

If this prayer is heard, on a day Ulysses may proclaim in native wood-notes wild the goodness of the living God, and hymn the glories of a universe that man, ill-starred as he may be, is powerless to defile. Even if such power is not granted to the mariner, he will yet have a happiness he had not thought possible for mortal men to know. And she who had Wisdom for her godmother, I hope and pray she is also happy in self-fulfillment. If this is a fatal egotism, I am not afraid to expose it to you. The mariner is not so blind that he does not see that it is a more developed, a far higher form of our species who sits with his old pipe in his favorite chair in Bury Street, St. James', frowning over this ridiculous letter. You and she begin where he leaves off. What virtue both must have inherited! And who shall dare to say how terribly a man may be punished for lack of virtue in his ancestors.

We send you our blessing and our affection.

H.H.

Having reread this letter, Edward Ambrose turned again to the concluding pages of the manuscript still lying upon his knees. The clock on the chimney piece struck four, but no heed was paid to it. The empty pipe was still between his teeth when finally he exclaimed: "Yes, it's wonderful ... very wonderful. It is even more wonderful than I had hoped."

He then took the pipe from his mouth and found the stem was bitten right through.

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