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, by Albert Edwards**

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**COMRADE YETTA**

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**COMRADE YETTA**  
**BY**  
**ALBERT EDWARDS**

[Pg iii]

AUTHOR OF "A MAN'S WORLD"

New York  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
1913

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## COMRADE YETTA

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## COMRADE YETTA

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### BOOK I

### CHAPTER I

## BENJAMIN'S BOOK-STORE

The girlhood of Yetta Rayefsky was passed in her father's second-hand book-store on East Broadway. In the late nineties the fame of his kindly philosophy had attracted a circle of followers, and the store became almost prosperous.

It was in a basement—four steps down from the sidewalk. The close-packed cases around the walls were filled with the wildest assortment of second-hand English books. You were likely to find a novel of Laura Jean Libby cheek by jowl with "The Book of Mormon," between two volumes of "Browning's Poems." The tables in the centre were piled chaotically with books and periodicals in Russian and Hebrew.

Every night in the week you would have found Benjamin Rayefsky and his little daughter Yetta perched on high stools back of the desk to the left of the door. He would have greeted you with his sad, wistful smile, and would have gotten down to shake hands with you. It would have surprised and hurt him if you had asked at once for a book, paid for it, and gone out. It was customary to take plenty of time and to make quite sure that he did not have in stock some book you would prefer to the one you had come after. [Pg 2]

When he had succeeded in making you feel at home, he would have returned to his desk, and Yetta would have gone on reading aloud to him. Very likely you would have wanted to laugh at the discussions they had over how various English words should be pronounced. When they could not agree, Benjamin would write down the word on a slip of paper for Yetta to take to school in the morning and submit to the teacher. You would have wondered with amusement how much the little lassie understood of the ponderous tomes she read in her high-pitched uncertain voice.

But you would not have wanted to laugh at the memory you carried away of the couple. More than one Gentile who had dropped into the store by chance went away racking their brains to recall the Holy Picture the Rayefskys suggested. It was what the psychologists call "inverse association." The Father and Daughter inevitably called to mind the Mother and Son.

Benjamin resembled—except for an ugly scar on his forehead—Guido Reni's "Christ." There was the same poignant sadness about his mouth, the same soft beard and sensitive nose; there was the same otherworldly kindness in his eyes and his every gesture. And little Yetta was very like the Child Mary in Titian's "Presentation."

Towards nine o'clock the little shop began to fill up. First of the regulars was a consumptive lad whose attention had been caught by an advertisement asserting that a certain encyclopædia was worth a university education. Lacking money to go to college or to acquire so large a set of books, he was reading one of these compendiums in Rayefsky's Book-store. He had reached the letter "R," and considered himself a junior. There were others who came for regular reading, but more came to talk—and to listen to Benjamin. At ten he would close Yetta's book and, putting his arm about her shoulders, begin his evening discourse. Generally his text was some phrase from his reading which had impressed him during the day. Before long the little girl's eyes would close and her head fall over on her father's shoulder. [Pg 3]

But one night he kept her awake. There was a wedding in progress across the street. It was his custom to talk directly to some one person of his audience, and this night he addressed himself to Yetta. With poetic imagination he paraphrased the idyll of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz, making of the story an interpretation of marriage for his daughter's guidance. Some time in the years to come a Man would claim her, and against that time he taught her the vow that Ruth made to Naomi.

"Whither thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

He made her repeat the vow over and over again in Hebrew until she knew it by heart.

"It is with these words, my daughter," he said, "that you must greet the Bridegroom."

Much of the gentle wisdom which her father preached to the little shopful of listeners Yetta did not fully understand. But for nine years, from the time she was six till she reached fifteen, it was the lullaby to which, every night, she fell asleep, perched on her high stool, her head on his shoulder. Much of it sank in. [Pg 4]

This is to be the story of how little Yetta Rayefsky grew up into useful happiness. But her father's influence was the thing, more than all else, that differentiated her from thousands of other East Side girls. Without Benjamin's story, hers would be incomprehensible.

His father had been a man of means in the Russian town of Kovna. But Benjamin, the only son, had no talent for trade; he was of the type of Jews who dream. And he loved books. The library facilities of the Kovna Ghetto were limited, but he read everything on which he could lay hands. From his youth up he knew and loved the Psalms and the more poetic sections of the Prophets. The age-old beauty of the Hebrew literature was a never failing spring at which he refreshed his soul. He had also read the novels of Gogol, Korolenko, and Dostoiefsky, and the few books he could find on history and science.

A strange sort of cosmography had grown out of this ill-assorted reading. He took the Prophecies seriously and looked forward with abiding faith to the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Like most deeply religious people he was not strictly orthodox. He scrupulously observed the forms of Hebraic ritualism, but his real inspiration came from King David rather than from scribes who compiled the Talmud or the Rabbis who minutely interpreted the Torah. He had much sympathy with the Zionists, for they also had ardent faith in the Promises, but he took no interest in the geographical aspects of their aspirations. The Messiah, when he came, would establish His reign over all the earth. He also believed, as did the Zionists, that the Jews were the light-bearers of the human family, but he considered them a People chosen for special service—not for peculiar favors.

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Added to this hoary mysticism was a very disjointed idea of world's history and a crude conception of Evolution. He believed that God's purpose with the Race was being worked out through the development of Democracy—which he understood to be another word for loving-kindness and brotherhood. He had never seen Democracy. He knew nothing of the crimes committed in its name; he had no conception of the modern Plutocracy, which is everywhere in a life-and-death struggle with Democracy—and as often as not seems to be winning the fight.

This vague idealization of Democracy was stimulated by the rare letters from his sister Martha in New York. While Benjamin was still a lad she had married David Goldstein, a ne'er-do-weel of the community, and with her dowry they had emigrated. The poor woman could hardly be blamed if she hid from her family the cruel realities of her life. She wrote what she thought would please them. As her imagination was limited, she borrowed her metaphors from the Scriptures and had milk and honey flowing down the Bowery. Benjamin often illuminated his talks on the Promised Land by references to the freedom and justice of America. It was not hard for him to believe in a Utopia. It did not seem too much to ask that all men should be as unselfish and gentle as himself.

Living thus in his dreams he grew to manhood. In the early twenties he married. His wife, fortunately, had common sense enough for two, and protected his patrimony from waste. The first child they named Benjamin, and a few years later Yetta was born.

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The father held a privileged position in the Jewish community. His pure, unworldly life, his ever ready sympathy, his learning and homely wisdom, had earned him the rank of a saint. There were some, of course, who shook their heads over his dreamings. With so much money to start with, they said, he might have become rich—perhaps a "merchant of the first class." But every one loved him. The women came to him with their troubles, and even the busiest, most careworn men liked to sit for a while and hear him recite the sonorous prophecies and talk of the Kingdom which is to come.

It was in 1890 that Benjamin and his daughter were torn loose from their anchorage. The affair lacked the proportions of the later and more formal Jew-killings of Kishineff and Odessa. The cause of the outbreak was never explained, but we, who lynch negroes on so slight provocation, may not throw stones. Unexpectedly a mob—the scum of the Christian quarter—rushed into the Ghetto. At first they were intent on loot, but the hooligans had had to drink much vodka to generate sufficient courage to attack the defenceless Jews. Passions so stimulated cannot be controlled, and soon the mob was engaged in murder and rape. Benjamin went out on the street to reason with them. They left him for dead.

It was several weeks before he regained his consciousness. An ugly scar stretched from above his left eye to his ear. Many of his friends held that he never quite recovered from that wound, for as long as he lived he sometimes spoke of his wife and his son Benjamin as though they were still alive. But such lapses of memory happened rarely; generally he remembered that they had been buried while he was in the hospital. He had only Yetta left. He would surely have gone mad if he had lived on among the memories of Kovna. So he had emigrated to join his sister in the Happy Valley of America.

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There was wonderful vitality to Benjamin's dreams. Even the tangible realities of Orchard Street could not obliterate them.

Many hideous things which he saw he did not understand. Among such phenomena was his brother-in-law. In the social organization of the Kovna Ghetto, David Goldstein had found no place. The opportunities for viciousness were too limited for him; he had been only a shiftless misfit. But on the East Side of New York his distorted talents found a market. He had sold them to Tammany Hall. His wife's money had been wasted in a legitimate business enterprise for which he had no fitness. A defalcation had caused his arrest, the District Leader had saved him from jail, and David found the niche into which he fitted. He was nominal owner of The Sioux Hotel—a saloon of the worst repute. The profits of vice are large, but those "higher up" always claim the lion's share. And as David had taken to drink—a rare vice among the Jews—his wife and her three children were having a very miserable time of it.

Perhaps it was the wound across his forehead which made it difficult for Benjamin to see clearly. About all he seemed to realize was that his sister could not afford to live comfortably. He had brought with him a few thousand dollars, the wreck of his father's fortune, and, by offering to pay liberally for a room and board, he enabled his sister to move into a better flat and so dulled the edge of her poverty. Some instinctive wisdom made him resist David's impassioned appeals to invest his money in The Sioux Hotel.

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But he was no more of a business man than his brother-in-law, and before long, seduced by his passion for reading, he was persuaded to buy the second-hand book-store.

It was a dark basement. There were only a few hours a day when one could read, even in the

front, without a lamp. But it was Yetta's home. To be sure, she and her father slept at the Goldstein's flat and had breakfast there. But by seven they were in the book-store. For lunch they had tea and buns from the coffee-house upstairs, and at six o'clock Yetta brought their dinner from her aunt's in a pail. At first the place had seemed to Yetta very large, and the darkness in the back limitless and fearsome. Once, when her father had gone back there and she could not see him, she had become frightened and called him. He, laughing at her timidity, had taken her in his arms and they had explored all the dark corners by candle-light. She always remembered the sense of relief which had come to her when she realized how small it was.

Benjamin was thirty-four when this change in his life took place. With his scholarly turn of mind, it did not take him long to learn to read English fluently. But in his store on East Broadway he had little chance to speak the new language. Few of his customers spoke anything but Russian or Yiddish. Yetta always found it hard not to pronounce "book" "buk." This was the first word her father taught her. He was an insistent teacher. He realized his own inability to become an active unit in the seething, incomprehensible life about him. His explorations of the new world were meagre. He was tied to the store except on Saturday afternoons, and he could not desecrate the Sabbath by trolley rides. The poverty and misery which he could not ignore, he thought of as local. The unhappy lot of his people was due to their ignorance, their inability to understand the new language, their age-old habits of semiserfdom. But with Yetta it was to be different! She was to be fitted for full participation in the rich life of perfect freedom. He put especial emphasis on the language.

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There were few things which made him outspokenly angry. The principal ones were the Jewish papers. Yiddish was to him the language of the Kovna Ghetto, the language of persecutions and pogroms. The pure Hebrew of the Scriptures—Yes!—he would have every child of the Race know that. He taught it to Yetta. It was the reservoir of all the rich traditions and richer promises. But Yiddish was a bastard jargon which his people had learned in captivity. It held no treasures of the past, no future hope. Let his people supplement the language of their forefathers by one of freedom. Let them learn the speech of the land of Refuge. His contempt for Yiddish, of course, isolated him from everything vital in the life of the East Side, and drove him back farther into his dreams and to Yetta.

As soon as she was old enough she went to the closely packed public school near by. While she was away, he read hungrily. He had cleared a shelf in the darkest corner of the store, and there he put by all the books which pleased him—those he wanted her to read when she grew old enough. They were not for sale. Yetta got very little play during her childhood. Back in the store, after school hours, she perched up on a high stool beside her father and went over her lessons with him.

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At the end of the first year Benjamin's bank account had decreased by five hundred dollars. It had been a rare month when the total sales had equalled the month's rent and living expenses. But he was not depressed. A customer asked him one time about his business.

"Although I do not sell many books," Benjamin replied, "I have much time to read."

The second year would have been worse except for the lucky chance which secured him the agency for some Russian newspapers and considerably increased his income. If he had not so stubbornly refused to have anything to do with Yiddish, the store might have become prosperous, for he gradually learned the business and grew to use some judgment in replenishing his stock. His quaint philosophy attracted a little group of admirers. Even if they did not entirely accept his dreams, they liked to hear him talk about them.

In this environment Yetta grew into girlhood. Every day when her school work was finished she read aloud to her father from the books he had placed on the reserved shelf. It was a planless mixture—a History of the Jews, Motley and Prescott, Shakespeare and Dickens and Emerson.

The last thing she read to him was a three-volume edition of *Les Miserables*. She was fifteen then, and her reading was frequently interrupted by his coughs. Perhaps he had caught it from the lad who was racing with death to graduate from the Encyclopedia. Benjamin's friends shook their heads mournfully. But he expected to recover soon; was he not taking his "patent medicine" regularly? And so to the wonderful symphony of Hugo's masterpiece Benjamin coughed out his life. The third volume was read, not in the little store, but in their bedroom in the Goldstein's flat. It was the last book Yetta read for several years. When it was finished, she had begun to be afraid; she did not have the courage to begin a new book. He was too sick to listen.

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## CHAPTER II YETTA'S GIRLHOOD

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The death of her father was a greater catastrophe to Yetta than she realized. She felt only the personal loss. Her uncle took care of the financial matters, sold the book-store, and so forth. When the funeral expenses were paid, he said there was nothing left. Coming back from the cemetery, her aunt, in as kindly a manner as was possible to so woe-begone and soured a woman, tried to explain to her what it meant to be penniless. Leave school? Go to work? She hardly listened. Her sorrow was too real, too wild and incoherent.

The Goldsteins had three children. Isaac was eighteen. Two years before he had graduated from the House of Refuge—a pickpocket of parts. He had his ups and downs, but on the whole he found money "easy," and hardly a week passed when he did not hand his mother a few dollars.

The twin daughters of sixteen were working and brought their wages home. Rosa was anæmic, querulous, and unattractive. She worked "bei buttonholes." A slight curvature of the spine, which had become apparent in her childhood, had developed into a pitiful deformity after the years bent over a machine. Rachel had monopolized all the charms of health and good spirits which should have been divided between them. Her face looked much younger than Rosa's, but her body had developed into a pleasing womanhood which had been entirely denied her sister. She was not beautiful, but she was red blooded, merry, and likable. She was a milliner and earned twice as much as Rosa.

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So the Goldsteins should have been fairly prosperous, but the father's craving for alcohol had grown more rapidly than the earning capacity of his children. Poverty had weighed too heavily on Mrs. Goldstein to allow her to tolerate an idler, and besides she had always looked with disapproval on Yetta's unwomanly education. It seemed almost impious to her to have a girl in school. She had perjured herself blissfully about the age of her own daughters to avoid the Truant Officer. For a few days the family left Yetta alone in her room to cry. Then they jerked her out of the stupor of her grief, and threw her into the cauldron of modern industry.

Rachel had seen a sign which advertised the need of "beginners" in the Vest Trade. Yetta followed her docilely up two flights of dirty stairs into a long work-room, which had been made by knocking the partitions out of a tenement-house flat. It was a gloomy place, for the side windows were faced by a dingy brick wall three feet away. The end windows looked out on Allen Street. The tracks of the elevated were on a level with the floor, and every few minutes the light which might have been expected from this quarter was cut off by the rush of a train. Artificial illumination was needed all the year round.

In the street below children shouted and cried; pushcart peddlers hawked their wares in strident, rasping voices; heavy trucks, loaded with clattering milk-cans, rattled deafeningly over the cobblestones. The chaos of noise caught in the narrow cañon of the street seemed to unaccustomed ears a pandemonium which must be audible in high heaven.

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But none of this noise entered the long dark room two flights up. At one end of the shop a cheap electric motor threw its energy into two revolving shafts along the ceiling; these in turn passed it down a maze of roaring belts to a dozen sewing-machines—all twelve going at top speed. It sounded as if no one of the many bearings in the room had been oiled, as if each of the innumerable cogs in the machines were a misfit. The sound seemed like a tangible substance which could be felt. There was no room left in the shop for the noises of the street. If Gabriel had blown his horn on the sidewalk below, the silent women bent over the speeding machines would not have heard—they would have missed the Resurrection.

Dazed by this strange and fearsome environment, Yetta caught tight hold of her cousin's hand. But Rachel, the adventurous, would not have been dismayed in Daniel's den of lions. She boldly led the way into the "office." Half a dozen women, all older, were already in line. The boss—a rotund, narrow-eyed man—was looking them over. But as soon as he saw the young girls he lost interest in the women.

"This is my cousin, Yetta Rayefsky," Rachel said. "She'd make a good beginner."

"Afraid of work?" he asked gruffly.

Yetta was speechlessly afraid of everything. But Rachel answered for her—a flood of extravagant, high-pitched eulogy.

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"One dollar a week, while she's learning. Regular piece price when she gets a machine."

One of the older women, seeing the hopelessness of her own situation,—all the bosses preferred youth,—began to wail.

"Shut up!" the boss growled. "I will take the girl. Get out, all of you."

So Yetta was employed. At first the work consisted of carrying, piling, and wrapping bundles of vests. The loads were very heavy for her unpractised back. But she managed to live through the first day, and the next, and gradually got used to it. After a long wait she was put at a machine.

Even in such grossly mechanical work as sweat-shop labor, brains and youth count. Yetta's fingers were still plastic. Before long she had mastered the routine movements. Above all, she proved quicker than the other women in such emergencies as a broken thread. In less time than usual she worked to the top and became the "speeder," drawing almost double pay.

During the years which followed, while all that part of her brain which had to do with manual dexterity was keenly alive, the rest—the part of her brain in which her father had been interested—went to sleep. It was inevitable. Perhaps if she had been older when the crisis came, she might have made a struggle against her environment. She might have resisted her weariness for an hour or so after she came home, might have propped her eyes open and continued her studies, but she was only fifteen.

At first, while still a "beginner," her earnings were so small that there was some measure of

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charity in her aunt's sheltering of her. She was constantly reminded of the need of increasing her wages. But before this incentive had passed, before her pay began to amount to a fair charge for her board and lodging, before her spirit had recovered from the lethargy which had followed the loss of her father, she had been taken captive by "Speed." It was the keynote of her waking life. Every detail of the sweat-shop, the talk of her table mates, the groaning song of the belts—even the vitiated air—were "suggestions" beating in on her plastic consciousness, urging ever increasing rapidity.

It had become a habit for her to hand over all her wages to her aunt. She had her father's lack of guile and less experience. The bedroom which Benjamin had shared with his daughter was rented to a stranger. Yetta had to sleep in the same bed with the twins. She had to wear their outgrown clothes. But even if she had realized how little she was getting in exchange for her wages, she would not have had the courage to go out among strangers. And she had not sufficient energy—after all the machine took—to argue about it with her bitter, hardened aunt.

The drab monotony of her sweat-shop life was unbroken. The bosses changed frequently. So did the workers. But the process was unchanged—except that each new boss shaved the price per piece and pushed up the rate of speed. And then, after three years, a little flickering gleam of sunshine fell on Yetta's face. Rachel went to a ball.

Mrs. Goldstein objected to "dance-halls" because she was old fashioned and knew nothing about them. Mr. Goldstein objected because he knew them all too well. So when Rachel announced one night at supper that she was going to "The Mask and Civic Ball of the Hester Street Democratic Club," a storm broke loose. Mr. Goldstein—none too gently—threw his daughter into the bedroom and locked the door. Later in the evening he came home a shade more drunk than usual. Smashing some furniture to wake the household, he delivered a speech on the text of female respectability and where he would rather see his daughter than in a dance-hall. The "grave" was the least unattractive place he mentioned. Rachel seemed to give in before the family wrath.

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But in her trade there were frequent rush periods when it was necessary to work after supper. One night she came home unusually late. As soon as she had put out the light and crawled into bed, she woke up the two girls and confided to them in great excitement that she had been to a ball. A girl in her shop had lent her some finery, a shirtwaist, a pair of white shoes, and a hat. Of course one could not go to a dance in a shawl. It had been "something grand." She kept them awake a long time telling of the fine dresses, the "swell" music, and the good-looking men. She was too "mad about it" to sleep. She jumped out of bed and, humming a popular tune, danced a waltz for them in her nightgown. She was very sleepy in the morning, but the music was still in her ears. The other girls were rather dismayed by her rank disobedience. The morose and spiteful Rosa threatened to tell her father. Rachel herself became frightened at this and promised never to do it again.

But not many days passed before Rachel announced at supper that she would have to work late that night. Somehow Yetta knew it was a pretext. She could hardly get to sleep. She woke up the moment Rachel tiptoed into the room.

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"You've been again," she said.

"Sure. But don't wake up Rosa."

"It's very wrong."

It may be that Rachel, who was only nineteen and had been brought up blindfolded, did not see anything wrong in the two dances she had attended. There are many perfectly respectable dances on the East Side. Fate may have led her to such. Or perhaps she glossed over dangers she had seen. She denied Yetta's charge. Rosa snored regularly beside them, while the two girls whispered half the night through.

Rachel's defence, although some of it was only half expressed,—she was not used to talking frankly about holy things,—was sound. After all, women do not come into the world to spend their lives in sweat-shops. They ought to marry and bear children. What chance did she have? She saw no men in her factory. It might be all right to leave such things to one's parents—if they were the right kind. But every one knew her father was a penniless, shiftless drunkard. What sort of a match could he arrange for her?

She was going to as many dances as she could. First of all, they were fun, and precious little fun did she get trimming hats for other women to wear. And then—well—she was not ugly. Perhaps some nice young man would marry her. That very evening a "swell fellow" had danced with her four times. He had wanted to walk home with her. But she would not let him do that, till she was sure he was "serious." She would see him again at a dance on Saturday night, and she would find out. What other chance had she? Her father could do nothing for her. Nor her mother. Nor her brother. Well—she was of age, she would do for herself.

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"And if I was as swell looking as you are, Yetta," she said, "I'd sure get a winner. Why don't you come to a dance with me?"

The next day at the lunch hour Yetta overheard some of the girls talking about dances. Instead of going off by herself, as she generally did, to consecrate her few minutes of leisure to memories of her father, she sat down and listened to them. Yetta did not know how to dance. But the next time a hurdy-gurdy came by at noon, she began with the help of her shopmates to learn. Although

she made rapid progress, although she listened eagerly to Rachel's account of stolen gayeties, she did not give in to her cousin's urgings. Her natural timidity, joined to a habit of obedience, kept her from going to a dance.

But a new element had come into her life. She began to feel that in some shameful way she was being defrauded. Was she to know nothing of Life but the sweat-shop? Was her youth to slip away uselessly? Since Rachel had spoken of her looks, she sometimes lingered before the mirrors in store windows and wondered if her smooth skin was doomed to turn wrinkled and yellow like that of the women at her table. Was she never to have children? The future, which she had never thought about before, began to look dark and fearsome. She did not feel that anything of lasting good could be gained by sneaking out to a ball, but at least, as Rachel said, it must be fun. Was she never to have any fun? Were the years—one after another—to creep by without music or laughter? Sooner or later the craving for a larger life would have forced her out to adventure with Rachel, but the temptress was suddenly removed.

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Isaac Goldstein encountered his sister at a dance. He had not been home for more than a week, but he came the next day and told his parents. When Rachel came in from work that evening, the drunken father denounced her as a disgrace to his fair name. Rachel listened in sullen silence to his foul abuse until, enraged by his own eloquence, he struck her. She turned very white and then suddenly laughed.

"Good-by, Yetta and Rosie!" And then, clenching her fist at her father, she cried out: "And you—you go to Hell."

She slammed the door behind her and never came back.

David Goldstein did not often trouble to go to the Synagogue, but the next Friday night he put on his old frock-coat and frayed silk hat and in the meeting-house of the men of Kovna, he read the Service for the Dead over his pleasure-loving daughter.

Yetta was surprised to find how much she missed her cousin. To be sure she had not seen much of her—they worked in different shops. But since they had shared this secret together, it had seemed almost like having a friend. It had never been a joyous household, and now with Rachel's occasional laughs gone it was bleak indeed.

But these confidences, short-lived as they were, had—in spite of their tragic ending—done their work with Yetta. They had suddenly opened a window in the wall of the dark room where she lived. Through it she saw, as through a glass darkly, a fair garden, lit with the sunlight of laughter, a garden where blossomed the wondrous flowers of music, of joy—of Romance.

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Since the recent development of "Child Study," since grave and erudite professors have written learned volumes on the subject of "Play," many things, which former generations thought lightly of, have taken on importance. In the gurgling of a month-old baby we now see an experimentation with, a training of, the vocal apparatus which may later win the plaudits of a crowded opera or sway the council chamber of a nation. It is no longer senseless and rather disgusting noise. It is part of the profound development of Man. The haphazard muscular reflexes of a five-year-old boy—the running violently to nowhere in particular, the jumping over nothing at all—is no longer, as our grandfathers held, an aimless and sometimes bothersome amusement. A human being is getting acquainted with the intricate system of nerve complexes and motor-muscles which is to carry him through his allotted work in the world. And the little girl with her sawdust doll has become a portentous thing. If she does not learn to hold it properly at seven, her real babies, when she is twenty-seven, are likely to fare badly.

Yetta had never had dolls. There had been no younger children in her household. She had never associated with boys. In a starved, vicarious way, through the confidence of Rachel, she had begun to "play" with the ideas of marriage, of home-making, of babies. An unrest, the cause of which she did not guess, had invaded her. She was just coming into womanhood. Nature was working deep and momentous changes in her being. It is a transition which may be beautiful and joyous if freedom for play is given to the developing organs and nerve-centres. Because of her starved childhood it came to Yetta late and abruptly. She was becoming a woman in an environment where nobody wanted anything but wage-earning "hands." And so to her it meant erratic moods of black despair, of uncontrolled and ludicrous lyricisms, of sudden and senseless timidities, abnormal, insane desires.

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Unless something happened, her womanhood was to be wasted. She had sore need of a Prince in Silver Armor. But no Princes go about nowadays rescuing fair damsels from the Ogre Greed. However, Rachel had opened a window on a quasi-fairyland where, if there were no bona fide princes, there were at least some "swell-looking men." And just as she was getting intoxicated with the wonderful vision, the window was slammed shut in her face.

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### CHAPTER III THE SWEAT-SHOP

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The sudden closing of the window made her prison cell seem darker than before. It needed the contrast of the vision to make her see the sordidness and squalor—the grim reality—of that long



dark room, with its chaos of noise, its nerve-destroying "speed."

Scattered through the East Side of New York there are hundreds such "sweat-shops," engaged in the various branches of the "garment trade." Sometimes there will be half a dozen in the same tenement; one above another. Even the factory inspectors are never sure of the exact number. They are running so close a race with bankruptcy, it is hard to keep track of them. Often half a dozen will fail on the same day, and as many new ones will start the next. It is not on record that any one ever found a good word to say for the "sweating system." Such "shops" exist because I and you and the good wife and the priest who married you like to buy our clothes as cheaply as possible.

Yetta's "shop" manufactured vests. The four women at each table formed a "team." With separate operations on the same garment, they had to keep in exact unison. If any one slowed up, they all lost money by the delay. They were paid "by the piece," and long hours, seven days a week, brought them so infinitesimal a margin over the cost of brute necessities that the loss of a few cents a day was a tragedy for the older women with children to feed.

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Yetta, the youngest of all, was Number One at her table.

The name of Number Two was Mrs. Levy. She was anywhere between twenty-five and fifty, bovine in appearance, but her fingers were as agile as a monkey's. She sat stolidly before her machine, her big body, which had lost all form, almost motionless, her arms alone active. Her face was void of any expression. Her washed-out eyes were half closed, for they were inflamed with trachoma. Eight years before she had brought her three children over from Galicia to join her husband and had found him dying of tuberculosis. She had been making vests ever since. She was an ideal sweat-shop worker, reliable—the kind that lasts.

Opposite her Mrs. Weinstein grabbed the vests as they left Mrs. Levy's machine. She also was a large woman, but not much over thirty, and just entering the trade. She was of merry disposition and had kept much of her youthful charm. Her hair, of course, was disordered; the cloth-dust stuck in blotches to her perspiring face. There was a smudge of machine grease over one cheek, but where her blouse—unbuttoned—exposed her throat and the rise of her breasts, the skin was still soft and white. Her husband, of whom she always spoke with fond admiration as a very kind and wise man, had deserted her a few months before. Engaged in another branch of the garment trades, he had become involved in one of the strikes which with increasing frequency were shaking the sweating system. He had been black-listed. After weeks of fruitless search for work, he had disappeared. If he found work elsewhere, he would send for his wife. He could not bear to stay and be supported by her. She had a sister, who had married well and who would not let the babies starve. Besides, she did not consider herself a regular vest-maker. Some day, soon, her husband would find work, in Boston, Philadelphia—somewhere. She was always expecting a letter to-morrow. So Mrs. Weinstein could afford to be cheerful.

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But if Number Two had an unusually stolid body and phlegmatic brain—the type which suffers least from sweating; and if Number Three had been blessed with a merry, hopeful soul, Mrs. Cohen, at the foot of the table, had none of these advantages. She had been Number One, not so very long before—a marvel of speed. Then she had begun to cough. It is impossible to cough without breaking the regular rhythm which means speed. In a few months she had slipped down to the bottom. She was no older than Mrs. Weinstein, but her skin was as yellow as Mrs. Levy's, and even more unlovely, for the flesh behind it had melted away; the only prominences on her body were where her bones pushed out.

She had begun at twenty-one, when her husband died leaving her with two children. There had been another baby a couple of years later—because she had hoped the man would marry her and take her out of the inferno. He had not. And there was no hope any more, for who would marry a woman with bad lungs and three children?

Despair, while embittering her, had cleared her vision. She saw the "shop" and the "system"—and understood. She had entered the trade strong and healthy, and had been well-paid at first, when she had the great desideratum—Speed. It had seemed like good pay then. But now she knew better. They had been buying not only her day-by-day ability, they had bought up her future. For the wages of less than ten years they had bought all her life—they had bought even her children! Already the flow of vests had piled up once or twice too swiftly for her. Jake Goldfogle, the present boss, was threatening to discharge her. If she lost this job, it would be the end. The Gerry Society would surely take her babies and put them in "institutions." No, she had not been well-paid in the days when they had given her extra wages for the pace that kills. It is small pleasure for a mother to hush the hunger-cry of her children, but that was all the joy that was left to Mrs. Cohen. And if she lost her job, she would lose even this.

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Just in proportion as Number Four at the bottom of the table had learned many bitter things from life, so Yetta at the head had almost everything yet to learn. She began the long lesson with a pain in her back.

It came unexpectedly. It was as much the insulting surprise of it, as the hurt itself, which made her cry out sharply and drop her work—throwing the whole team out of rhythm.

"*Wos is dir, Yetta?*" Mrs. Weinstein asked with motherly solicitude.

"*Oy-yoy-yoy!*" Yetta said, putting her hand to her back—"*Es is schon verbei.*"

Mrs. Cohen at the bottom of the table laughed mirthlessly.

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"It will come back," she screamed in Yiddish above the din of the machinery. "I know. It begins so. One speeds two, three years—four—with one it is the lungs, with another it is the back, or the eyes." She seized the momentary pause to ease herself with coughs.

Mrs. Levy, who had been long in the trade, had seen many a "speeder" give in; some slowly, some suddenly. She had seen dozens of them, fighting desperately the fight for food, slip down from the head to the foot and out—out through the door to the street and nowhere. As Mrs. Cohen had said, it was sometimes the eyes, sometimes the lungs, sometimes the back. She nodded her head in affirmation. Oh yes, she had seen it many times. She could have told the story of one mother who had gone on speeding in spite of back and lungs and eyes, had kept on speeding until one day she had fallen over her machine dead. Her hair had gotten tangled in the cogs, and they had to cut it to take her away.

Mrs. Weinstein tried to comfort Yetta.

"Don't listen to them," she said. "You are yet young—you'll be all right—"

She stopped abruptly, for the office door had opened and Jake Goldfogle came out. His ear, trained to the chaotic noise of the shop, had caught the momentary halt.

"*Ober, mein Gott, wos is der mer?*" he roared.

Mrs. Cohen, who had caught up with her work and was waiting for more, pointed an accusing finger at Yetta.

Jake Goldfogle was twenty-eight. This was his first "shop." The dominant expression of his face—which he tried to cover with an assumption of masterliness—was worry. The person who has been ground by poverty is never a debonaire gambler. But these ignorant, unimaginative women who slaved for him, whom he lashed with his tongue and sometimes struck, did not understand his situation, did not know of the myriad nightmares which haunted his waking as well as his sleeping hours. They bent low over their machines, hurrying under the eye of the master, holding their breath to catch the torrent of abuse they expected to hear fall on Yetta.

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They did not realize—least of all did Yetta—that she was an exception. Jake swallowed the curses on his tongue and asked her in a constrained and unfamiliar voice what was wrong.

"Nothing," she said. "A pain in my back."

No sort of pain known to women was considered a valid excuse for breaking speed. She wondered with sullen, servile anger how much he would fine her. If any of the women had looked up, they would have seen strange twists on the boss's face. He turned abruptly, without a word, and went back to his office. He sat down at his desk and looked through the little window, by means of which he could, glancing up from his ledger, spy on the roomful of workers. His eyes rested a moment on Yetta's stooped back. Then, grasping his temples, he paced up and down his dingy office, cursing the day he was born. He was in love with Yetta and could not afford to tell her so.

The psychology of the refugees from Russian and Galician Ghettos, who come to live among us, is very hard for us to understand. Above all, the Jew is marked by single-mindedness and consistency of purpose. We have our Anglo-Saxon tradition of compromise and confused issues. We have generally several irons in the fire. We shift easily—often flippantly—from one purpose to another. The Semite, having once accepted a goal is hard to divert.

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Coming to us, as most of them do, in abject poverty, it is small wonder that many a Jewish lad decides that the Holy Grail is made of American dollars. The surprising thing is the unswerving fidelity with which they follow the quest—a fidelity which is quite absent in the legends of King Arthur's English Knights. It is the same no matter what ideal they choose. Just as the money grubber will deny himself necessary food and overwork his wife and children to amass a little capital, so the East Side poet will stick to writing rhymes in Yiddish, although it can never give him a decent living, and the Jewish Socialist will hold fast to his principles through starvation and persecution.

Jake Goldfogle had a vague recollection of a great wave which had washed over the steerage deck of an immigrant steamer and had scared him immensely. All his other memories were set in the scenery of the New York slums. He had "got wise" young, with the wisdom of the gutter, which says that you must be either a hammer or an anvil, preyed upon or preying. For the last fifteen years he and his sister, more recently reënforced by her husband, had been engaged in a desperate struggle to pull up out of the muck.

For years the three of them had been slaves to the machine. Six months before they had put all their miserable savings, all their credit, into buying this "shop." They had accepted a highly speculative contract from which there could be no halfway issue. A dozen weeks more and it would be over—either an immense success or utter ruin. Failure meant the swallowing up in a moment of the results of their long slavery; it meant going back to the machine.

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Hundreds of men throughout the city, in the different garment trades, were in exactly the same position. Ground between the gambling nature of their contracts and insufficiently secured credit, the fear of ruin in their hearts, they had been driving the rowels deeper and deeper into

the flanks of the animals who worked for them—on whose backs they hoped to win to the gilded goal of success. But revolt from such conditions was inevitable. Strikes were constantly occurring. This fear was the worst of Jake Goldfogle's nightmares.

The revolt of the garment workers was as yet unorganized and chaotic. There were a dozen odd unions, but few of them were strong or well disciplined. Too many of those in the trade were immigrants from southeastern Europe and the Russian Pale—where only a few of the men are literate. Most of them were women—mothers. When the long hours in the shops were over, they hurried home to their children. It was very hard to get them to meetings.

But in spite of all these handicaps the workers were gradually organizing. Such strikes as had already occurred had had little effect except to ruin the smaller bosses. The large manufacturers could afford to wait until their "hands" were starved back to the machines. But so close was the contest,—it mattered little whether the trade was vests or shirtwaists or overalls,—that a few days' interruption was enough to ruin the weaker bosses. The small fry, like Jake, echoed the sentiments of *Le Grand Monarque*—The Deluge might come after, if only they could speed their contracts to completion. And so, with ever increasing viciousness, the rowels were driven deeper and deeper.

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It had been a surprising sensation to Jake Goldfogle to discover that it was more pleasant to look through his spying window at the curve of Yetta's neck and the wild little curls of rich brown hair that clustered about it than to add up columns of figures. Even the unhealthy, stooped curve of her spine as she leaned forward to the machine seemed gracious to him. He looked forward eagerly to the times, every half hour, when he went out into the shop on a tour of inspection, for then he could catch glimpses of her face. To be sure she never looked up from her work while he was watching. But there was one place where he could stand unnoticed and see her in profile. It was a marvellously regular face for the East Side. The dark curve of her eyebrows was perfect, and sometimes he could catch the gleam of her eyes. The skin of her throat was whiter even than Mrs. Weinstein's. She was a trifle thinner than Jake's ideal—but he told himself she would fill out. All this added color to his dream of success, a deeper shade to his fear of ruin.

A man of another race would probably have lost his head and asked her to marry him. But Jake had a deep-seated habit of planning for success. Long before he had noticed the grace of her body and face he had realized that she was the best worker in his shop, "the pace-maker" for the whole establishment. If success was to be won, it would be by just that very narrow margin, which the breaking in of a new "speeder" would jeopardize. So he had tried to put her out of his mind till the "rush season" was over. Intent on his main purpose he had not thought of her physical well-being. She was young and healthy looking. It had not occurred to him that a few weeks more or less would matter. The pain in her back surprised him.

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If the incident had occurred in the morning, he might have called her into his office then and there and asked her to marry him. Things had looked brighter in the morning. But at lunch—a frugal affair, two sweet buns and a glass of tea—he had heard disquieting talk of the "skirt-finishers" strike. It had been more serious than most. Half a dozen shops had been already wiped out. And his informant—a hated competitor—had gloomily foretold trouble in their own trade. If strikes broke out among the "vest-makers," it would tighten credit. The call of a couple of loans would be the end of Jake. No! He could not afford to take Yetta out now. Any one who came to take her place might be infected with the virus of Unionism. His own women did not know what a strike was. No. He could not risk it. If Pincus & Company paid promptly on the next delivery, he could take up those dangerous loans and then—perhaps—

He put his face close to the spying window and looked out at Yetta's back. He wondered just where the pain had been and whether it still hurt.

"Poor little girl," he said.

But Yetta knew nothing of her boss's intention. She could see no outlet. The future stretched before her, so barren that it hurt to think of it. But she could not escape the thought. Was she to get fat and ugly like Mrs. Levy? Would the pain come again and would she slip down—as Mrs. Cohen prophesied—coughing herself to uselessness?

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## CHAPTER IV LIFE CALLS

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In the months that followed Rachel's departure Yetta began to lose hope. She could see no promise of escape, and lethargic time gradually faded the colors of her dream. The flame of holy discontent which had blazed for a while in her soul threatened to go out. Sometimes she wondered what had happened to Rachel. But "Speed" eats up a person's power of wondering.

Yetta had been at the machine for a long time now. Her muscles had become hardened. She did not often suffer from weariness any more, but she had, without knowing it, commenced to go downhill. The immense reserve of vitality, which is the blessing of so many of her race, was running low. It was amazing how her strong young body had resisted the strain. But any doctor would have shaken his head over the future. After all there is a limit, beyond which the nerves and muscles of a woman cannot compete with electricity and steel.

One night, a few days after the pain had come in her back, an American woman knocked at the door of the Goldstein flat while Yetta and Rosa were eating supper.

"I'm a neighbor of yours," she said. "My name is Miss Brail. I've come to get acquainted."

Mrs. Goldstein looked up hostilely from her sewing. Rosa, surly as usual, went on with her eating. But Yetta offered the intruder her chair. The visitor seemed used to such cold receptions; she sat down placidly and tried violently to establish more friendly relations.

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She and some other women had rented the house across the street and were going to live there. It was to be a sort of a school. First of all they were going to start a kindergarten and day nursery for the children of women who worked. Rosa interrupted harshly that there were no children in their household. Miss Brail refused to be rebuffed. They were also going to have a sewing school for young women. Rosa, who had accepted the responsibility of the conversation, although she had not stopped eating, said that she and Yetta sewed all day long and did not need to learn.

"Well," Miss Brail continued bravely, "we will have a cooking-class too."

Rosa replied that her mother cooked for them.

"But don't you want to know how to cook yourself? Some day you'll have a home of your own, and it will be worth while to know how to cook good meals cheaply. Why, if the wife only knows how to buy scientifically and understands a little of food values, you can feed the ordinary family on only—"

But once more Rosa interrupted her. She had finished her meal and, emptying her tea-cup with a noisy sip, she stood up in her gaunt, twisted unloveliness.

"Do you think any one's going to marry me?" she asked defiantly.

Miss Brail did not have the heart to answer the question truthfully. She turned towards Yetta, who—confused by the implication of her look—hung her head and blushed. Rosa laughed scornfully.

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"She ain't got no money. Nobody'd marry a girl for her looks, even if she could cook."

At this blasphemy against Romance, Miss Brail became eloquent. She was very definitely unmarried herself. But not so much an "old maid" as a new woman. It would have been impossible to picture her fondling a cat. She was almost athletic in her build, her hair was combed to hide the few streaks of gray, her eyes were young and full of fire. Her tailor-made suit was attractive; in a very modern, businesslike way, even coquettish. You could not look at her without feeling that no one was to blame but herself that she was unmarried. She delivered an impassioned harangue on the subject of men. Of course there were soulless brutes who would marry only for money. But the right sort of a man would just as soon take a poor girl as a rich one if he really loved her. She knew lots of that kind. They were going to have clubs and classes for young men in the house across the way—she called it The Neighborhood House. And once a month they would have dances. She invited Rosa and Yetta to come.

At the word "dance," Mrs. Goldstein stopped sewing, and sticking her needle in her wig, got up threateningly. No! Neither her daughter nor her niece would go to a dance. With her bony hand she pointed emphatically at the door. Miss Brail protested that the Neighborhood House dances would be eminently respectable; only the young men and women they knew personally. She tried to say that it was good to give the girls a chance to meet men in clean, orderly surroundings. But she could not resist the old woman's wrath, and at last, shrugging her shoulders in defeat, she went out.

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Mr. Goldstein, when he heard of the incident, added his curses to those of his wife. Dances had been the ruin of one daughter, and that was enough disaster for a self-respecting family. Besides, these Goyim were trying to undermine the True Religion. David was hardly a religious man. But social settlements always took an interest in reform politics. Tammany Hall had small reason to be friendly with them. And as he could think of no arguments, this religious talk seemed a handy weapon.

But all her uncle's and aunt's denunciations could not persuade Yetta that Miss Brail was evil. Morning and evening, as she went out to work and came home, she stopped a moment on her doorstep to note the progress of rehabilitation in the house across the way. What the East Side calls the "parlor floor" had formerly been a store. Its great plate-glass window was cleaned and a heavy curtain was stretched across the lower half, so that people on the sidewalk could not look in. White dimity curtains were hung in the upstairs windows. The fine old front door was painted white, the rusted banister of the steps was replaced by a new and graceful one of polished steel. Before long the "residents" moved in. Their arrival coincided with the appearance of beautiful potted plants inside the windows.

Although the screen hid the front parlor from the street, it was not high enough to hide it from the windows of the Goldstein's flat. From that vantage-point Yetta learned the routine of evening work in the Settlement. A bulletin-board beside the door helped her to put names to the things she saw. On Monday nights there were meetings of "The Martha Washington Club." They were young women of her own age, and Miss Brail presided. There was generally some "uptown woman" who spoke or sang to the girls. This part of the evening's entertainment lasted until nine, then they grouped about Miss Brail at the piano and practised some choral music. They ended

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with half an hour's dancing and went home a little after ten. Tuesday night there was a club of boys. Wednesday night a class in sewing. Thursday night "The Abraham Lincoln Debating Club" held forth. Most of them were young men in the early twenties, but a few were older. On Friday there was a "Mothers' Club," and on Saturday night a magic-lantern show.

At last it came time for the monthly dance. Yetta had noticed the announcement on the bill-board several days before. On the eventful night she pretended to be sleepy and went to bed early, but as soon as Rosa began to snore she wrapped herself in her shawl and a blanket and tiptoed out into the front room to watch the ball. The Martha Washington Club had turned out in force, dazzlingly beautiful in their best clothes. The black-suited young men of the debating club also looked very wonderful to the hungry-eyed girl who watched it from afar. As was the strange custom of The Krists, the big window was opened although it was mid-February, and the sound of the four-piece orchestra and the laughter came up, unobstructed, to Yetta's ears.

She had never been so happy in all her life, but most of the time her eyes were filled with tears. She imagined herself first as one of the girls and then as another. There was one whose shirtwaist seemed especially beautiful. Yetta was convinced that if she were a millionaire, or if a fairy godmother should offer her one choice, she would choose just such clothes. There was one of the young men, a curly-haired, laughing fellow, whom she had noticed on Thursday nights. Whenever he took part in the debates, all the other men clapped violently. Generally she imagined herself dancing with him.

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After a while the music stopped. Miss Brail and the other settlement women brought in trays loaded with lemonade and sandwiches and cakes. The curly-haired man sat down beside the girl in the resplendent waist. Hot little blushes chased themselves all over Yetta's body. It frightened her even to imagine that she was so gayly dressed, that such a man sat close to her and whispered in her ear, looking at her and laughing all the time.

The supper fire had not yet burned down in the Goldstein's sordid kitchen-eating-sitting room. It was stuffy and hot, but Yetta, in spite of her shawl and blanket, shivered when the intermission was over. The curly-haired man nonchalantly put his arm about the gorgeous shirtwaist and, with his face rather close to his partner's, swung off into a dizzy two-step. Yetta felt as if she had been suddenly caressed. She had to grit her teeth to keep them from chattering.

A tremendous storm had broken out in the breast of the little sweat-shop girl. Sometimes she had to close her eyes, the beauty of the vision was so dazzling. For a moment she would tear herself away from the blighting memory of reality, and her soul seemed to float away from her body into the brightly lit room across the way. In the most deeply spiritual sense she became part of that gay scene. She was arrayed in gorgeous clothes. Men—even the wonderful curly-haired man—sought her as a partner. And she could laugh!

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But the Blessed Angel of Forgetfulness is—like her sister, the Spirit of Delight—an inconstant hussy. No Wise Man of all the ages has learned the trick of keeping her always at his side.

The memories of the day's stark realities would submerge Yetta. Back of her was the squalid flat, the snores of her loveless relatives. In her dark bedroom her one frayed dress was hung over the back of a chair, waiting for her to put it on and hurry through the dawn to Jake Goldfogle's Vest Shop. Routine—hopeless monotony! A prison tread—from the vitiated air and uneasy sleep of the tenement, so many steps to the cruel speed and inhumanity of the Machine. Then so many steps back to the tenement, and all to do over again.

In front of her—in the room across the street—"Life-as-it-might-be." Beauty—thrilling excitement—joy!

The eyes of Yetta's soul swung back and forth from one vision to the other. Through the long evening she knelt there by the window, so forgetful of her body that she did not realize how the dirty window ledge was cutting into her elbows, how her knees were being bruised on the unswept floor.

At last the musicians put away their instruments. Every one clapped insistently and crowded about Miss Brail. But she waved her watch in their face. A distant church-bell tolled midnight. Yetta stayed at her post until the last laughing couple had shaken hands with the ladies at the door. For several minutes more she watched the shadows on the upper windows, while the "residents" talked over the success of the dance. She watched till the last light was out, then she crept back to bed and cried herself to sleep.

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The tears she shed that night were not the kind that heal. There was acid in them which ate into the quick. For nearly four years her body had been on the rack. Now her soul was being torn. The questionings which had troubled her after Rachel's disappearance became more and more insistent. Was she never to know what joy meant? Was day to crawl along after day in desolate and weary monotony? Was this dull ache of soul-hunger never to be relieved until some indefinite future was to find her—cheated of everything—cast out useless on the human refuse heap? Was this weary plain of uneventfulness never to be broken by any dazzling mountain peaks nor shady valley?

Shortly after the Settlement Ball, which Yetta had watched as a starveling beggar peers through a baker's window, Life suddenly opened up. The drab monotony was illumined by a lurid display of fireworks. Rockets of glaring, appalling red shot up into the night. There was a great white blaze of hope, and all the sky became suffused by the soft caressing colors of unsophisticated

Romance.

The sweat-shop motor broke down. Jake Goldfogle cursed and tore his hair. He kept his "hands" waiting in idleness half through the afternoon, until the electricians had come and said that the damage could not be righted till midnight. Then Jake surlily dismissed his women. It was rare that Yetta had such a holiday. There was no reason for her to go to her dreary home. It was a precocious spring day, the sun shone with a heat that made the streets attractive.

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Wandering about aimlessly, Yetta came to Hamilton Fish Park. The faint suggestion of rising sap which came to her in that open space seemed infectious. The questionings which had disturbed her returned with new force. Why? What did it all mean? Was there no escape?

Suddenly her attention was caught by a familiar figure, Rachel, arrayed in cheap finery. Yetta quickened her pace to overtake her and called her. It was a great shock to Rachel when she recognized her. She stared at her in bewilderment, but it was surely Yetta,—Yetta of the old life, of the great sad eyes, with the same old shawl over her head.

"The motor broke in my shop," Yetta explained as they sat down. "I came out for a walk. Where are you working?"

"I ain't working."

Yetta's eyes opened wider.

"Are you married," she asked with awe in her voice.

Shame closed Rachel's lips. How could she explain the grim dirtiness of Life to her ignorant little cousin? She started to get up and go away. But suddenly the heart-break of it all—the memory of the girlish dreams she had confided to Yetta—overcame her. She threw her arms around her cousin and cried, great sobs which shook them both. A few words came to her lips, the same phrase over and over: "Oh! Yetta. I wanted to be good." When the first burst of her grief was spent, she began to tell how it had all come about.

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At first everything had gone smoothly. She had taken a furnished room with the girl from her shop who had lent her the hat and white shoes for her first dance. "She had a crush on me," Rachel explained. They had led a joyous but quite innocent life, working hard all day and two or three nights a week going to dances. As far as they knew how to choose they went to respectable places. Several men had paid court to Rachel. A clerk in a dry-goods store on Sixth Avenue had been in love with her. He was serious. But he was earning very little, had a marriageable sister, and wanted to wait a couple of years. She had even become engaged to one man. At first, she said, she had "been crazy about him." She had let him kiss her and make pretty violent love to her. But after a while she saw he was "a spender," too free with his money—like her father. She did not want a man like that, so she had sent him about his business. Then her room-mate "got a crush" on another girl and had left Rachel alone in the furnished room.

"What can you do?"—she began to cry again—"when you ain't got no place to have your friend call except a furnished room? All alone? A girl ain't got no chance—all alone—like that."

She could not tell Yetta what came next, so she asked about the family. As Yetta told her meagre store of news, the flood-gates of Rachel's bitter heart opened. She cursed her family. They were to blame for her disaster. Why had not her father made a decent home for his children? Was it her fault that her brother was a crook? If they had been honest and thrifty, they could have given her a marriage portion. Worse than doing nothing for her, they had even eaten up her wages. If she had been an orphan, she could have put some of her pay in the bank—she could have saved enough money to get married on.

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"Don't you let them cheat you, Yetta," she broke out, "the way they cheated me. Perhaps I'm a bad woman, but I never cheated little girls the way they cheated us. I never robbed an orphan like they done to you. You're a fool to stand for it. Why should you give them your wages? Haven't they cheated you enough? They made your poor father pay too much board. The funeral never cost like they said it did. And now they're stealing your wages. I tell you what you do. You find some good woman in your shop, who'll take you to board, and put your money in the bank. But don't go to no 'furnished room.' Furnished rooms is Hell! You—"

"Hello, Ray. Introduce me to your friend."

The intruder's voice sent a convulsive shiver through Rachel. He wore a suit of dove-gray, the cuffs and collar of which were bound with silk braid. There was a large diamond in his scarlet tie. As though he did not wish to be outdone by the sun in its premature glory he wore a slightly soiled Panama hat, shaped after the fashion depicted in photographs of the German Crown Prince.

"I say," he insisted, and there was a twang of menace in his soft voice, a more evident threat in his hard domineering eyes, "I say, introduce me to your friend."

"She's my cousin, Yetta Rayefsky," Rachel replied reluctantly.

"And my name," he said with easy assurance, "is Harry Klein. I'm glad to make your acquaintance, Miss Rayefsky. Do you dance as well as your cousin?"

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"I've never been to a dance," Yetta stammered.

She was very much flustered by his stare of frank admiration. No man had ever put a "Miss" to her name before. Again the hot blushes chased themselves over her body. But he did not seem to notice her embarrassment.

"I was walking along the street," he said, "and noticed Miss Goldstein here in the Park. I came to ask her to go to the Tim Sullivan ball with me to-night. Won't you come along?"

"She ain't got no clothes for a ball," Rachel said.

"I'm sure," he said, his eyes turning hard again, "that you could lend her some."

But Yetta was frightened beyond words at the bare idea of going. She refused timidly.

Harry Klein urged her, managing gracefully the while to weave in the story of his life. He was a commercial traveller for a large silk-house on Broadway. Of course it was very good pay, and in a few months he was to be taken into the firm, but it had its inconveniences. He did not get to New York very often. He liked dances, but it was no fun to go alone. Being away so much, he did not know many nice girls. He had no use for the kind you can "pick up" at a ball. He did wish she could come. He knew another travelling man who was also in town—a friend of his. It would be great fun for the four of them to go together.

But he did not push his urgings too far. He was sorry she would not come, but he hoped Miss Goldstein could find a partner for his friend. Would she come now on that errand?

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"I'm sorry to run away with your cousin, Miss Rayefsky," he said, signalling Rachel to get up. "And I sure hope I'll have the pleasure of meeting you again."

He bowed very low, made a gallant flourish with his hat, and taking Rachel by the arm, started off gayly. But he turned back after a few steps.

"I'm not going to be discouraged," he said with his very best smile, "because you won't go with me to-night. I like your looks and want to get acquainted with you. I'll see you again."

Once more he flourished his hat, and rejoined Rachel.

Yetta sat still on the park bench for a long time after they had gone. She tried to make some sense out of Life. But it was all very perplexing. What did Rachel's story mean? In a vague way she had heard of the women who are called "bad." She knew their more blatant hall-marks. Rachel's cheeks were painted; she had spoken of herself as "bad." But the term did not mean anything to Yetta which could include a girl like her cousin who "wanted to be good." She understood that Rachel was unhappy, bitter, and very much ashamed, but she could not think of her as sinful or vicious. She tried—but entirely in vain—to imagine what sort of life Rachel was leading. She tried to picture in what sort of acts her "badness" consisted. She had heard somewhere of "selling love," but she had no idea how it was done. It was very perplexing for her—indeed it has perplexed older and wiser heads—to discover that "bad" people may after all be good.

But it was hard for her to keep her mind on this problem of ethics. It was very much easier to think of Harry Klein. She had never talked to so courteous and well dressed a gentleman. The dream of the curly-haired debater was wiped from her mind—Harry Klein was much better looking.

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A queer question shot into her mind. Did a girl have to be "bad" to have such enchanting friends? No. That could not be. He had wanted to be friends with her. She knew she was not bad.

He had said he wanted to be her friend! The blood raced through her veins at the thought. She went over again in her mind all her arguments with Rachel. The only possible way to escape from the sweat-shop was to marry. Of course she could not hope to win so debonair a gentleman as Harry Klein. But rescue—if it were to come at all—must come in some such way. It was her only hope.

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## CHAPTER V HARRY KLEIN

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When they were out of hearing, Harry Klein tightened his grip on Rachel's arm.

"Say, Kid, that cousin of yours is a peach. Why didn't you put me on before?"

"Oh, Jake," Rachel pleaded, "leave her alone. She ain't got no chance. She's only a kid. She ain't got no father or mother. Oh, Jake, please. Promise me you'll leave her alone. There are lots of other girls. She's only a kid. Please—"

"Oh, shut your face," he growled; "you make me tired."

And he began to whistle a light-hearted ditty. Rachel might just as well have gone to Jake Goldfogle and have asked him, for the same reasons, not to drive her cousin so hard. She might just as well have asked you or me to pay a decent price for our clothes. Harry Klein, just like Mr. Goldfogle—just like you and me—needed the money.

"Where's 'Blow Away'?" he asked, interrupting his whistling.

"He's asleep," Rachel said.

"Well—we'll wake him up."

They turned down a side street.

"Jake," Rachel began again, "I'll find you some other girl—I'll do anything for you. Oh, Jake, please." [Pg 49]

"Shut up," he growled. "Tell your troubles to a policeman."

They went up three flights of dirty stairs to a door which Rachel opened with a latch-key. It gave on a long hall. Turning to the left, they entered a parlor fitted out with cheap plush furniture. The windows were closed, the air heavy with the scent of stale beer and cigarette smoke—all the varied stench of a debauch.

"Wake him up," Jake ordered.

Rachel turned down the hall and opened a bedroom door. The air was even worse than in the parlor. A thin-chested youth of twenty-eight or so was asleep, lying across the bed on his face. The butt of a pistol stuck out of his hip pocket. His coat and vest and shirt were on the back of a chair, his shoes on the floor.

"Charlie," Rachel called.

There was no response. She approached the bed cautiously and gave a pull at his foot, jumping back out of reach as soon as she had touched him. There were a couple of angry grunts.

"Charlie," she called again.

He sat up with a roar of profanity.

"How many times have I told you to leave me alone when I'm sleeping? I'll break your dirty face for you."

"Jake's in the front room," she interrupted him. "Wants to see you."

"Jake?" He lowered the hand he had raised to strike her. "What in Hell does he want?"

"How do I know?"

"You never know nothing," he growled sourly, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. He shuffled down the hall in his stocking feet. When the great ones of the earth are waiting, you cannot stop to put on shoes. [Pg 50]

"Hello, Blow Away," Jake said. "I've got something to say to you. Your bundle"—he indicated Rachel—"steered me up to a honey bunch this afternoon, named Yetta Rayefsky. The little doll took my eye. See? She's Ray's cousin. I just want you to explain to her—as a favor to me—that she mustn't butt in. The less talking she does with her mouth the better it'll be. You'd better impress it on her, so she won't forget? See?"

Charlie—alias Blow Away—saw. And Rachel saw. She cowered down in a corner and promised not to warn Yetta—if only they would not beat her. But it was a basic belief of these two gentlemen that "a beating is never wasted on a woman."... It was from this time that Rachel began to kill herself with "booze." She did not like to remember how she had betrayed Yetta. And drink helped her to forget.

There were few things which Jake, or Harry Klein—it does not matter what name we use for him, for a hundred aliases were on the back of his portrait in the Rogues' Gallery—there were not many things which he enjoyed more than seeing some one cower before him. The servility with which "Blow Away" had obeyed his orders, the wild terror and passionate pleadings of Rachel, had tickled the nerves of his perverted being, and he smacked his lips as he went downstairs and out into the twilight of the open streets.

He was the recognized leader of the principal East Side "gang"—a varied assortment of toughs, "strong-arm men," pickpockets, "panhandlers," and pimps. It must not be supposed, however, that these various professions were sharply differentiated. There is a hoary tradition which says that once upon a time the under world of New York City was divided into rigid classes and cliques, when a "dip" looked down on a beggar, and highway robbers had a professional pride which kept them from associating with panders. But in the year of grace 1903—when Jake's crooked trail ran across Yetta's path—such delicate distinctions, if they ever had existed, were entirely lost. Many a man who claimed to be a prize-fighter sometimes "stuck up a drunk." The "flyest" pickpocket did not disdain the income to be derived from the sale of "phony" jewellery. It was no longer possible to distinguish a "yeggman" from a "flopper," and even bank robbers wrote "begging letters." And of all "easy money," the easiest is from prostitution. There were very few denizens of the under world who did not have one or two women "on the string." Even the legendary aristocracy of forgers had sunk thus low. [Pg 51]

The political manifestation of the gang over which Jake ruled was the James B. O'Rourke Democratic Club, of which he was president. This organization maintained, with the help of a subsidy from Fourteenth Street, a shabby parlor floor club-room on Broome Street. They gave



one ball and one picnic a year. A central office detective, if he had attended a meeting, could have given a "pedigree" for almost all the members. But the political bigbugs, the members of the city administration, who sometimes came to visit the club, did not bring a detective with them. They saw only a roomful of ardent young Democrats. The good-will of the club was an important asset to aspiring politicians; the members would willingly vote half a dozen times for a candidate they liked.

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The social centre of the gang was a "Raines Law" hotel on lower Second Avenue. It had a very glittering back parlor for "ladies." There, and in the Hungarian Restaurant next door, Jake's followers spent their moments of relaxation. The frontier between their territory and that of hostile gangs was several blocks away. The "hang out" was just inside the borders of a police precinct, with whose captain they had a treaty of peace.

The more professional headquarters were in an innocent-looking barber shop on Chrystie Street. In the back there was a pool parlor. The lamps were so shaded that the table was brilliantly illumined and the rest of the room was black. If you walked in from the brightly lighted shop in front, you could not tell how many people were there, nor how many pistols were pointed at you. From the toilet-room in the back there was an inconspicuous door into the alley, which, besides its strategic advantages, led to the back door of Pincus Kahan's pawnshop. Much stolen goods followed this route.

A sort of Robin Hood romance has been thrown around the notorious gang leaders of Lower New York. As usual, the reality back of the romance is a very sorry thing. Jake, for instance, was not an admirably clever, nor strong-willed, nor fearless specimen of the genus homo. To be sure he excelled many of his stunted, defective, and "cocaine-doped" retainers in these qualities, but above all he owed his position to a calculating, patient prudence. Discretion is certainly the better part of valor in knavery, and while most crooks are daredevils, Jake was discreet.

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Since his first detention in the House of Refuge, Jake had managed to keep out of jail. On his release he had organized a "mob" of pickpockets. Most of its members were boys he had met in that worthy institution. Neither the House of Refuge nor any of the other "reformatories" are to be blamed for the crimes of those who have passed through them. Many of their inmates are taught honorable trades, and some follow them after release. Nearly half of the juvenile pickpockets who gathered about Jake had never been arrested—and they were every bit as bad as those who had been in the House of Refuge.

Owing to their leader's discretion, this little "mob," which had affiliated with the dominant East Side Gang, enjoyed an almost unbroken run of prosperity. But when he had turned eighteen, Jake retired from the active practice of his profession. There was as much money and more security in women. Nature had endowed him with the necessary external charms. He enjoyed cleanliness, he was good looking, and above all he had a soft, persuasive voice.

His covetousness, joined with a natural ability at organization, was always pushing him into new enterprises. He gathered together the wreck of the notorious Beggars' Trust. He joined "The Independent Benevolent Society," and cornered the business of supplying girls to their "brass check" houses. One after another, he gained control of the gang's most lucrative ventures. Almost any other man of the under world would have made a play for acknowledged leadership long before Jake did. He was modest, or, as his enemies said, a coward. He waited until sudden death or imprisonment had removed his principal rivals—until the leadership was practically forced upon him.

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There were cleverer, more strong-willed, braver men in the gang than he. But he was never careless. A civil war within the political machine had given him an opportunity to make explicit and profitable treaties with those "higher up." He had sense enough to leave "dope" alone. He lacked the imagination to have any sentiment of loyalty or any sympathy, and this made him what is called unscrupulous. Like most cowards he was bitter and cruel in revenge. He had never killed a man with his own hands, but he ruled his organization of "thugs" through fear.

It was two days after her encounter with him in the Park before Yetta saw him again. As she came out of the factory, after the day's work, she almost ran into him.

"Why, hello, Miss Rayefsky," he greeted her. "Your cousin Ray told me where you worked. May I walk along with you?"

He walked beside her to the corner of the street where she lived. Glowing stories he told her of the Ball, how much fun he and Rachel had had, and how sorry he was that she had missed it. Really, she ought to have come. What fun was there for working girls if they did not go to dances? To be sure some girls were too crazy about it, went to balls every night and stayed up too late. He disapproved of such doings. He had to work. And he did not want to be sleepy in the office. No, indeed! A serious young man with ambitions could not afford to try the all-night game. He very seldom went to balls except on Saturday night.

Hairy Klein, alias Jake, had sized Yetta up and decided on the "serious" talk.

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It was several days before he turned up again. He explained that he had been "out on the road." In the course of half a dozen such walks he opened his heart to her. There was nothing about himself which he did not tell her. She knew all his ambitions and hopes, the names of his influential relatives, the details of his serious, laborious life, and the amount of his balance in the Bowery Savings Bank. Pretty soon the "bosses" would keep their promise and take him into the

firm. They would be surprised to find how much capital he had accumulated. Meanwhile he was learning the business from A to Z. What he did not know about silk was not worth knowing.

To all this fairy-story Yetta listened with credulous ears. The young man had a convincing manner; he was courteous and well dressed. And besides, Rachel would have warned her if he had been bad.

If Yetta had grown up with boys, if she had played at courtship,—as most young people happily do,—she might have seen through the surface glitter of this scoundrel. She had no standard by which to judge him.

But in a timidly defensive spirit she refused to go to a dance with him. It was partly the instinct of coquetry, which told her to struggle against capture. It was more her humility. When he said he liked her, thought she was good looking, wanted "to be her steady fellow," and so forth, it made her throb with a strange and disturbing pride. But it also made her distrustful—it was too good to be true. He had somewhat over-colored his romance. If he had only pretended to be a clerk at \$11.50 a week and meagre expectations, it would have been easier to accept. But why should this rich and brilliant young conqueror want poor, penniless her?

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It was not so much that she doubted Harry's truthfulness; she found her good luck unbelievable. And this uncertainty tormented her. Despite her lack of experience, she had a large fund of instinctive common sense. She realized that she could not compromise with Life. Either this man was good, wonderfully, gorgeously good, in which case the slightest distrust was folly and cruelty, or he was bad—then the smallest grain of trust would be dangerous. She felt herself utterly unable to decide wisely so momentous a question. She longed ardently for some older confidante, some woman whose goodness and wisdom she could trust. She wished she knew Miss Brail and the Settlement women. She was sure they were both wise and good.

There was her aunt. In her desperate extremity she proposed one night that Harry should call at the Goldstein's flat. But when he refused, she could not blame him. His argument was good. Her aunt was sure to oppose any one who threatened to marry Yetta and divert her earnings. He stood on the street-corner and urged her earnestly to leave her relatives. He had wormed from her all the sordid details of that miserable family. Why should she give her money to a drunkard who had no claim on her? He knew a nice respectable place where she could get a room for half her wages. She could buy some nice clothes with her savings. He made quite a pretty speech about how much better she would look in a fine dress. It was his firm conviction that she was the most beautiful girl in New York.

Yetta knew that it was foolish for her to go on living with the Goldsteins. As Rachel had said, they were and always had been cheating her. But a dread of the unknown kept her from at once accepting Harry's advice. The waves of Life were swirling about her dizzily, and she felt the need of a familiar haven. She held on in panic to the only home she knew, sparring blindly for time, and hoping that something would happen to convince her definitely whether or not she ought to put trust in the alluring dream.

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But all the time her instinctive resistance was weakening; she had begun to give into his seduction. Her growing horror of the "sweated" monotony of her life was forcing her relentlessly into the clutches of this pander. Strain her eyes as she might she could see no door of escape unless some such lover rescued her. Whenever she tried to think of the possible dangers of believing in Harry Klein, a mocking imp jeered at her with the grim certainties of life without him. What risk was there in the dream which was worse than the inevitable barrenness and premature fading of the sweat-shop? She listened eagerly to what he said about the flat they would rent in Harlem. But with more thrilling attention, she listened to his stories of dances. Her heart hungered passionately for a little gayety. And then there was the fear that at some dance he might meet a more attractive girl and leave her.

She was no longer handing over all her wages to her aunt. Under pretext of a slack season she was holding back a couple of dollars a week. She carried these humble savings wrapped in a handkerchief inside her blouse. Every time she felt the hard lump against her body, her heart gave a little jump. She would have some money to buy a hat and some white shoes for her first dance.

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Jake, alias Harry Klein, had a more devious psychology. When "Blow Away" asked him one night, in the Second Avenue "hang-out," how things were going with Ray's cousin, Jake's lying face assumed a faraway contented smile. But inwardly he was raging over Yetta's stubbornness. He was not used to such long chases. When he had first seen her, his money-loving soul had revolted at so shameful a waste of earning capacity. A pretty girl like that working in a sweat-shop! He had followed the scent without much enthusiasm. It would be an affair of a couple of weeks. Most pretty girls want good clothes to look prettier. Most of them lost their heads if a well-dressed man made love to them. The grim, hopeless monotony of poverty made most of them hungry for a larger life. It was really sickening to a man of his experience to see how greedily they swallowed his story of the silk firm on Broadway. It was—and this was his expression for supreme easiness—like stealing pennies from a blind beggar.

Yetta by her stubborn caution had won a sort of respect from him. His pride was engaged. His face flushed when he thought of her. She stirred in him something more than vexation. The girl "on his string" who was at the moment enjoying his special favor suddenly seemed stupid and insipid to him. In his distorted way he rather fell in love with Yetta. His day-dreaming moments

were filled with passionate lurid pictures of possessing her. Although it was proving a long chase, he knew the odds and was sure of the outcome. Sometimes he thought almost tenderly of the time of victory. Sometimes his face hardened, and he vowed he would make her pay.

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The pursuit had dragged on a solid month when quite by chance he stumbled on an argument which won his case.

He began to worry about her health. She ought to get out of the sweat-shop. It would kill her. He told her horrible stories about how women went to pieces in the sweat-shops, how they got "bad lungs," or went blind, or had things happen to them inside. He would, the very next day, find a position for her in a store or some place that would not be so hard on her. It did not matter if the wages were not so good; it broke his heart to think of her ruining her health. As soon as they took him into the firm he was going to marry her. He did not want his wife to be sick or crippled.

In his mind was a dark and sinister plan to entice Yetta from her home and establish her in nominal employment with some complaisant woman. He was really a very stupid young man. He did not realize that in all her life Yetta had never had any one worry about her health. He did not guess how his solicitude, which seemed so unselfish, had choked her throat and filled her eyes with tears. He went on with his evil eloquence, when all the time he might have put his arms about her and kissed her, and carried her off wherever he wished.

The next afternoon in the sweat-shop, the pain smote Yetta in the back once more.

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## CHAPTER VI THE PIT'S EDGE

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This second backache did not cause any noticeable interruption in the day's routine. Yetta gritted her teeth and kept the pace—if anything, increased it. But while her fingers flew back and forth over the accustomed work, her thoughts soared far afield. If there had been persuasiveness in Harry's words, there was ten times as much eloquence in that sudden clutch of pain. As Mrs. Cohen had prophesied, it had come back. How soon would she feel it again?

At last the motor stopped its crazy rattle, the roar of the belts turned to a sob, the day's work was done. Yetta arranged her shawl with trembling fingers and hurried down the stairs. But she hesitated a moment inside the doorway before plunging out into the pack of workers who were hurrying eastward.

The ebb and flow of this tide of tenement dwellers is one of the momentous sights of Manhattan. At five in the morning the cross-town streets are almost deserted. On the Bowery the milk wagons and occasional trucks rattle northward in the false dawn. The intervals between the elevated trains are long. But the side streets are even more lifeless. Now and then shadows flit eastward—women, night workers, who scrub out the great Broadway office buildings. They would be shadows even in broad daylight. Towards six one begins to hear sharper, hurrying footfalls—coming westward. The tide has begun to flow. It grows in volume with the increasing light. The congested tenements have awakened; by six the flood is at its height. So dense is the rush that it is hard to make way against it, eastward. So fast the flow that the observer can scarcely note the faces. It is the backs which catch the eye and leave an impress on the memory. A man who walked like a soldier—upright—in that crowd would seem a monstrosity. Even the backs of the little children are bent. They seem to be carrying portly persons on their shoulders.

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Then for close to twelve hours these side streets are almost deserted again—till the ebb begins. It is hard to decide which sight is the more awesome: the flow of humanity hurrying to its inhuman labor or the same crowd ebbing, hurrying to their inhuman, bestial homes.

But Yetta was not thinking of her fellow-workers. With the egoism of youth she was thinking of herself and the pain in her back. Harry had been right—the sweat-shop was killing her. There was a chance of escape and Life might never offer her another. She had come to the now-or-never place. Yetta was not a coward, she was only timid. And the bravery of timid people is sublime. For only a moment she hesitated in the dark hallway, below Goldfogle's Vest Company, and then with a smile—a fearless smile—on her lips she stepped out into the glare of the arc-light. Harry was waiting for her. She slipped her hand confidently into his arm.

"Say, Harry, to-morrow night, let's go to a ball."

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"What?" he said, stopping short, to the surprise and discomfort of the home-rushing workers. "What?"

"Sure. I want some fun."

At last she had swallowed the bait! He could hardly believe his ears. But he was afraid to seem too eager. They were swept along by the hurrying crowd almost a block before he spoke.

"How about clothes?"

"I got some," she said. "I'll bring 'em to the shop and put 'em on there."

"Why not to-night?"

"No. To-morrow."

They hurriedly talked over the details of her escape. She would tell her aunt the "rush-work story." When the shop closed, Harry could take her somewhere to supper and afterwards to a dance.

"To-morrow night? Sure?" he said when they separated at her corner.

"Sure," she called back.

She ran upstairs and told her aunt that there was a rush order in her shop and she must hurry back; she only had time for a glass of tea and a piece of bread. To-morrow she would take a bigger lunch and not come home for supper. In a few minutes she was again on the brightly lit streets. From her scant store of savings she bought a hat, a blouse, a pair of stockings and white shoes. She left her bundles at a store near her home, and then started on a pilgrimage.

The shrine she set out to visit was the little second-hand book-store on East Broadway, where she had been so happy with her father. It had hardly changed at all. Only the man who sat on the high stool behind the desk did not look like her father. She stood there aimlessly for a few minutes, and then her eye fell on the first two volumes of *Les Miserables*. It was the set she had read to her father. The last volume was in her room.

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"One volume is gone," the man told her; "you can have them for seventy-five cents."

"I ain't got more'n half a dollar," she said.

"The complete set is worth five dollars."

"I only got fifty cents."

"All right. Take them."

She turned away from him to pull the last of her little horde out of her blouse. When she faced him, there were tears in her eyes.

"What's the matter?" he asked kindly.

"Nothin'. My father used to keep this store. These were the last books I read to him."

"Oh! Is your name Rayefsky? I knew your father—he was a good man. And I guess I used to know you, when you were about so high. Let's see—what was your name?"

"Yetta."

"Oh, yes, little Yetta Rayefsky, grown up into a big woman. I suppose you'll be getting married soon."

"Say, can I sit down here fer a while," she asked, to change the subject.

"Of course you can," he said cordially, bringing her a chair.

She pulled it back into the obscurity and sat there all the evening, watching through wet eyes the old familiar scene, the people who came to buy, and the people who came to talk. One or two she recognized. When she had been a little girl, she used to sit up there behind the desk on a high stool beside her father and fall asleep against his shoulder. There was no one now to lean her head against when she was tired—except Harry. He promised to take care of her.

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Memories of her father seemed to crowd the dingy old store. Why were there not more men like him in the world? He would not have wanted her to kill herself over the machine. How glad he would have been that she had found a lover to rescue her. She recalled the sermon he had preached about the wedding across the way. She did not remember many of the words; much of it had been above her childish understanding. But she remembered how he had told her that she must love and trust and cherish her man. She recalled the Vow of Ruth which he had taught her. And now at last the lover had come. The old sad, drab life had ended; she was about to enter into the glory. When it was time to close, the bookseller insisted on giving back her fifty cents.

"You take the books," he said. "And when you get married, you can call them a wedding present from a man who knew your father, and never knew a better man."

Hugging the two volumes of *Les Miserables* against her breast, she walked home more light hearted because of this evening with ghosts—more light hearted than she had ever been before.

The next morning Yetta left home earlier than usual, so that she could pick up her bundles on her way to work. All the long morning the noisy machinery of the shop seemed to be playing the music of The Song of Songs.

But suddenly The Fates seemed to become ashamed of the way they were treating her. Perhaps Yetta's dreams of her father the night before had pierced through the adamant walls and stirred him out of the drowsy bliss of Paradise; he may have thrown himself at the feet of The Most High to plead his daughter's cause. Perhaps it was her Guardian Angel which intervened. Or perhaps it was just chance.

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When Yetta went down on the sidewalk during the noon rest to get a breath of air,—with the Song ringing in her heart,—her attention was attracted by a group of people about a woman who

was speaking. She joined the listening crowd. The woman was talking about a strike of "The Skirt Finishers." The girls had been out now for weeks and were on the point of starvation. The Woman's Trade Union League, to which the speaker belonged, had arranged a ball for that night in behalf of the "skirt finishers."

"Every garment worker ought to come," she said. "It's your fight they are fighting. The garment trades are all 'sweated'—you've got to rise or die together. And every cent from the tickets goes to help the strike. The hall, the orchestra, everything has been donated—all the money goes to the girls. But, more than the money, they need encouragement. Don't buy a ticket and throw it away. Of course the fifty cents will help, but we want more than the money, we want a crowd. It will cheer up the girls a bit if the ball is a success. If you can't come yourself, give a ticket to some one who will."

Now the spirit of her father, or her Guardian Angel, or chance, moved Yetta to give her last fifty cents to the cause of the strikers. The time was so close when she was to leave the sweat-shop forever that her heart went out to all the less fortunate girls who had no such happy prospects. She would not only buy the ticket, but if the strikers needed encouragement, she would persuade Harry to take her there. [Pg 66]

When the day's work was over, she hurried into her new finery and downstairs to meet her lover. Harry looked her over approvingly. Yes, she was worth all the time it had taken. But he was too wily a fox to let his evil glee be apparent. The rest was so easy; only a fool would risk frightening her now. A couple of hours more love-making, the intoxication of a few dances, a little wine—if it need be a drop or two of chloral—and the trick was turned.

He took her to "Lorber's" for supper. And leaning over the brightly lighted table, over dishes which all together cost less than a dollar, but which seemed to her very wonderful, he solemnly asked her to promise to marry him. Just as solemnly she said "yes." Jove's laughter did not reach her ears to disturb her as she looked trustful and happy into his eyes. One cannot but wish that sometimes the guffaws of Jupiter were louder.

Harry promised to go to a jeweller in the morning and buy her an engagement ring. And when they had finished talking over this important detail, Yetta remembered about her ticket to the Woman's Trade Union League ball. Harry tried to laugh the idea away. He knew nothing about trade-unions except that high-class "crooks" did not belong to them. But the Lyceum Hall, where it was to be held, was a very modest place.

"It's sure to be stupid in that hall," he said. "They never have good balls there. I'm going to take you up to The Palace. There's a swell affair there every night—the real thing. And fifty cents! What fun can you have at a fifty-cent ball? Sometimes the tickets cost five dollars at The Palace." [Pg 67]

But Yetta had set her heart on using her own ticket, and it seemed an unimportant detail to Harry. They compromised; they would go to both, first to hers and then to his. She would see that he knew what he was talking about.

He proposed a bottle of champagne. For a moment Yetta was frightened.

"I never drank no wine," she protested.

"Oh, come," he said, "they always drink wine over a marriage contract. I wouldn't ask you to if it would hurt you."

Yetta looked at him out of her big, deep eyes. He had the peculiar kind of nerve which made it possible for him to look straight into them. He reached his hand across the table and put it caressingly on hers. And so she believed him.

"If you says fer me to," she said, "I'll do anything you wants me to, Harry—always." And then Yetta remembered her father and the vow he had taught her. It made her suddenly bold. She took firm hold of the hand Harry had reached to her across the table, and in a singsong but throbbing voice began to recite the wonderful old Hebrew words. The pimp was bewildered. His religious instruction had been neglected; he knew no Hebrew.

"Wot's this yer giving me?" he asked.

And Yetta translated into the vernacular.

"It means: 'Wherever you go, I'll go too, where you sleep, I'll sleep wid you, your folks will be my folks and I'll pray to your God; when you die, I'll die too and be buried beside you. And God can do more to me, if I leave you before I die.' My father taught it to me. Ain't it a swell thing to say when you're engaged?" [Pg 68]

When at last the significance of Yetta's avowal had penetrated Harry's thick skull, he moved uneasily on his chair. The business side of him said he was wasting time. It had been a foolish precaution to bring her to this respectable restaurant. He might have taken her straight to the Second Avenue "hang-out"—with its complaisant proprietor and the rooms upstairs. But there was a sweetness—even to him—in such innocent, confiding love. He had acted the part with her so long that it seemed something more than bald pretence. There was a residue of "original decency" left under the hard shell, which living in this world of ours had given him. And this part of him—God knows it was small and weak—wished that it was true. It was strong enough to make him prolong the make-believe. He ordered only a half bottle of champagne—as a really, truly

lover would have done. It was nine o'clock when they left.

They walked along Grand Street towards the Bowery. A sudden wave of tenderness flooded Harry.

"Yetta," he said, "you've never kissed me."

Her feet on the roseate clouds, she was quite unconscious of the passers-by; she turned her face up to him unquestioningly. But Harry never lost consciousness of such things. He did not dare to risk the jibes of onlookers. He tightened his grip on her arm and led her into a dark doorway. The late March wind was cold, and no loiterers sat on the steps nor stood about in the hall. Yetta—a bit surprised at his prudence—gave herself freely into his arms. When he kissed her, the last faint shadow of a doubt disappeared. She was sure he really loved her. The blood pounding in her head under his caresses dizzied her—but she was not afraid. Only somehow, the flush in his face and the husky tone of his voice seemed unfamiliar.

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"Yetta," he said in a hot whisper. "Did you mean what you said—that stuff your father taught you? Will you come with me to-night—to my room and—never go away?"

This was a new idea to Yetta; she had not thought out the literal meaning of the ancient vow. For a moment she looked into his face, then turned her head aside. After all, that was what her father had told her to do.

"I'll marry you," he said, "as soon as they take me into the firm. It won't be long."

But this aspect of it had not worried Yetta. She did not question his good intentions. She was trying to picture to herself what such a change in her life would mean. There had been so little joy for her that now it was hard to accept it.

Suddenly a familiar figure crossed her range of vision. Her eyes, which had been straining to pierce the future, focussed on the other side of the street.

"Look! look! Harry," she cried. "There's Rachel. Run and call her. Quick."

"No," he said firmly. "That ain't Ray."

"Yes, it is," Yetta insisted. "I guess I knows my cousin when I sees her. Run after her. I'd like to tell her."

But Harry's hand, which before had caressed her, tightened over her arm in a brutal grip. He jerked her along in the other direction to the Bowery.

"I tell you it ain't her. Come on. Get into this car."

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The evil look in his eyes terrified her. The sound of his voice hurt even more than his cruel grip. She got into the car without a word. But she knew he had lied. She realized suddenly and with terror that she did not know the man beside her. She had caught a lightning gleam on a new side of his character. She had seen something dark and sinister. And all the joy which had been in her heart shrivelled up and cowered.

For a moment they sat side by side in startled silence. Harry was surprised and angry with himself for having lost his temper. He tried to cover his blunder, to get back to the old intimacy. But Yetta heard the forced note in his suave voice. The sight of Rachel had recalled her warnings about the dangers which life holds for unprotected girls. She did not answer him nor speak till the car passed Fifth Street.

"The Lyceum's on Sixth Street."

And when they reached the sidewalk, she asked him flatly why he had lied.

"Can't you understand, Yetta," he asked, bending his head close to hers, "that I didn't want anybody butting in to-night?"

But she was not reassured. Once a doubt had entered, the whole fabric of her dreams had begun to totter. And while he told her over again the threadbare story of his glowing prospects, she was remembering that she had never seen the "Silk-house" on Broadway. When he spoke of how happy they would be, she felt the sting of his rough grip on her arm. She was a very frightened young person as they reached the door of the Lyceum Hall.

Harry felt the change in her and was raging. All the quasi-tenderness he had felt for her earlier in the evening had gone. He wanted to break her. He cursed himself for the time he had wasted that evening. She would have gone anywhere with him a half hour before. His distorted brain was torn by strange emotions. Yetta had caught hold of the inner fabric of his imagination as no other girl had ever done. And, as is just as true of cadets as of other men, when they begin to care, they lose their *sang-froid*. He was suddenly afraid of losing her. He felt himself awkward.

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His lack of ease was intensified by his strange surroundings. He had never been to a ball like this. He only knew two kinds: the flashy, vicious dances, organized by his own class, the kind he was planning to take Yetta to, and "Greenhorn balls"—sordid but equally vicious—in the back rooms of low-class saloons, patronized by ignorant, newly arrived immigrants.

The entry to the Lyceum Hall was packed with poorly dressed people, but they were not greenhorns. The women were the strangest of all to him. Their kind did not come to the balls he

frequented. More than half of them wore shawls; they were of all ages, from fifteen to seventy. They were serious-eyed working women, and many of them looked hungry. He felt that his foppish clothes were conspicuous. He felt hostility in the stares of the men. He would have given anything to be among his own kind, on familiar ground.

Indeed he was conspicuous among that roomful of poorly dressed men. He attracted the attention of a couple who stood near the door, Mabel Train and Walter Longman. In a way they were as conspicuous as he, but the curious glances which turned in their direction were not hostile. Miss Train was secretary of the Woman's Trade Union League. Many of the women and girls, as they entered the room, rushed up to greet her. She was about twenty-seven, tall and slender. In reality her body was an almost perfect instrument. She was never sick, and rarely unpleasantly tired, but in looking at her one was more impressed with nervous than physical energy. She was more graceful than beautiful. Her face was too small, a fault which was emphasized by her great mass of brown hair. But her diminutive mouth was strong in line. Her eyes were keenly alive and unafraid.

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Longman was over thirty, big of bone and limb. Although he strongly resembled a tame bear, he was a likable-looking man. And just as it surprised people to find that Miss Train was a hardy horsewoman, and could tire most men at skiing or swimming, so every one wanted to laugh when they were told that this lumbering giant, Longman, was an Instructor of Assyriology at Columbia.

"Look," she said as her eyes fell on Harry and Yetta, "he's a cadet."

The remark, and the matter of fact, decisive way she said it, was typical of Mabel Train. She knew the life of the East Side well enough to recognize Harry's unsavory profession at a glance, and she did not waste time beating about the bush of euphemisms. She never declared a heart or a club when she meant a spade.

Longman's eyebrows went up affirmatively, but he at once opposed the natural deduction from her observation.

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"Now, don't you go butting in, Mabel, until you're asked."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"The girl's a stranger. I guess I've got a right to welcome her."

And with Longman lumbering behind her she crossed the hall.

"Good evening," she said to Yetta, elaborately ignoring Harry's existence. "I'm Miss Train, secretary of the League. What's your trade?"

But Yetta replied with a question.

"Didn't you talk to the girls at the Neighborhood House?"

"Yes. I gave them a talk on Trade Unions. Were you there? I don't remember your face."

Yetta started to explain how she had watched the meeting from her window. But suddenly she began to stutter; she saw Miss Train look at Harry, saw the scorn and contempt in her eyes. Yetta could not remember what she was trying to say. Some newcomers rushed up and interrupted them. Mabel Train felt that the short conversation had been a decided failure.

But to Yetta it had had immense significance. In the preceding months the Settlement had come to typify all the good things of life, for which she hungered. Like her cousin Rachel she "wanted to be good." The women whom she watched in the house across the street had seemed to her good, and also they seemed happy. Miss Train was of that world, she bore its stamp. And she did not trust Harry. Down crashed the dream into greater ruin. Yetta was afraid with Harry. Beside such women she would be safe. How could she escape?

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A man on the platform clapped his hands for attention and asked the people to take seats close to the stage.

"Aw! Come on," Harry said; "let's beat it. This place is stupid."

"No," Yetta said with the determination of fear; "I want to stay."

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## BOOK II

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### CHAPTER VII THE SKIRT-FINISHERS' BALL

Harry was right. It was a stupid ball. It was more of a strike-meeting than a dance. To most of the people the speeches were of more importance than the two-steps. As he followed Yetta, grumblingly, up towards the platform he realized that the crowd of workers, packing in about them, cut off all possibility of escape. He had not set out that evening with the intention of sitting on a hard bench and listening to "a lot of rag-chewing."

"Is this what you call fun?" he growled at Yetta.

But the crowd—so foreign to his manner of life—intimidated him. He sank into surly silence.

The first speaker was a nervous, overstrained Irish woman. With high-strung Celtic eloquence she told the story of the sweated. Her manner was almost lyrical, as if she were chanting a new "Song of the Shirt." Most of the garment workers in the audience were Jews, but although her manner of appeal was strange to them, the subject matter of her speech was their very life, and they were deeply moved.

The president of the "Skirt-Finishers' Union," who spoke in Yiddish, followed her. She told of the intolerable conditions of the trade: how the prices had been shaved until no one but girls who lived at home and had no rent to pay could earn a living at it; how at last the strike had started and how desperate the struggle was. The treasury was empty, so they could pay "benefits" no longer. Unless money could be raised they would be starved back to the machines—defeated.

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Then a young Jewish lawyer, Isadore Braun, spoke. It was the ringing message of Socialism he gave them. All the working people of the world were victims of the same vicious industrial system. In one branch of industry—like "skirt-finishing," which they had just heard about—it might momentarily be worse. But the same principle was back of all labor. The coal-miner, the lace-maker, the farm-laborer, the clerk—every one who worked for wages—was in the same manner being cheated out of some of the product of his labor. Individually the workingman is powerless. When men or women get together in a union, they are stronger and can sometimes win improvements in the conditions of their trade. But if they would all get together in one immense organization, if they would also vote together, they would be an overwhelming force in politics. They would rule society. They could install a new civilization based on Justice and Brotherhood.

"Workingmen of all countries, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to gain!"

Dr. Liebovitz rose when Braun sat down. He was a smooth-shaven, amiable-looking man, but he spoke with a bitterness in striking contrast to his appearance.

"The bosses do more than cheat you. They're not only thieves—they're murderers! I'm a doctor. Day and night I go about through this district with a bag of medicine and surgical instruments trying to save the lives of people—men and women and newborn babies—who would never be sick if it was not for the crimes of capitalism!

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"Tuberculosis! How many of you are there in this audience who haven't lost a relative from lungs? As I sat here a moment ago I heard at least a dozen tubercular coughs. It's preventable—it's curable. There's no reason why any one should have it—less still that any one of you should die of it—if Capitalistic Greed didn't force you to live in rotten tenements, to work long hours in worse shops.

"Unless you people who are here this evening—and all the working people—make up your mind to make it impossible for some people to get fat off your misery, unless you get together to overthrow Capitalism, to establish Socialism, some of your babies are going to die of impure milk, others of adulterated food, more of T. B. Unless we can put these murderers out of business there will never be an end to this horrible, needless, inexcusable slaughter."

Miss Train spoke when he had finished. She made no pretence of oratory, did not seek to move them either to tears or anger. She tried to utilize the emotions stirred by the other speakers, for the immediate object of the meeting—raising funds for the "skirt-finishers." A collection would now be taken up. Mr. Casey, the secretary of the Central Federated Union, had promised to address them. He had not yet come. She hoped he would arrive while the girls were passing the hat.

"For Gawd's sake," Harry said, "come on. This is fierce."

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"No," Yetta replied, jerked down from the heights by his gruff voice. "I want to hear it all."

She had listened spellbound to the speakers. Never having been to a meeting, she had never heard the life of the working class discussed before. Almost everything they said about the "skirt-finishers" applied equally to her own trade. Jake Goldfogle was grinding up women at his machines to satisfy his greed. Before, he had seemed to her an unpleasant necessity. Now he took on an aspect of personal villainy. He was not only harsh and foul-mouthed and brutal, he was robbing them. Cheated at home by her relatives, at the shop by her boss, what wonder her life was poverty stricken!

A strange thing was happening to Yetta. The champagne which Harry had urged on her was mounting to her brain. She had not taken enough to befuddle her, but sufficient—in that hot, close hall—to free her from her natural self-consciousness, to open all her senses to impressions, to render her susceptible to "suggestion." This, although Harry did not understand psychology, was why he had urged it on her. But his plan had "gang alee." The alcohol was working, not amid the seductions of a brightly lighted, gay ball-room, but in this sombre, serious assembly. The "suggestions" which were flowing in upon her receptive consciousness were not the caresses of a waltz. She was being hypnotized by the pack of humanity about her. She was becoming one with that crowd of struggling toilers, one with the vast multitude of workers outside the hall; she was feeling the throb of a broader Brotherhood, in a way she never could have felt without the

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stimulation of the wine.

One of the speakers had alluded to the evil part in the sweating system which is played by the highly paid "speeders." Yetta was a "speeder." Why? What good did it do her? Her uncle swallowed her wages. Jake Goldfogle—the slave-driver—profited most. How did it come about that she—her father's daughter—was engaged in so shameful a rôle? She wanted passionately to talk it over with some one who understood.

Open-eyed she watched the group of speakers on the platform. She felt the kinship between their idealism and her father's dreams. He would have loved and trusted Miss Train. It must be wonderful to be a woman like that. With the inspiration of the wine in her veins, she felt that she might find courage to talk to her.

The young woman whom Yetta was so ardently admiring was holding in her hand a note from Mr. Casey which announced that he could not get to the meeting, and she was asking Longman—ordering him, in fact—to fill the gap in the programme. He was protesting. He was not an orator. The sight of a crowd always made him mad. He was sure to say something which would anger them. It would be much better to begin the dance. But Miss Train was used to having her way. His protest only half uttered, Longman found himself out on the platform.

"Mr. Casey can't come. And Miss Train has asked me to take his place. Now, I'm no good as a speaker, and you won't like what I say, but I'm going to tell you what I believe. Braun and Dr. Liebovitz told you about the rotten injustice of our social system, and what they said was true. But they did not tell you whose fault it is. You may think the bosses are to blame. It's your own fault. You're only getting what's coming to you.

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"You're slaves because you haven't the nerve to be free. You came here to hear the bosses called names. I don't like the bosses any more than you do. But it makes me tired to hear everybody cursing them and not looking at their own faults. You are getting cheated. What are you going to do about it? Are you cowards? Haven't you got the guts to stand up and fight for your rights?"

"Fourscore and several years ago, our Fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation dedicated to the ideals of Democracy, of Liberty, Justice, and Brotherhood. And look at this nation now! Plutocracy has swallowed up Democracy. I don't have to tell you garment workers how little there is of Justice and Brotherhood. What's wrong? Were the Fathers off on their ideals? No! But they neglected to people this continent with a race of men! The country is full of weak-kneed cringers, who read the Declaration of Independence once a year, but would rather be slaves than go hungry. People whose rights are 'for sale.' People who prefer 'getting on in the world' to liberty. The trouble with this country is that we've got too few patriots.

"I'm an American. What I've been saying to you Jews applies equally to my own people. But at least I can say this for myself. It isn't much, but it's more than you can say. My ancestors fought for Liberty. Back in 1776 some of my forebears thought enough of independence to risk not only their jobs—but their lives. My father valued human freedom enough in the sixties to fight for it.

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"Do you want some one to give you Liberty?—to hand it to you on a platter? You come here, hundreds of thousands every year, from the oppression of mediæval Europe, because here in America men of a different race and creed have bought some measure of freedom with their blood. Not perfect Liberty—far from it. But we had to fight for the little we have.

"You're disappointed in America. You curse the bosses who enslave you. But think a moment. Why should you be free? There's nothing in life worth having, which doesn't have to be striven for. One of the American Revolutionists said, 'Eternal vigilance is the price of Liberty.' Have you been vigilant?"

"To-day the age-old fight for Liberty is being fought out in Industry—between Capital and Labor. What part in it are the Jews of America going to take? Are you going to submit servilely to injustice, in the vain hope that some one else will win Justice for you? Or are you going to follow the footsteps of the glorious fighters of your race, like Heine and Marx? Are you going to beg for Liberty or join the Army of Liberation, pay your share of the price and have the proud right to claim your share of the Victory?"

"I know your history. I know how the ages of oppression have bent your backs. I know your poverty. But did you come to America to transplant here these old traditions of servitude? No. You came in search of a broader life, a larger measure of Freedom. Well. Just like every one else you'll have to fight for it. You've got to sacrifice for it. You've got to be ready to die for it.

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"What are the most servile, down-trodden, abject trades in the city? The sweated garment trades. Who works in them? Jews. Where are the rottenest, vilest tenements? On the East Side. Who lives in them? Jews. You are the worst-paid, hardest-driven, least-considered people in New York. You are willing to work in sweat-shops. You consent to live in dumbbell tenements. You submit to injustice.

"You haven't joined the fight, although the Jew can fight when he wants to. I've no quarrel with these 'skirt-finishers.' But the fact remains that—with a few glorious exceptions—the great mass of your people have preferred a new serfdom to the trouble of earning Liberty. The Chosen People are watching the combat from a safe distance.

"This may sound as if I was a Jew-hater. I'm not. But I love Liberty. The fight is world-wide, international, interracial. It's bigger than Jew or Gentile. It's for the Freedom of Humanity. And

the people who are willing to be slaves are more dangerous enemies than those who want to be tyrants. It's rather good fun fighting oppressors. But it's Hell trying to free ourselves from slaves."

His words inflamed Yetta's imagination. How often she had heard her father explain the misery of their people by the lack of training in the habits of freedom! He had felt—and it had been his keenest sorrow—that the Chosen People were falling far short of their high calling. She remembered his solemn talks with her, his explanation of why he had wished her to study. He wanted her to be an American—a free woman.

Longman stopped. Instead of applause there were angry murmurings. But his words had sounded like the Ultimate Truth to Yetta. Why did they not greet his message with a cheer. The wine accomplished its miracle. Without its burning stimulation she would have been a cowering bundle of timidity before that sullen audience. But many good things can the kindly Fates conjure out of vile beginnings. The champagne which was to have been her utter undoing gave her courage. She got up as one inspired. [Pg 83]

"What he says is true. We Jews don't fight for Freedom like we ought to. Look at me. My father loved Liberty. Perhaps some of you remember him. His name was Rayefsky. He used to keep a book-store on East Broadway. He talked to me about Liberty—all the time, and how we in this country ought to do our share. And then he died, and I went to work in a sweat-shop. Vests. I forgot all he had told me. What right have I got to be free? I forgot all about it. I ain't been vigilant. Nobody's talked to me about Liberty—since my father died. I'm"—her voice trembled a moment—"Yes, I'll tell you. I'm speeder in my shop. I'm sorry. I didn't think about it. Nobody ever told me what it meant before. If there's a union in my trade, I'll join it. I'll try not to be a slave. I can't fight much. I don't know how. I guess that's the real trouble—we're not afraid—only we don't know. I ain't got no education. I had to stop school when my father died. I was only fifteen. But I'll try not to make it harder for those that are fighting. I think..."

But her excitement had burned out the stimulation of the wine. She suddenly saw the sea of faces. It turned her from The Voice of her Race into a very frightened young woman, who knew neither how to go ahead nor how to sit down. [Pg 84]

"That's all I've got to say!" she stammered. "I'll try not to be a slave."

Her simple, straightforward story, above all her self-accusation, turned the spirit of the assembly. "That's right," a number of men admitted, and there was considerable applause. She was too confused, too frightened at her own daring, to realize that she had saved the meeting from failure. But Miss Train, who never lost her presence of mind, recognized the Psychological Moment to end the speech making, and she signalled to the orchestra to begin the dance music. Every one got up and began, with a great hubbub, to move the benches back against the walls.

But Harry Klein was in no mood for dancing. In this unfamiliar, disturbing atmosphere, he also was discovering that his companion had a new and unsuspected side. It was something he did not understand, with which he was unprepared to deal. Everything seemed conspiring to tear her away from him. There were limits even to his patience. He must get her out on the sidewalk—into his own country.

"Come on," he said gruffly, taking firm hold of her arm. "I've had enough of this. Come on, I say. I ain't going to listen to hot air all night."

In her moment of exaltation, Yetta had almost forgotten the existence of her fiancé. His brusque manner broke into her mood with a suddenness which dazed her. He had led her down the hall, nearly to the door, before she could collect her wits. Beyond the door was the dark night and helplessness and unknown fear. Here in the hall was the woman who had been in the Settlement, the woman of whom she was not afraid. [Pg 85]

"Wait," she said. "I want to talk to Miss Train."

In all that hostile environment, Miss Train's silent disdain had been the most outspoken. Harry would rather have had Yetta talk with Rachel. Rachel at least was afraid of him.

"Come on," he growled, and jerked her nearer to the door.

"No, no. I want to stop."

"Don't you begin to holler," he hissed, with a rough jerk. He tried to subdue her with his hard eyes. "Come on. Don't you make no row. Don't you holler."

They were close to the dark doorway now, and somehow Yetta could not find breath to scream out her fright. He pushed her roughly out into the vestibule. But his progress came to a sudden stop. Some one caught him by the collar and swung him off his feet.

"Not so fast, my man." It was Longman. "Where are you trying to take this young lady?"

Harry's free hand made an instinctive movement towards his hip pocket, but Longman's hand got there first.

"Oh, ho!" he said softly. "Concealed weapons?"

Jake nearly wept with rage. He—the president of a political club, the dreaded leader of a murderous gang—held up in such a manner for the mockery of a lot of working-men!

"I asked you where you were taking this young lady," Longman repeated.

"I brought her here," Jake snarled, trying desperately to regain his *sang froid*. "I guess I can take her away when she's tired of the show."

"Yes. Of course you can take her away, if she wants to go. But you can't if she doesn't. I didn't catch your name," he continued, turning to Yetta, "but I'd be very glad to see you safely home, whenever you want to go. Would you prefer to go with me or with this—" he looked first at the wilted desperado in his grip and then at the little circle of men who had gathered about. "He's a Cadet, isn't he, comrades?" [Pg 86]

There was a growl of assent.

"You ain't going to throw me down now, are you, Yetta," Jake pleaded, the thought of losing her suddenly undoing what he considered his manhood, "just because this gang has picked on me."

"Of course you can go with him if you want to," Longman said kindly. "But really I think you'd better not. You won't do much for Freedom if you go with him."

"I'll stay," Yetta said simply.

And then Jake began to curse and threaten.

"Shut up," Longman said laconically, and Jake obeyed.

"Here," he continued to some of the men, "hand him over to the police. Be careful; he's got a gun in his pocket. Make a charge of 'concealed weapons.' And—what is your name?—Rayefsky. Thanks. Miss Train wanted to speak to you—that's why I happened along just now. Won't you come and we'll find her."

He told her how much he had liked her speech, as he led her across the room and chatted busily about other insignificant things, just as if rescuing a young girl from the brink of perdition was one of the most natural things in the world. Yetta was not at all hysterical, but she had had enough strange emotions to upset any one that night. His quiet steady tone, as if everything of course was all right, was like a rock to lean upon. [Pg 87]

He left her in an empty committee-room off the stage and hurried out to find Mabel, who, as a matter of fact, had not sent him to find Yetta. With no small exertions he pried her loose from the swarm of admiring young girls, and, leading her to the door of the committee-room, told her what had happened.

"Good old Walter," she laughed; "warning me not to butt in, and doing the rescue all by yourself."

"I didn't butt in," he said sheepishly, "until the chap began to use force."

"Are muscles the only kind of force you recognize?" she said. "I'll bet he wasn't using half as much force when you interfered as he had other times without touching her."

She went into the committee-room and closed the door. And in a very few minutes Yetta was lost in the wonder of a friend. Hundreds of girls had sobbed out their troubles on Miss Train's shoulder before, but, although she made jokes to her friends about how tears faded her shirtwaists, none of the girls had ever failed to find a ready sympathy. Although the process had lost the charm of novelty to Mabel it was for Yetta a new and entirely wonderful experience. Not since her father had comforted her for a stubbed toe or a cut finger had she cried on anybody's shoulder. And Miss Train, as well as Longman, had the tact, as soon as possible, to lead her thoughts away from the evening's tragedy to the new ideals which the meeting had called to life. As soon as her tears were dried, Mabel took her out in the main hall and introduced her to her friends. Longman came up and claimed a dance, and after it was over he sat beside her for a time and talked to her about labor unions and the struggle for Liberty. And then he called over Isadore Braun, the socialist lawyer, and had him dance with her. These two were her only partners at her first ball. Every few minutes Mabel managed to escape from her manifold duties and sit beside her. [Pg 88]

About midnight they took her home. Longman shook hands with her, and Mabel kissed her good night. Yetta went up the dark stairway very tired and shaken.

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## CHAPTER VIII NEW FRIENDS

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"Interesting girl," Longman said as he and Miss Train turned away from Yetta's door.

"Yes. I'll have to keep an eye on her. She may be a valuable recruit."

Longman laughed.

"What's so funny?" she asked sharply.

"Funny isn't just the word, but don't you ever see anything in people except enemies and allies?"

"I don't think much else matters—enemies and allies. There can't be neutrals in a fight for Justice."

"True enough, but I see a lot of interesting things in this little girl of the slums, which haven't anything to do with the fact that she is chuck full of fighting spirit and is sure to be on the right side."

"For instance?"

"Well. To begin with, a sweet and pure character, which in some amazing way has formed itself in this rotten environment—a wonderfully delicate sort of a flower blossoming in the muck heap. The kind of a sensitive plant that the slightest rude touch would blight. It's a marvel how it has escaped being trod upon—there are so many careless feet! I'm not proud of myself as I am, but I hate to think of what I'd be like if I'd been born in her cradle. It is always a marvel to me when some child of the slum wants to be good. From where in all this sordidness did she get the inspiration? And then it is always interesting to me—sad and interesting—to see how utterly stupid this desire for goodness is—how it is just as likely to lead to utter damnation as anywhere else. This Yetta Rayefsky has a beautiful and quite absurd trust in people. On a very short acquaintance she trusts you completely. I think she trusts me too—just exactly as she trusted that Cadet. And the faith she put in him was just as beautiful as what she has given you."

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"Walter, a person who looked at you would never dream that you're such a—"

"Sentimentalist? I suppose you're going to call me that again."

Longman said it bitterly. And she, knowing how the taunt would sting him, with equal bitterness did not reply. They trudged on side by side in silence, across town to Broadway and up that deserted thoroughfare towards Washington Square. They were neither of them happy.

In the bottom of her heart Mabel Train knew that something had been neglected by those fairies who had equipped her for life. They had showered very many talents upon her. But they had forgotten that little knot of nerve cells which had to do with the deeper affections. There were heights and depths of life which she knew she would never visit. It made her feel unpleasantly different. And Longman, whom otherwise she liked very much, was always reminding her of this deficiency. It seemed to her that he was mocking her cold intellectualism. And being supersensitive on this point, she had hurled "sentimentalist" in his face.

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Of all the odd types in New York City, Walter Longman was one of the most bizarre. His parents had died while he was in Harvard. They had left him an income of about five thousand a year. He did not make a brilliant record in the University. There were nearly always one or two conditions hanging over his head, but a marked talent for languages and a vital interest in philosophy carried him through. He was not popular with the students because in spite of his immense body he could not muster sufficient interest in football to join the "squad." He preferred to sit in his window-seat and read.

In the course of his junior year he chanced in his haphazard reading upon a German scientific review which contained an account of some excavations in the territory of Ancient Assyria. It told of the discovery of a large quantity of "brick" books, in a language as yet undeciphered. The matter interested him, and he set out to find what the library contained on the subject. He was surprised at the amount of material there was. The story of how Rawlinson and others had deciphered unknown languages fascinated him. He stayed on in Cambridge two months after graduation to finish up this subject. He found more information about the "brick" books which had first caught his attention. Several hundred of them had been brought to a museum in Berlin. Having nothing pressing to do in America, he went over to have a look at them. All the spoil from this expedition had been housed in one room. After studying the bricks for a couple of days, he thought he had found a clew. He could get more ready access to them if he was a student, so he went to the University and enrolled. He had no idea of staying long, nor of attending courses in the University, but his only plan for life in America was to write a book on philosophy, and that could wait.

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The first "clew" proved to be an illusion. But those rows and rows of ancient bricks, with their cryptic writing which hid the story of a lost civilization, had piqued his curiosity. Again he decided that his work on philosophy could wait.

It was two years before he satisfactorily translated the first brick. Once having found the key, his progress was rapid. If he had been in touch with the Assyriologists of the University, he would probably have confided in them at once. But he knew none of them personally, and he went on with his work single-handed. It took him six months to translate the entire collection. They contained the official records of a certain King of kings, who had ruled over a long-forgotten people called the Haktites. It took him six months more to arrange a grammar and dictionary of the Haktite tongue. Then he remembered the University and took his two manuscripts to the Professor of Assyriology. He was decidedly provoked by the first scepticism which greeted his announcement, even more bored by the hullabaloo which the savants made over him, when investigation proved the truth of his claim. He stayed a year longer in Europe, to see an edition of his work through the press at Berlin and to translate the scattered Haktite bricks in other museums. This took him as far as Teheran and afield to the site of the excavations, where there were numerous inscriptions on the stonework which was too unwieldy to be taken to European museums. Then he came to New York to take up the position of Instructor in Assyriology in Columbia. He had stipulated that he should be granted a great deal of leisure. It was not a hard

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matter for the University to arrange, as there was no great clamor among the students to learn Haktite. But Longman had insisted on the leisure, so that he would have opportunity to write his book on philosophy, which seemed to him very serious and infinitely more important than the dead lore of his department. He was vexed with himself for having wasted so much time and acquired such fame in so useless a branch of human knowledge.

He established himself in the top floor of a two-story building on Washington Square, East. He took the place on a long lease, and making free with the partitions, had arranged a big study in the front overlooking the Square, a bath, a bedroom, and a kitchenette behind it. Two big rooms in the rear he sublet as storerooms to the carriage painter who rented the ground floor. Having a horror of servants, he made his own coffee in the morning and Signora Rocco, a worthy Italian woman, came in with a latch-key when he was out at lunch and put the place in order. Twice a week he had to go up to the University.

The rest of his time went to what he considered his real work. He was to call his book *A Synthetic Philosophy*. Hundreds of would-be sages had cut themselves off from all active communion with life, had retired to the seclusion of a study or cave, and had written solemn tomes on what Man ought to think. Longman was going to discover what his kind really did think. He went about it in a systematic, almost statistical way.

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He had reduced the more important of the various possible human beliefs to twenty-odd propositions and many subheads, all of which he had had printed on a double sheet of foolscap. It began boldly by raising the question of Deity. From the heights of metaphysical discussion of the Existence, the Unity, and the Attributes of God, it came nearer to earth by inquiring into Heaven and a belief in a future existence. Again it soared up into the icy altitude of Pure Reason and the *Erkenntniss Theorie*. Again it swooped down to more practical questions of Ethics, what one considered the *summum bonum* and under what circumstances one conceded the right to suicide, and whether or not one believed that every man has his price. Whenever Longman found willing subjects he cross-questioned them by the hour. From the notes he took he tabulated the victim's *credo* on one of the printed questionnaires and filed it away. Almost every one laughed at his idea, but with the same dogged momentum which had kept him bent for months on and over Assyrian bricks, which interested him only slightly, he stuck to this work which interested him deeply.

In a way he was especially fitted for it. Every one liked him and found it easy to talk freely with him. And he was quick to detect any cant or lack of sincerity. If he wrote "yes" after the question, "Do you believe it pays to be honest?" it was the subject's basic belief, not a pretence nor a pose. And he had a knack of putting his questions in simple, comprehensible language. The printed questionnaire bristled with appalling technical words. But he did not use such phrases as "ultimate reality," "the categorical imperative." He did not ask his subject if his idea of God was anthropomorphic. Very few of the people whose faith he analyzed would have understood such terms.

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It was the essence of his proposition that he should tabulate the convictions of all sorts and conditions of men. And in his quest for varied points of view he had come into very close contact with a strange mixture of people. Into his "operating room," as Mabel Train derisively called his study, he had enticed college professors and policemen, well-bred young matrons and street-walkers. One of his sheets recorded the intimate convictions of the man downstairs who painted carriages; another, those of a famous opera singer. The Catholic Bishop of New York had undergone the ordeal and a Salvation Army lassie, who had knocked at his door to sell a *War-cry*, had come in to try to convert him. She had been very much distressed by his perplexing questions, but like all the rest had quickly fallen captive to his gentle manners and understanding eyes. She had dropped her missionary pose and had talked freely to him, not only of her beliefs, but also of her doubts.

Almost every one who had gone through the ordeal remembered it with a strange, awed sort of pleasure. It is so very rarely that we find any one to whom we can tell the truth.

There was a wreck of a man, an habitu  of cheap lodging-houses and gin-mills, who would tell you the story on the slightest provocation. One cold October night when he had no money for a bed and was trying to live through the night on a park bench with a morning paper for a blanket, a man had asked him if he wanted a drink. Not suspecting the good fortune which had befallen him, he had followed Longman to the "operating room." First there had been a stiff bracer of whiskey—"good Scotch whiskey, sir,"—and then a plentiful cold supper of bread and cheese and sardines and a steaming cup of coffee—"as much as I could eat, sir"—and a cigar—"as long as yer foot, sir. He was a real gentleman, sir, and he talked to me like I was a gentleman."

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There was a young wife of an elderly professor. Some of the ladies of the faculty raised their eyebrows when her name was mentioned and did not go to her teas. She had been smitten by Longman's broad shoulders and gentle bearishness and had quite eagerly consented to come to his study. She did not tell anybody about it, but she cried when she thought about it—cried that he had not asked her again.

Whether or not Longman's book promised any great usefulness to humanity, the preparing of it was of undoubted use to him. He had seen life at close quarters, with what Mirabeau called "terrible intimacy." His heart had grown very large there in his "operating room." As well as he could he hid his ever ready sympathy under a surface joviality and flippancy. There were very few people beside Mabel who realized what a sentimentalist he was. He was a brother to Abou ben

Adhem. And that love of his fellow-men necessarily brought him into bitter revolt against things as they are. But he had no collective sense; he loved his fellow men individually. He had no feeling for mass movements. Intellectually he realized the need of united activity, he believed in trade-unions and socialism. But the sight of a crowd always made him angry. He was an ardent apostle of the Social Revolution. But he could not work harmoniously with an organization. So the socialists called him an Anarchist. He did not care what he was called. But most of the difference between his very small living expenses and his liberal income found its way unobtrusively into some socialist or labor organization.

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But for three years now Mabel Train had been the "Cause" to which he gave his devotion.

She was also of the class of those who, never having had to work, had volunteered in the cause of those who must. But she had done so in a more intense, thoroughgoing, and practical way than had Longman. She had given not only what money she could spare, but herself.

She was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, and having come under the influence of the able and daring group of economists on that faculty had been educated to a position in labor matters which is very nearly as radical as that of the socialists. One of her professors had told her that in all his experience in coeducation he had never encountered a woman with a more masculine brain. At the time she had felt complimented. She had, at twenty, been proud that she did not have hysterics, that her mind did not have "fainting fits," that she could tackle the problems of the class-room in the same graceless, uninspired, direct way that men did. At twenty-seven she was beginning to realize that life was not a class-room exercise and that there were certain inevitable problems of womanhood which could not be solved man-fashion. She felt herself cold in comparison to other women. The romances of the girls in college had rather disgusted her. At twenty-seven she would have given her right hand for the ability to lose her head like some of the shop-girls among whom she worked.

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As a matter of fact the professor had been quite wrong in calling her intellect masculine—it was only a remarkably good one. It had the fearlessness to look the folly of our industrial system in the face and understand it. She had a deep womanliness which made it impossible for her to accept a manner of life which was in contradiction to her intellectual convictions. Thinking as she did that the relations between capital and labor were basically unjust, it was necessary for her to spend her life in the fight for justice.

What might be called "the normal mother instinct" had been denied her. Her woman's nature had turned into an ardent desire to "mother" the race. The babes who die unborn, those who are poisoned by bad milk, who wither up from bad air, whose growth is stunted by bad food—all the sad little children of the poor—were her own brood. She wrote rarely to her two blood sisters—she was the big sister of all the girls who are alone.

Her parents were entirely out of sympathy with her interest in working people. Principally to escape their ceaseless nagging, she had come East. For several years she had been the head of the Woman's Trade Union League. Her gentle breeding made her successful with the wealthy ladies on whom the League depended for support, the working girls idolized her, the rather rough men of the Central Federated Union had come to recognize that she never got up in meeting unless she had something to say. And the bosses complimented her ability by hating her cordially.

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Most of the young men who tried to court her—and there was a constant stream of them, for she was a very attractive woman—fared badly. She was distressingly illusive. Her intellect was so lively that it was hard to admire her manifold charms. She wanted the people who talked to her to think. And she checked sentimentality with scornful laughter.

Things were further complicated for her would-be suitors by the fact that Mabel, when she was not very busy, was always accompanied by her room-mate Eleanor Mead. Eleanor did not look like a formidable duenna. She was of a pure pre-Raphaelite type. By profession she was an interior decorator, and her business card said, "Formerly with Liberty—Avenue de l'Opera, Paris." She carefully cultivated the appearance of an Esthete. She nearly always dressed in rich greens and old golds and was never truly happy except during the limited season when she could wear fresh daffodils in her girdle. She was clever at her work and gained a very good income, which she augmented by fashionable entertainments where she lectured in French on subjects of Art and sometimes gave mildly dramatic readings of Maeterlinck and other French mystics.

Most men found her style of beauty too watery. But one of the "Younger Choir" had taken her as his Muse and had dedicated a string of Petrarchian sonnets to her. Eleanor had been rather flattered by the tribute until the unlucky bard had been forced by the exigencies of his rhyme to say that she had "eyes of sapphire." People had begun to make sport of her "sapphire" eyes—they did have a rather washed-out look—and had begun to call her "Sapphire." Most of Mabel's lovers shortened it disrespectfully to "Saph." She had given this aspiring versifier the sack, and his long hair was no longer to be seen in the highly decorated apartment on Washington Square, South.

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Although her appearance was not at all dreadful, she was feared and hated by all Mabel's admirers. It was impossible to call on Miss Train—it was necessary to call on both of them. Without any open discourtesy, with a well-bred effort to hide her jealousy, Eleanor made the courting of her friend a hideous ordeal. Most aspirants dropped out of the race after a very few calls. But for three years Longman had held on. It had not taken him long to know what was the matter with him, and after two unsuccessful efforts to see Mabel alone and tell her about it, he

went one night to the flat with grim resolution.

"Miss Mead," he said abruptly on entering, "I've got something very important I want to say to Miss Train. I want to ask her to marry me. Will you be so kind—?"

He opened the door leading into the dining-room. His manner had been irresistible. And Eleanor with her head in the air had sailed out past him. He shut the door carefully. All the evening long, Eleanor knelt down outside it, with her ear glued to the keyhole. But she heard nothing to distress her.

Longman got no satisfaction. Mabel had rejected his offer as decisively as possible. But he had refused to be discouraged. The third time that he forced a proposal on her, it had made her angry and she had said that she did not care to see him again. A few days later she received a very humble letter from him. He pleaded for a chance to be her friend, and solemnly promised not to say a word of love for six months. She had not answered it, but the next Sunday he came to the flat for tea. They had drifted into a close but unsound friendship. Eleanor's dislike for him was so evident—she maintained that the way he had banished her to the dining-room proved that he was no gentleman—that he very rarely went to their apartment. But on every possible occasion he met Mabel outside. The people who saw him at her side, night after night at labor meetings, assumed that they were engaged. This added intimacy only whetted Longman's love. From bodyguard he fell to the position of slave. He ran errands for her.

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With the masculine attitude towards such matters he did not believe that she would accept such untiring service if there was no hope.

When at the end of the stipulated six months she refused him again,—just as coldly as at first,—it was a bitter surprise to him. If a man had acted so, Longman would have unhesitatingly called him a cad.

He went away to the mountains to think it out. In a week he was back, proposing again. Once more she became angry. When she said "no," she meant "no." She did not want to marry him and did not think she ever would. He had asked to be her friend. Well. She enjoyed his friendship, but if he was going to bother her every few days with distasteful proposals of marriage it made friendship impossible. For two weeks he struggled with himself in solitude, torn between his desire to see her and his pride. Then he went to a meeting where he knew she would speak and walked home with her.

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So it had recommenced and so it had continued—in all three years. A deep camaraderie had grown between them. They knew each other better than many couples who have been married twice as long. But Longman could see no progress towards the consummation he so earnestly desired. During the three years there had been alternate moods of hope and despair. At times he thought she surely must come to love him. At other times the half loaf of intercourse tasted bitter as quinine. He told himself that he was a weak fool, a spectacle for the gods to laugh at, hanging to the skirts of a woman who had no care for him. At times he said, "Let all the rest go hang, today's sweet friendship is better than nothing." There were sad and angry moments when he paced up and down in his study and cursed her and himself and his infatuation—and the next moment he wanted to kiss the dust she had trod upon.

But steadily the torment of their relationship grew worse. More and more insistent had become the idea of going away. Perhaps she would miss his friendship and call him back. But he had been too deeply enslaved to dare so drastic a revolt. However, that morning had brought him mail which had suddenly crystallized this idea. He had resolved to put it to the test.

"Mabel," he said as they entered Washington Square, "if you're not too tired let's go up to the Lafayette for a while. I've got something important to talk over with you."

A look of vexation crossed her face, which, with quick and painful sensitiveness, he interpreted.

"No," he said gravely, "I won't bore you with any professions of affection. It's a business matter on which I'd like your advice."

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"Why not come up to the flat; we've some beer, and Eleanor's been making some fudge. It's more comfortable than that noisy café."

"Very well, then," he said stiffly. "I'll leave you at your door."

"Now, Walter—don't be a fool. What are you so sour about to-night? You haven't opened your mouth for six blocks."

"You know very well that I can't talk with "Saph" on the job—she hates me. I'd like to talk this over with you."

"All right," she said, shaking his arm to cheer him up. "But don't be quite so grumpy, just because I called you a sentimentalist."

Over the marble-topped table in the café, he told her that a letter had come inviting him to join an expedition, organized by the French Government, to excavate some Haktite ruins in Persia. From the point of view of an Assyriologist it was a flattering offer; they had selected him as the most eminent American in that department. But it would be a three or four years' undertaking in one of the most inaccessible corners of the globe. They would probably get mail no oftener than two or three times a year. And after all he was more interested in the thoughts of live men than

in mummies and cuneiform inscriptions. It would stop his work on philosophy.

"In fact, Mabel," he ended, "there is only one thing that makes me think of accepting. I can't stand this. I don't want to bring up the forbidden subject. But I'm tired—worn out—with hiding it. If I stay here in New York, I'm sure to—bore you."

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He tried to smile lightly, but it was not much better than the smile with which we ask the dentist if it is going to hurt. Mabel dug about in her *café parfait* for a moment without replying. She understood all the things he had not said. At last she did the unselfish, the kindly thing, which, if she had been a man, she would have done long before. She sent him away.

"It looks to me like a great opportunity. It isn't only an honor for past achievements, but a chance for new and greater ones. Sometimes I poke fun at your Synthetic Philosophy, but seriously I don't think it is as big a thing as your Assyriology. Whether you like it or not the Fates have given you a talent for that. Your wanting to do something else—write philosophy—always seems to me like a great violinist who wants to be a jockey or chauffeur. You're really at the very top as an Assyriologist. It's not only me—but most of your friends—think you have more talent for that. I think you'd best accept it."

Longman swallowed his medicine like a man. A few minutes later he left Mabel at her door.

She found "Saph" stretched out *à la Mme. Récamier* on the dull green Empire sofa.

"Will you never get out of the habit of staying to sweep up after the ball?" she asked languidly.

"I haven't been sweeping up," Mabel replied; "I've been over at the Lafayette with Walter. Now don't begin to sulk," she went on; "he's been telling me great news. The French Government has asked him to go on one of their expeditions to Central Asia. He's going."

"Goody," Eleanor cried, jumping up. "I'm glad!"

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"I'm not," Mabel said; "I'll miss him no end."

"Mabel Train, I believe you're in love with that man."

"No, I'm not. And I'm half sorry I'm not. I'm tired, done up. Good night."

"Don't you want some fudge?—it turned out fine."

"No. Goodnight."

Mabel did not exactly bang her bedroom door, but she certainly shut it decisively, and for more than an hour sat by her window, watching the ceaseless movement in the Square. Once she saw Longman walk under an arc-light. His head was bent, his hands deep in his pockets. Although the sight of him left her quite cold, her eyes filled with tears as they had not done for years. It was just because the sight of him left her cold that tears came.

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## CHAPTER IX YETTA ENLISTS

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Yetta did not fall asleep readily after the ball. Her mind was a turmoil. If she tried to fix her attention on this question of Liberty which had stirred her so deeply, she was suddenly thrown into confusion by a memory of the cold fear which Harry Klein's hard eyes and brutal grip had caused her. She felt that she must think out her relationship with him clearly if she was ever to be free from fear, but again this problem would be disturbed by the thought of her wonderful new friends.

Sleep when it came at last was so heavy that she did not wake at the accustomed hour in the morning. When Mrs. Goldstein came into the bedroom to rouse her, she was startled by the sight of the new hat and white shoes, which Yetta had been too excited the night before to hide.

The first thing Yetta knew, there was a great commotion in her room. Her uncle and aunt, neither more than half dressed, were accusing her loudly of her crime and heaping maledictions on her head. It was several minutes before Yetta fully awoke to the situation. And when she did, a strange transformation had taken place within her; she was no longer afraid of the sorry couple.

"Yes," she said, sitting up in bed, drawing the blanket about her shoulders, "I went to a ball. If you don't like it, I'll find some other place to live."

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The garrulous old couple fell silent. Goldstein's resentment against his daughter Rachel was fully as much because she had stopped bringing him money to get drunk on as because she had "gone wrong." After a minute's amazement at Yetta's sudden display of independence, they began a sing-song duet about ingratitude. Had they not done everything for her? Taken her in when she was a penniless orphan? Clothed and fed and sheltered her?

"And haven't I paid you all my wages for four years?" she replied. "Go away. I want to get dressed."

At the shop Yetta found that the story of her speech had been spread by one of the girls at the



second table who had been at the ball. Fortunately this girl had not witnessed the scene with Harry Klein. Yetta found the women at her table discussing the matter in whispers when she arrived. In the moment before the motor started the day's work, the bovine Mrs. Levy told her that she was a fool.

"You've got a good job," she said. "You'll make trouble with your bread and butter. You're a fool."

"Better be careful," the cheerful Mrs. Weinstein advised. "Don't I know? My husband's a union man. Of course the unions are right, but they make trouble."

"It ain't no use," the sad and worn Mrs. Cohen coughed from the foot of the table. "There ain't nothing that'll do any good. Women ain't got no chance."

The motor began with a roar.

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It is a strange fact of life, how sometimes a sudden light will be turned on a familiar environment, making it all seem new and entirely different from what we are accustomed to. Four years Yetta had worked in that shop. She had accepted it all as an inevitability, which no more admitted change or "reform" than the courses of the stars. The speeches to which she had listened made it suddenly appear in its true human aspect. It was no longer a thing unalterable, it was an invention of human greed. It was a laboratory where, instead of base metals, the blood of women and young girls was transmuted into gold. The alchemists had failed to find the Philosopher's Stone. The sweat-shop was a modern substitute. It was a contrivance by which such priceless things as youth and health and the hope of the next generation could be coined into good and lawful money of the realm.

Her nimble fingers flying subconsciously at the terrible speed through the accustomed motions, Yetta saw all the grim reality of the shop as never before. She saw the broken door to the shamefully filthy toilet, saw the closed, unwashed windows, which meant vitiated, tuberculosis-laden air, saw the backs of the women bent into unhealthy attitudes, saw the strained look in their eyes. More vaguely she saw a vision of the might-be life of these women,—clean homes and happy children. And behind her she felt the existence of the "office", where Jake Goldfogle sat and watched them through his spying window, and contrived new fines. And even more clearly than when she had made her speech, she saw her own function in this infernal scheme of greed, saw herself a lieutenant of the slave-driver behind her. She wondered if the other women hated her as she deserved to be hated. But habit is a hard thing to break, and her fingers sped on as of old.

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When the day's work was over, a sorry sort of a woman, named Levine, a woman who had had many children and more troubles and very few joys, lingered in the shop and told Goldfogle the gossip about Yetta's speech. She had expected some reward, a quarter—or even a dime—with which to buy a little more food for her children. But she got only curses. During the day one of Jake's loans had been called. What was he to do, hounded by his creditors, threatened from within? If he had been an Oriental despot he would have slain the bearer of these bad tidings.

Yetta, afraid of meeting Harry Klein outside, clung as close as might be to Mrs. Weinstein on her way home. She ran the few blocks she had to go alone.

It was a useless precaution. He had no intention of accosting her that night. The official dispensers of Justice had taken small interest in the charge against him. He had been promptly bailed out and knew the papers would get lost in some pigeonhole. But although he was not worrying about his arrest, he was more unhappy than he had been since the first day he had spent in jail as a boy. Like most crooks he believed in "luck." Apparently his luck had turned. There was only one consolation. It had been a single-handed game. None of his followers knew of his downfall. So he had set about planning a spectacular *coup* which would restore his prestige if the story of his disgrace got out. His vengeance, to be complete, should have included Longman, but the scent was too faint. He did not know his adversary's name. But he knew just where to put his finger on Yetta. He was a discreet young man, and he wanted to be very sure there would be no slip-up. So this night he trailed along behind her, safely hidden in the crowd. When he saw that she had walked home along the accustomed streets, he smiled contentedly.

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"It's a cinch," he told himself.

During the day an event had occurred in the Goldstein flat; a messenger boy had come with a letter and a bundle of pamphlets for Yetta. Even the postman is a rare visitor to such homes, and the arrival of a special messenger is talked about by the whole street. Mr. Goldstein, whose dispute with his niece had driven him out to find solace from his troubles, had, more early than usual, returned to the flat. He had found his wife very much excited over the bundle which reposed in state on the kitchen table. He was not so befuddled but that he saw the tracts were about Trade Unions. So when Yetta returned from her work she found a new storm blowing. As a Tammany man and a pillar in the Temple of Things as They Are—it is doubtful if he realized how important he and his kind are in the maintenance of that imposing structure. Mr. Goldstein had to oppose trade-unions and socialism. They seemed to him more subversive of the order of Society than social settlements, dance-halls, or the Religion of the Goyim. And he was sufficiently intoxicated to have forgotten the mercenary caution which had in the morning kept him from throwing out the chief brandy-winner of the household. All through her supper Yetta had to listen to reproaches—which were not too delicately worded. But they hardly bothered her. As soon as she could find a good place to live she was going to leave. She was not afraid any more. And when she had crammed sufficient food into herself, she picked up the bigger of the two lamps

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and escaped to her room with the pamphlets and the letter.

It had taken Mabel Train less than five minutes to dictate the letter, although she had two or three times stopped to attend to things which she thought more important. But of course to Yetta, the letter seemed importance itself. It was the first she had ever received, and it was from the most wonderful woman in the world. Mabel asked some questions about the shop and the chances of organizing the vest trade, and she urged Yetta to come to the office of the League to see her. She gave a list of the meetings at which she was to speak the next few nights, and asked Yetta, if it was impossible to get off in the daytime, to come to one of these meetings. She wanted very much to have a long talk with her—above all she hoped that Yetta would not forget her. It was an informal and affectionate letter. Yetta read it over five times, and each reading made her happier.

Then she turned to the pamphlets and did not go to bed until she had finished them. It was four years since she had read so much. There were hard words here and there which she did not understand, but on the whole they seemed wonderfully clear. Many of the questions which had been perplexing her were answered, many new ones raised. Although the reading made her feel keenly her ignorance—made her cheeks burn with shame over the years when she had brutishly ceased to think—she certainly understood life better, she saw more clearly her place in it.

The last of the pamphlets bit into her. It was called "Speed." It was written in a violent and unjust spirit. The author had failed to realize that the "speeders" were human beings; that few, if any of them, were willing or understanding tools in the hands of the bosses. He spoke of them as "traitors to their comrades," "ignoble creatures—Judases who sold themselves to the oppressors for thirty pieces of silver," "more detestable than scabs." To be a "speeder," this author held, was "a prostitution more shameful than that of the streets." If Mabel had selected the pamphlets, this one would not have been sent to Yetta, but she had told her stenographer to send "half a dozen." And Yetta, not knowing much about stenographers and their blunders, thought that all this was what the wonderful Miss Train thought about her. She felt that some deep expiation was necessary if she wished to look her new friends in the face. [Pg 112]

She was in the grip of hurrying forces. She could see but three courses open before her. It was possible to go on as she had been doing, part of the great machine which was robbing mankind of its liberty, a blind tool in the hands of the tyrants—a tool until she was worn out and discarded. She might slip into the hands of some Harry Klein. Or she might risk all in the Cause of Freedom.

It would be easier for us to understand Yetta's outlook on life, if we too had stood on the very brink of that bottomless abyss; if we realized, as she had suddenly come to realize, how very narrow is the margin of safety, which even our greatest caution can give us. It did not seem to her that she was risking much in risking everything she had.

Mabel Train, on the contrary, had joined the ranks of Social Revolt without any compulsion. She and her family were beneficiaries of the system to the overthrow of which she had dedicated her energy. It would have been very easy for her to sink into the smug complacency of the life to which she had been born and bred. Why should she not accept the conventional lies of our civilization as her mother, her sister, and her friends did? She had been given this strangely strong intellect which her professor had called masculine, and she could not help but recognize the "falsehoods." She had also been given a keen sense of ethics and a tremendous pride. She could not bear the thought of being "the kept woman" of Injustice. [Pg 113]

With all that is ordinarily called "good" at her command, she had voluntarily chosen a hard and cheerless life, a career which was largely thankless. Instead of cotillions she went to the balls of the Amalgamated Union of Skirt Finishers. She had given up a comfortable home for light-housekeeping in a flat. The hardest of all was that instead of being considered an ordinarily sane young woman, all the people of her old life thought her a crank and a fool.

Yetta's situation was indeed different—less heroic but more tragic. And just in proportion as your own toothache hurts you more than your neighbor's, it was more vital. Her life seemed to her shameful, and as a price of shame it offered her nothing but a gradual rotting into barren uselessness. Her first effort to escape from the vicious rut into which she had fallen had led her to the brink of a greater shame, a surer disaster. Of all the people with whom life had brought her into contact, three seemed preëminently good: her father, Longman, and Mabel Train. They all loved Liberty. Once her eyes had been opened, Yetta would gladly have given up much more to the New Cause. As it was, the crusade seemed to her not a sacrifice, but an escape. An irresistible force was pushing her into Revolt—*la force majeure* of poverty. [Pg 114]

She did not foresee what form her new life would take; she was ignorant of too many important things. But she reached a determination to seek out Miss Train at the earliest opportunity and enlist.

And having cleared up this problem, her mind was freer to face the case of Harry Klein. It was not an easy thing for her to fold away all the emotions and dreams to which he had given life. She was still unenlightened in such matters. She did not see clearly the details of the horrors from which she had escaped. All she knew was that he had lied to her. He had with his honeyed words been plotting to make her "bad." Some of Longman's words at the Skirt-Finishers' ball came back to her and seemed to apply. She had foolishly dreamed that some one could give her freedom. That had been an idle hope; if she was to escape from her dungeon of monotony she must do it herself.

Harry Klein did not go to sleep until his plans were laid. He had had a satisfactory talk with the keeper of a Raines Law hotel on the route which Yetta followed on her way home after she left Mrs. Weinstein. The rooms upstairs would be empty on the morrow, and the ladies' parlor clear of witnesses. He had ordered a dozen of his followers to be in a saloon across the street. At a signal from him they were to rush out and fire their revolvers in the air in imitation of a gang fight. All the homeward hurrying crowd would shriek and run. In the excitement he would jerk Yetta into the dark doorway.

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He did not like to use such "strong-arm" methods. It was always safer and generally easy to fool the girl into coming willingly. But this occasion demanded decisive action. He went over the plan carefully, and could find no flaw in it. "It's a cinch," he repeated as he went to sleep.

Jake Goldfogle did not get to sleep at all. He tossed about on the bed in his stuffy tenement room—which he had hoped to leave so soon for a Harlem flat—and tried to think a way out of his difficulties. He had spent his last resources in meeting the unexpectedly called loan. If trouble broke out in his shop, there was very little hope of pulling through. It was his nature to cross all bridges as soon as he heard of them. But this one which seemed so close he could not traverse. Should he appeal to Yetta at once? Or should he trust to luck, to the chance of the storm blowing over? All night long he swung from one decision to the other. His final conclusion was to redouble his spying, and at the first hint of trouble to call Yetta into his office. He had no doubt that an offer of marriage would change her into an ally.

Yetta, having no idea how the powers of darkness were again closing about her, set out to work in the morning in high spirits—her face illumined by her new resolve. But her exaltation was short lived. Mrs. Cohen's lungs were much worse. All through the morning hours she struggled desperately with her cough. Mrs. Levy had seen the same thing so often before that she gave it no attention. But Mrs. Weinstein's merry eyes turned serious. And every cough tore at Yetta's heart. She was partly to blame. During the noon respite she and Mrs. Weinstein took care of the consumptive woman, tried to tempt her to eat with the choicest morsels of their none too savory lunches. Yetta urged her to go home for the afternoon and rest. But that was impossible. Goldfogle would "fire" her if she left, and she needed the job.

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So when the short lull was over, the women took their places about the table. Hardly five minutes had passed when a paroxysm of coughing checked Mrs. Cohen's hands, and the work began to pile up. Yetta broke her thread, and by the time she had mended it Mrs. Cohen had caught up. Jake, hearing the stop, came to the door, but, seeing that Yetta was to blame, went back without speaking. Within half an hour Yetta had to break her thread again. But Mrs. Cohen was past the aid of such momentary rests. Before three the crisis came. She let go her work and dropped her head on her hands, horribly shaken by sobs and coughs. Yetta, feeling that she had helped to kill the woman, stopped her machine. Jake rushed out into the shop.

"*Wos hat da passiert?*" he demanded of Yetta, nervous and angry. "Did your thread break again?"

"No." Yetta stood up. "I stopped."

"Stopped?" he repeated in amazement.

"Yes. I stopped. It's a shame. Mrs. Cohen is sick and can't keep up."

Jake was only too glad to find some one else to vent his vile temper upon. He ran around the table and grabbed Mrs. Cohen roughly by the shoulder.

"You're fired," he shrieked. "I've had too much from you. You're the slowest woman here. Now you stop the whole table. You're fired."

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"No, you don't, Mr. Goldfogle," Yetta cried, as excited as he was. "You don't fire her without you fire me too. See? Ain't you got no heart? She's killed herself working for you. You ought to take care of her now she's sick."

"Vot you tink?" he wailed. "Is it a hospital or a factory I'm running?"

"If it's a slaughter-house, Jake Goldfogle, I won't work in it."

The altercation had stopped all the work. The shop was strangely quiet. And Jake, his hope of success, his dream of love, trembling about his ears, could hardly keep back his tears. Suddenly he found voice and turned on the other women.

"Vot for do you stop? Vork! Vork, or I'll fire you."

And then coming up close to Yetta he said:—"You come vid me to my office. I vant to talk vid you."

"Why don't you say it here?" she asked defiantly. "I don't care who hears me talk. You got to treat Mrs. Cohen right or I'll quit. The other girls will quit too if they ain't cowards."

"No, no, no," he said, trying to hush her. "You come vid me, Miss Rayefsky."

She hesitated. She had expected him to rage and threaten her; his cringing manner disconcerted her. Anyhow it would give Mrs. Cohen time to breathe, so she reluctantly followed him into the dingy little office. He carefully closed the door.

"I've got sometin' to tell you. I. Vell—Yetta, you be a good girl und not make no trouble in the

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shop. Und ven de rush season is over, Yetta—I'll, yes, Yetta, I luf you. I'll marry you. You be a good girl und not make trouble, Yetta, und I'll marry you."

If he had threatened to kill her, Yetta would not have been so surprised. She was dumbfounded. And Jake, nervous, frightened, amorous Jake, took her amazed speechlessness for consent. He thought the magnificent generosity of his offer had overpowered her.

"Yes, Yetta," he drivelled on, "I luv you already since a long while. I vant to tell you, but the contract is zu close. I need you in the shop. You're the best vorker. It's only a few veeks now, Yetta. Ve'll be rich. Rich! I don't care if you ain't got no money. Ven I seed you first, Yetta, I luvved you."

He grabbed one of her hands and tried to kiss her. The slap he received dizzied him.

"You come out in the shop, Jake Goldfogle," she cried, pulling open the door. "You tell them what you told me. What do you think the pig said to me?" she asked the surprised women. "You tell them, Jake Goldfogle, or I will. He wants me to marry him—after the rush season. He loves me so much he wants me to go on speeding for him—slave driving—till after the rush season. Oh, the pig! I'd rather be hustling on the street, Jake Goldfogle, than be married to a sweat-shop keeper."

Jake's temper was never very good; it had been torn by too many and desperate worries. To have his heart's dream thus publicly scoffed at, robbed him of his last shred of self-control. Giving tongue to an incoherent burst of rage and filth, he rushed at Yetta. She thought he was going to strike her. But she was too angry herself to be afraid.

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"Don't you hit me, you brute," she screamed at him, shaking her own fists in his face. "I ain't working for you no more, Jake Goldfogle. See? I ain't one of your slaves any more. I'm a free woman. I'll have you arrested, if you hit me. And shut your dirty mouth."

Jake was cowed. His fist unclenched.

"You see what kind of a boss we've been working for," Yetta said to the other women. "He ain't a man. He's a pig! Wanted me to marry him—after the rush season. I've quit him and you ought to quit too."

"Shut up," Jake shrieked.

"I won't shut up. See what you've done to Mrs. Cohen. You've killed her, and now you want to throw her out. We ought to strike."

"Don't you talk strike in my shop, you—"

"Yes. We ought to strike. You know the dirty deal we're getting. Rotten wages and speed. It's because we ain't got no union and don't fight. We ought to strike like the skirt-finishers."

"Police! Police!" Jake howled, rushing to the door. "I'll have you arrested, you dirty little—"

"I don't care if he does have me arrested," Yetta went on more quietly after he had gone. "If he was treating us decent, he wouldn't yell for the police, when somebody says 'strike.' I ain't afraid of jail. I'm afraid of staying here on the job and coughing myself to death. I'm going to quit, and you ought to too."

"You're a fool. You're making trouble," the bovine Mrs. Levy said with conviction.

"No. She ain't," Mrs. Weinstein spoke up. "I guess my man belongs to a union. He's told me lots of times that us working people ain't got no other hope. It's the bosses what make trouble by cheating us. I'll strike, if the rest do."

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"I'll strike anyhow," Yetta said. "I won't never work for a pig like that, asking me to marry him after the rush season."

"I'll strike vid you, Yetta," the girl said who had been to the ball. "My sister's a skirt-finisher. But the strike ain't no good unless everybody quits."

"I'll strike," another voice chimed in.

"All right," Mrs. Weinstein said. "We'll all strike."

"It's foolishness," Mrs. Levy protested, rubbing her trachoma-eaten eyes.

But the excitement had caught the rest of the women. And when Jake returned, hatless and breathless, with a phlegmatic Irish policeman, he met all his women coming downstairs. In spite of his frenzied pleading, the policeman refused to arrest them, refused even to arrest Yetta.

"I'll take your number. I'll report you, if you don't arrest her. She's been making trouble."

"Aw! Go on, ye dirty little Jew. I'll smack your face, if ye talk back to me. And you women, move on. Don't stand around here making a noise or I'll run you in."

But on the next corner the group of women did stop. Where should they go? What should they do next?

"Nobody'll go back to work," Yetta said, "unless he'll take Mrs. Cohen, too, when she gets rested."

"I won't never get rested," the coughing woman said.

"Oh, yes, you will, sure," Mrs. Weinstein said. But everybody knew she was lying.

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The girl whose sister was a skirt-finisher and who knew all about strikes took down the names and addresses of the twelve women. Mrs. Weinstein promised to look after Mrs. Cohen. And Yetta started uptown to the office of the Woman's Trade Union League. And all the long walk her heart was chanting a glad hosanna. She wasn't a speeder any more. She could look free people in the face.

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## CHAPTER X THE W. T. U. L.

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It was near five in the afternoon when Yetta reached the brown-stone front which held the offices of the Woman's Trade Union League. It had once been a comfortable residence. But Business, ever crowding northward on Manhattan Island, had driven homes away. The house seemed dwarfed between two modern buildings of twelve and eighteen stories.

In what had formerly been the "parlor," Yetta found a rather barren, very businesslike office. Two stenographers were industriously hammering their typewriters, but the chair behind the big roll-top desk was empty.

"Hello," one of the girls greeted her, hardly looking up from her notes. "What do you want?" "I want to see Miss Train."

"Sit down. You'll have to wait. Advisory Council."

She jerked her head to one side to indicate the double doors which in more aristocratic days had led to the dining-room. It was anything but a cordial welcome. To be sure the two girls were "organized." Miss Train had persuaded them to form a union. One was president and the other was secretary, and there were about six other members. They had done it to please her, just as they would have done anything to please her. Nevertheless they felt themselves on a very much higher social plane than mere shop girls.

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Yetta sat down disconsolate. She had not expected to have to wait. She did not appreciate the overwhelming importance of an Advisory Council. In fact, she did not know what it was. And she did not think that there could be anything more important than the strike in her shop. In a few minutes her impatience overcame her timidity.

"Say," she said, getting up and coming over to the girl who had spoken to her. "You tell Miss Train that I'm here. It's important—about a strike."

"Humph," the stenographer snorted, "skirt-finisher?"

"No. I ain't a skirt-finisher. I work bei vests. It's a new strike. Miss Train'll want to know about it right away."

"What do you think?" the stenographer asked her companion. "Can't disturb the Advisory Council, can I?"

The two girls cross-questioned Yetta severely, but at last gave in to her insistence. One of them knocked at the double doors. They were opened from the inside a couple of inches and Mabel looked out.

"We've struck," Yetta cried, rushing towards her.

Mabel turned towards the occupants of the inner room and asked to be excused a moment.

"I'm very busy just now," she said as she sat down beside Yetta. "Tell me about it quickly."

The Industrial Conflict is not logical. At least it does not follow any laws of logic known to the so-called "labor leaders." It is connected with, actuated by, a vague something, which for want of a better term we call "human nature." And labor leaders are just as uncertain what "human nature" will do next as the rest of us. They will spend patient years on end organizing a trade, collecting bit by bit a "strike fund," preparing for a battle which never comes off or miserably fizzles out. In the midst of such discouragement, an unprepared strike in an unorganized trade will break out and with no prospect of success will sweep to an inspiring victory. Mabel had seen such surprising things happen a hundred times.

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More than once, since her short talk with Yetta at the ball, she had thought over the possibility of organizing the vest-makers. But the project seemed to hold very little promise. The "skirt-finishers" had lost. She, with her hand on the pulse of things, knew it, even if the strikers did not. And here, once more, a new strike had broken out, just as another was collapsing. It might be only a flash in the pan, a quarrel in one shop. It might spread. She listened closely to Yetta.

Her eyes were also busy. She noted the peculiar charm of the young girl, the big deep eyes with their sudden changes from excited hope to melancholy sadness, her cheeks flushed with the impetuous enthusiasm of a new convert.

Mabel thought of the group of well-to-do women in the other room. She had small respect for most of them, none at all for some. It would have been a very complicated matter to analyze the reasons which caused these "ladies" to interest themselves in the cause of working girls. Some few of them had similar—if less forceful—motives to those which had led Mabel to give her life to the work. Some of them liked to be thought odd, and found in labor unions a piquant fad. Two were suffragists and were seriously interested in all organizations of women. There was one at least whose morbid instincts were tickled by the stories of desperate misery which circulated in the League.

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Probably all of them had been somewhat influenced to seek election by the fact that Mrs. Van Cleave was on the Board—she might invite them to one of her functions.

She was a mystery to Mabel. She was very fat and very rich and a leader of the inner circle of "Society." She attended the meetings regularly, and never seemed to take the slightest interest in anything. Every January first she mailed a check for ten dollars. Mabel had never succeeded in getting any other money from her. But her social prestige was of unquestioned value—otherwise she was absolute dead-wood.

Mrs. Karner, the wife of a millionaire newspaper owner, was the only one of them all who really helped Mabel. She was an intelligent woman and rendered efficient service along many lines.

It was a hard group to work with. The sincere ones were occupied with many other activities. It was difficult to get any enthusiasm into them. But the League could not exist without their financial support. Now that the "skirt-finishers" strike was ending in disaster, how could she keep up their interest, how could she persuade them further to open their pocket-books? Yetta's radiant face gave her a suggestion.

"Wait a minute," she interrupted her in the middle of a sentence. "There are some other people who ought to hear about this. Come along."

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She led Yetta through the double doors into the committee-room. It was one of Eleanor Mead's achievements. The room had been extended to the back of the house. Along the sides were piles of cheap folding chairs. When they were put up, they would accommodate about two hundred. By the windows in the back there was a large flat-topped table and ten easy chairs in which the Advisory Council were comfortably installed. Above the table hung a great mezzatone photograph of the Rouen statue of Jeanne d'Arc. The room, all in brown tones, harmonized with it and the half-dozen similar portraits of famous women.

"Ladies," Mabel said, "this is Yetta Rayefsky. She has just come to tell me of a new strike in her trade—vests. We've finished to-day's business. And if you can spare the time, I am sure you will be interested in her story. Begin at the beginning, Yetta," she went on as the ladies nodded assent, "and tell us all about it."

Yetta was utterly confused. She had never seen so much fine raiment nor so many jewels. No one had ever stared at her through lorgnettes in the insolent way that Mrs. Van Cleave did.

"They are all friends, Yetta," Mabel encouraged her. "And if the strike is to succeed, we will need all the help we can get."

Thus prodded, Yetta began. The many books which she had read to her father as a child had familiarized her with good English. But in the last four years she had fallen into the mixture of Yiddish and slipshod English which is the language of the sweat-shop. Now she felt that she must speak correctly, and the search for words added to her self-consciousness and ruined the effect of her story. Mabel was just beginning to regret that she had brought her in, when in some sudden, inexplicable way all the excitement of the last few days came over Yetta with a rush and stimulated her as the wine had on the night of the ball. She began to speak simply, straight out from her heart. It was not an economic exposition of the industrial conflict; not even a coherent explanation of the strike in her shop. It was a more personal story. She wandered off from her main subject, told them about her father and the book-store. She told them about Rachel and Mrs. Cohen. She told them about Jake Goldfogle and his offer of marriage. Now and then Mabel asked a question about the conditions in her trade. God knows they were bad enough, but to Yetta such things seemed insignificant details; she was concerned with the frightful implications of poverty. Long hours and poor food seemed of small moment to her compared to the miserable meagreness of the life of the girls. To be sure they were hungry, but more awful was the fact that they were starving for sunlight. More than once she came back to Rachel and how she had "wanted to be good." Suddenly she stopped and turned to Mabel.

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"Ought I to tell them about Harry Klein?"

The roomful of women—ease-loving, worldly women—also turned to Mabel to catch her answer. They had fallen silent under the spell of Yetta's simple eloquence. Some of them Mabel detested. It seemed almost sacrilegious to let this unsophisticated girl strip her soul naked before them. But she saw that Yetta was moving them more deeply than she ever could.

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"It hasn't anything to do with the strike," she said after a slight hesitation. "You don't need to tell it—if you'd rather not."

"Please tell us."

It was Mrs. Karner who had spoken. Yetta had felt that she was the friendliest of all these fine

ladies. She had found encouragement in her eyes whenever she had looked at her. So taking a deep breath, she plunged in.

"You see, it was just luck—if it hadn't been for luck, I'd have gone wrong—just like Rachel."

She began with the night when she had watched the Settlement dance from her window. With the wonderful cleverness of self-forgetfulness she made them feel how her heart had hungered for a little happiness; how, although she had wanted very much to be good, she had reached out her hands, pleadingly, toward the dream of joy. She made them understand how the deadening barrenness of the sweat-shop had made it easy for her to believe in Harry Klein, how he had come to her singing the Song of Songs—like a Prince in Shining Armor riding forth to rescue her from the Giant Greed. Even the fat Mrs. Van Cleave was crying behind her lorgnette when Yetta told of her first supper with Harry.

"You see," she ended, "it's mostly against things like that that we girls strike. We may think it's for higher wages or shorter hours, but it's because it's so hard for a poor girl to be happy."

Mrs. Karner jumped up and put her arms around Yetta and kissed her and cried against her cheek. "Ladies," Mabel struck while the iron was hot, "shall we support this strike? Shall we try to organize the vest workers?"

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No formal motion was put, but Mrs. Karner, who was chairman, instructed the secretary to enter on the minutes their unanimous decision to aid the vest-makers. Mrs. Van Cleave nodded her head approvingly and volunteered to head a sub-committee in finance. It was the first time she had ever done anything but sit placidly in her chair. Then the meeting adjourned, and when the last of the ladies had left the room, Mabel gave Yetta a great hug.

"Oh, you darling," she said. "You even made Mrs. Van Cleave cry. It was wonderful."

And then without any reason at all, Yetta began to sob. Mabel installed her in one of the big chairs and sat down at her feet. "There," she said, "you cry as much as you want to. You've got a right to cry a week after a speech like that."

Resting her head against Yetta's knee and holding her hand, she lit a cigarette and began to think out the new campaign. Yetta's sobs wore themselves out quickly, and they began to talk. Mabel's grasp of details, her unexpected knowledge of the vest making, amazed Yetta. Mabel knew things about the trade which she had never dreamed of.

The two stenographers were called in. One was set to work on a volume of Factory Reports, preparing a list of vest shops. And Mabel instructed the other one to call up the *Forwaertz*—the Yiddish Socialist paper.

"What's your address?" she asked Yetta. "I'm going to ask Mr. Braun to come and see you to-night and write up the strike."

The question reminded Yetta of a new complication.

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"I forget," she said. "I can't go home. My uncle's fierce against unions. I ain't got no place. I'll have to find one."

"That's all right; you come home with me to-night," Mabel reassured her. And turning to the stenographer, told her to ask Mr. Braun to come to her flat for dinner. She dictated letters to half a dozen different people telling of the new plans and asking them to come to the League rooms on the morrow. It was nearly seven when she and Yetta and the two stenographers left the office.

All the last hour, Harry Klein had stood impatiently in the dark doorway, waiting for Yetta to pass. As the last of the ebb tide flowed by him, he went across the street and told his followers that there was nothing doing. For two more nights he marshalled them, but Yetta did not pass that way any more.

His luck had changed. It was not long before his retainers noticed it. In due time a new president was elected to the James B. O'Rourke Democratic Club. And so he passes out of this story.

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## CHAPTER XI

### MABEL'S FLAT

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Yetta had no clear idea of what fairy-land should be like, but when she passed through the door of Mabel's flat, it seemed that she had entered it.

She had never dreamed of such beautiful rooms. Even a more sophisticated observer would have been impressed with Miss Mead's arrangements. Interior decoration was her profession, and she was more proud of her work in this humble apartment than of anything she had done elsewhere. Most of her commissions were for people who were foolishly rich, who were more anxious to have their rooms appear expensive than beautiful. There was nothing in the apartment simply because it had been high-priced. Nothing pleased Eleanor more than to tell how little it had all cost. She could talk by the hour on the absolute lack of relationship between pure æsthetics and money. One of her lectures was on this subject, and she used the apartment as a demonstration room.

But to Yetta the forty dollar flat seemed a miracle of luxury.

The room which impressed her most with its appearance of opulence was the white enamelled, large-mirrored bath-room.

Eleanor herself was a vision of loveliness. Yetta had seen very few women with real blonde hair, and those few had not known how to wear it. There was a book she had seen as a child with a picture in it like Eleanor, but she had not thought that such women walked the earth. And her dress! It seemed to the little East-sider fit raiment for a queen. She could not imagine how it could shine so unless it was woven of spun gold. But it was not so costly as she imagined. The only real extravagance which Eleanor permitted herself in her quest for the Beautiful was the purchase of early daffodils.

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Mabel got out one of her own shirt-waists and hurried Yetta into it. While she was changing her own workaday clothes for a fresh outfit,—hardly less gorgeous than Eleanor's,—they heard the maid admitting Isadore Braun.

He was a product of the Social Settlement Movement. Even as a little boy he had been bitten by the desire to know. The poverty of his family had forced him to go to work, but he had continued his studies in the night classes of a Settlement. His boyish precociousness had attracted attention, and some of the University men of the Settlement, impressed by his eagerness to learn, had helped out his family finances so Isadore could return to school. They had helped him through High School and into the City College.

During his sophomore year Isadore had joined the Socialist party. His conversion had been a deep and stormy spiritual experience to him. He knew it would shock and alienate his supporters. Caution, expediency, every prudent consideration had urged him to postpone the issue—at least till he had finished college. But the new vision of life flamed with an impatient glory. He could not wait.

His new political faith separated him from the friends who had made things easy for him. But it brought him new ones a-plenty who, if poorer, were truer. He had been compelled to leave college. But he had already developed a marked talent for the kind of journalism the East Side appreciates, less "newsy," but decidedly more literary than the output of the English papers. He found a place on the *Forwaertz* where, for a bare living wage, he wrote columns about history and science and the drama. It was an afternoon paper, so he had his evenings free to study. He had taken the night course in the New York Law School. It had been a desperate struggle which he could not have won through except for a talent at reducing work to a routine and for one of those marvellous constitutions—like Yetta's—which seem the special heritage of their race, a physical and nervous endurance, which is probably explained by agelong observance of the strict dietary regulations of Moses.

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He was not an attractive person to look at. His face was heavily lined and lumpy. His short, stocky body had been twisted by much application to desk work. His right shoulder was noticeably higher than his left.

Nor was his type of mind attractive. It was too utilitarian to admit of any graces. He was twenty-five years old, and, since the days of enthusiasm when he had become a Socialist, he had imposed on himself an iron rule. He had not given himself a vacation, he had not read any book, had not consciously done anything in these five years, which did not seem to him useful. With the same merciless singleness of purpose which had marked Jake Goldfogle's struggle to become rich, Isadore Braun had driven himself in the acquisition of abilities, which would make him a more forceful weapon in the fight for Socialism.

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He had led his classes in the Law School. He had spurred himself on to immense effort, not because he wanted to sit on the Supreme Bench, but because he saw that the workers were in sore need of competent, sympathetic legal representatives. He believed that the Socialists were the most enlightened element in the great army of industrial revolt. He held that they should be a sort of "general staff," guiding and advising the Labor Unions—the rank and file of the army. His only idea in entering the bar was to act as attorney for the unions. If he had been offered a large retainer to settle a will or draw up a business contract, he would have been surprised and would have refused on the ground that he was too busy. He had volunteered his services as legal adviser to the Woman's Trade Union League.

He still drew his meagre salary from the *Forwaertz*, but he wrote less frequently on general subjects and had specialized on the labor situation. He kept to the newspaper work, not only because it gave him a small income, but even more because it gave him an audience. Almost every Yiddish-speaking workman in the city knew his name. He was a concise and forceful speaker, and now that he no longer attended night school he was on the platform, preaching Socialism, four or five nights a week.

This manner of life had had its inevitable and unwholesome result. For years he had been so intensely occupied with details that he had had no time to think broadly, to criticise, and develop the fundamentals of his faith. At twenty he had accepted the philosophy of Socialism; he had not had time to think about it since. He was rapidly becoming a narrow-minded fanatic. It was a strange, but common paradox. Having spent five years in the fight for Socialism, he could not have given a more coherent, a maturer statement of his beliefs than at first. All his associates held the same creed, but they discussed only its detailed application. Like himself they were—with very few exceptions—slaves to, rather than masters of, the Great Idea.

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His only non-Socialist friends were Mabel Train and Walter Longman. When he first took up the work of the Woman's Trade Union League, he had had a sweeping contempt for "bourgeois reformers." Gradually Mabel had forced him to abandon his hostility and at last to give her a high degree of respect. He was unable to understand her. But it was equally impossible for him to withhold his admiration for her consistency of purpose, her dogged persistence in a far from pleasurable career, her great ability, and her strong, straight intellect. He knew no other woman who was more steadfast than Mabel. But why? What were her motives? She was not a Socialist. She explained casually that she did not have time for more than Labor Unions. He could understand devotion to a great philosophical principle, but he could discover no coherent system of thought back of Mabel's unquestioned devotion.

He was a frequent visitor at the flat. But it never occurred to him to make a social call. For Eleanor he had no manner of use, a feeling which she entirely reciprocated. While he tried to pretend to a polite interest in "interior decoration," she made no pretence at all of caring for Socialism. And as soon as the business, which had caused him to come, was finished he found himself ill at ease, even with Mabel. On the basis of their common work, the organization of labor and the conduct of strikes, they had a delightfully frank and free friendship. But on any other ground he felt constraint. He never discussed Socialism with her, and this was strange, as he was an ardent proselyter. Back of her offhand explanation that she was too busy to occupy herself with the party, he felt the existence of a point of view entirely different from his own. In reality he was afraid to open this subject with her; he was afraid of her brilliant vision and her incisive, railing style of argument. He had gotten out of the habit of discussing the broad foundations of Socialism; he would be off his accustomed ground. He told himself that she was a woman, and if she got the better of him in repartee, she would think that she had demolished Socialism.

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Through Mabel, he had met Longman, and if she did not fit into his theory of life, Walter was an even greater exception. His easy-going, rather lazy brilliance was always startling Isadore and making him angry. Here was an exceptionally able man, who was keenly alive to the rottenness of the present order, but who took only a languid interest in righting it. What a power he might be! Instead he spent his time on the deadest of dead pasts and in an inconsequential way dallied—"diddled," Isadore called it—with philosophy. He could not think of Longman's manner of life without raging; it was such despicable waste. He ought to have despised him, but he could not help liking him. Having no bond of common work with Longman, as he had with Mabel, he found himself more often in his rooms than in her flat.

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Yetta, somewhat abashed by the glorious clothes of her hostesses, found Isadore's unkempt appearance a decided relief. His hair, black, curly, wiry, looked as if it had not been brushed for a decade. The spotless linen, the gilt shades of the candles, the bewildering assortment of forks and spoons, the white-aproned French maid, all rather dizzied her. It was indeed comforting now and then to glance up at the familiar East Side face across the table.

Eleanor, after a few formal politenesses from the head of the table, fell silent, and Mabel began to tell Isadore about the new strike. Once in a while they asked Yetta a question. When the table was cleared and the maid brought coffee—tiny, tiny cups of black coffee—Eleanor went into the parlor and arranged herself with a book beside a green-shaded lamp. And Isadore, taking out some rough sheets of copy paper, began scribbling notes for the article which should tell the East Side on the morrow that a gigantic, rapidly spreading, and surely victorious revolt had broken out in the vest trade. Once Yetta protested that her shop—twelve women—was the only one which had struck. But they laughed aside her objection. At least it was necessary to make it sound big, perhaps it would grow. Then they began drawing up a set of demands for the strikers to submit to their employers. First of all came the "recognition of the Union," and then a long list of shop reforms. About the only one which would be intelligible to those not familiar with the trade was that for a higher rate of pay per piece; the rest involved such technical considerations as the regulation of speed, ventilation, etc. Yetta wanted them to put in a clause demanding the reinstatement of Mrs. Cohen. But Mabel explained that there would be no sense to the demands unless other shops joined the strike, so they could not put in anything which applied only to one.

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"But," Yetta insisted, "I guess there's a Mrs. Cohen in every shop."

They argued against her that the unions could not try to right individual wrongs, they could only hope to win conditions which would stop the production of Mrs. Cohens. Although she was unconvinced, Yetta gave in. Isadore hurried off to a meeting.

Eleanor gave him a perfunctory good night without looking up from her book, and Mabel walked down the hallway with him. Yetta felt suddenly forlorn. Eleanor went on reading, ignoring her existence, and Mabel lingered to talk with Isadore at the door.

When Mabel came back, Eleanor looked up from her book and spoke querulously in French.

"I should think you might at least say you are sorry for spoiling our evening."

"It isn't spoilt yet," Mabel replied. "It's only begun."

"Not spoilt for you, perhaps. You never think of me. You solemnly promised to keep this evening free for some music. And at six your stenographer casually calls me up to say that there will be people for dinner. You can't even find time to telephone yourself."

"Now, Nell, don't be cross. If you listened to our talk, you must have seen how important—"

"Oh, everything is more important than I."

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"We'll have our music all right. I'll send the little one to bed."

And then changing into English, Mabel told Yetta that she must be very tired after so much excitement, that they had a hard day before them, and that she had best take a piping-hot bath to make her sleep and turn in at once. Yetta did not understand French, but from Eleanor's tone she had guessed the meaning of "*de trop*." She wanted very much to stay up and talk with Miss Train, but with a pang in her heart, she followed her docilely into a bedroom, watched her lay out a nightgown and bath-robe, and as docilely followed her into the dazzling bath-room.

"Take it just as hot as you can stand it, and then jump right into bed," Mabel said, and kissed her good night.

Before she was half through with her bath, she began to hear the sound of music. And when she had put on the nightgown and wrapped herself in the bath-robe,—her skin had never felt such soft fabrics,—she opened the door noiselessly and stood a moment unobserved in the hallway. In the front room Mabel was sitting at the piano and Eleanor stood beside her, with closed eyes, a violin tucked lovingly under her chin, and swayed gently to the rhythm of the music. It was one of Chopin's Nocturnes. Yetta did not know what a Nocturne was; the best music she had ever heard had been the cheap orchestras at the Settlement and at the Skirt-Finishers' Ball. Neither Eleanor nor Mabel were great musicians; it would have seemed a commonplace performance to most of us, but to the girl in the bath-robe it sounded beautiful beyond words, the most wondrous thing of all the wonderful new world she had so suddenly entered.

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She listened a moment and then tiptoed down the hall to her bedroom. She carefully closed the window, which Mabel had as carefully opened, left her door ajar, so she could hear the music, and climbed in between the soft white sheets. She was very tired, the hot bath had quieted her nerves, and it was while they were playing the third piece, something by Grieg, that she fell asleep. Her last conscious thought was a dreamy, wistful wonder if she could ever become a part, have a real share in so gorgeous a life.

For more than an hour they kept at their music. The people who wondered why two so different personalities lived together had never seen them as they played. Neither of them was expert enough to perform in public, but they both passionately loved to make music. Eleanor's ridiculous posing, her querulous jealousy, very often jarred on Mabel's nerves. She sometimes thought of breaking up the household. But there were precious moments when their differences melted away and they enjoyed a rare and perfect harmony. Now and then Mabel escaped from her manifold engagements, and they went together to a concert or the Opera. Even more intense became their intimacy of emotion on the more frequent occasions when—as this evening—they played together. Such moments more than compensated for the daily frictions. To the jealous Eleanor they meant that Mabel's mind was cleansed of all preoccupations, when no one, no fancied duty came between them, when they could forget everything—everything—and be together. To Mabel such intimacies meant escape from all the heart-breaking routine of misery and struggle which was her daily life; they were interludes of unalloyed happiness, white moments in the sad business of living. Somehow the magic of the music soothed and lulled to sleep the great ache of social consciousness. She knew no other way to win forgetfulness from the overwhelming melancholy of Life.

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"Nell," Mabel said, putting her arms around Eleanor when at last they were going to bed, "do you want to be nice to me? Try to like this little Yetta. She interests me. And I'd like to have her stay here for a while, if you don't mind."

"At least," Eleanor replied, "she's more decorative than most of your protégées."

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## CHAPTER XII

### YETTA'S GOOD-BY

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Yetta woke at her accustomed hour. But instead of hearing the vague murmur of awaking life about her, there was a strange silence. She could not even hear any one snoring. She had a panicky feeling that perhaps they had been murdered. So getting out of bed, she tiptoed down the hall to Mabel's open door and was reassured to see her sleeping peacefully. Back in her own room she climbed into bed again. But it did not occur to her to go to sleep, now that it was so light—lighter than her old bedroom had been at noon. For a few minutes she occupied herself looking about, studying the pictures and *bibelots*. A narrow strip of old tapestry on the wall looked especially strange to her; it was badly faded, the picture in it was hard to make out. It seemed almost uncanny to be in bed after she was awake, so she got up and dressed, noiselessly. She sat down by the window and, pulling aside the curtain, looked out, up the street, to Washington Square. Here and there were blotches of faint green; the early spring had started a few buds. Yetta had seen very little green that was not painted. And the swelling buds of the little park seemed to typify all the strangenesses of the new world which was opening before her.

It made her sad. She was not of this world. She could never be like Mabel. Her instinctive common sense showed her the great gulf which separated her from the life of her new friends.

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In an uncertain way she was beginning to form a conception of Beauty and the graciousness of luxury. Eleanor's gown, her daffodils, the way she stood when she played the violin, all suggested to Yetta an idea of personal adornment much more intricate than her former ideal of a hat and white shoes. The dinner had shown her that eating might be something more than the mere satisfying of hunger. Mabel had changed her street clothes for a dinner gown. Evidently she thought of clothing as something more than necessary covering. Even the room where she was sitting was more than a place to sleep. All this "moreness"—this surplus over necessity—this luxury, was what separated her life from this new world. It did not seem possible that she could ever cross that chasm.

The reverse of the proposition came to her with equal force. Could Mabel cross? Could she really become a part of the world of work, the world of less? It seemed just as improbable. Yetta felt lonely and out of place. An inevitable wave of resentment came over her against these two favored women. Was not all this beauty and easy grace—this luxury—what she and her kind, Rachel and the other girls, were starving for? She felt herself in the enemy's country.

There was a light knock on her door, and Mabel, wrapped in her dressing-gown, came in.

"Oh, you're up already," she smiled.

All of Yetta's hostility melted before her frank greeting and morning kiss. Eleanor, it seemed, never got up before nine, so they must be quiet. In a few minutes Mabel reappeared in her street clothes, and closing the dining-room door, so as not to disturb the sleeper, they had their breakfast. This meal, even more than the dinner, amazed Yetta. There were coffee and rich cream and eggs and toast and marmalade. She had known, of course, that people dine in state, but that any one ever drank his morning coffee leisurely had never occurred to her. As Mabel read the newspaper, Yetta had much time to think, and once more the feeling of hostility returned. For more than an hour now her people had been bent over the life-destroying machines, and Mabel sipped her coffee slowly and read the news. Yetta wanted to be up and doing.

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But once out on the street she was amazed and humbled at the sight of Mabel's efficiency. Yetta would not have known what to do first. Mabel had the whole day's work planned out.

First they went to the "girl who knew all about strikes" and from her got the addresses of the other women in Jake Goldfogle's shop. It developed that the bovine Mrs. Levy and the tell-tale Mrs. Levine had gone back that morning. But there was no work for only two, and Jake had sent them home with a promise to let them know as soon as he began again. He expected to start the next morning, he had told them. To Mrs. Levine he had given a dollar and whispered instructions to join the strikers and keep him informed.

The minute Mabel saw Mrs. Cohen she hurried out to a drug-store and called up Dr. Liebovitz. "It will have to be a sanitarium," Yetta overheard her say. "And at that I'm afraid it's too late. Whatever is necessary put on my account." Then Mabel arranged that the Cohen babies should be boarded by two of the poorest strikers and so out of her own pocket assured a little income to these families. Above all, Yetta wondered at Mabel's ability to spread confidence. Most of the women were helpless when they arrived, were hoping that Jake would forgive them and take them back. With a few words Mabel had banished all doubt. Ten of the dozen women—the exceptions were the bovine Mrs. Levy and Mrs. Levine, the spy—were soon convinced that victory was assured. And all except Mrs. Levy promised to come up to the Woman's Trade Union League at four o'clock and organize.

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This attended to, Mabel, with Yetta at her heels, jumped into an uptown car, and hurried to the office of the Central Federated Union to ask for a charter for the new union. Mr. Casey, the secretary, was a hale and hearty Irishman of near forty. For twenty years he had been an expert typesetter, and he never talked with any one twenty minutes without telling how he had set up some of the Standard Dictionary—"the most complicated page iver printed."

"Gawd," he remarked at sight of Mabel, "here comes some more trouble. Can't ye give a body any peace, Miss Train? Ye know there be two or three men in the world besides yer blessed women."

The other men in the room got up and offered their chairs. Once more Yetta was amazed at the ease with which Mabel stated her case. With her straightforward way of looking at things, she had come to know and understand these men. She knew the personal history of most of them, their carefully hidden virtues as well as their vices. And whether she knew them to be "grafters" or "straight" she had a knack of winning her point.

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"Sure," Casey said. "You can have the charter. That ain't no trouble. But don't ask me nothing else now. The Devil himself won't be no more busy on the Resurrection Day than I be."

"We're all busy," Mabel replied. "And I really want you to come round at four and help them organize."

Casey waved his hands and pounded the table and swore—occasionally asking pardon for his "damned profanity"—but Mabel hung on. She had already won the other men in the room, and they laughingly urged him to go.

Having gained his promise to come, Mabel did not waste a minute more of his time. She rushed Yetta over to the Woman's Trade Union League and plunged into her morning's correspondence.

All those things which had seemed to Yetta of overwhelming importance began to look very

small. There were some of the "skirt-finishers" in the office. Their strike involved several hundred women. There were only twelve in Goldfogle's shop. While Mabel was busy at other things Yetta picked up a copy of *The American Federationist*, the monthly organ of the national federation of labor unions. How infinitesimal was her part in this great industrial conflict! She read of thousands of miners striking in the anthracite fields, of a hundred woollen mills which had locked out their operatives. The street-car men were out in a Western city. A strike referendum was being taken by the printers of half a dozen Southern States. A great revolt had tied up the Chicago stock-yards. And here in New York there were five different strikes in progress. At one moment her pride swelled at the thought that she was a part of this vast army of workers who were fighting for a larger share of sunshine and Freedom. At the next it was borne in on her with a rush how insignificant was the case of the vest-makers.

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She had read almost every word in that month's issue of *The Federationist* before Mabel called her and they went downstairs to the working-girls' restaurant for lunch. They found an empty table, and Yetta had just commenced on her long list of questions, when two excited "skirt-finishers" came in, and seeing Mabel, rushed up to their table. Once more Yetta felt herself pushed back into a second place. That morning the strike had reached its crisis, the women of two shops had gone back to work on a compromise which ignored the union; a general stampede was imminent.

About two o'clock, the women of Goldfogle's shop began to appear, and sharp at four, Mabel tore herself away from the "skirt-finishers" and came into the back room where the vest-makers were assembled. The *Forwaertz* had come off the press an hour before, and the women who could read Yiddish had read aloud Braun's glowing account of their exploits. It had given them a new sense of importance, the feeling that there was sympathy and power back of them. And this feeling was strengthened by Mr. Casey's jovial and inspiring speech. When they had elected officers,—Mrs. Weinstein, president; "the girl who knew all about unions," treasurer, and Yetta, secretary and business agent,—he handed them over a charter printed in three colors which seemed to them a sort of magic promise of victory. They agreed as a matter of course on the set of demands which Braun had already printed in the *Forwaertz*.

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Mabel pulled them down from their enthusiasm to talk details. She explained that their one hope of success lay in persuading the other vest shops to join the strike. Alone they were helpless. Each one of them was to think of all the vest workers she knew and persuade them to start a strike in their shop. She read the list of vest shops and checked off every one where some of the women had acquaintances. Then she gave them great sheaves of the *Forwaertz* and assigned them two by two to the principal vest shops. They were to stand at the door and distribute papers to every one who came out. In the evening they were to call on their friends in the trade and be on the job again in the morning with copies of the *Forwaertz* at other factory doors. She and Yetta, their business agent, would go down and interview Goldfogle. Of course he would not give in at once, but it was best to show him they were not afraid. And then with some words of encouragement about how the *Forwaertz* was helping them, and the Central Federated Union and the Socialists, and of course the Woman's Trade Union League, she dismissed them.

Without Mabel beside her, Yetta would hardly have found the courage to perform her first duty as business agent of the union. Some of the old terror of a boss's arbitrary power still clung about Jake Goldfogle. In a moment of excitement she had dared to defy him. But it was a different thing to seek an interview with him in cold blood. But to Mabel it was all in the day's work. And she did most of the talking.

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Jake received them nervously. He could not, like the big employers, afford to sit back cynically and wait for his workers to starve. A week's tie-up meant certain ruin for him, and with equal certainty it meant ruin for him to grant his women anything like decent conditions. Sorely exploited by bigger capitalists, his one hope of success lay in a miracle of more cruel exploitation. He had been busy all day with employment agencies. They could furnish him with plenty of raw hands, but he needed skilled labor. It would be much better if he could get his old force back. And so he greeted them with some decency. But the sight of Mabel, this unknown businesslike American woman, disconcerted him. He had expected to have dealings only with his employees. He saw at once that he could not fool nor browbeat this stranger.

He hardly listened to what she said, but grabbed at the typewritten sheet of "demands." Before he was halfway through, all hope vanished.

"Vot you tink?" he wailed. "Am I a millionaire? How you expect me to make my contract?"

"We don't expect you to make your contract, Mr. Goldfogle," Mabel replied calmly. "We expect you not to take any contract that you can't fill decently. You don't care how your workpeople live on the wages you give, and we don't care for your contract. If you can give your people fair conditions, they'll be back at work in the morning. If you can't, it's a strike."

"Go away! Get out," he cried, jumping up. "To-morrow I vill start with new hands. I'll never take none of the old ones back."

Mabel smiled at him undismayed.

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"Scabs," she said, "will break your machines. It will be cheaper to keep shut than to work with greenhorns."

Jake knew that this was only too true. But he thought that a bold attitude might scare his old

employees into coming back.

"You tink so? Vell. I'll show you. Get out!"

It was getting towards closing time, so Mabel and Yetta, with arms full of the afternoon's *Forwaertz*, stationed themselves before one of the big vest shops and handed out copies to every one who would take one, talked to all who would listen. They had supper in an East Side restaurant and then went out again to call on some vest-makers whose addresses they knew.

Once, as they were hurrying along the street, Yetta suddenly stopped.

"I forgot," she said. "I've got to go to my aunt's and get some things."

"That's so," Mabel said. "They must be worrying about you. You tell them you are going to live with me for a while."

"No," Yetta said. "It don't matter what I tell them; they'll think I've gone wrong. But there are some things I want to get before they sell them."

They were not very far from her doorway, and when they got there, Mabel asked if she should come up.

"No," Yetta said, "you wait. It won't take me a minute."

She did not want her new friend to see the place where she had lived. Her uncle might be at home and drunk. But when she reached the door of the Goldstein flat, her heart suddenly failed her. Perhaps he was home, perhaps he would curse her the way he had Rachel, perhaps he would strike her. If it had been only her few clothes, the new hat and the white shoes, she would have slunk downstairs afraid. But there were the three volumes of *Les Miserables*. So she went in.

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Only her aunt and her cousin Rosa were in the room.

"I've come to get my things," she said, not wishing to give them time to formulate any accusations. "There's a strike in my shop. I won't be earning any money now for a while, so you wouldn't want me here. I'm going to live with a friend."

She went into the bedroom and began wrapping up the books and shoes in her extra shirt-waist and skirt. Rosa stood in the doorway and watched her.

"Who's your friend?" she asked.

"Her name's Miss Train."

"Oh. It's a woman, is it?" Rosa sneered.

Yetta flushed angrily but held her tongue, and when she had gathered together her meagre belongings, she looked once more about the dismal bedroom and came out into the kitchen where Mrs. Goldstein was sitting in silence, sewing away at a frayed underskirt of Rosa's.

A sudden tenderness came to Yetta for this hard old woman who had mistreated her.

"Good-by, Aunt Martha," she said.

For a moment she stitched on without apparently noticing her niece's presence. And then she spoke to Rosa.

"It isn't so bad," she said, "as when Rachel went. She was my own daughter."

"But I'm not going where Rachel did," Yetta protested. The old woman did not reply.

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"Auntie," Yetta went on, "I ain't going wrong. If you ever want to know about me, or if you ever need anything, you ask at the Woman's Trade Union League. Here. I'll write down the address. They'll know where to find me."

She tore off a piece of the paper from her bundle and scribbled the address. As her aunt was not looking up, she left it on the table.

"Good-by, Rosa," she said. "Good-by, Aunt Martha."

Out in the hall she felt faint and dizzy. She had not loved the place nor its inmates. Why did it hurt to go? She leaned against the wall for a moment to regain command of herself. Her little glimpse into the new world had not given her the feeling that she would ever be at home there. Even Columbus had misgivings about his enterprise into the unknown sea. But presently she felt the sharp corner of *Les Miserables* digging into her side. She had been hugging her little bundle as if it had been a life-preserver. And she found courage to go on down the dark stairs and to meet Mabel and the New Life with something of a smile.

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## BOOK III

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### CHAPTER XIII

## THE STRIKE

It was near midnight when Mabel and Yetta at last turned homeward. They had talked to vest workers from a dozen shops. The article in the *Forwaertz* had been a stirring one, and probably ninety per cent of the trade had heard of the outbreak in Goldfogle's shop and Braun's prophecy of large consequences. Yetta could not see that much had been accomplished, but Mabel, more accustomed to judging such things, was jubilant.

"Yetta, dear," she said, as she kissed her good night, "there's a beautiful French song called '*Ça ira*'—which being interpreted means, 'There'll be something doing!'"

All day long the conviction had grown on her that there was promise of big development to the insignificant quarrel between Yetta and her boss. More often than not strikes break out at the most inopportune times for the workers. Sometimes a sudden provocation will drive the men into a premature revolt. Again there will be rumbles of trouble for a long time before the crisis, and when the men walk out, they find the bosses have had ample time to make provision for the fight. But a careful study of the vest-making industry could not have discovered a more favorable moment. The rush season was just drawing to a close. On the one hand, the bosses were straining every nerve to finish their contracts on time. On the other hand, many of the workers would be laid off anyhow when the rush was over. By striking, the less skilled, poorest paid workers risked only a few weeks' pay. And surely they had enough cause to revolt. All those to whom she had talked had told of intolerable speed, pitiful pay, and arbitrary fines, indecent conditions. There was good reason to hope that the whole trade would become involved. And so at bedtime she sang the "*Ça ira*" to Yetta.

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Her forecast proved true. Before two o'clock every one knew that the strike had "caught." Half a dozen shops, including one of the biggest, walked out during the morning. And after the noon hour not a quarter of the vest-makers were at work.

While it might have been possible for Jake Goldfogle to find twelve skilled workers for his small shop, it was not possible to find enough for the whole trade quickly. It settled down into an endurance fight. Both sides "organized." The strikers rented a hall in the sweat-shop district for headquarters and a committee sat there *en permanence*, making out union cards for the strikers, and a card catalogue of their names and addresses, arranging for the distribution in "strike benefits" of all the money that could be raised. In this detail work, of immense importance to the successful conduct of a strike, Mabel was a tower of strength. She had been through it all a hundred times before, and she never got flurried. Everything seemed like a chaos, but through it her cool-headed generalship kept an effective order.

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In a Broadway office the bosses organized "The Association of Vest Manufacturers." Their headquarters were less noisy than those of the Union. But quiet does not always mean a higher standard of ethics. As the Woman's Trade Union League was helping the strikers, so trained men were lent to the bosses by the Employers' Association. In a few days skilled vest makers from other cities began to flow into New York. Some of the shops were able to begin work again at about half their normal capacity. The press agents of the Association of Vest Manufacturers sent out announcements to the newspapers that the strike was over.

The Union retaliated by a campaign of "picketing." Isadore Braun took this work in hand. He marshalled the volunteer "pickets" every morning, assigned them to their posts, and carefully explained to them their legal rights. They were free to stand anywhere on the street and to talk to any one who would listen, so long as they did not attract a crowd which impeded traffic. They must not detain any one by force, nor threaten violence, nor use insulting language.

Recently a justice of the Supreme Court of New York has handed down a decision that "peaceful picketing" is a contradiction in terms. From his point of view all picketing is inherently violent. As a legal maxim it is idiotic. The great majority of labor pickets are peaceful. But in any large and long-continued industrial conflict some of the strikers are starving, many have hungry children at home. They cannot be expected to love the "scabs," who are taking their jobs. And it is desperately hard for the leaders of a strike—no matter how sincerely they try—to prevent sporadic acts of violence. Braun, himself a lawyer and a Socialist, was a firm believer in legality. Again and again he impressed on the strikers the urgent desirability of keeping within the letter of the law.

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The first day Mabel and Yetta picketed together. They stood on the sidewalk before the largest of the vest shops and tried to talk to every one who went in. Mabel did most of it. She used the old, time-worn arguments of the unionists. The only chance for the workers was in standing together. If the scabs took the strikers' jobs, they were helping the boss more than themselves. After a strike is settled the bosses always fire the scabs and take back their old force. If they did get steady work sooner or later, somebody would scab on them. If they joined the union they would get enough strike benefits to live on, and with a strong organization the trade would be a good one. And after all it is dirty business stealing jobs from your brother workers. Most of the scabs hurriedly passed them, a few listened sullenly, one or two replied with insults. To an outsider, picketing looks hopeless. You very rarely see any one quit work. But long experience has taught the unions that it does pay. It is not so much the rare cases where a dozen scabs stop at once as the regular drain of those who are ashamed to face the pickets and who do not come back to work again.

Mabel was too busy to picket very often. She had her hands full trying to save what she could out

of the wreckage of the skirt-finishers' strike. And there were a thousand and one things to do for the vest-makers, arranging meetings, trying to interest the newspapers, spurring on the Advisory Council to raise money. They had collected a good deal, but the poverty of the vest-makers was appalling; "strike benefits" kept the treasury always empty. She had to see to replenishing it daily. Yetta, however, was on picket duty every day.

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Gradually it became evident that the "picket" was successful. Most of the imported vest-makers, the skilled operatives, had joined the union. Only a few of the shops were running at all and at great expense on account of the uneconomy of raw hands. The smaller bosses were going into bankruptcy. Jake Goldfogle had been the first to fall. Five days had cleaned him out. The next day two more went under. Credit was beginning to tighten for even the biggest bosses.

The Association of Vest Manufacturers saw that it was necessary to break the picket at any cost. There were a number of secret conferences with city politicians. The police magistrate who was sitting at Essex Market Court was transferred to an uptown jurisdiction, and his place was taken by a magistrate named Cornett, notorious for his outspoken hostility to unionism. The police also got their orders.

Busy days began for Isadore Braun. Pickets were arrested on all sides. At first he seemed to get the better of the legal battle in the dingy Essex Market Courthouse. He had the law on his side, and a forceful way of expressing it. The early batches of pickets were discharged with a warning. But in a few days the police got the hang of the kind of testimony which was expected of them. The court began to impose fines, which of course meant imprisonment, as the girls had no money.

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It is an educational maxim of Froebel that we learn by doing. Like most concise sayings, it is not entirely true. Yetta, for instance, had been making vests for four years, but she learned more about vest-making in the first four weeks of the strike than she had in her years of labor.

She began to realize that her "trade" was more than a routine of flying fingers. Braun at one of the meetings had traced out the complicated process of industry. Outside of her shop there had been men who were "cutters," men who prepared the pieces of cloth on which she worked. Back of them were the people who wove the cloth and spun the yarn, and further back still were the shepherds who grew the sheep and clipped the wool. And when the vests had left her shop, they had gone to "finishers." From them to dealers who were buying coats and trousers of the same cloth, and at last the complete suits were sold to wearers by the retailer. And all these thousands of people, who were her co-workers, had to eat. Some one had to bake their bread. The bakers were really part of the vest trade. And so were the cobblers who made shoes for the workers, and the coal miners who tore fuel for them from the bowels of the earth, and the steel workers who made their machines and their needles. It was hard to think of any worker who did not in some way contribute to the making of vests.

Braun had said that all the people of the process were equally exploited by the same unjust system. They were all "wage-slaves." And in her daily intercourse with the strikers, sometimes on picket duty, sometimes at meetings, sometimes at headquarters attending to the clerical work of distributing "benefits," she came to realize as she never could have done from her own experience alone, what "wage-slavery" means. The tragedy of Mrs. Cohen's life was being repeated on every side.

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She had never made the acquaintance of hunger—the great Slave Driver—before. And even now, she only saw it. She at least got a good breakfast at Mabel's flat. And sometimes she got a lunch or supper. Mabel, in her immense preoccupation with the details of the strike, did not realize how often Yetta went through the day on the one meal. But the flat was twenty minutes' walk from the strike headquarters. Yetta had no money for car fare and could rarely spend the time to walk there for lunch or dinner. When there were meetings in the evening and she walked home with Mabel and Longman, they generally had a cold supper. But she was of course earning no wages and had taken nothing from the Goldstein flat which she could pawn. The need of the other strikers was so much more appalling than her own that she could not find heart to ask for "strike benefits."

Mabel, having at once realized Yetta's remarkable power of appeal, was carefully engineering the limelight. With disconcerting frequency Yetta found herself in its glare. The half-dozen newspaper men who had tried to get a story out of this sweat-shop revolt had been steered up to Yetta. And they had all sent around their staff photographers to get her picture. The papers with a large circulation among the working classes had made her face familiar to millions. One of them had the enterprise to get a snapshot of her, arguing with a scab, before the Sure-fit Vest Company. Even the man who signed himself "The Amused Onlooker" in the *Evening Standard*, wrote a psychological sketch of this East Side firebrand. His tone was railing as usual, but he tried to be complimentary towards the close by comparing her to Jeanne D'Arc.

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Whenever there was a chance, Mabel pushed Yetta on to the platform. The various women of the Advisory Council arranged afternoon teas for her to address. To Yetta such begging speeches were much more unpleasant work than picketing. But it was not hard for her to talk to these small gatherings. She spoke to them very simply. She did not again tell her own story—in the rush of events she had almost forgotten it. Every day brought to her notice new and more bitter tragedies. On the whole the money raised was not much—ten, fifteen, sometimes twenty-five dollars. But every cent was needed. Mabel, from much experience of her own in similar circumstances, knew that Yetta was surprisingly successful. But there was hardly ever a woman

present at these uptown teas whose cheapest ring was not worth many times the amount collected. Yetta, seeing the jewels and knowing the intense need of her people, counted over the few dollars and thought herself a failure.

But if these excursions into polite society did not bring the monetary returns for which she wished, they at least made Yetta's face, her great sad eyes, and gentle voice, familiar to many women of social prominence—a result which was to bear fruit in the future.

It also cured her of the envy which had cast a shadow of bitterness over her first morning in Mabel's apartment. She came to realize even more clearly the gulf which separated her people from the world of luxury. She no longer wanted to cross the gulf. The strange country into which she got these occasional glimpses seemed a very hard-hearted place. It was always a shock to her to see such laughing, light-hearted indifference. Sometimes she went on a similar errand to the headquarters of other unions. There she found her own people and sure sympathy. She spoke one evening in a barren, ill-lit room, where the "pastry cooks" held their meetings. They were most of them foreigners, French and German, just coming out of a disastrous strike, and were very poor. They had no money in their treasury, but some of them went down in their pockets, and she got a handful of nickels and dimes. It was not as much as she had secured from some "ladies" in the afternoon, but it was more inspiring. She felt very keenly that in some mystic way their gift, which they could so ill afford, would be of greater use to the Cause than the dollars from uptown.

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The well-dressed women she met seemed to her of small worth compared to her trade-mates. She was proud of her share in the wonderful heroism of the women who went hungry. The memory of her father was the most brilliant of her mental treasures. If she had been brought up by a more practical man, if her father had taught her to consider elegance, or social success, or wealth, or culture of more virtue than loving kindness—as most of us are taught—her verdict would, of course, have been less severe. But she could not feel that the Golden Rule was taken seriously by the Christian women uptown. She doubted if they loved their neighbors as themselves. Certainly their definition of the word did not reach downtown. The diamonds of their useless ornaments threw a cruel light on the misery of her people.

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In forming this harsh estimate of the world of luxury she had Mabel beside her as a standard of comparison. Why were the other women different from Mabel? They were no more beautiful, no better educated, no more refined. But Mabel was the "real thing." Yetta was ashamed of her first envy and distrust. Day by day she saw more fully the broad scope of Mabel's activities—of which this vest-makers' strike was only one—and her admiring wonder grew. Mabel gave not only her time, but she was not afraid of what the girls called "dirty work"; she carried a banner in the street on the day of the parade, she did her turn at picketing, her share of addressing and sealing envelopes. And she carried very much more than her share of the heavier responsibilities. Yetta found it hard to understand how other women, who also knew the facts of misery, could act so differently. Yet, day after day she told them the facts, and they were content to give five or ten dollars. No. Yetta did not want to be a "lady."

Almost every day some of the pickets were arrested and sent to the workhouse. But others always volunteered to take their places. There is no surer lesson to be learned from history than that persecution is like oil to the flame of enthusiasm. Instead of breaking, as the bosses—with the fatuousness of Nero—had hoped, the picket became more intense and more effective. The bosses decided that "something decisive must be done." There were several conferences—very quiet and orderly they were—with the expert strike-breakers who had been loaned to them by the Employers' Association. A long statement was prepared, which informed the public that the vest manufacturers, feeling that they were not getting sufficient assistance from the city police, had employed a private detective agency to protect their property and the lives of their faithful employees from the outrages of the strikers. All the English papers published this statement without any inquiry as to whether life and property needed special protection. The more complaisant ones published the stories which the "press agent" of the association furnished on the "outrages." So the impression was spread abroad that the striking vest-makers were smoky-haired furies, who brawled in the streets and tore the clothes off respectable women.

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But there was hardly any one who had ever been involved in a strike, employer or employed, hardly a cub-reporter in the city, who did not know what this announcement meant. The bosses had failed to break the strike by "legal" means. The "private detectives" had been called in to do it by intimidation and brutality. Girls began coming into the strike headquarters with bleeding faces, with black and blue bruises from kicks.

No justice of the Supreme Court has handed down a decision on the probability of the public peace being disturbed by the use of thugs, calling themselves "private detectives," in labor disputes.

Mabel, realizing Yetta's special usefulness as a speaker and money-raiser, tried to persuade her that this other work was more important than picketing.

"No," Yetta said. "If I didn't spend the morning with the girls, I would not have anything to say at night."

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Mabel did not urge her further; she no longer called her *la petite* when she spoke of her to Eleanor. Every one who came in contact with her during these weeks knew that she was growing very rapidly into womanhood.

Yetta expected to get arrested. Why should she not? In a way she had started all the trouble. Why



should the other girls be knocked about by the ruffian private detectives and she escape? Day after day she took her post before one or another of the vest shops and did her duty as she saw it, as the other women were doing it. There were always two pickets at each post, and it was in these morning watches that Yetta got her deepest insight into the lives of her comrades.

She was having a very easy time of it. She had a pleasant place to sleep. She had her one sure meal a day. There were no children crying to her for food. The other women were faring worse than she. Some were sick, almost all were hungry and insufficiently clad. And while Yetta was often called away to the less fatiguing work of the office, or to some uptown tea, these women, used to sitting all day before a machine, were standing hour after hour before their posts. But it was not the sight of them, pitiful spectacles as many of them were, which hurt Yetta most. It was their stories—unintentionally told for the most part. The words dropped by chance, which called up visions of sick husbands and the hungry babies. Some of the pickets were gray-haired and bent, some were younger than Yetta, and they all seemed to be suffering more for the strike than she. And the hungry babies! Her sleep was troubled at night by dreams of their cries.

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That she had been spared by the police and thugs seemed to Yetta the most unjust thing of all the injustice she saw about her. A week on "the Island" would mean little to her; she had no one dependent on her. But always they picked some widow, who had no one to care for her children while she was in prison. Yetta felt herself strong and healthy. Why did the thugs always beat up some old woman or some frail consumptive girl? Although she had escaped trouble so long, she quietly and without excitement expected it. Whenever she met any of the girls who had been in the workhouse, she asked about it—in the same way that we, if we were expecting to winter in Paris, would inquire from friends who had been there about the rents and shops and so forth.

But when at last her turn came, it happened in a manner utterly unexpected.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### ARREST

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At headquarters on May Day morning Yetta was detailed to the Crown Vest Company. As she was starting out, she met Mabel, whose mackintosh was glistening with rain.

"Oh, Yetta," she said, "don't go out to-day. The weather's so bad, and if you catch cold you can't speak."

But Yetta only smiled. It seemed to Mabel that she had never looked so beautiful before. Her face had begun to hollow a little from the strain, her olive skin was a shade paler, her eyes seemed to have grown bigger. And her shoulders, which had begun to stoop in the sweat-shop, had straightened up with the month on her feet and the new pride of combat. She was wearing the same skirt and waist she had worn to the dance, for she was to speak uptown that afternoon, and she had a warm shawl over her head and shoulders. The soles of her shoes were worn through, but Mabel could not see that.

"I've only got a few hours of it," she said. "There's that Advisory Council again this afternoon."

And she went out into the rain. The Crown Vest Company was on East Fourth Street, just off Washington Square. As Yetta turned the corner from Broadway she was nearly blown off her feet. All the winds of heaven—the biting, penetrating winds of a late spring storm—were caught in Washington Square as in a funnel, and escaped through the narrow cañon of East Fourth Street. Although Yetta was late, she was surprised to find no other picket before the Crown Vest Company. They were always assigned in couples. Her surprise turned to distress when she recognized the "private detective" in the doorway. His real name nobody knew. He called himself Brennan, but the girls called him "Pick-Axe." He was the one they dreaded more than any other. He thought himself a wit. It was his custom to tilt a chair against the wall by the doorway and, lighting his pipe, amuse himself by trying to make the girls blush. There was no limit to the brutality or nastiness of his tongue.

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"Come in out of the rain, Dearie," he said when he saw Yetta. "There's room for two on this chair."

She tried not to hear him and began a sentry-like tread back and forth before the door. At least she was glad it was raining. Sometimes in good weather a crowd of depraved loungers would gather to listen to Pick-Axe's wit.

"It's too bad to have to work on a day like this, Little One," he called as she passed again. "Let's go over to the saloon and have a drink. There are nice warm rooms upstairs."

Yetta felt she would not shiver so hard if it were not for his cold, stinging voice. She decided it would be cowardly to let him drive her out of earshot. That would please him too much. She wondered why the other picket was not there.

"You needn't be so proud"—when she was again opposite him. "The first girl this morning tried to be proud. But she got over it. What's the use? Better come and have a drink, same as she did."

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Yetta knew it was a lie. And yet—good God, it was cold! She had had her fill of eggs and hot

coffee that morning. She wouldn't be hungry till noon, and she was so near home, she could get a good lunch. Some of the girls were always hungry. Few of them had warm clothes for such weather. How could they stand it? She wished she had asked the name of the other girl detailed to the Crown.

"I felt right sorry for her," Pick-Axe went on. "Gawd! she was hungry. You ought to have seen her eat. Pretty little girl, too. Now she's having a good sleep."

Of course it was a lie. But Yetta felt herself getting colder and colder. Pick-Axe got up and came towards her. She tried not to notice him, but she wanted very much to run.

"Come on," he said. "What's the use of being a fool? Nobody's outdoors. They ain't no scabs coming to-day. Let's go over to the saloon and make friends."

Yetta having reached the end of her beat turned mechanically and started back towards where he stood.

"That's a sensible girl," he said.

But she walked on past him as if he were a lamppost.

"Well," he snarled, "I guess I'll have to go over and wake up your friend. It'll take you about half an hour to wish you'd come instead...."

There is no need of printing all that he said.

He walked across the street. Yetta could not help turning her head to watch him as he entered the swinging door. He caught her glance and waved his hand. Her fright disappeared in anger. Of course she did not believe that he had persuaded one of her union girls to go into the saloon with him. But it was even viler to pretend that he had. Some one ought to kill the brute.

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Just then Yetta saw one of the strikers—little Mrs. Muscovitz—hurrying up the street. Yetta rushed to meet her.

"Were you detailed here?" she asked eagerly.

Mrs. Muscovitz was coughing and could only nod her head affirmatively. Yetta wanted to shout with joy. So Pick-Axe's story was after all a lie.

"I'm sorry I'm late," little Mrs. Muscovitz said hoarsely, for she was "bad with bronchitis," "but I got a little money this morning and I had to buy some things for the baby."

One glance told Yetta where the money had come from—Mrs. Muscovitz had pawned her shawl. More than once they had picketed together, and Yetta knew the little woman's story. Three years before she had married a young sign painter. Before the honeymoon was over he had begun to cough. He died before the baby was born. And when Mrs. Muscovitz had been able to get about again, all the furniture of their little home had gone for doctor's bills. Her engagement and wedding rings had brought her enough to establish herself in a garret. She took the baby to a day nursery and went to work. Now, she was coughing. It hurts to cough when one also has the bronchitis. Having no shawl, her thin waist was soaked and plastered to her skin. Yetta could see the muscles of her back work convulsively whenever she coughed.

"Look y'ere, Mrs. Muscovitz," she said authoritatively. "You go home. You ain't got no business out on a day like this. You'll catch your death. There ain't nothing doing to-day. I can hold it down alone."

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"It's all right for you to talk, Yetta," Mrs. Muscovitz replied. "You can make speeches and you can work in the office and do lots of things for the Union. There ain't nothing I can do but picket. I couldn't pay rent without the 'strike benefits.' I've got to do something."

Pick-Axe came out of the saloon and seeing them together, knowing that it was less sport trying to torment two women than one, pulled his chair well inside of the doorway and cursed the vile weather.

"I tell you what you can do," Yetta went on arguing with Mrs. Muscovitz. "It'll do more good than standing here. You go over to headquarters and make some coffee. You tell Miss Train I said it was so cold she must send coffee out to the girls. You can borrow some pails and cups and Mrs. Weinstein's boy'll carry it round. Hot coffee'll do the girls good, and it'll make the cops sore to see us getting it. Making coffee'll do more good than standing here. Nobody's out; I can hold down this job all right."

"I hate to leave you alone with that snake."

"Oh," Yetta laughed, more light-heartedly than she felt. "Words don't break no bones. You run along."

While Mrs. Muscovitz was hesitating, she caught sight of a scab. "Look," she whispered. A big-boned young woman of about twenty, poorly clad and apparently much frightened, was standing on the opposite curbstone. She looked up at the sign in the window of the Crown Vest Company advertising the need of workers. And she looked down at the two women before the door. After a few indecisive minutes she started across the street.

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"You run along to headquarters and get that coffee started," Yetta said. "I'll talk to her."

"No," said Mrs. Muscovitz. "Let me do it. And then I'll go. I want to do something."

She started towards the woman. Pick-Axe, bundled up in his overcoat, back in the entryway, did not see the scab approaching. She had probably read in the papers lying stories of how the strike breakers were being attacked. She was very much afraid, and when she saw Mrs. Muscovitz coming towards her, she screamed. Pick-Axe, not having seen what was happening,—if one wishes to find excuses for him,—may have really believed that the little Mrs. Muscovitz had assaulted the husky young scab. At the sound of the scream he jumped out of his chair and rushed at Mrs. Muscovitz. She, thinking that he was going to strike her, held out her hand to guard her face. Pick-Axe grabbed it, and with a vicious wrench, twisted her down on her knees.

"You slut! You—! You—!" he bellowed and swung his heavy-soled boot into her ribs.

Yetta—to use a phrase of melodrama—"saw red." Something happened in her brain. Her rather Platonic conviction of a few minutes before that somebody ought to kill the brute, was changed into a passionate, throbbing desire to do it herself.

Just as his foot found its goal in Mrs. Muscovitz' side, Pick-Axe felt the sudden impact of Yetta's whole weight. It was more of a spring than a rush. As far as she had any idea, she wanted to choke him. The sudden jolt bowled him over—he was standing on one foot—and as he fell his head came down on the stone paving with a sickening thud. If it had not been for his heavy cap, the blow might have cracked his skull. As it was it stunned him. His face turned very white. The scab ran up the street too frightened to look back.

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"I hope he's dead," Yetta said with tight-clenched fists.

But Mrs. Muscovitz felt his heart and shook her head.

"Sure?" Yetta asked.

"Yes. His heart's beating. Feel it yourself."

"I wouldn't touch the snake with my foot," Yetta said; "come on."

"Nobody but the scab seen us," Mrs. Muscovitz said.

"Come on," Yetta repeated. "Let's go to headquarters."

Somehow she did not care whether any one had seen her or not. She had tried to kill a man and regretted that she had not succeeded. She had read stories of murderers' remorse. And now she knew they were lies. She would never have been sorry if she had killed that snake.

As they were turning into Broadway, Mrs. Muscovitz, who was always looking back, suddenly gripped Yetta's arm.

"He's getting up," she said. "There's a man helping him."

They both peered back around the corner and saw Pick-Axe, with the aid of the stranger, painfully getting to his feet and rubbing his head in bewilderment.

"Come on," Yetta said. "He'll begin to holler in a minute. I've got a dime. We'll take a car."

They ran to catch a downtown car. They rode in silence, Mrs. Muscovitz nursing her aching arm and the bruise in her side. Yetta, surprised at the calm which had come after the sudden typhoon of passion, kept repeating, "I tried to kill him, I tried to kill him."

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At the headquarters they found Isadore Braun, just returned from attending to the morning's batch of arrested pickets in Essex Market Court.

"Come into the committee-room," Yetta said to him quietly. "We've had some trouble."

"What is it?" he asked professionally as he closed the door.

"It's bad," Yetta replied. "Mrs. Muscovitz and I was picketing the Crown. And Pick-Axe—well, he jumped on her and—well—I knocked him senseless."

Braun bounced out of his chair in amazement.

"You? You knocked Pick-Axe senseless? You're joking."

But Yetta shrugged her shoulders affirmatively. And Braun began to laugh. He knew Pick-Axe. Every few days he encountered the bully in court, listened to his cold-blooded perjuries. He knew, from the girls, of his brutality. And he thought he knew Yetta. Her first speech at the Skirt-Finishers' ball had attracted his attention. He had followed her development through the four weeks of the strike with increasing interest. Above all he had been impressed with her quiet, gentle ways. The idea that she had knocked out Pick-Axe was preposterous.

But Mrs. Muscovitz added her affirmation. As he gradually got the details from them he grew more and more serious. It was the first time the enemy had had any real ground to charge them with violence. They would certainly make the most of it.

"Do you think he knows your face?" he asked Yetta.

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"Sure."

Braun realized that his question had been foolish. Yetta was the most-advertised, best-known person connected with the strike.

"They'll be after you with a warrant," he said.

Yetta shrugged her shoulders.

"Were there any witnesses?" he asked.

"Only the scab," Mrs. Muscovitz said. "She run away. I guess she's too scared to come back. And the man who helped him get up."

Braun sat for a few minutes, with his chin in his hands, thinking it out.

"We'll have to lie," he said at last. "This is the story. Mrs. Muscovitz was talking to the scab. Pick-Axe twisted her arm and kicked her. That's all true. You tried to separate them. That's true, too, in a way—"

"I tried to kill him," Yetta put in.

"But you mustn't tell the judge that! You tried to separate them, and he slipped on the wet pavement and bumped his head. You two ran away, afraid that he'd attack you. You took a Broadway car and came straight here. Let's see—" he looked at his watch—"You got here about eleven thirty."

"I'd rather tell the truth," Yetta insisted. "Tell the judge just what the snake said to me and why I was mad."

"You can't do that. In the first place the judge would not listen to all of it. And then he would not believe you. They're looking for a chance to say we are using violence. Why did you do it—Oh, well, there's no use asking that. It's done. We've got to lie."

Yetta looked unconvinced.

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"It won't only be worse for you," Braun went on. "It'll be worse for all of us, if you tell the truth."

"All right, then," Yetta said reluctantly. "I'll lie."

Just then Mabel rushed in without knocking.

"Pick-Axe and a plain-clothes man are out here with a warrant for Yetta," she cried. "Where can we hide her?"

"We won't hide her," Braun said. "We don't want to seem afraid of this charge."

"What's it all about?" she asked.

"Why, Pick-Axe was getting gay as usual," Braun said. "He slipped on the wet pavement or tripped over something and bumped his head. I guess he's trying to make an assault charge out of it."

"What?" Mabel asked in astonishment. "He's got the face to say that Yetta attacked him?"

Yetta started to say, "I did," but Braun kicked her unobtrusively and she kept still.

"Go out and tell them we will surrender at once," Braun said.

As soon as Mabel had left he hurriedly repeated the story they were to tell.

"Don't tell anybody the truth," he insisted. "Not any one. Not even Miss Train. We've got to bluff. And the more people who believe we are telling the truth, the better the bluff is."

They went out into the main room, and Yetta was formally put under arrest.

"That's the other woman," Pick-Axe said at sight of Mrs. Muscovitz.

"I haven't any warrant for her," the plain-clothes man said. He had no especial affection for the ruffian who pretended to be a detective.

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"She is coming to court anyhow as a witness," Braun said.

At that moment he caught sight of Longman and a reporter and a ray of hope. He hurried over to them.

"Longman," he said, "they've arrested Yetta Rayefsky on an utterly absurd charge of attacking that thug, Brennan, whom the girls call Pick-Axe. I wish you'd come over to court. I can use you, I think, in the defence. And"—he turned to the reporter, "it may be worth your while to come, too. I think there'll be a story in it."

So the little procession set out. Yetta walked ahead between Pick-Axe and the detective. Braun and Mrs. Muscovitz and Longman and the reporter trailed behind.

There was hardly anything more sincere about Pick-Axe than his fear and hatred of Braun, so he kept his mouth shut as long as he was in hearing. But when the steel door of Essex Market Prison had clanged shut behind him, as soon as the desk man had entered Yetta's name and age and address on his book, Pick-Axe gave rein to his filthy wrath. They had taken her into the

"examination room," and Yetta, following Braun's advice, refused to answer any questions. She crouched in a corner and tried not to hear what he was saying. She had grown up in a community where men are not over-careful in their choice of expletives, but she had never listened to anything like this.

It would have been very hard for Yetta to tell any one—even Mabel—what that quarter of an hour meant to her. She was not exactly afraid. In a way she was prepared for it. She had heard Pick-Axe talk before. The girls had told her that the worst thing they had suffered during their imprisonment was what they had had to listen to, insults and obscenity and the mad ravings of the "drunks."

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Although Yetta was not afraid nor surprised, her whole being shuddered under it. Her flesh seemed to contract in an effort to escape the contagion of such loathsomeness. For years she would turn suddenly pale at the barest memory of that torrent of abuse. Once Pick-Axe came close as if he was going to strike her, but the detective pulled him away. Yetta was almost sorry. It would have been a relief if he had struck her with his hand.

And yet it was very little for herself that Yetta suffered. She was being sacrificed for a great host. What they did to her mattered very little, but in her they were striking at all the myriad "people of the process"—the women of her trade, the cloth weavers, the wool-growers, those who grew wheat for their bread, who made beds for them to sleep in. She felt herself a delicate instrument for the transmission of sound. Those stinging, cruel words were going out to the remotest corners of the land, were bringing shame on all the lowly people of the earth, just as his kick, crashing into Mrs. Muscovitz' side, had made them all gasp with pain. Once she looked up, she wanted to ask him what they paid him that made it worth his while to treat her people so. But she knew it was useless to ask—he would not have understood.

Then echoing down the corridor, she heard a warden bawling her name. From the point of view of Braun's intended defence, Yetta's arrest had come at a fortunate time of day. By noon the morning calendar is disposed of, and he could have her arraigned for hearing at once. The least delay meant the possibility of the prosecution finding some witness who had seen Yetta strike Pick-Axe.

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Yetta had wanted to tell the judge the truth. It was only because Braun insisted that it would endanger the success of the strike that she had consented to lie. But when she was led into the court-room, her scruples left her.

Telling the truth is like a quarrel—there must be two parties to it. Nicolas Gay, the Russian painter, has a canvas called, "What is Truth?" It portrays Pontius Pilate, putting this question to the Christ. And you realize at once why the Prisoner could not answer. Truth is not the enunciation of certain words. Nothing which the scorned and scourged and thorn-crowned Jesus might have said about His Truth could have penetrated the thick skull of the gross and pride-filled Roman proconsul.

Yetta, in a somewhat similar situation, understood at once that this dingy court-room was not an Abode of Truth. Magistrate Cornett, before whom she was led, although a young man, was quite bald. He sat hunched up in his great chair, and the folds of his heavy black robe made him look deformed. His finger nails were manicured. His skin was carefully groomed, but the flesh under it was flabby. His face and hands were those of a gourmand.

The clerk read the complaint. It charged Yetta with assault in all its degrees in that on that very day she had with felonious intent struck one Michael Brennan on the head with a dangerous weapon, to wit a blackjack.

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"Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," Braun replied.

The plain-clothes man deposed that he knew nothing about the case except that he had served the warrant as directed by the court. He had found the defendant in the strike headquarters of the vest-makers.

The man who had helped Brennan get up was a clerk in a neighboring wholesale house. He had been sent out with a telegram, and in the rain-swept, deserted street he had seen no one but the prostrate detective, who was just regaining consciousness as he came up. He helped the stricken man to his feet, and that was all he knew.

Then Michael Brennan, alias Pick-Axe, took the stand. Ordinarily he made a fairly good appearance in court. He felt himself among friends, felt a reassuring kinship with the policemen, the clerks, and even with the judge. To be sure they all knew he was a perjurer, and very few of them would shake hands with him. But still he was a necessary part in the great machine for preserving social order, by which they all were paid. But this day he was not at his ease. In the first place his head ached horribly. In the second, he was so infuriated that he could scarcely control his tongue. And thirdly, he knew that he was in for a grilling from Braun. And he was more than usually afraid of this ordeal because he was not sure what had happened. He remembered kicking Mrs. Muscovitz, he had a vague conviction that Yetta had rushed at him—and then he remembered coming to and being helped to his feet.

"Yer Honor," he began, "I was in front of the Crown Vest Company this morning doing duty as usual. There wasn't nobody around except this here Rayefsky girl and a woman she's brought as

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a witness. Well, Yer Honor, I went into the hallway to light my pipe and just at that minute a scab comes along—"

"Your Honor," Braun interrupted, "some of my clients have been sent to prison for using that term. This court has held it to be insulting and abusive."

"It was a slip of my tongue, Yer Honor," Pick-Axe said with confusion.

"Clerk," the Judge instructed, "strike out that word, and you be more careful, Brennan."

"Yes, Yer Honor. I was saying a respectable woman came along looking for work—she wasn't really a woman, just a young girl. I didn't see her because I was in the hallway lighting my pipe, as I told Yer Honor, but I heard her holler and, rushing out, I seen this other woman a-laying into her, beating her up something awful—"

Mrs. Muscovitz tried to protest from the benches, but Longman, at a signal from Braun, hushed her.

"Well, Yer Honor, I runs up and tries to arrest the woman, and the other one—this Rayefsky girl—jumps on me with a blackjack and lays me out, Yer Honor. The first thing I knows I come to, with this gentleman a-helping me up. How long I laid there senseless, Yer Honor, I don't know. I came right over here and got the warrant, and Officer Sheehan and me, we got her at the strike headquarters, like he told Yer Honor."

"Do you wish to question the witness, Mr. Braun?"

"Brennan," he began, "did you see a blackjack in the defendant's hand?"

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"No, sir! If I'd a knowed she had a blackjack would I have let her sneak up behind me? No. I'd have run her in before."

"What makes you think it was a blackjack?"

"The bump on my head." He leaned over the bench so the judge could examine it. "She couldn't have made that with her hand, Yer Honor."

"It certainly looks like a blackjack," the judge said.

"Are you sure, Brennan, it wasn't a piece of stone?"

"No. It wasn't no stone—I'd have seen her pick it up. It was a blackjack," he insisted doggedly.

"How do you know it wasn't a piece of gas-pipe?"

"What's the use of such questions?" the judge asked impatiently. "The crime would be no less serious if the blow had been struck with a piece of gas-pipe."

"Your Honor," Braun replied, "it is a serious question. Brennan does not know what hit him and I do. In two more questions I think I can convince the Court that he does not know. Brennan," he turned to the witness, "you say that you had gone into the hallway to light your pipe. When you rushed out to attack the picket, did you see this gentleman coming down the street? Professor Longman, will you please rise? Brennan, did you see this gentleman coming down the street with that cane in his hand?"

Brennan had been wondering why Longman had come to the court. He looked at him suspiciously.

"No," he said. "I never saw that man till I got to the strike headquarters."

"Well, Brennan, are you quite sure, are you prepared to swear that when you were kicking Mrs. Muscovitz about this gentleman did not knock you down as you deserved—as any real man would have done?"

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"I didn't kick the woman," Brennan said.

"That's not the question. Are you sure it wasn't Professor Longman who laid you out?"

For a moment Brennan hesitated. It was hard for him to believe that Yetta had knocked him senseless. He knew that Braun was trying to catch him in a perjury. And he had a guilty conscience.

"If it was him that hit me," he roared, "I'll have him sent up. I was doing my duty."

"Officer," the judge said, "see that this man does not leave the room."

"It is a useless precaution, Your Honor," Braun said. "Professor Longman was nowhere in the neighborhood. But I think it is quite clear that Brennan does not know who or what hit him."

The reporter who had come with them, not being regularly detailed to the court, was not afraid to laugh out loud.

"I have no other questions to ask," Braun went on. "Will the Court have the defendant's account of what happened?"

The oath was administered to Yetta and she told the story, which Braun had taught her, more

calmly and simply than most people tell the truth. The judge did not believe that a person who had just committed a murderous assault could be so cool under the charge. He knew Brennan, and that he was probably lying now. He himself had slipped on the wet pavement that morning, his motor had skidded on the way downtown. He believed Yetta. He had generally believed the strikers against whom Brennan and the other "private detectives" had testified, but, knowing just what was expected of him by those on whom he depended for advancement, he had sent the other girls to jail. He twirled his pencil a moment, asking her a few inconsequential questions, and regretfully came to the conclusion that he could not possibly hold her on the assault charge.

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"Are there any other witnesses?" he asked.

"Mrs. Muscovitz, who was picketing with the defendant, is here," Braun said. "She tells me exactly the same story. She will tell it to the Court if Your Honor so directs. But it seems rather a waste of time. There is no case against my client. Brennan has shown the Court that he doesn't know what hit him. Look at the two of them, Your Honor. If you think that any twelve men on earth will believe that this slip of a girl assaulted the complainant, you can of course hold her for the Grand Jury. But I ask the Court to discharge the defendant."

"Not so fast, Mr. Braun," the judge snapped. "Even admitting the truth of her improbable story—which I very much question—admitting there is insufficient evidence to hold her on the assault charge, she confesses to disorderly conduct in interfering with an officer who was making an arrest. Clerk, make out a charge of disorderly conduct. I suppose you'll swear to the complaint, Brennan."

While this detail was being attended to at the clerk's desk, the judge delivered himself of an informal philippic against the strikers. He aimed a good deal of his discourse at Mrs. Muscovitz: it was only the extreme leniency of the Court, he said, which kept him from ordering her arrest;— as a matter of fact it was past his lunch time. His tirade, which he seemed to enjoy immensely, as he saw the reporter taking notes, was interrupted by the Clerk handing him the new papers.

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"Yetta Rayefsky, you admit picketing, which means intimidating honest work-people, before the Crown Vest Company this morning; you admit interfering with Officer Brennan, while he was engaged in the performance of his duty. The Court finds you guilty of disorderly conduct. But the officers inform me that this is the first time you have been brought to court. As is my custom, I will discharge you if you promise not to picket any more. Understand that if you are brought before me again, I will send you to prison. Take my advice and go to work. Idleness always breeds trouble. Will you promise not to picket any more?"

"No."

The judge sat up with a jerk.

"Ten days, workhouse," he thundered.

And as they led her away, he rapped on his desk with his gavel, and the clerk announced adjournment.

"That little Jew girl had more spunk than I gave her credit for," the judge said a few minutes later, in his chambers, to his secretary who was helping him on with his fur-lined coat. "I wonder if she did blackjack Brennan." He had to sit down again to laugh at the idea.

"Don't scold me," Yetta said to Braun, when he came into the prison and spoke to her through the grating. "I was tired of lying."

Braun said to himself as he went away that it was just like a woman to get away with a big lie and stumble over a little one.

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## CHAPTER XV THE WORKHOUSE

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In the afternoon Yetta was loaded into "the wagon" with a lot of "drunks" and prostitutes and taken up to the Department dock to wait for the ferry across to the Island.

She had not realized how the month's strain had tired her until the excitement was over and she was on the tug in midstream. In sheer weariness, she turned round on her seat and, crossing her arms on its back, buried her face in them. Presently she felt a hand on her shoulder.

"Don't take it so hard, Little One," a not unkindly voice said. "It's fierce at first, but you get used to it." She looked up into a face of stained and faded gaudiness.

"Oh," the woman said, somewhat taken aback. "You're one of them strikers. Did they beat you up?"

"No," Yetta replied, "I got off easy."

The woman stood a moment first on one foot and then on the other—she could not think of anything more to say. She went across the boat and told one of her cronies what kind of a shame she thought it was "to run in a nice girl like that."

Yetta was in a strange state of detachment. It surprised her afterwards to remember how little the discomforts of the prison had troubled her. She was hardly conscious of the dirty, rough clothes they gave her. The bitter, hard, and useless work of scrubbing the stone flagging seemed to her unreal. She hardly noticed the food they set before her for supper. She was not hungry. And when they let her go to bed, she plunged so quickly and deeply into the oblivion of sleep that she did not feel the vermin nor hear the sinister whispers of her cell-mates. Her mind, utterly fagged out with all the new thoughts and experiences, was taking a vacation. Even the sense nerves were too tired to record with exactitude their impressions.

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Before Yetta fell into this blissful, dreamless sleep her arrest had begun to stir up considerable excitement in New York. When Braun and Longman returned to the strike headquarters from the court-house, they found Mabel preparing to go uptown to the meeting of the Advisory Council. The imprisonment of Yetta seemed to her the crowning outrage of the long list of trivial arrests. She did not dream how nearly the charge came to being true. Dozens of other girls had been sent to the workhouse on perjured evidence. But this seemed different. Yetta was "hers." In the past weeks she had become "her" friend. So are we all constituted. We read in the morning paper that thousands of Chinese or Russians or Moors are dying of famine. Perhaps we mail a check to the Red Cross. But if we should be hungry or one of our dear friends should starve, it would seem extravagantly unjust.

In this ireful frame of mind, Mabel met the ladies of the Advisory Council. To them also Yetta was a much more real personality than the other girls who had been arrested. Their Yetta, their quiet-mannered, sad-eyed, gentle-voiced Yetta, arrested for assaulting a man? It was impossible! With the tears in her eyes, Mabel assured them that it was true.

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"We can't permit this," Mrs. Van Cleave said, snapping her lorgnette ominously. "It is preposterous! The young lady has been a guest in my house. I have introduced her to my friends. It can't be permitted."

"Well, what can we do about it?" Mabel asked, for once at a loss.

There was a clamor of wild suggestions. It was at last Mrs. Karner, the woman whom Yetta had liked, and at whose request she had told about Harry Klein, who brought out a practical plan.

"We've got to do it through the newspapers," she said. "Stir up the press."

"Oh," Mabel said in despair, "they laugh when I come into their offices. They're not interested, or they're on the other side."

"They laugh because they're used to you. You haven't any news value," Mrs. Karner went on. "But they would not laugh if Mrs. Van Cleave talked to them."

"Hey? What?" Mrs. Van Cleave asked with a start.

"Oh! you won't even have to go to their offices; you can send for them. I worked on a newspaper once, and I know. You won't have to go to them. They'll come. The editors will eat out of your hand—do anything for you on the chance that you might invite their wives to dinner. Have your secretary call up the papers, and you'll have a hundred special writers camped on your doorstep."

"Well, well! What an idea!" Mrs. Van Cleave snorted.

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All the women, with various degrees of obsequiousness, begged her to do it. But it was not the kind of newspaper notoriety she liked.

"No," she repeated a dozen times. "I could not do that. Preposterous! Preposterous!"

But she hardly heard the urgings. She was looking away beyond the room at the vision of a little girl who had died many years ago—the only thing which had not been worldly in all her life. And this little daughter of hers had had eyes very much like Yetta's. Yes. Very much like. In fact they were almost exactly the same. And just when the women were giving up hope she suddenly spoke decisively.

"Yes. I'll do it. My secretary is outside in the motor. Call her in."

"Jane," she said when that very businesslike and faded young woman appeared, "two things. One, a list of all the women who met that little working-girl at my house. Two, telephone all the city editors. I want to give out a statement, a personal statement. My house, to-night. Morning papers. You can use the telephone in the front office. That will do."

Yetta and Mrs. Van Cleave divided the first column the next morning. In the two and three cent papers Yetta got most of the space, in the one cent papers the proportions were reversed. But Yetta's story, more or less diluted with descriptions of Mrs. Van Cleave's drawing-room and gown and diamond tiara—she had given the newspaper men a few minutes as she was leaving for the Opera—was read by almost everybody in Greater New York. Yetta was invariably described as little, in several cases as only thirteen. Pick-Axe was ordinarily spoken of as an ex-prize-fighter—a libel on the profession, which can at least boast of physical courage.

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Among others who read the story was the Commissioner of Correction. He called up the warden of the workhouse.

"That jackass, Cornett, has stirred up hell down at Essex Market. Seen the papers? Well, there'll be fifteen hundred reporters bothering you this morning, trying to interview this Rayefsky girl.



Don't let them. But they'll get at her when she comes out; she'll be telling her impressions of prison life to everybody. Give her some snap. Feed her. Damn her soul, don't give her no chance to kick. See?"

It was about nine o'clock when this message crossed the wire. A few minutes later the warden entered the women's wing of the workhouse. There were about fifty prisoners on their knees, scrubbing the stone floor.

"Yetta Rayefsky."

She got up in surprise and came towards him, wondering what new thing they were going to do to her.

"Know anything about children?" he asked.

Yetta was too much surprised by the question to answer.

"Well," he said, "you don't look like you'd cut their throats. My wife needs a nurse. Come on."

"Ain't you got any clothes that fits her?" he asked the matron at the door. "Clean ones. Don't want things like that in the house. Wash her up. We don't want bugs. And send her over right away."

"Gee," the matron said with sudden, cringing respect. "Why didn't you tell me you had a pull?"

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So Yetta was taken out of the Inferno, before her tired senses had fully waked up to its horrors. The warden's house was outside the prison. It had a pleasant lawn, close-clipped, its flower beds well tended, for the labor of the "trusties" was free. There was already a nurse for the children, and Yetta did not have anything to do. The yesterday's storm had been the end of winter, and an almost midsummer heat had fallen on New York. She spent most of her time on a rustic bench under a great elm. There was a fine open view across the busy river to the busier city.

The real nurse was snobbish and would not speak to her, which saved her from much foolish chatter. Nobody paid any attention to her except the warden's three-year-old boy, who continually escaped from his nurse and tried to climb into Yetta's lap. They gave her good meals and a comfortable bed. It was somewhat unkind of them to jerk the baby out of Yetta's lap whenever he found his way there. But otherwise she was very well treated. The only restrictions they put on her was that she should not leave the lawn and should not read the papers. "It would give her a swelled head," the warden said. His prohibition had the advantage of keeping her from the excitement of contact with the strike.

Above everything else, Yetta needed rest and quiet to think. The first day she dozed. The second day her mind woke up. She had a fear that she would forget something. So many things had happened in the past month. Ten days seemed to her a limitless time, so she began at the beginning. Her earliest recollections were of the dingy little book-store and her father. The morning passed in rearranging her memories of him. When they called her for supper, she had reached, in the review of her life, Rachel's first dance. Afterwards she sat in the little dormer window of her bedroom and looked out at the twilight falling over the city; she watched the lights on the river and the stars in their courses overhead and went over her acquaintance with Harry Klein.

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She had learned a great deal during this month out of the shop. From words dropped here and there, from things she had seen, she had come to a clearer understanding of the thing she had escaped. She had thought she was in love with Harry Klein! She went to sleep realizing how hollow had been her conception of love. The word had a very different content now that she had seen Walter and Mabel together and had heard the gossip of the girls. The thought of two such people being in love seemed very wonderful to her.

After breakfast the next morning she took her seat again in the shade of the elm tree and, with her chin in her hands, pondered over the strike. She had a remarkable memory for words and phrases. She could have given a full synopsis of all the speeches she had heard in that month. Most of the people who had talked at the meetings had tried to tell what the strike meant. She went over the various and often contradictory explanations, and, supplementing them with her own experience and observations, reached an interpretation of her own. Much of it came as a direct inheritance from her father. The two speakers who had influenced her most were Longman and Braun. With the former she believed that all those who loved liberty were under a sacred obligation to struggle for it. And Braun's straightforward, concise statement of social organization seemed to her reasonable. As soon as possible she wanted to get a chance to study Socialism.

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Meanwhile the storm kicked up by her arrest was growing apace. That morning the papers contained an open letter which the Commissioner of Corrections had addressed to the ladies of the Woman's Trade Union League. He had been forced to this action, because the evening papers had published interviews with other strikers who had been in the workhouse. They gave impressive details of the nauseous place, of the rank food, the vermin, the dark cells, and the debased associations. The Commissioner's letter was a dignified document. It had been written by his secretary. In a sweeping manner he denounced the accusations made by the strikers as malicious libel and referred the ladies of the Advisory Council and the public in general to page 213 of the last report of the Prison Association, which gave just tribute to the modern sanitation, the wholesome dietary, and the healthy régime of the workhouse.

"In regard to the case of Miss Rayefsky, about whom this agitation has centred, the Commissioner begs to point out that he has no manner of responsibility over commitments. It is not within his province to pass judgment on the decisions of the courts. He must accept whomsoever is committed to his custody. In reply to his inquiry, the warden of the workhouse informs him that, instead of suffering the fantastic tortures which certain hysterical lawbreakers have tried to persuade the public are actualities in the workhouse, Miss Rayefsky has been detailed to the work of nurse to the warden's children, and is living—probably in greater comfort than she ever knew before—as a member of his household.

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"As the Commissioner does not care to ask the public to take his word in preference to irresponsible newspaper stories, he invites the Woman's Trade Union League to appoint a committee to visit Miss Rayefsky in the workhouse and report to the public."

While Yetta was pondering over the meanings of strikes and industrial warfare, all New York was discussing her case and reading what various society ladies thought about the way their pet had been treated. Pick-Axe lost his job as private detective and had to go back to highway robbery.

After lunch Yetta tackled the hardest problem of all—why had she tried to kill Pick-Axe? Instinctively she felt that Longman would understand. But neither Mabel nor Braun would,—Braun least of all. Her act did not fit in with Socialism. No other speakers had urged the strikers as vigorously as the Socialists to abstain from violence or lawbreaking. Longman was not the only one who would understand. There was Casey, the secretary of the Central Federated Union, and the men of the "Pastry Cooks' Union." She could have told them about it without any hesitancy. She tried for some minutes to decide whether her father would have understood. She was not sure. She wanted to judge herself justly in the matter, but try as hard as she might, she found it impossible to blame herself sincerely. Her speculations were interrupted by Longman's voice.

"What are you thinking about so hard?"

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She jumped up in surprise to see that Longman and Mrs. Karner had come across the lawn without her hearing their approach. The warden had established himself in a chair where he could watch them.

Mrs. Karner had happened to be in the office when the Commissioner's letter arrived. She had appointed herself, together with Mabel and Longman, the committee to visit Yetta. They had notified the Commissioner, and he in turn had warned the warden. But just as they were about to start, a representative of the Association of Vest Manufacturers had telephoned to Mabel for a conference. It was too important to miss. So Mrs. Karner and Longman had come alone.

Yetta rushed into Mrs. Karner's arms and had hard work not to kiss Longman. She had not realized that she was lonely until she saw the familiar faces.

"We've only got fifteen minutes," Longman said. "So we must get down to business. Did they bring you to the warden's house at once?"

"No. At first—the first night I was in a cell. It was about nine the next morning the warden came and took me out."

"Just as I was telling you," Longman said to Mrs. Karner. "When they read the newspapers, they got scared and made an exception for her. Your newspaper campaign did it."

"What?"

And Mrs. Karner told Yetta all about it; how angry her friends were to hear of her being accused of assault and how they had made an awful row in the papers. Yetta's face burned. If Longman had been alone, she would have told him the truth in spite of Braun's interdiction. But she was not sure that Mrs. Karner would understand.

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"It's hard on you, Yetta," Longman said, "to be locked up. But it's great business for the strike. It was just such a picturesque outrage as this that was needed to attract attention. The papers are full of it, and everybody's for the vest-makers. The girls took a collection on the street yesterday and got nearly a thousand dollars. The bosses are scared. Their organization is breaking up. Two of the shops have settled already. It looks like a victory all round."

For ten minutes more they gave her the hopeful news and loving messages. Then they saw the warden coming across the grass.

"Is there anything you'd like to have me send you?" Longman asked.

"I'd like some books that tell about Socialism."

"Warden," Longman said as the official approached, "we've enjoyed this visit very much. We're greatly obliged to you for your especial kindness to Miss Rayefsky. Would you have any objection to my sending her some books?"

"She can read my books, if she wants to," he said gruffly.

"That's very kind, I'm sure. But she wants to study. It's some books on economics I want to send her."

"I've no objection," the warden said. "Send them to me. But no newspapers."

Mrs. Karner kissed her again, and Longman shook hands. There had been little of such kindness in Yetta's life, and their visit touched her deeply. The thoughts of the last few days had been tinged with bitterness. It was softened by the realization that she had friends. In the great city there beyond the river were people who cared for her. And what wonderful people they were!

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The Department tug swung out into the current, and Yetta saw Mrs. Karner waving her handkerchief. She jumped up to wave back.

When Mrs. Karner sat down, there were tears in her eyes.

"Do you suppose she'll keep the faith?" she asked Longman.

He was surprised by the question. He had never heard Mrs. Karner use the word "faith" before. She was ordinarily brilliantly cynical.

"I don't quite understand."

"Oh, yes, you do. Will she have the—what do the long distance runners call it?—'wind,' 'staying power,' to keep her faith in revolt? In Socialism? It's a long race, this life of ours, and an obstacle race every foot—will she last?"... In a moment she went on. "Oh, I hope she will. It's beautiful! I hope she won't be fooled into something else. Nothing on earth is worth so much as faith—Why don't you say something?"

"I'm—"

"Oh, you're surprised to hear me talk like this. But don't be mean and rub it in, even if I have sold out. Once upon a time—" she broke off suddenly and then began again. "Do you really suppose any one ever lived who has not had some youth and faith? I was a girl once. Time was when there weren't any wrinkles on my soul. Why! Once upon a time, I was going to write the Great American Novel! Sometimes I try to comfort myself by saying that newspaper work was too hard for a woman. I ought to make a pilgrimage somewhere—on my knees—to thank the gods I wasn't born a vest-maker. I did not have the nerve—the staying power. I sold out."

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"And when this dinky little boat gets to the dock, I'll ask you to get into my car and come up to Sherry's for tea. It will save me from going to that great Social Institution, that bulwark of America's greatness—The Home. I'd invite you to it, only it would seem like an insult. There's a big room looking out on the Drive—full of Gothic furniture; some of it was made in the Middle Ages and some was made in Milwaukee. Bert has a fad for Gothic. Home's a sort of Musée du Cluny. This isn't my day, but some women are sure to drop in. Some in skirts and some in trousers, and they'll talk nonsense and worse. And once upon a time I was a real woman, and worked with real men and had thoughts. It's so long ago I almost forgot about it till this little vest-maker came along, with her big eyes and her faith."

The boat bumped against the pier.

"Don't be scared at my melodramatics," she said. "Come up to Sherry's and I'll tell you the latest scandal. Some of it is quite untellable. We'll forget the little Jewess with her disturbing eyes. Curses on them! You know, looking into them makes me understand why they crucified Christ at such an early age.—Will you come?"

"Can we stop on the way and get those books for Yetta?"

Late that night Longman took out one of his printed sheets of foolscap and added Mrs. Karner's credo to his collection. It was the first of his questionnaires he had filled out since he had begun preparations for the expedition to Assyria.

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The next morning the warden handed Yetta a bundle of books. On the fly-leaf of the smallest one—Thoreau's *Essays*—Longman had written: "Thoreau lived before Socialism commenced. But I don't think any of the modern writers have bettered 'On the Duty of Civic Disobedience.'"

In the six days which were left of her sentence, Yetta had time to read and reread all the books Walter had sent her, and to think her way to a surer footing in Life.

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## CHAPTER XVI CARNEGIE HALL

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The ten days when Yetta had nominally been in prison, but was really resting her body and improving her mind on the warden's pleasant lawn, had been great days for the vest-makers.

The sudden publicity which her arrest had given their Cause turned the tide in their favor. None of the English papers gave an accurate nor intelligent account of the struggle, but in a vague way the generally listless public came to realize that a picturesque conflict was raging on the East Side between hundreds of half-starved women and the Powers of Greed. One could hardly call it sympathy, for sympathy requires some degree of understanding. But the conviction became widespread that it was not a "fair fight." The pathos writers were daily turning out miniature *Uncle Tom's Cabins*. And the society writers continued to give space to the new fad.

The strikers might have won considerable concessions without this fortuitous aid. They had tied

up their trade for five weeks at the height of the rush season. Their enthusiasm and *esprit du corps* had grown with hunger and persecution. Even the biggest bosses had begun to wonder if it would not be cheaper to make some compromise. But certainly the strikers would not have won so quickly nor so largely if this unexpected force had not come to their assistance. The judge in Essex Market Court no longer dared to be so high-handed. The hired thugs were afraid that every passer-by was a reporter, every picket a society pet. The second day two of the bosses deserted the Association of Vest Manufacturers and settled with their forces. Once started, the stampede became general; every day more shops settled, and by the time Yetta was discharged the strike was practically over.

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It was four o'clock of a Thursday afternoon when she was given back her own clothes and told that she was free. As she waited on the Island dock for the ferry to carry her across an unexpected wave of fear came over her. The city beyond the river looked hostile to her. Sooner or later the vest strike would end. What should she do then? She knew that the "strike" would not be over for her—it would last as long as she lived. But where was she to live, how was she to gain a living? How could she get the chance to study, which she felt to be her greatest need? This last was what troubled her most. It did not matter where she slept nor what she ate, but she needed the knowledge which is power. As the tug fought its way against the current and the city came closer and closer, it looked to her like some jealous monster which stood guard over a great treasure. Somehow she must do battle with it, for the prize must be hers. She felt herself very weak, and her armament seemed pitiable.

On the New York dock she found Mabel and Walter and Mrs. Karner waiting for her.

"Yetta, Yetta," Mabel laughed and cried, with her arms about her. "Remember what a crowd of girls came up to welcome the first ones who came out? Why do you suppose they're not here to welcome you? They're back at work. We've won! We've won!"

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Yetta opened her big eyes very wide, but her heart was too jerky for her to speak. Over and above the joy of the dear victory was the exhilaration of friendship. It seemed as though these three friends had come down to meet and arm her for the fight for the treasure. Mabel's embrace was like armor, Mrs. Karner's kiss was a helmet, and in Longman's frank grip she felt a sword placed in her hand.

"Come on," Mrs. Karner said. "Climb into the motor. You're all going to have dinner with me. You've got to speak to-night, child—the biggest audience you ever saw—Carnegie Hall. They had lots of foolish plans to bother you, but I said 'No! I'll take her in hand and see that she gets a bath and clean clothes and a good meal and a little quiet to think out her speech.' Climb in."

As the car sped across the city, they explained to Yetta that Mrs. Van Cleave had donated the rent of Carnegie Hall—this before the strike had been won—and that, as all the arrangements were made, they had to have the meeting anyhow. It promised to be a big thing, as all those who were Mrs. Van Cleave's friends, or wanted to be, had scrambled for boxes, and all the two and one dollar seats had been sold.

Mrs. Karner was as good as her word. Once in the imposing house on Riverside Drive, she left Longman uncomfortably balanced on a Gothic chair in the library, and she and Mabel rushed Yetta into a bath even more dazzling than that which had so impressed her in the Washington Square flat.

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"When any one gets herself arrested and wins a strike all by herself, and is going to make a speech to the Four Hundred, she has to let other people do things for her. So I got you some clothes."

At one of the meetings of the Advisory Council Mrs. Van Cleave had said, "Of course some one must see to it that she is decently dressed." Mrs. Karner had volunteered to attend to that, and, talking it over with Mabel, who brought some of Yetta's scanty wardrobe as a model, they had arranged a simple, becoming suit of soft brown corduroy.

"If you're tired, you can take a nap. We'll wake you for dinner."

"No," Yetta said. "I ain't sleepy. I want to hear about the strike."

So they arrayed her in the new dress and fussed around with her hair and at last brought her out into the library. For a while the four of them discussed the strike.

"Yetta," Mabel asked, changing the subject abruptly, "what are you going to do now?"

They had to wait several minutes before she answered.

"I don't know. I've been trying to think about that. There'll be more strikes, and I want to help in them. When there ain't nothing like that to do, I want to study. I've got to study a lot. You see I ain't been to school since I was fifteen, and you've all been to college. Of course I can't never go to college, but I'd like to learn all I can."

"I don't know what I'll do. I'd like to keep on being business agent of my union, if they ain't elected nobody else. But they can't pay me nothing. I suppose I'll go back to the trade. I don't know no other way to earn money. But I'd like to get out of it so I could study. I want to know more, so I can be of more use. Yes. I've got to study. I'll have to think about it."

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"Well, there are two things we've got to suggest," Mrs. Karner said. "I suppose I'd better tell her

Mrs. Van Cleave's offer first. You see, Yetta, you've made a great hit with her, and she's got oodles of money. She thinks you're very wonderful, just the way the rest of us do"—somehow Mrs. Karner's flattery was so kindly and laughing that it hardly made Yetta feel uncomfortable—"and she thinks you ought to have a college education. Look at the child's eyes open! Yes. It's true. She wants to pay all your expenses in preparatory school and Bryn Mawr. If you worked very hard, you could graduate in six or seven years. Mrs. Van Cleave really wants you to do it. Nobody asked her to nor suggested it. And she's very generous when she gets started. She'll give you a fat allowance, and you can dress just as well as the other girls. Miss Train and I have both been to college and we know what fun it is. Dances and all that. And it's nice to have good clothes. It's a great chance. You've got brains and lots of common sense, and you don't have to worry about any of the other girls being better looking than you are. You'll probably spend your vacations with Mrs. Van Cleave. You'll like as not marry a mil—"

Yetta knew that Mrs. Karner was mocking.

"Is it a good college to study?" she asked.

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The two women were silent. Mabel was from Wisconsin and Mrs. Karner had gone to Mount Holyoke. Neither thought very highly of the college of Mrs. Van Cleave's choice. Longman answered the question.

"There isn't any woman's college in the country which has a higher standard of scholarship. It is one of the best there is in that way. If you want to be a 'scholar,' if you want to go in for Greek or mathematics or one of the sciences, a degree from Bryn Mawr is something to be proud of. But most of the girls are rich. I don't mean that they would be unkind to you. With Mrs. Van Cleave back of you, you don't need to worry—they'd probably go to the other extreme. But I don't believe you'd find many of the girls—or many of the faculty—interested in the problems of working people. Mrs. Van Cleave is very kind, but I think even she is more interested in you than in 'strikes.' As I say, if you want to be a 'scholar,' it's a good place. But if you want to be a labor agitator, if you want to fight for freedom, I don't think Bryn Mawr would help you much."

The excited glow in Yetta's eyes, the heightened color of her cheeks, died out.

"What's the other offer?" she asked. "You said there were two."

"Oh, it isn't any fairy godmother proposition, my dear Cinderella," Mrs. Karner said. "It's just everyday work. Nothing so fine as a college degree. It's in Miss Train's line, so she'd better tell you."

"No, Yetta," Mabel said. "This other offer is a pretty drab-colored affair. You know my old plan to try to ally all the garment workers, vests and coats and pants and cloaks and overalls, all in one big federated union like the building trades. Well, this vest strike has been so successful, I've been able to interest some of the ladies in my bigger scheme and they've put up the money so the league can hire a new organizer. It isn't as much as you could earn at the machine, but it is enough to live on. We all think you'd be the ideal person. You could keep on as business agent for the vest-makers. I know they want you, and even if they can't pay you anything, it would give you a standing with the Central Federated Union and even among the unorganized workers. They all know about how this strike won, and there's sure to be others soon. Of course there would be lots of work, but the ladies would be willing to let you have your mornings free to study. It isn't like going to college. But if you really want to educate yourself, you could do it. We'll all help you. I don't want to urge you. I want you to do the thing you think is best for yourself. And Mrs. Van Cleave's offer is very generous. But you know how much I would like to have you working with me in the League."

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Yetta got up and went to the window. She knew that all the eyes were fixed on her back. She knew what they were thinking, and she resented it. They had all had a college education given them as a matter of course. They could not know what it meant to her. She could not get her wits together under their silent regard.

"I guess I'll go and lie down till dinner," she said. "I must think—about to-night's speech."

When she had disappeared, Longman broke out.

"Why can't you women be frank and say what you think? Mrs. Karner's proposal is better than Mrs. Van Cleave's. She'll make a horrible mistake if she ties up with a lot of millionaire snobs."

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"Mabel," Mrs. Karner said solemnly, "let us keep perfectly still and listen to some man-wisdom."

In the face of this jibe, Longman had nothing more to say.

"Does the lord of creation think," Mrs. Karner went on, "that little Yetta Rayefsky is only deciding whether she'll go to college or not?"

"Well, for God's sake, why don't you try to help her instead of making it harder for her?"

"Has the philosopher not yet discovered that some things are not decided until one decides them alone? Saint Paul had to go off to Arabia. Yetta's gone to my guest-room. You can help a person pay her rent and, if you've lots of tact and taste and insight, you can help her choose a becoming hat, but you can't help a person to do the brave thing."

"That's witty," Longman said sourly. "But I didn't happen to be joking."

"When we want to vote, Mabel, the men say we have no sense of humor. But now he accuses me of joking—and apparently," she said after a pause,—"he thinks Yetta doesn't know just how we feel."

The subject of their conversation had not lain down, she had curled up in a big chair drawn up before the window, looking out across the Hudson to the setting sun over the Palisades. She was trying desperately to understand the fable of the fox and the grapes after it is turned inside out. The enticing bunch was in easy reach. Were the grapes really sour? It was nearly an hour before they called her, but she had not yet begun to think out what she should say at Carnegie Hall.

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There is something grotesque about most large public meetings. Very rarely a speaker gets the feeling, at his first glance over the upturned faces, that there is some cohesion in the assembly, some unity. He realizes that they have come together from their various walks of life, their factories and counting-houses, because of some dominant idea. It is then his easy task, if he is anything of an orator, to catch the keynote of the assembly and carry his hearers where he will.

It was not such an audience which gathered that night at Carnegie Hall. After Walter had given a quick glance from the door of the dressing-room over the mass on the floor, the circle of boxes, and the packed tiers of balconies, he turned to Mabel.

"The people in the boxes," he said, "have come to stare at Yetta, and the rest to stare at them."

"Don't tell her that, for goodness' sake," Mabel said.

But Yetta saw it herself. For the first time she had a sort of stage-fright as she peeked out at them. The people in the boxes irritated her. She had talked to that kind of women before, and they had only given a few dollars. She wondered how many of them had been to Bryn Mawr.

Mabel called Yetta from the doorway to introduce the Rev. Dunham Denning, the rector of Mrs. Van Cleave's church, who was to act as chairman. And then she was presented to an honorable gentleman named Crossman, who had once been a cabinet member and had gray hair, and a wart on his nose. These two elderly gentlemen embarrassed Yetta very much by their courtly attentions. She did not have the slightest idea what to say to them.

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When at last the speakers stepped out on the platform, there was a break of polite hand-clapping from the auditorium and a perfect storm of applause from the back of the stage. Yetta turned in surprise to find that banks of seats had been put up and that they were closely packed with her own vest-makers. She had not seen them from the door of the dressing-room. She stopped stock-still with tears in her eyes. Mabel had to pull her sleeve to get her to come forward and acknowledge the greeting of the main audience.

But the noise behind her had shaken Yetta out of the lassitude which the sight of the well-dressed, complacent people of the boxes had given her. She must do her best. She felt herself very small and the thing she wanted to say very big. She pulled her chair close to Mabel's and slipped her hand into that of her friend.

The Rev. Dunham Denning in a very scholarly way reminded the audience of several things which the Christ had said about the neighbors and which he—the reverend gentleman—feared were too often forgot. He introduced the Honorable Mr. Crossman, who was known to all for his distinguished services in the nation's business, his justly famed philanthropies, and his active work in the Civic Federation, which was striving so efficiently to soften the bitterness of the industrial struggle. Mr. Crossman had very little to say, and said it in thundering periods. It took him nearly an hour.

Then it was Mabel's turn. She spoke, as was her wont, in an unimpassioned, businesslike way. She outlined the work of the organization which she represented and spoke of the vest-makers' strike as an example of what the league could do if it had sufficient means.

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When she sat down, the chairman began to cast the flowers of his eloquence at Yetta's feet.

"If I may use such an expression," he said, "while Miss Train has been the brains of this strike, which we have gathered here to approve, the next speaker has been its very soul. My own acquaintance with her is of the slightest. But it has been sufficient to convince me past any doubt that the charge on which she was sent to the workhouse was an infamous libel. Who can look at her sweet face and believe her capable of vulgar assault? But you are to have the opportunity to judge for yourself. She will tell us of this victory to which she has so glowingly contributed, and it is my hope, as I am sure it is that of this vast assembly, that she will tell us about her own experiences.—Ladies and Gentlemen, I present Miss Yetta Rayefsky."

Yetta squeezed Mabel's hand and, getting up, walked down to the edge of the platform. She wanted to get near them so they could hear her.

The laughter and the conversation in the boxes stopped for a formal round of applause. But as they clapped their hands and stared at the curiosity, something about her fragile beauty made them clap more heartily. At close range, Yetta looked abundantly healthy. But far away, standing alone on the great platform, she seemed frail and exotic. The two-dollar seats took their cue from the boxes and made as much noise as they could. The gallery and the mass of vest-makers behind her cheered and howled and stamped their feet without thought of the proprieties. And Yetta stood there alone, the blood mounting to her cheeks, looking more and more like an orchid, and waited for the storm to pass.

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"I'm not going to talk about this strike," she said when she could make herself heard. "It's over. I want to tell you about the next one—and the next. I wish very much I could make you understand about the strikes that are coming.

"But first I ought to say a few words to you for my union. We're very much obliged to all who have helped us. We couldn't have won without money, and we're thankful to everybody that gave us a dime or a penny.

"It's a wonderful victory for us girls and women. We're very glad. For more than a month we've been out on strike, and now we can go back to the sweat-shop. Because we've been hungry for a month—some of us have got children and it was worse to have them hungry,—because a lot of us have been beaten up by the cops and more than twenty of us have gone to jail, we can go back to the machines now and the bosses can't make us work no more than fifty-six hours a week. That's not much more than nine hours a day, if we have one day off. And the bosses have promised us a little more pay and more air to breathe, and when we've wore ourselves out working for them, they won't throw us out to starve so long as they can find any odd jobs for us to do. We've had to fight hard for this victory, and we're proud we won, and we're thankful to all you who helped us. But better than the shorter hours and everything else is our union. We've got that now, and that's the most important. We won't never be quite so much slaves again like we was before.

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"But we've won this strike now, so we've all got to think about the next one. I don't know what trade it will be in. Perhaps you never heard of the paper-box makers, or the artificial-flower makers, or the tassel makers. There's men with families in those trades that never earned as much as I did making vests. And the cigar makers—they're bad too. And if you seen the places where they bake bread, you wouldn't never eat it. It don't matter which way you look, the people that work ain't none of them getting a square deal. They ain't getting a square deal from the bosses. They ain't getting a square deal from the landlords. And the storekeepers sell them rotten things for food. There's going to be strikes right along, till everybody gets a square deal.

"Perhaps there's some of you never thought much about strikes till now. Well. There's been strikes all the time. I don't believe there's ever been a year when there wasn't dozens here in New York. When we began, the skirt-finishers was out. They lost their strike. They went hungry just the way we did, but nobody helped them. And they're worse now than ever. There ain't no difference between one strike and another. Perhaps they are striking for more pay or recognition or closed shops. But the next strike'll be just like ours. It'll be people fighting so they won't be so much slaves like they was before.

"The Chairman said perhaps I'd tell you about my experience. There ain't nothing to tell except everybody has been awful kind to me. It's fine to have people so kind to me. But I'd rather if they'd try to understand what this strike business means to all of us workers—this strike we've won and the ones that are coming. If I tell you how kind one woman wants to be to me, perhaps you'll understand. You see, it would be fine for me, but it wouldn't help the others any.

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"Well. I come out of the workhouse to-day, and they tell me this lady wants to give me money to study, she wants to have me go to college like I was a rich girl. It's very kind. I want to study. I ain't been to school none since I was fifteen. I guess I can't even talk English very good. I'd like to go to college. And I used to see pictures in the papers of beautiful rich women, and of course it would be fine to have clothes like them. But being in a strike, seeing all the people suffer, seeing all the cruelty—it makes things look different.

"The Chairman told you something out of the Christian Bible. Well, we Jews have got a story too—perhaps it's in your Bible—about Moses and his people in Egypt. He'd been brought up by a rich Egyptian lady—a princess—just like he was her son. But as long as he tried to be an Egyptian he wasn't no good. And God spoke to him one day out of a bush on fire. I don't remember just the words of the story, but God said: 'Moses, you're a Jew. You ain't got no business with the Egyptians. Take off those fine clothes and go back to your own people and help them escape from bondage.' Well. Of course, I ain't like Moses, and God has never talked to me. But it seems to me sort of as if—during this strike—I'd seen a Blazing Bush. Anyhow I've seen my people in bondage. And I don't want to go to college and be a lady. I guess the kind princess couldn't understand why Moses wanted to be a poor Jew instead of a rich Egyptian. But if you can understand, if you can understand why I'm going to stay with my own people, you'll understand all I've been trying to say.

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"We're a people in bondage. There's lots of people who's kind to us. I guess the princess wasn't the only Egyptian lady that was kind to the Jews. But kindness ain't what people want who are in bondage. Kindness won't never make us free. And God don't send any more prophets nowadays. We've got to escape all by ourselves. And when you read in the papers that there's a strike—it don't matter whether it's street-car conductors or lace-makers, whether it's Eytalians or Polacks or Jews or Americans, whether it's here or in Chicago—it's my People—the People in Bondage who are starting out for the Promised Land."

She stopped a moment, and a strange look came over her face—a look of communication with some distant spirit. When she spoke again, her words were unintelligible to most of the audience. Some of the Jewish vest-makers understood. And the Rev. Dunham Denning, who was a famous scholar, understood. But even those who did not were held spellbound by the swinging sonorous cadence. She stopped abruptly.

"It's Hebrew," she explained. "It's what my father taught me when I was a little girl. It's about the

Promised Land—I can't say it in good English—I—"

"Unless I've forgotten my Hebrew," the Reverend Chairman said, stepping forward, "Miss Rayefsky has been repeating God's words to Moses as recorded in the third chapter of Exodus. I think it's the seventh verse:— [Pg 214]

"And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

"And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey."

"Yes. That's it," Yetta said. "Well, that's what strikes mean. We're fighting for the old promises."

"Pretty little thing, isn't she?" a blonde lady in Mrs. Van Cleave's box asked her neighbor.

"Not my style," he replied. "Even if you had no other charms, if you were humpbacked and cross-eyed, that hair of yours would do the trick with me. Haven't you a free afternoon next week, so we could get married?"

"I didn't know old Denning was so snappy with his Hebrew," another broke in.

"Which reminds me of a story—"

"Is it fit to listen to?" the blonde lady asked.

"Yes—of course. It's about a Welsh minister—"

But the lady had turned away discouraged, to the boredom of the man who really wanted to marry her.

But perhaps in that crowded auditorium there may have been some who had understood what Yetta had been talking about.

Later in the evening, when she was standing with Longman on the deserted stage, waiting for Mabel, who—to use Eleanor's expression—was "sweeping up," he asked her what she was doing the next day.

"I want you to have dinner with me," he said. "Mabel and Isadore Braun are coming. And if it isn't asking too much, I wish you could give me some of the afternoon before they come. I'd like to talk over a lot of things with you. You know I'm sailing the day after to-morrow. It's my last chance to get really acquainted with you." [Pg 215]

"Sure. I'd like to come," Yetta replied. "But where are you going?"

She listened in amazement to his plans. She had thought he was going to marry Mabel. When he had left them at the door of the flat, Yetta asked her with naïve directness if she wasn't engaged to Longman.

"No," Mabel laughed. "Where did you get that idea?"

"Why, all the girls think you are."

"Well, they're all wrong. I'm not."

"And aren't you in love with him?"

"Not a bit. You Little Foolish, can't people be good friends without being in love?"

Yetta went to sleep trying to think out this proposition. She hardly remembered the choice she had made between college and work, nor the strain of the great meeting. It was very hard to believe that Mabel and Walter were not in love.

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## CHAPTER XVII THE OPERATING ROOM

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Walter's study seemed to Yetta an ideal room. There was no appearance of luxury about it—nothing to remind one by contrast of the hungry people outside. There were no "decorations," except two portraits of his grandparents and a small reproduction of one of the great cow-faced gods of the Haktites which stood on the mantelpiece above the fireplace. The rest of the room was made up of comfortable chairs, a well-padded window-seat, and books. The cases were full and so was the table and so were some of the chairs and there were books on the floor. Knowledge was a goal which her father had set before Yetta as almost synonymous with



"goodness" and "happiness." It was a thing she had forgotten about in the sweat-shop, but for which her recent experience had given her an all-consuming hunger. No one who has been "sent to college," who has had an education thrust upon him, can realize how much she venerated books. When Longman brought her to his room, it seemed to her as if she had entered the home of her dreams.

The greatest thing that had come to Yetta in the new life was the gift of friends. In the days since her father's death, with the exception of the few weeks when Rachel had given her confidences, she had had only loveless relatives and shopmates. And now she could hardly count her friends. From the very first she had given Longman the niche of honor in this gallery. The reason was something more subtle than his dramatic entrance into her life. She seldom thought of him as her rescuer. But she felt that his regard for her was more personal and direct than that of the others. She could not have explained it coherently to herself, but she felt it no less keenly. Mrs. Van Cleave was fond of her because she had eyes like those of the long-dead daughter. Mrs. Karner was attracted to her because she typified her own lost youth. Isadore Braun and Mabel valued her because of her flaming spirit of revolt.

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Over on "the Island," the warden's little three-year-old son, in spite of her prison dress, in spite of the jealousy of his own nurse, had run into her arms at first sight. Instinctively she felt that Walter liked her in a similar fashion. If, during the strike, she had sold out, turned "scab," Braun and Mabel would no longer have been her friends. But Longman would have come to her in his gentle, lumbering way and asked her about it. He might have been disappointed, even angry, but still he would have been her friend.

Yetta wanted to begin at once with some questions about Socialism.

"You'd better save them till Isadore and Mabel come," Longman laughed. "He's got all the answers down by heart—the orthodox ones. And Mabel isn't a Socialist. I'm neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring. It will start a beautiful shindy if you spring those questions to-night."

He told her about his projected book on Philosophy, and how he would like to add her credo to his collection. The big scope of the idea caught her fancy, and she said she was willing.

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It was slow work at first. The earlier questions on his list led her into unfamiliar fields. She had never troubled her mind over metaphysics. She was not sure what kind of a god she believed in—nor whether It really ought to be called "God." She had given no thought to the question whether this is the best or worst possible world. The prophecies, which her father had loved so much, inclined her strongly to the idea that it might be made a better one. But she had never even tried to determine whether the Universe is an elaborate and precise mechanical instrument, a personally conducted puppet show, or a roulette wheel. Her inability to answer these questions—and the way he put them made them seem very important—shamed her. He seemed to be sounding the depths of her ignorance. Did she believe in a future life? She threw up her hands.

"I don't know."

"Nobody knows. It's a question of belief. You loved your father very much, and when you were a little girl he died. Was that the end of him?"

She shook her head. He waited patiently for words.

"No. It wasn't the end of him. Anyhow the memory lasts."

"Do you ever talk to him now?"

"Sometimes. I pretend to."

"Is it as good as if he was really here?"

"Almost—sometimes."

"Well. After you die do you think you'll meet him?"

Yetta curled herself up a little tighter on the window-seat, her forehead puckered into deep wrinkles.

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"Yes," she said after a while. "I think—once, anyhow—I'll have a chance to talk to him—tell him everything and ask him what was right and wrong—and he'll tell me."

"How will he look?"

"I don't know. But I'll know it's him."

The ordeal became easier as the questions began to deal with more mundane problems. But before long they got into deep water again.

"Do you believe that honesty is the best policy?"

That took a lot of thinking and brought back the wrinkles.

"Honesty—telling the truth," she said at last. "I guess it's the best something, but it ain't always the best policy. If I hadn't perjured myself, we wouldn't have won this strike."

"What?"

"I don't mind telling you. I lied in court. I swore I didn't hit Pick-Axe; but I tried to kill him."

Longman whistled softly.

"Tell me about it."

When she had told him all,—what Pick-Axe had said and done, how suddenly blind rage had overcome her, how at length Braun had persuaded her to lie,—she asked him if he thought honesty would have been the best policy in this case.

"I'm asking questions this afternoon, not answering them," he said gravely. "This interests me a lot. So you think it's sometimes right to lie in a good cause."

"No," she said quickly. "I don't think it's never right to lie. But I guess sometimes you've just got to. If I'd told the truth, they'd have sent me to prison, instead of the workhouse. I wouldn't have cared. It ain't nice to lie, and like Mr. Thoreau says, there's worse things than being in the worst prison. But it would have been awful for the others. Just because I told the truth all the papers would have lied and said all the girls were murderers. We'd have lost the strike. I'd have felt better if I'd told the truth. But there's more than two thousand girls in our trade."

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"It's like this, I think. If you make up your mind that something is good, you got to fight for it; you can't be afraid of getting beat up, or arrested, or killed, and you can't be afraid of hurting your conscience either. Mr. Thoreau has got an essay about John Brown and how he fought to free the black slaves. Well, suppose somebody'd come to him and told him how he could do it, if he'd commit a big sin himself. I guess he'd have done it. If he'd said, 'You can beat me or put me in prison or hang me for those black men, but I won't sin for them,' he'd have been a coward. I'd rather go to prison than tell a lie like I done. But I ain't afraid to do both."

She had sat up stiffly on the window-seat while she was trying to say all this. Again she curled up. She watched Walter, as he sat there in deep thought, absent-mindedly drumming on the table with his pencil. She could not have talked like this to any one else in the world. She had expressed herself poorly; in her intensity she had slipped back into her old ways of speech, but she knew he did not care about doubled negatives, nor "ain't's." She knew he had understood. And just when she had found this wonderful friend, she was losing him. He was going away in the morning for years and years. Central Asia sounded far away and dangerous. Something might happen to him and he never come back. She was afraid she would cry if she kept silence any longer.

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"What do you think?" she asked.

"I was wondering if you are afraid of anything."

"Oh, yes. Lots of things."

"For instance?"

"Well, I'm afraid of the Yetta Rayefsky who tried to kill Pick-Axe. And I'm afraid of myself for not blaming her for it. And I'm afraid of being useless. I'm afraid of waste. I'm afraid—more than anything else—of ignorance." She sat up again. "Yes. That's the worst thing the bosses do to us—they keep us ignorant. I don't think even you can understand that. You've had books all your life. You've been to school and college, you're a professor,"—the awe grew in Yetta's voice,— "your room is full of books. I sit here and look at them and try to think what it must mean to know all that's in so many books and I want to get down on my knees, I'm so ignorant."

"Good God! Yetta," he said savagely, jumping up. "Don't talk like that. I'm not worth your stepping on."

He came over and took her hand and surprised her by kissing it humbly.

"I'm going away to-morrow—for a very long while—and I want to tell you, before I go, that you're a saint, a heroine. Did books mean so much to you? And you decided to work instead of going to college? Books?" He grabbed one from the table and hurled it violently across the room. "Books? They are only paper and ink and dead men's thoughts. Truth and wisdom don't come from books. They can't teach you those things in college. Yes. I've had books all my life. I live with them." He stamped up and down and shook his fists at the unoffending shelves. "If I know anything Real, if I've got the smallest grain of wisdom, I didn't get it from them. There's only one teacher—that's Life, and before you can learn you've got to suffer. I don't know much because things have been easy for me. How old are you? Nineteen? Well, I'm over thirty. You talk about getting down on your knees to me! Good God! I've ten years start and every advantage, but I don't know—Capital K-N-O-W—as much as you. And good? I ought to ask your pardon for kissing your hands. I'm *no* good! God! I want to break something!"

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He looked around savagely for something which would make a great noise. But he suddenly changed his mind, and pulling up a chair to the window-seat, where Yetta was sitting bolt upright, he began again in a quieter tone.

"Yetta, I'm a lazy, self-indulgent imbecile. I've never done anything in all my life that I didn't want to do. I've never sacrificed anything for any cause, not my easy-chairs, nor my pipe, nor my good meals, nothing. Nothing but automobiles and yachts which I didn't want. God gave me a brain which I am too lazy to use. And besides my general uselessness and selfish waste, I'm a coward. Why am I going off to Persia? Is it because I think it will ever do anybody any good, ever make

life sweeter or finer for any one, to have me decipher the picture puzzles of the people who worshipped that stupid-faced cow on the mantelpiece? No. I'm not that foolish. Is it because I don't know what I might do, if I was as wise as you are—wise enough to know that we must give our lives to win our souls? No! I know that just as well as you do, Yetta. But I'm a coward. I'm running away, because I'm afraid of life."

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He jumped up again and began to pace the room.

"Oh, well!" he groaned. "Enough heroics for one afternoon. But don't let books hypnotize you, Yetta. Schopenhauer said once that the learning of the West crumples up against the wisdom of the East like a leaden bullet against a stone wall. There's nothing in books but 'learning.' And you've got some of the Eastern wisdom, Yetta. It's part of your Semitic heritage. Treasure it. Don't ever let books come between you and your intimacy with life. One pulse beat of a live heart is worth all the printed words in a thousand books. I—"

But he interrupted himself and sat down gloomily and looked out over Yetta—who had curled up once more—at the budding green tree tops of Washington Square.

His tirade had disturbed Yetta much more than he dreamed. It was not until long afterwards that she was to bring out his words from the treasure-house of her memory and come to understand what he meant by all his talk of Knowledge and Wisdom. She would never think as lightly of book learning as he did. She even less appreciated his ardently expressed admiration of her, and his self-condemnation. It was his pain which impressed her. He had fallen from his godlike majesty. He was no longer a calm-browed Olympian, who deigned to let her drink from the fountain of his wisdom. He was just a simple man, who suffered. And so Yetta began to love him.

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In the wonder of it she forgot that he was going away.

"Yetta," he said abruptly. "Where are you planning to live? Are you going to stay on with Mabel and Miss Mead?"

"Why, no," she rushed dizzily down through the cold spaces which separate Dreamland from New York City. "I—I don't suppose so. I'll find a room somewhere. On the East Side, I guess."

"That's not a good plan," he said in a businesslike tone, for in spite of all he had been saying about heartbeats, he did not suspect the disturbing rate of Yetta's pulse. "The intellectual life on the East Side is too feverish. You'll get into their very bad habit of all-night discussions, which lead only to brain-fag. And besides you'd be living too near your work. You're going to study, and you'll need a place where you'll be undisturbed. I've got a suggestion. I think it would be good for you; it certainly would be a favor for me. Why not live here? I've got a long lease on the place. I wouldn't want to give it up, even if I could. I'd been planning to leave the key with Mrs. Rocco and have her come in once a month to air the rooms and chase the moths. Then I was going to pay one of the stenographers up at the University to attend to my mail. There are a few bills coming in every month, and the letters must be forwarded to me. Not half an hour's work a week, but somebody's got to do it. If you would care to, it would save me a little expense, and you'd save room rent. It's a good place to study—better than the East Side. And some of the books are worth reading. What's the matter?"

"Everybody's so kind to me," Yetta said, blinking her eyes to drive away the tears.

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"This isn't kindness," he protested. "It will save me about ten dollars a month."

Taking her silence for consent, he went on to explain to her how she was to open the letters and mail a printed card explaining his absence to the writer and every week forward the bundle of mail to the French Legation in Teheran. And then he explained the money matters, how she was to pay the rent and his subscriptions to various learned and philanthropic societies and so forth.

All the while, Yetta, curled up on the window-seat, was trying to realize how very empty her life would be after he left. It would at least be some comfort to live here in his room with his ghost.

While he was still explaining the details about his mail and the bank account he would open in her name, a couple of waiters arrived laden with linen and dishes. They were from the Lafayette, where Walter was a regular patron. He knew the *chef* and the *garçons* by their first names and they had laid themselves out to make his farewell dinner memorable. The books and papers on the table were piled on the floor. And just as one waiter was giving a last pat to the cloth and the other was lighting the candles, Mabel and Isadore arrived.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### WALTER'S FAREWELL

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Mabel had come to the dinner with some reluctance. She feared that the farewell might take too personal a line for pleasure. Walter's heart was so full of bitterness that he was glad when things went to the other extreme and turned into a celebration of the strike victory.

When at last the waiters had removed the débris of the feast, and Walter was nursing the coffee urn, Mabel and Isadore began to discuss Yetta's plans. They had a great deal to say about her

work in trying to ally the garment trades. But Walter, when he had distributed the coffee, broke into the conversation abruptly.

"You people seem to think," he challenged them, "that Yetta's principal job is to organize the garment workers."

"Well, isn't it?" Mabel asked.

"No! And I hope she won't let you two bluff her into thinking it is. Her main job for the next few years is study. The garment workers will be organized and reorganized fifty times before they get a definite formation. She's only one opportunity to form her intellect. It must last her all her life. It's more important than this work you talk about because it's to be the basis of the bigger jobs to come. All the time she's going to be torn by what looks like conflicting duties. Every day she'll wake up with the feeling that there's something she can do which would or might help in this immediate campaign. The temptation to give all her time to the union work is the worst one she'll have to face. If she yields to it, she'll regret it all her life. Three years hence the work she did in the mornings will look very small indeed and the study she neglected will look very, very big.

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"When you talk about 'sweat-shops,' Mabel, you curse the bosses for robbing the girls of leisure and all chance of culture. Watch out that you don't 'sweat' Yetta, that you don't let her 'sweat' herself. It's criminal nonsense to talk work, work, work. Plenty of people will be saying that to her. I think she's got sense enough to keep her head, but you who are her friends ought to be telling her study, study, study."

"You're right, Walter," Mabel said with unusual humility.

"What we ought to do," he went on, "is to outline a course of study for her. What do you suggest, Isadore?"

"We've just published a new pamphlet which outlines a course of reading," he said. "It's called 'What to read on Socialism.'"

"That's a fine idea of a liberal education." Mabel snorted. "She isn't going to be a Socialist spellbinder. Her job's with the unions. The Webbs' *Industrial Democracy* would help her a lot more than your Socialist tracts."

"It's just as iniquitous to sweat her intellect as her body," Longman groaned. "Can't you two blithering idiots realize that before you read any of these books you read hundreds of others, studied for years? I hope she won't specialize—in her study—on Socialism or trade-unions, either, for several years. She needs to keep her mind open and absorb a background. She ought to read Westermarck's *History of Human Marriage* before she tackles Bebel's *Woman*. She ought to read Lecky and Gibbon and John Fiske and Michelet and a lot of astronomy and geology and physics and biology—a person's an ignoramus to-day who hasn't a broad knowledge of biology—and she ought to know something about psychology before she tackles the Webbs. She ought to put in some time on pure literature. You people are thinking about Yetta Rayefsky, the labor organizer of the next few years. Well, I hope she's going to live still three score years and more than ten. It's going to do her more good to read Marcus Aurelius than Marx and Engels. She wants to know something of the traditions of the race, the great men of the past, Homer and Shakespeare and Rabelais and Swift. And above all she needs to know the ideas of our own times, Ibsen and Tolstoi, Shaw and Anatole France. She'll pick up the Socialist and trade-union dope as she goes along. It's the background we, her friends, can give her."

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And so for an hour or more they squabbled over a large sheet of paper and at last evolved a course of reading for her. There were to be two mornings a week to natural science, two to history, two to social science and psychology, and one to literature. Yetta sat back and listened to it all, very much impressed by the way these three intellectual giants hurled at each other's heads the titles of books of which she had never heard. There was indeed very much for her to learn. Mabel generally concurred in Walter's suggestions, but Isadore doggedly insisted that more Socialist matter should be included. He was especially rabid on the question of history.

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"What's the use of learning a lot of rot you've got to unlearn? Why read Michelet and Carlyle on the French Revolution? These old idealists did the best they knew how. Carlyle really thought Mirabeau made the Revolution and Michelet thought it was Danton. But nobody, not even the antisocialists, believes in the 'great man theory' any more. All our history has got to be rewritten from the modern point of view. It hasn't been done yet, and the only way to get things straight is to saturate yourself in the social idea, get it into your head that this is a world of economic classes, not individuals, then you can read anything without danger—you know how to discount it.

"You talk about 'background'—well, that's what I'm insisting on. Let's get it right. It's the lack of a deeply social background that makes so many of our well-intentioned modern reformers sterile. People still believe that great changes can be made by strong individuals. A lot of peace advocates believe that Mr. Carnegie is going to abolish war. But most seem to think that things can be reformed piecemeal. This crusade against infant mortality is a good example. Its ideal is fine. But it tries to isolate it from all the rest of the social problem and cure it alone. It can't be done. It's tied up with rotten tenements and landlordism, with bad milk and commercialism, with poor wages and industrialism. Just like war, it is a natural, inevitable part of capitalism.

"It's the same thing with the trade-unions. They try to separate their economic struggle with their

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bosses from the political aspect of the social problem, and it can't be done. The unionists make a pitiful showing just because they are still slaves to the old culture; they lack broad insight. The actual things they try to do are good, but they're barren because their background is wrong."

"Thanks," Mabel said sarcastically. "I'm so glad to know what's wrong with us."

"Now, Yetta," Longman said, with the gesture of a circus man introducing his curiosities, "the show is about to commence. On your right you see the 'pure,' the hidebound, the uncompromising Socialist, Isadore Braun. To your left you see the 'suspect,' the 'bourgeoise,' step-by-step reformer, Miss Mabel Train. They are about to engage in a bloody combat."

"But," interposed Yetta, "what are you?"

"Yes," Braun echoed. "What are you?"

"That's an uninteresting detail. I'm only the referee of this bout."

"He can poke fun at a serious position," Braun said. "But he's afraid to or can't define his own."

"I'll tell you what he is, Yetta," Mabel volunteered. "He's a—"

"No, I'll tell her myself," Walter interrupted. "If you want it in one word, I'm a *syndicaliste*. We haven't any English word for it."

"He believes in a general strike," Mabel explained, "although not one trade strike in ten really succeeds."

"Exactly and because," Walter assented emphatically.

"He believes," Braun supplemented, "that although the working people haven't enough class consciousness to vote together we can ask them to fight together." [Pg 231]

"Exactly and once more exactly! I hate to talk, Yetta, because—as I confessed to you before these two noble examples of self-sacrifice came in—I haven't the nerve to practise my beliefs. I hate to talk, and I've never done anything else. But I've got just as definite a creed as Isadore.

"A general strike has more hope of success than a dozen little strikes, because it's a strike for liberty—and that's the only thing that interests all the working class. The trade strikes are for a few extra pennies. And when one of them does succeed, it's because of some bigger enthusiasm than was written in their demands. You went right to the heart of the matter last night when you said you had been striking so as not to be slaves. I'll bet you've seen it when you talked to the other unions. Which of your demands interested them most? Dollars to doughnuts it was 'recognition of the union.' They all have demands of their own about wages and hours. But when you say 'union' to them, you're saying liberty. You're appealing to something bigger than considerations of pay—to their very love of life.

"The basis of a General Strike must be an ideal which is shared by every working-man. The simon-pure unionists, the A. F. of L., the Woman's Trade Union League, are fighting for little shop improvements, different in every trade. Sometimes—often—one set of demands is in conflict with another. The one thing that holds the movement of the workers closer together is this brilliant idea of union. And the leaders are busily preaching disunion.

"Read any history of labor and you'll see. First it was every man for himself. Then shop unions and each shop for itself. Then all the workmen of one town. Now, its national trade-unions. Tomorrow it will be industrial unions. The change has already begun. We already have the Allied Building Trades. Mabel's keen on allying the various branches of garment workers. The miners have gone further. They have a real industrial union. That's the next step. We'll have the typesetters, pressmen, folders, newsboys, all in one big newspaper union. Engineers, switchmen, firemen, conductors, roundhouse and repair-shop men all in a big brotherhood of railroad men. Twenty gigantic industrial unions in place of the hundreds of impotent little trade organizations. No one can look the facts in the face and deny either the need of the change or the actual progress towards it." [Pg 232]

"Braun shudders at the thought because the men who are now urging this change—the Industrial Workers of the World—are displeasing to him. They are not good party socialists. Mabel don't like them because they tell unpleasant truths about the crooks in her organization. I don't like them personally, either, because they are just as narrow-minded as Isadore, and I guess some of them are as crooked as any of the trade-union leaders. But the idea is bigger than personalities. You mark my words, Yetta, industrial unionism is going to be a bigger issue every year with the working-men. It's going to win. And the outcome of industrial unionism is the General Strike and Insurrection.

"Isadore pooh-poohs the idea of bloodshed. The social revolution is going to be a kid-glove affair. He will admit the possibility of sporadic riots. But the great victory is to be won at the voting booths. Justice is to be enthroned by ward caucuses and party conventions. Victor Berger instead of Dick Croker. The central committee instead of Tammany Hall. He really believes this, but it is based on two suppositions, both of which seem to me very uncertain. First, reason is to conquer the earth and the great majority is to vote reasonably—that is, the Socialist ticket. Second, the grafters and all the contented, well-fed, complaisant people are going to resign without a struggle." [Pg 233]

"I don't think they will. They may not have the courage to defend their privileges themselves. But bravery, the fighting kind, is one of the cheapest things on the human market. Our government buys perfectly good soldiers for \$13.50 a month. The privileged class always has hired mercenaries to defend their graft and I think they will in the future. They've already begun to do it with their State Constabulary in Pennsylvania. Read about how the French capitalists massacred our comrades after the Paris Commune. That was only thirty years ago. I don't see any reason to hope for a very startling change in their natures.

"And then is reason going to rule the world—the cold intellectual convictions that Isadore means? I doubt it. The great movements in the world's history have come from passionate enthusiasms. Take the Reformation, or the English Commonwealth, or the French Revolution. Not one man in ten of all the actors in those crises were what Isadore would call reasonable. Reason is powerless unless it is backed by a great enthusiasm. And if we have that, we can turn the trick quicker with a general strike and insurrection than we could by voting.

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"This question of violence or peace is a thorny one. We've got to separate what we would like to see from what seems probable. Bloodshed is abhorrent. But it is pretty closely associated with the history of human progress. Before the great Revolution the mass of the French people were in the very blackest ignorance. They've had a century of revolution and bloodshed, and to-day they are the most cultured nation in the world. The same thing is happening to-day in Russia. We read in the papers of assassinations and executions and insurrections. It means that the intellect of a great people is coming to life. And the mind of our nation has got to be shaken into wakefulness, too. We've got to learn new and deeper meanings to the old words justice and liberty. I'd like to believe we could learn them in school, by reading socialist pamphlets. But all the race has ever learned about them so far has been in battle-fields and behind barricades. I hate and fear bloodshed. I believe it's wrong. Just as you said you thought it was wrong to lie. But I love liberty more.

"And there's one other point: Until we learn these lessons, we've got to see our strong men and women cut down by tuberculosis, we've got to stand by and watch a slaughter of innocent babies that makes Herod's little massacre look like a schoolboy's naughtiness. The socialists don't like the word 'violence.' The reality is in the air we breathe. The landlord wracks rent out of the poor by violence—no amount of legal drivel can hide the fact that every injustice of our present society is put through by the aid—on the treat—of police. The whole force of the state is back of the grafters. It's violence that drives people into the sweat-shops, that drives the boys to crime and the girls to prostitution. And all this deadly injustice will go on until we've learned the lessons of justice and liberty. Let us learn them as peacefully and legally as possible, but we must learn them. Blood isn't a nice thing to look at, but it isn't as unspeakably horrible as the sputum of tuberculosis."

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"What you are saying is rank anarchy," Braun protested.

"I've told you a hundred times you can't scare me by calling names. 'Anarchy' is just as much a word of progress as 'Socialism.' I think you've got the best of it when it comes to a description and analysis of society and industrial development. But the Anarchists have got you backed off the map in the understanding of human motives and social impulses.

"I'm an optimist, Yetta, about this social conflict. I don't think it matters much what form people give to their activity. The important thing is not to be neutral. The thing that is needed is a passion for righteousness. Once a person sees—really sees—the conflict between greed and justice, and enlists in the revolution, it doesn't matter much whether he goes into the infantry or cavalry or artillery. I see in society a ruling class growing fat off injustice, a great, lethargic mass, indifferent through ignorance, and a constantly growing army of revolt. Anybody who doubts the outcome is a fool. History does not record a single year which did not bring some victory for Justice. But a person's equally a fool—I mean you, Isadore—who tries to prophesy just how the war will be conducted. There isn't any omniscient general back of us, directing the campaign. The progress towards victory is the result of myriad efforts, uncoordinated, often conflicting. It is entirely irrational—just like evolution. The anthropoidal ape, sitting under a prehistoric palm tree and picking fleas off his better half, did not know how—through the ages—his offspring were going to become men. Even with our superior intellects, our ability to study the records of the past and guess into the future, we cannot presage the steps of the progress. The directing force is the instinctive common sense of life. It's a more mysterious force than any theological God. It's always on the job, always pushing life through new experiments, through 'variations' to the better form.

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"All evolution has been a history of life struggling for liberty. It was a momentous revolution, when the first tiny animalcule tore itself loose from immobility, when it conquered the ability to move about in quest of food and a larger life. And so one after another life conquered new abilities. It's abilities, not rights, that constitute liberty. Think how many fake experiments life made before it turned out a man. The same process is going on to-day. You can't crowd life into a definition. Justice is being approximated, not because of one formula. The victory will come not because the people accept one theory, but because of thousands and thousands of experiments. And the ones that fail are just as much a part of the process.

"Gradually this common sense of life is awaking the minds of the lethargic mass. This is sure progress. It matters not at all whether the mind of the individual come to life in the trade-union, the Socialist party, or the Anarchist Group—or the Salvation Army. The important thing is that a new person has conquered the ability to think for himself. It doesn't even matter whether the

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words that woke him to life were true or not.

"Life isn't logical. And socialism seems to me to have almost smothered its soul-stirring ideal in a wordy effort to seem logical. The trade-unions are illogical enough. At least you can say that for them. But it's only once in a while—by accident—that they sound the tocsin."

This kind of talk disturbed Isadore. From first to last it ran contrary to his manner of thinking. But in an illusive way it seemed to have a semblance of truth—a certain persuasiveness. The error—if error there was—was subtle and hard to nail down. As he listened he knew he was expected to answer it. He must defend his colors before Yetta. It was not an easy thing to do. His whole life was built on an abiding faith that the hope of his people lay in the activities of the Socialist party. There was no cant nor insincerity about him. He felt that the spread of such ideas as Longman's would render doubly difficult the work of his party. It vexed him not to be able at once to demolish his friend's heresies. But he was used to arguing with opponents who thought any change was unnecessary or impossible. Walter admitted all this and went further. Isadore was off his accustomed field.

"You're a hard person to argue with," he said, "because your ideas are so unusual. I don't mean to say you're wrong just because you are in a minority of one. But it's hard to reason against oratory. I wish you would put your position down on paper, so I could give it serious thought."

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"Maeterlinck has come pretty close to it in *Notre devoir social*," Walter replied.

"Oh, that!" Isadore said contemptuously. "That isn't an argument, it's a sort of fairy story."

"Still calling names! There's truth in some fairytales—a whole lot of truth you can't express in your dialectics."

"That!" Isadore said, jumping at a point of attack, "is, I guess, the fundamental difference between us. You're a sort of mediævalist, living in a realm of romance and fairy stories—ruled over by your instinctive sense of life. You forget that we live in the age of reason. You said liberty consisted in abilities. Well, I believe that abilities bring obligations. Instead of jeering at reason and dialectics, I think it's our preeminent ability. We, reasoning animals, have a duty to use and perfect—and trust—our intellects. And the Socialist theory is the biggest triumph of the human mind. The theory of evolution is the only thing to compare with it. But Darwin had only to fight a superstition. It wasn't much of a feat to convince thinking people that it took more than one hundred and forty-four hour's to create the world—then his case was practically won. Marx had to fight not only such theological nonsense, but the entire opposition of the ruling class. Socialism had always been proscribed. A college professor who taught it frankly would lose his job. But it has never had a set-back. It has gathered about it as brilliant a group of intellects as has Darwinism. It's growing steadily.

"Having no trust in reason, you are driven back to violence. But I do believe in intelligence. I don't want to hang my hope of the future on such illogical things as dynamite and flying bullets."

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"If you don't respect intellect and logic, of course you don't sympathize with Socialism. But you can't ask me to give up the results of my own reasoning, backed as they are by the best brains of our times, to accept your imaginings."

"I don't ask you to give up Socialism," Walter laughed. "On the contrary, as long as it seems truth to you, give up all the rest. Your ability seems to find its right setting in the party—just as Mabel's does in the trade-unions—just as I'd be ill at ease and useless in either.

"The point I want to insist on is my faith that, back of your reasoning and activity and back of my speculations and laziness, this instinctive sense of life is working out its own purpose. Only future generations will be able to know which—if either of us—is right."

This argument thrilled and fascinated Yetta. In the years that were to follow she was to hear such debates repeated endlessly. The new circle of friends she was to make were as passionately interested in such questions of social philosophy and ethics as are the art students of Paris in the relative value of line and color or the concept of pure beauty. In time talking would lose its charm; she was to realize that—as Walter had said—it often leads to brain-fag. But this, her first experience, was an immense event.

The two men leaned back in their chairs, their faces relaxed. They seemed to have talked themselves out. Yetta turned to Mabel, who sat beside her on the window-seat.

"You're not a Socialist?" she asked.

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"No." Mabel replied. Such discussions bored her. "Nor an Anarchist either. I happen to be living in the year of grace 1903. I'm not interested in Isadore's logical deductions nor Walter's imaginings. They both know that if the working people want enough butter for their bread,—let alone Utopia,—they've got to organize. Cold experience shows that they can be organized on economic step-by-step demands, and that we can build up stable, practical unions along these lines—which every day are bringing to the working class a great spirit of unity. And cold experience also shows that the labor organizations which ask for the earth don't last. There have been dozens just like the Industrial Workers of the World before, and where are they now? Those people haven't enough practical sense to organize a picnic.

"If I were a theorist, instead of a rather busy person, I would have nothing against Industrial

Unionism. It's on the cards, and I am working for it. But I haven't any time for these fanatical dreamers. I haven't anything against the Socialist idea of the working people going in for political representation. Whenever I get a chance I put in a word for it. But once more I've no time for people who don't do any real work and spend their time writing pamphlets about nothing at all and quarrelling over party intrigue. They're very wonderful, no doubt, with their reason and their imaginations—master-builders, the architects of the future, and all that. I'm quite content to be a little coral insect, adding my share to the very necessary foundations, which they forget about. Anyhow, to-night isn't '*Le Grand Soir*'—and as dreaming isn't my job, I can't afford to sleep late. Come on."

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In the doorway, as the four were going out, Mabel called Isadore, who was pairing off with Yetta, and asked him about the injunction in the cigar-makers' case. Walter dropped behind with Yetta. He was almost glad that Mabel had denied him these last few minutes of *tête-a-tête* with her. He had been looking forward to it all the evening. But there was not anything for him to say to her. So he talked to Yetta, as they crossed the Square.

"There's one thing I almost forgot. Mrs. Karner has taken a great fancy to you. I know she'd appreciate it if you went up to see her every once in a while. Don't let her know I suggested it, but something she said the other day made me see how much she likes you. She tries very hard to pretend not to care about anything, but at bottom she's serious—and good. In the League work you'll have to play around a good deal with some of the swells, and she's a good one to practice on.

"Well, here we are. I'll send the keys over by Mrs. Rocco when I go. You can move in any time you want to."

Mabel went up the steps and fitted her latch-key into the door. She reached down to shake hands with Walter.

"So long," she said with an even voice. "Good luck."

"About once in every long while," he said, "we'll get mail. I'd like to hear from you now and then."

"I'm not much of a letter-writer," she said, "but I won't forget you."

For the first time, Yetta really believed that Mabel did not love him.

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"Good-by, Mr. Longman," she said. "We'll all be waiting for you to get back."

"Thanks! And I hope you'll write too—give me the news when you send me my mail. And the good chance to you. Good-by, Mabel."

"Good-by, Walter," she called back over her shoulder.

"Isadore," Walter said, as the door shut behind the girls, "come on over to the Lafayette and have a drink."

Braun looked at his watch.

"Oh, damn the time. Come on. I want somebody to talk to me."

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## BOOK IV

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### CHAPTER XIX YETTA'S WORK

In the next few months Yetta learned a new meaning for the word "work." In the sweat-shop, day after day, she had sat before the machine, her mind a blank, three-quarters of her muscles lifeless, the rest speeding through a dizzying routine. Only when a thread broke had there been any thought to it. In the new work there was no repetition, none of this dead monotony. Every act, every word she spoke, was the result of a consciousness vividly alive. In the keen, exhilarating thrill of it she had little time to mope over Walter's absence.

It is a strange paradox of our life that, while no other social phenomenon touches us at so many intimate points as the organization of labor, while very few are of more importance, most of us know nothing at all about the details of this great industrial struggle. Our clothes bear the "union label" or are "scab." In either case they are an issue in the conflict. Heads have been broken over the question of whether this page, from which you are reading, should be printed in a "closed" or "open shop." Around our cigarettes, the boxes in which they are packed, the matches with which we light them, the easy-chairs in which we smoke them, and the carpets on which we carelessly spill the ashes, a tragic battle is raging. Nine out of every ten people we meet are concerned in it. The man who takes our nickel in the Subway, the waiter who serves our lunch, the guests at dinner, the unseen person who pulls up the curtain at the theatre, the taxicab chauffeur who takes us home, are all fighting for or against "unionism."

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From the human point of view there is no vaster, more passionate drama. Intense convictions, bitter, senseless prejudices, the dogged heroism of hunger, comfort-loving cynicism, black



treachery, and wholehearted idealism are among the motives which inspire the actors. The stage—which is our Fatherland—is crossed by hired thugs from the "detective agencies" and by dynamiters. In the troupe are such people as Jane Addams and Mr. Pinkerton, shedders of blood and preachers of peace. There are hardly any of us who do not at some time step upon the stage and act our parts.

From the viewpoint of politics, the conflict has a deeper significance. What is the statesmanlike attitude to the growing unrest of those who do the work of the world—an unrest which is steadily and rapidly organizing? Close to two million of our citizens pay dues to the unions, their number grows by a quarter of a million a year. This is a momentous fact in politics. What is to be done about it? No one who thinks of such things can deny that sooner or later we—as a nation—must answer that question.

Profound in its political significance, rich in human color, the organization of labor touches us on every hand. But very few of us have any idea of the life of those men and women who devote themselves to this imposing, threatening movement. What, for instance, is the daily work of the secretary of the Gasfitters' Union in our town? What is an "agitator"? What are his duties? How does he spend his time? Why?

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It was into this little-known life that Yetta was plunged. First of all she was "Business Agent"—or as we more generally say "the Walking Delegate"—of her Vest-Makers' Union. She had to attend to all business between the organization and the bosses.

When a complaint reached her that some employer was violating the contract he had signed with the union, she had to investigate. If the charge was justified, she could call the girls out until the offending boss decided to observe his agreement.

It is just as hard for a labor organization to find a satisfactory "business agent," as it is for a mercantile concern. One will be too aggressive, another too yielding. One will be always irritating the employers and causing unnecessary friction. The next will make friends with the bosses and be twisted about their fingers. Once in a while a "business agent" sells out, betrays his constituents for a bribe, just as some of our political representatives have done.

Even in trades where the union has existed for a long time and somewhat stable relations have grown up between it and the employers, the position of "business agent" calls for a degree of tact and force which is rare. It is impossible for the delegate of the men to reach a cordial understanding with the bosses. He has at heart the interest of the entire trade, men working in different places under varied conditions, while the boss thinks only of his own shop. One is trying to enforce general rules, the other is seeking exceptions. The employer may be friendly with the union and in some sudden rush ask a favor which the men themselves would like to grant. But the walking delegate, knowing that all bosses are not so well disposed, that he may not grant to one what he refuses to others, cannot make exception, even if it seems reasonable to him.

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Yetta's position was doubly difficult. The boss vest-makers were smarting under their defeat. They regarded the union as an unpleasant innovation, an infringement of their liberty. A visit from Yetta seemed an impertinence. On the other hand the new union was pitifully weak. The treasury was empty. The bosses knew this, knew just how much hunger the strike had meant to their employees. They tried to take advantage of the situation. The Association of Vest Manufacturers, after the disorganization which followed the strike, was getting together again. Their frequent meeting promised a new attack. All the girls felt trouble in the air. There were causes for quarrel in almost every shop. But a new strike—if it failed—would surely wreck the union. Everything was to gain by delaying the new outbreak. Yetta's common sense, supplemented by Mabel's experienced advice, pulled them through many tight places.

The crisis came in about a month at the very Crown Vest Company, before which Yetta had tried to kill Pick-Axe. The boss, Edelstein, was just the kind of man to have employed such a thug. He began the attack by discharging three girls who had been prominent in the strike. A clause in the settlement, which he had signed, had said there should be no discrimination against the unionists. If Edelstein was allowed to violate this agreement, the other bosses would surely follow suit, and one by one the little advantages so dearly won would be lost.

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Yetta tried to reason with the man. He tilted his cigar at a pugnacious angle, put his feet on the desk, and insolently hummed a tune while she talked.

"If you think you can run my shop," he said, "you can guess again. The union wants to know why I fired these girls? Well, tell the union I didn't like the way they wore their hair."

"It's nine o'clock now," Yetta said. "If you don't reemploy those girls by three—that's six hours—or give the union a serious reason for their discharge, I'll call a strike on your shop."

"Go ahead and call it," he said savagely. "My girls have had enough of your dirty union. They won't try striking again."

Although Yetta had managed to deliver her ultimatum with outward calm and a show of confidence, the next six hours were the most unpleasant she had ever spent. Would the girls walk out at her call? If they did not, it would surely kill the union. Edelstein was certainly offering them all sorts of inducements to stay. The other bosses were back of him, urging him on. They wanted to break the union. What had she to offer the girls but hunger and an ideal? There were not ten dollars in the treasury. Most of the girls were still in debt from the first strike; many of

them would be dispossessed by their landlords if they struck again.

But Yetta's side was stronger than she realized. The success of the strike had taught the girls the tangible value of loyalty. The break-up of the employers' association had had the opposite effect. Each and every boss had tried to desert his fellows first and so make better terms with the union. Edelstein did not trust—would have been a fool to trust—the other employers. They were using him as a catspaw, and he knew it. If he succeeded in breaking the union, they would gladly profit by it. But, after all, they were his competitors; if he got into trouble single-handed, they would just as gladly profit by that. He consulted his forewomen. They all believed that enough of the force would go out to tie up his shop. So the three girls were reemployed.

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This victory gave Yetta new strength and confidence. She had taken the measure of her opponents and was not afraid any more. She went about her work with a firmer tread, with a greater faith in the eventual triumph of her cause. Her decisive stand with Edelstein had turned the balance. The bosses began to accept the union as an inevitable thing. Yetta did not have to call a strike for many months, not until the girls had recovered their breath and gathered enough strength to demand and win a new increase in wages.

Her work as business agent absorbed only a small amount of her time. Most of it went into efforts to organize the other garment workers. The success of the vest-makers had made a great impression on the sweated trades. The idea of "union" was popular. Sooner or later they were bound to organize—as the inevitable logic of events forces labor to unite everywhere. It was not smooth sailing by any means. But Yetta gradually grew to the stature of her work. Although she was sometimes discouraged at the slowness of her progress, Mabel was always radiant and talked much of her remarkable success.

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But in her effort to ally the various garment trades, Yetta was face to face with the thorniest problem of labor organization. In union there is strength, and if we do not hang together, we will surely hang separately. But if you re-read the history of our country during the years between the Revolution and the ratification of the Constitution, and recall the various efforts at secession which culminated in the Civil War, you will be impressed by the difficulty of living up to this beautifully simple idea of united action in politics. It is not different in labor organization.

In almost every industry there are small trades of highly skilled men who occupy a favorable strategic position. It is so with "the cutters" in the business of making clothes. Their union was the oldest of all. Practically every man in the country who knew the trade was a member. They could not be replaced by unskilled "scabs." They were in a position to insist that the bosses address them as "Mister." Why should they join forces with these new and penniless unions? What had they to gain by putting their treasury at the disposal of the struggling "buttonhole workers"?

Why should the opulent province of New York enter into a union with tiny Delaware or far-away Georgia? In the proposed Congress how could representation be justly distributed? The cutters would not listen to any proposal which did not give them an overwhelming voice in the Council. It is against such cold facts as these that the theory of Industrial Unionism, which had sounded so alluring to Yetta as Longman outlined it, has to make headway.

At first Yetta was confused by the conflicting organizations which were struggling for support from the workers. There was the American Federation of Labor, to which Mabel gave her allegiance. Its organizers were practical men, interested first, last, and all the time in shop conditions. Effective in their way, but their cry, "A little less injustice, please," seemed timid to Yetta. Then there was the Socialist party. Their theories were more impressive to her—they went further in their demands and seemed to have a broader vision. But of all the Socialists she knew, Braun was the only one who interested himself actively in the organization of the workers. The rest seemed wholly occupied with political action. There was also the Industrial Workers of the World. They cared very little for either firmly organized unions, which were Mabel's hobby, or for the party in which Isadore put such faith. They placed all their emphasis on the Spirit of Revolt. In a more specific way than the other factions they were out for the Revolution. They appealed strongly to that side of Yetta which was vividly touched by the manifold misery she saw about her, the side of her personality which had struck out blindly at Pick-Axe. She recognized that it had been a blind and dangerous impulse. It was not likely to come again. But this phase of her character, although she feared it, she could not despise. It was not dead, it was only asleep. And she knew that the same thing was present in the hearts of all the down-trodden people—her comrades in the fight for life and liberty.

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The triangular debate, which she had heard for the first time at Walter's farewell dinner, she heard repeated on all sides. She felt it no longer as an interesting academic discussion, but as the vital problem of the working-class. It was an issue towards which she would have to take a definite attitude.

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The welter of ideas, the perplexing conflict between alluring theories and hard facts, was sharply illustrated to her by a mass meeting at Cooper Union which had been called to raise funds for the Western Federation of Miners. All classes of society were shocked at the news of violence and bloodshed in that spectacular outbreak of social war in Colorado. One thing was clear to all—there was no use preaching peace, no use talking about the harmony of interest between labor and capital, there was nothing the Civic Federation could do. The curtain had been torn aside. It was war.

Few of the workers in the city approved of the violent methods to which the miners had resorted. But in the heat of battle such considerations became insignificant. The working-class of New York wanted to help.

Two or three orderly speeches had been made, when confusion was caused by the miners' delegate. Instead of telling the story of the strike, as had been expected of him, he utilized his time in denunciation of the American Federation of Labor and in chanting the praises of Industrial Unionism. The audience had gathered to express their sympathy for the miners. He insulted the organization to which most of these Easterners belonged.

Yetta had never heard a more forceful piece of oratory. He had led a charge against the State militia, and he was not afraid of a hostile audience. His appearance of immense strength dominated the more puny city dwellers. His mighty voice rang out above the tumult and reduced it.

"The A. F. of L.," he shouted, "is a rotten aristocracy. Everywhere it is holding down the less fortunate workers. More strikes are double-crossed by 'labor leaders' than are lost in a fair fight. Until we smash it there's no hope for the working-class. Out in the mines we've already won a three-fifty day. Not for the skilled trades, but for every man who goes down. We don't have any leaders who go to the Civic Federation and drink champagne with the capitalists." [Pg 252]

"Look at the unions you're proud of. You know as well as I do that the Big Six scabbed on the pressmen. Nobody in the printing industry has got a chance. The typographers have pigged it all.

"Nobody's got a look-in with the labor fakirs unless they've got enough money to pay initiation fees.

"You craft unionists have won your house and lot and 'benefits.' But I tell you that the Revolution is coming from the unskilled who can't pay your fees. If you don't get out of the way, you'll get run over with the rest of the aristocrats and grafters.

"Your graft is no good, anyhow. It won't last. It depends on your skill, and machines are killing skill every day. Look at the glass-blowers. That was a fine craft—wasn't it? You couldn't blow glass unless you had served a long apprenticeship. And when you once knew the trade, it was a cinch—a graft for the rest of your life. Sweet, wasn't it? Just the thing 'Old Sell-'em-out' Sam Gompers dreams about. All of a sudden somebody invented a machine. Now the glass-blowers are yelling about the Child Labor Law—a kid of twelve can do more work with a machine than a dozen men by hand.

"You craft unionists ought to go out and look at a machine—an automatic that's knocked Hell out of some other trade. You'd see what's coming to you and your A. F. of L." [Pg 253]

"My father was a 'grainer,' painted the graining on wainscoting and bureaus—fine trade it was, too. He had a nice little house with a garden to it; the old woman had a servant. Some aristocrats we were. He was going to send me to college—he was. Then they invented a machine. He hit the trail to Colorado, and I went down in the mine when I was thirteen.

"Just think about that machine a minute. It could do the work better than men, so it put the 'grainers' out of business. It ain't got no feet, so it don't use shoes. Kind of hard on the cobblers. It ain't got no head, so it don't wear out three hats a year like my old man did. Kind of hard on the hat makers. The machine ain't got no belly, it don't eat nothing. That's a jolt for the butcher and baker—and the farmer too. The machine don't get sick. No use for a doctor. The machine"—he paused for his climax—"the machine has no soul—it don't even need a minister.

"The machine is killing the craft unions. It's bringing about the day of the unskilled. The answer is—Industrial Unionism."

The audience was too angry at his attack to applaud. The collection, when it was taken up, was not half what had been expected.

"Perfectly insane," was Mabel's comment as they walked home.

"But what he said sounded true to me," Yetta protested.

"True?" Mabel demanded. "What was the true reason he came? To raise money for the striking miners—who need it. He didn't even come here at his own expense. They sent him—to raise funds. He spouts a lot of his crazy ideas and spoils it all. I don't believe we collected enough to pay his railroad fare. Is that your idea of truth?" [Pg 254]

Yetta could not find an answer.

But the effort to solve such problems as this was a big factor in her mental development. It gave her added incentive to study. She sought learning not because "culture" is conventionally considered a good thing, but because she had a vital need for a wider knowledge in her daily life.

As Walter had foretold, she found constant temptation to neglect her study. She resisted it bravely. But when the "knee-pant operatives," whom she had organized, went out, she could not find heart for books. She gave all her time to the strike. It was only a three weeks' interruption. But the next year the buttonhole workers were out for two solid months, the hottest of the year—and lost. It was Yetta's first defeat. The last weeks had been a nightmare. Children had died of hunger. Some older women had hanged themselves. When at last it was over, Yetta dragged

herself up to the Woman's Trade Union League and wrote out her resignation.

"What on earth do you mean?" Mabel asked.

"Oh! I'm no good. I can't ever go down on the East Side again. I might see one of them. It's all my fault. I called them out. I promised them so much."

The moment Yetta had left the office Mabel telephoned to Mrs. Karner at her country home at Cos-Cob-on-the-Sound.

Yetta had followed Walter's advice in regard to Mrs. Karner, and a real friendship had grown up between them. Mabel did not understand why this blasé society woman, with her carefully groomed flippancy, cared for the very serious-minded young Jewess, but she knew that they frequently lunched together. So she told Mrs. Karner over the telephone how Yetta had broken down. [Pg 255]

On the window-seat of her room, Yetta cried herself to sleep,—the troubled, haunted sleep of pure exhaustion. She was waked at last from her nightmare by a pounding on her door. It was Mrs. Karner.

"You poor youngster! I dropped into the office a moment ago to sign some papers for Mabel and she told me about your resignation. I'm so glad! Now you haven't any excuse not to visit me. I'm lonely out at Cos-Cob. The motor's at the door. Put on your hat."

Before Yetta knew what was happening to her she was in the motor. In fifteen minutes they were out of the city, and Mrs. Karner put her arm about her.

"It was such a very little they asked for," Yetta muttered. "Not so much as we vest-makers demanded."

Mrs. Karner did not see fit to reply, and Yetta fell back into a sort of doze. At last they turned through a stone gateway into the Karners' place. She got only a hurried glance at the well-watered lawn and the open stretch of the Sound. She was rushed upstairs and to bed. In the morning Mrs. Karner would not let her get up. It was the first time Yetta had spent a day in bed.

When she was allowed to get up, she found the estate a strange country to be explored. The greenhouses, the tame deer, the spotless stables, the dairy, the kennels, the boat-house, all were endlessly interesting to her. Interesting enough to make her forget for a while the horrors of New York. It was the third day that she made friends with the gardener, and after that she got up with the sun to help him harvest the poppies. [Pg 256]

On Friday Mr. Karner appeared, with a man and his wife, whose name Yetta never troubled herself to remember, and they all went off for a week-end cruise. Most of the time the older people played bridge. Yetta made friends with the sea and a gray-haired old sailor from the Azores, who could speak nothing but Portuguese. Once while at anchor he helped her catch a fish. She would have enjoyed the cruise more if they had let her eat in the fore-castle with the crew. She liked Mrs. Karner very much when they were alone together, but it was unpleasant to see her with these others.

In time the color returned to Yetta's cheeks, and hearing that Mabel had torn up her resignation, she went back to Washington Square and to work.

Except for such crises, Yetta followed rigorously the course of reading which Walter had mapped out for her. The afternoons and evenings belonged to the work of the League, to the very busy life of the real world. The mornings belonged to Walter. Her first thought was always of him. While the coffee was heating, she attended to his mail. After breakfast, with his prospectus spread out before her, she settled herself in one of his chairs and took up one of his books. Following his suggestion she made copious notes, and, when a book was finished, she wrote a thousand words or so on the main ideas she had gained from it. She carefully saved all these notes. When he returned he would see how thoroughly she had followed his directions. [Pg 257]

On the other side of the world from Yetta, Longman was leading a rough, exciting tent-life among dangerously fanatic natives. It would have been hard to imagine two more sharply contrasting environments. He never dreamed of the loving devotion which was being offered him, so many thousand miles away. He did not suspect how his occasional letters, in reply to her weekly ones, fanned this flame. He was wholly occupied in racing against time and difficulties to complete his work.

The expedition was not having an easy time of it. The ruins about which they were digging were regarded by the natives with superstitious veneration. The little group of scientists had only a score of unreliable soldiers for defence, so the real men—Le Marquis d'Hauteville, *Chef de l'expédition*, a wiry, gray-haired veteran of the Algerian Wars; Delanoue, a dandified-looking Parisian, who had carved his name as an explorer in all sorts of outlandish places; Vibert, the photographer, and Walter—had their hands full. They were the rampart, behind which the half-dozen querulous, rather old-maidish specialists measured skulls, gathered fragments of pottery, took rubbings of inscriptions, and collected folk-lore.

It is very much easier to love a person who is absent than to live amicably at close quarters with his daily faults and foibles. As the months passed, Walter Longman—or rather the ghost which Yetta conjured up to that name—took on new graces, was endowed with ever more brilliant [Pg 258]

characteristics. Yetta hardly knew the real man. In their half-dozen meetings she had seen certain charming traits. He came to typify the kind of life she would like to lead. A life of cleanliness and comfort, but free from the shame of luxury. A life of books, but so close and sympathetic to the struggling mass of humanity as to escape the reproach of pedantry.

Her dreams of him—thanks to his absence—could not be contradicted. If an act in the life about her seemed good, she did not doubt that Walter could and would have done it better. Of the unpleasant pettinesses which she saw among her associates, she was sure that he was free. The authors she read seemed to her very wise, but their attainments could not be compared to Walter's mystic wisdom. It is very easy to laugh at such folly—and so much easier to cry.

The idolatrous incense which she burned at the altar of the Absent One was a great incentive to her study. Knowledge was not only the road to power, but also to his approbation. But his greatest contribution was the memory of his scorn for intellectual ruts, for cut-and-dried formulæ. "You can't crowd life into a definition," he had said. "Beware of simple explanations. Living is a complex business."

Such phrases—sticking in her memory like illuminated mottoes—held her back from joining the Socialist party. Sooner or later it was inevitable that she should do so. She was a logical Socialist, with the logic of events. It would have been difficult to erect any other structure on the foundations life had laid for her. She was a machine worker who had revolted before the grinding monotony had killed her faith and vision. She could still hope. She had the insight to see beyond the personal pettiness of squabbling dogmatists to the great principles of Justice and Brotherhood, which their heated advocacy sometimes obscures. Her life would have been poorer in any other setting.

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But it was a real gain to her that she did not join the party hurriedly. She might have resisted the urgings of Braun longer—even after she had read largely pro and con, even after she had familiarized herself with the traditional theoretical "objections to Socialism," and, weighing them against the facts of life, which she saw about her, the bent and aged women of thirty, the young men smitten with tuberculosis, the thousands of babies that never grow up, had found them light indeed—she might still have held back longer from the personal and entirely illogical reason that Walter had never joined if it had not been for a dramatic meeting with her old boss—Jake Goldfogle.

His shop had failed in her first strike. She had lost all track of him.

About nine o'clock one bitter winter night she was walking home along Canal Street. The row of pushcarts, lit by flaring oil lamps, were doing a scant business. It was too cold for sidewalk bargaining. She was moved by a deep pity for these men and women, who were forced out on such a night, to hawk their wares. It was not only the victims of the sweat-shop who find living a hard matter. Suddenly her notice fell on a dilapidated pedler, who was holding out a meagre tray of notions. He did not have even a pushcart. A heavy black patch hid one side of his face, but she recognized Jake at once. Her first impulse was to hurry past with averted face. But his shivering poverty—he had no overcoat—checked her.

"Hello, Mr. Goldfogle."

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He turned his unbandaged eye on her in bewilderment. His frost-bitten face flushed with resentment.

"Come on and have a cup of coffee," she said. "I want to talk with you."

The idea of coffee stopped the curses which were gathering on his tongue, and, ashamed of his lack of spirit, he followed her. They sat down opposite each other at a dingy little tea-room table. Jake remembered Yetta as a frightened shop-girl. The last time she had seen him, he had threatened her with arrest. He had solemnly sworn that he would never give her back her job. And now she was giving him a cup of coffee. He drank it in silence. Once upon a time he had dreamed of marrying her as though it would be a great condescension.

The coffee warmed him so that he told his story. The failure had been complete. He and his sister and brother-in-law had gone back to the machine. The sister had given out first with the East Side commonplace—a cough. For a while the two men had stuck together, once more a little money had begun to pile up. Then a belt broke; the flying end had caught Jake in the face. He lifted up the black patch and showed Yetta the horrible scar where his eye had been. When he had come out of the hospital, his brother-in-law had disappeared. For a while Jake had hoped to get some compensation out of his employer, but he had fallen into the clutches of a "shyster lawyer," who compromised the case out of court for a hundred dollars and kept seventy-five for his fee. This had happened about a month before. Jake had been dragging out a miserable existence, sleeping in the lowest doss-houses, and of the stock he had bought with his twenty-five dollars, the half-filled tray was all that remained. And if Yetta had not started the strike, he would have been a rich man. "Und I vas in luv wit you, Yetta," he ended.

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It happened that she had just received her month's pay, so she was able to buy Jake an overcoat and give him a few dollars for meals and lodging. And the next day she found work for him as a night watchman.

But although his gratitude for this job was voluminous it did not ease Yetta's conscience in the matter. There was something sardonically grotesque in the encounter. It convinced her, more

surely than books could ever have done, of the Socialist doctrine that all life is knit into one whole; that Jake, just as much as Mrs. Cohen, had been a victim of a vicious system.

"As long as this bitter industrial competition continues," she wrote to Walter, "there are bound to be such pitiful specimens as Jake. You see a lot in the papers nowadays about how the trusts are eliminating competition. The more I think about that the more horrible it seems. They are eliminating competition in the sales departments, in the distribution of the product, because there the waste is in dollars and cents. But in production—where the competitive waste is only human beings—the struggle is as bitter as ever. The high-salaried, 'gentlemanly' managers of the different plants of a trust cooperate in selling and in buying raw material, but in the actual work of the mills they have to compete to see who can exploit the workers hardest—just as Jake was driven to overwork us girls. I don't see any possible cure except Socialism, and I'm going to join the party."

Many months later, when the courier brought this letter into the camp among the ancient ruins, the exile opened it with feverish hands, ran his fingers down page after page until he came to Mabel's name. It was not until he had read this part several times that he gave any attention to the fact that Yetta had become a Socialist.

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## CHAPTER XX

### ISADORE BRAUN

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It was shortly before her visit to Cos-Cob that Isadore Braun asked Yetta to marry him.

In a way he was almost ashamed of himself for doing so. His tempestuous desire for her was something he could not understand, something which forcibly escaped from the control of reason, to which all his life had been submitted.

Yetta had walked into his cold, impersonal life in an utterly disturbing way. It was as if some sudden leak had let a glare of sunlight into a photographer's dark room. All the care which had been expended in fitting that laboratory for a specific—and valuable—piece of work was rendered useless.

With the methodical forethought of his race and the narrow vision of a fanatic, Isadore had arranged his future. He had planned not only each day's work, but his life-work. With dogged singleness of purpose he had trained himself to be an efficient machine. Such an irrational thing as Love had no place in his scheme. To be sure, he believed that marriage was good. Sometime—say at thirty-five—he would look around for a convenient comrade, a woman of similar ideals and purpose, and they would mate without any serious derangement in the life of either. But he condemned Romance. It was irrational.

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Romance had accepted the challenge and had worsted him. His first interest in the Yetta of the vest-makers' strike had turned into respect and admiration—and finally into something much more serious and dynamic. It was not until he caught himself neglecting some important work to attend a meeting where nothing called him except the chance for a few words with her that he discovered what was the matter with him. Again and again he rallied all his intellectual forces for the combat, but always after a short struggle he found himself flat on his back, with Romance performing the dance of victory on his chest.

At first he tried to comfort himself with the thought that after all Yetta was just such a mate as his intellect would have chosen. She also was a Socialist. But he was too honest with himself to admit this sophistry. It was not because of her theories that the flame burned within him. He would have been just as helpless, just as irrationally enslaved, if she had been a chorus girl. She was not reason's choice, for the intellect is colorless and Yetta was resplendent.

To admit the dominance of this irrational emotion was to abandon all his gods, to turn his back on his only religion. It is hard for most of us to realize the deep tragedy of Isadore's position. Few of us believe ardently in anything. We have a comfortable ability to keep our faith in things we know are false, a lazy credulity for exploded theories. We go on burning our incense at shrines the gods have deserted. We pretend to a love of liberty we do not feel. We are inclined to laugh at the spectacle of a man naïve enough really to care, to rend himself in a passionate quest for Truth—and may God have mercy on such of us.

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It was a month or more before Isadore surrendered to unreason. It was a defeat which told on him in shrunken cheeks. There were some who thought he was sick. But he knew better. Absolute reason, the god on whom he had staked his faith, was crumbling. Longman's talk about the lack of logic in life had seemed to him drivel. But now reason—the all-powerful deity—had gone down before the non-intellectual gleam in a young woman's eye, had turned tail and fled before the curve and color of a cheek.

He tried to propose by letter. Night after night in his dismal, unkempt furnished room, he laid out his writing-paper. Sometimes he scribbled furiously, pouring it all out on paper predestined to be crumpled up and thrown away. More often he chewed the end of his pen in a sort of mechanical tongue-tiedness.

And then one day—to his complete surprise—he proposed to her in the office of the Woman's Trade Union League. They had gone into the committee-room to consult over the "demands" for the Skirt-makers' Union. Yetta had drawn up a rough copy and Isadore was to put them into more legal shape. They were leaning together over the big table under the great picture of Jeanne d'Arc, when the grace of Yetta's wrist intruded between his consciousness and the troubles of the skirt-makers. He was always discovering some such new attractiveness about her.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, straightening up in vexation of spirit.

"What's the matter?" Yetta asked.

Isadore realized that this was neither the time nor the place, that neither of them was in the right mood, but he could not help telling her. [Pg 266]

Yetta stopped him as soon as her amazement had given place to understanding. With the simple directness which was her most outstanding characteristic, she refused even to consider his suggestion. Emphatically she did not love him.

For a moment it seemed tremendously important to Isadore to light a cigarette without letting his hand give way to its insane desire to tremble. When it was lit, he looked Yetta squarely in the eyes and knew there was no use in argument.

"Well," he said, after a few puffs, "let's finish up these demands."

The incident brought their cordial intimacy to an end. Yetta no longer called him by his first name. As before, their work threw them frequently together. Yetta, at first, was afraid of a fresh outbreak—and so was Isadore. He had lost faith in his self-control. But no outsider could have guessed the constraint which underlay their comradely intercourse.

Isadore was as much in love as Walter had been with Mabel, but he was of a more masterful disposition. The Work, to which he and Yetta had dedicated their lives, was more important than personal pain. When the business of the day required him to see her, he did not shirk it, but he no longer sought her out. If she did not love him, that ended it. He did not want the hollow mockery of friendship.

Yetta's heart was full to overflowing with her romantic dream of Walter. Isadore, the real, the daily, had no chance. If some one had asked her about him, she would have described him in glowing terms, with an enthusiastic tribute to his unusual loyalty and ability. Her respect for him was deep. There was no man of her race nor near her own age whom she held in such high esteem. But when it came to loving him,—unfortunately he was real. [Pg 267]

His proposal had seemed to her almost preposterous. Not that she felt herself too good for him. On the contrary her love for Walter had increased her very real humility. It was the concreteness of his offer that shocked her.

She rarely looked forward to Walter's return, and when she did, it was with no definite visualizing thought of marriage. The concept of sex was vague to her—and decidedly fearsome. Not even Harry Klein, her first lover—and she always thought of him as an incident in a dim and very remote past—had really stirred her woman's nature. He had appealed to her as an instrument, a key by which to escape from her dungeon. The sentiments, which his meagre caresses had raised, had by the fright of the adventure been driven back in dismay.

Sometimes, to be sure, a sort of sweet dizziness overcame her when she remembered how Walter had kissed her hand. The spot below the middle finger of her left hand which his lips had touched was a holy place. But more often she thought of his words. When in her dreams he seemed nearest, he was halfway across the room, in the big leather chair, while she was curled up on the window-seat. She was not yet twenty-one. Her girlhood had been sacrificed to the machine. Orderly, symmetrical development had been impossible. Now that she was a woman in body, in mind, in work, her imagination was still in the first flower of adolescence. [Pg 268]

On the mantelpiece of his old room, where she lived, a snapshot of the white men of the Expedition leaned against the cow-faced god of the Haktites. Like Saul of old, Walter towered head and shoulders above his mates. Khaki and a pith helmet are not exactly silver armor—but to Yetta he seemed the Shining Prince. And Isadore wanted her to live with him in an East Side flat.

If falling in love with her had disturbed Isadore, his inability to put her out of his mind after her emphatic refusal troubled him a thousand times more. He got no ease from his pain except in work. The anxiety of his friends increased. But, brushing aside their protests, he sought out ever new activities. He hated to be idle, he came to fear being alone in his room. But not even the most strenuous endeavor to forget relieved him.

In the beautifully illogical way life has, help came to Isadore from a source he would never have dreamed of. He came home early one night to write an article for the *Forwaertz*. To his dismay he found that he had left his notes in the office. The article would have to wait, and here he was with nothing to do, alone in his room, where of all places he found it hardest to escape from the aching hunger of his heart, the sad confusion of his thoughts.

It was not much of a room—an iron cot, a big deal table, a few cheap chairs and bookcases. It was not even decently clean. In the five years he had lived there he had been quite oblivious to its sordidness. But of late it had become abhorrent to him. He was already half undressed. The bitter [Pg 269]

summer heat had driven the tenement dwellers out on the street. The perspiring humanity which crowded the sidewalks offered no comfortable escape.

He turned to his bookcases. But he needed something of more compelling interest than the census and immigration reports to fill the time till sleep would come. Most of his little library were reference books, the rest he had read and reread. On the bottom shelf was a bundle he had never unwrapped. They were books Walter had given him after one of their discussions over the meaning of Life. He had never read them, because he was sure he would find no interest in the hodge-podge, haphazard kind of thinking which Walter seemed to enjoy. He pulled them out now—at least they would offer the interest of novelty. The first book he opened was Henri Bergson's *L'Evolution Créatrice*. Walter, as was his custom, had annotated it copiously. On the fly-page he had written, "A superb discussion of the limitations of Pure Reason." The phrase caught Isadore's eye as he listlessly read the note. Was not this "limitation" of reason the very thing that was troubling him?

No book that he had read in years seemed to vibrate so compellingly with a sense of actuality. This was partly due no doubt to the master craftsmanship of the author. But very likely it would have made no impression on Isadore if he had read it when Walter had asked him to. The jar and conflict of the last few months had opened up the compartments of his brain to a long-lost receptivity. The facts of life had shaken his intellectual structure until he was prepared to understand.

This suave and erudite Frenchman was calmly announcing that the Age of Reason was a myth, rationalism a superstition. From every field of human knowledge Bergson was gathering his evidence, from the microscopic data of biology to the gigantic stellar facts beyond our vision, with merciless logic he was proving that the instrument with which we reason is not divine. "The God which has failed you," he said to Isadore, "is a false god. The brain, with which you created it, is only a faulty animal instrument, as liable to error as your eyes, for which you have been compelled to buy rectifying glasses."

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While the message of Bergson is iconoclastic, a titanic warfare against the formal gods, it is by no means destructive. It holds a more magnificent, a more humanly satisfying optimism than metaphysics has dared, a promise of greater intimacy with the living truth than cold reason ever formulated. Above all it offered to Isadore to restore his self-respect.

He had to refill his lamp before he finished the book. And when he had reached the end, he could not sleep. A strange bodily unrest seized him. He wanted to get away. When the heavens opened and a great light shone upon Saul of Tarsus, he felt at once the need of going out to some distant desert place to rearrange his life in accordance with the new light. Isadore also had need of an Arabia.

Some time before he had received an invitation to visit a Socialist magazine writer named Paulding at his lake-side camp in the Adirondacks. Although Isadore knew the invitation had been sincere, that he would be welcome, he had refused it, because in his troubled frame of mind he had been frightened by the bare idea of idleness. He had been afraid to leave the rush of work. Now there was nothing he wanted more. So as dawn was breaking over the city, he packed his bag, putting in with care the books Walter had given him, and telegraphing that he had changed his mind, set out.

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It was the first real vacation he had ever taken. All the "country" he had seen had been from car windows and the crumpled patches one encounters on labor-union picnics. The camp was the barest of log-cabins. Mrs. Paulding was also a writer, and all the mornings his hosts were busy over their typewriters. So Isadore was much by himself. It was an entirely new experience for him to chop firewood. It took a week or more before he lost his diffidence before the pine trees. It was even longer before he became sufficiently familiar with the canoe to enjoy being out of sight of the landing. Paulding was an enthusiastic nature lover, and the struggles and adventures of the myriad animals of the forest and the lake which he pointed out were like enchanting fairy stories. Isadore had read such things in books, but it was endlessly strange for him to watch them in process. And all this strangeness helped him to the rest which, in spite of his denials, he desperately needed.

Gradually, as the weeks slipped by, he fought his way to a new outlook on life. Bergson and the pragmatists had shaken him out of his intellectual rut. His dogmatism had resulted from his manner of life. He had begun to think about social problems before he had come into intimate contact with social facts. His development had been the opposite of Yetta's. She had begun with facts and had judged all theories by them. He, having accepted a philosophy while still in the cloistered life of college, had been too busy preaching it to have much time to observe the complex reality of life. Bergson and his love for Yetta had jolted him out of this attitude. He was man enough to see his error and correct it.

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When he returned to the city in the fall, his comrades noticed the change in him. His former domineering conviction that he was right had given place to a gentler, more tolerant, and smiling self-confidence. He was no longer a doctrinaire. He was less cocksure, but more certain. His native sympathy with suffering humanity, which had been the real motive of his Socialism and which for years he had suppressed as sentimental, came to life again. It was in his public speaking that the new man showed clearest. He no longer made his appeal solely to reason; there was more red blood in his discourse, more pulsing life in his words. He had come to see that his hearers must feel as well as think. His Socialism had lost some of its sharp definitions, some of its



logical simplicity, but it had come to bear a closer similitude to life.

One day, shortly after his return, while walking, down the Bowery with a friend, he stopped and gave a nickel to an alcoholic-looking tramp. His friend expostulated. Such erratic almsgiving was worse than useless. It encouraged vagrancy; it was unscientific, unreasonable. Suddenly Isadore realized the change which had come over him. He grinned defiantly. "The poor devil," he explained, "looked as if he wanted a drink." His friend was scandalized. But if Walter had heard of the incident, he would have rejoiced as the Angels in Heaven rejoice when a lost lamb finds the fold.

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The change in Isadore had been more concrete than the acceptance of a new outlook on life. Up in the mountains he had questioned not only his metaphysics, but his habits. He had pondered over the practical tactics of Socialism as well as its philosophy. The loosening of his fundamental concepts had solidified his attitude towards practical problems. The rather diffuse propaganda work he had been doing no longer satisfied him. He wanted to concentrate on one tangible thing. And it seemed to him that what the movement needed more than anything else was a daily English paper. Back in New York, with a new and unconquerable enthusiasm, he set himself to this task.

But if his new point of view had healed his intellectual humiliation, it in no wise softened the torture of Yetta's indifference. Day after day, month after month, he lived with the ache of his love. But he came to laugh more readily, became less of a machine and more of a man.

It was several months after Yetta's refusal before he reopened the subject. He did it by a letter—so worded that it required no reply. He would not bother her, he wrote, with repeated urgings. He could not see the use of pleading. They were grown up, too serious-minded to act such a comedy. But he wanted her to know that he was steadfast. If in the future her regard for him grew into the love he hungered for, he trusted that she would tell him. And so the matter rested.

Other suitors sprang up a-plenty, and their noisy importunity made Yetta very thankful to Isadore for his dignified reserve.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### *THE STAR*

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The second summer after Walter had left, a desperate and successful strike of the cloak-makers brought Yetta's name once more into the papers. Mrs. Karner used the opportunity to open a new line of work to Yetta.

Mr. Karner owned *The Star*—the "yellowest" paper in the city. It was not only vulgar to the edge of obscenity, it was notoriously corrupt in politics. Being a one-cent paper, it of course posed as a "friend of the working-man," but it stood—unless the other side had collected an unusually large campaign fund—for Tammany Hall and the traction interests.

One morning at breakfast—while the cloak-makers' strike was a "live" news item—Mr. Karner spoke enviously of a woman who gave sentimental advice to love-lorn damsels on the magazine page of his keenest rival.

"I wish I could find some counter attraction," he said. "Our circulation among working girls is pitiful."

"Why don't you try Yetta Rayefsky?" Mrs. Karner suggested. "All the East Side girls know her. Do you happen to be advocating trade-unions this month?"

"Mildly—as usual."

"Yetta is keen on that. You remember her. She was out at Cos-Cob last summer. Rather caught your eye, I think."

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"That little Jewess? She was good-looking. Has she any other qualifications as a journalist?"

Mrs. Karner shrugged her shoulders.

"I thought you prided yourself on developing raw material."

Two days later Yetta was summoned to Mr. Karner's office. She went to the appointment, wondering what the great newspaper man could want of her—hoping that she might interest him in her girls.

"Glad to see you," Mr. Karner said cordially as she was ushered into his beautifully furnished sanctum. "This cloak-makers' strike is a big story. But we're not making the most of it. There's more in it than news copy.

"There ought to be something for our magazine page. I don't know whether you've ever read it, but it's the page that gets the women. They're not interested in arguments—not much in facts. It's the human interest story—something to make them cry—that gets over with them. About their own people. If they say 'That's just like Sadie or Flossie,' it's the right thing for us. We're always looking for that kind of copy.

"There must be some stories in this strike. Couldn't you give us two or three?"

Yetta was surprised at the offer and decidedly uncertain.

"It won't do any harm to try," he urged her.

He pressed a button, and when a rotund, merry-looking man appeared, he introduced him.

"Mr. Brace, this is Miss Rayefsky. She has just promised to send us some copy about the cloak-makers' strike for your magazine page." [Pg 276]

They discussed it for a few minutes, and when Yetta had gone, Karner kept Brace a moment.

"My wife," he said, "thinks we could train this Rayefsky girl to write. If we could get some one to put a crimp in Lilian Leberwurtz' 'Balm for Busted Bussums,' it would help a lot. Look over her copy when it comes in. Buy enough anyhow to pay her for her trouble. And if it shows any promise, see what you can make of her. And keep me informed."

Yetta floated out of *The Star* office on clouds. In a sudden flame of enthusiasm she pictured herself as a great author. But as she went home a horrible doubt struck her—she might fail. The doubt increased as she laid out a sheet of paper.

After much hesitation and several false starts, she decided to stick as closely as might be to reality. She wrote the story of one of her girls who, although she worked on the highest-priced opera-cloaks, was so poor that she had never worn any wrap but a frayed old shawl.

It was natural for Yetta to be simple and direct. The copious notes she had written in connection with her study had taught her some familiarity with her pen. Above all, her public speaking had helped her. It had taught her to think ahead and plan her climax in advance. The women who would read the magazine page were—or had been—shop-girls, such as the audiences she spoke to night after night. And Mr. Brace had told her to write just as she talked.

At last she mailed three sketches. Within twenty-four hours she received a letter from Mr. Brace asking her to come and talk them over. She had a difficult time looking unconcerned as she entered *The Star* office. Her stories had seemed rather good when she had finished them, but they had so sunk in her estimation by this time that she wished she had not written them. This sinking process was most rapid during the few minutes she was kept waiting on a bench in the big reporters' room outside the glass door of Mr. Brace's private office. [Pg 277]

There were long tables on two sides of the room; they were divided off into sections by little railings. Most of the places were filled by reporters writing feverishly on yellow copy paper or banging away at typewriters. Boys and men rushed about, carrying copy or proof in and out of the various glass doors about the room. Almost every one looked curiously at Yetta and the others on the waiting bench. There were three people ahead of her: a woman who looked like an actress, a white-haired old man, with a beard almost to his belt. He held a heavy manuscript on his knees with great care, evidently afraid some one would steal it. Next to her was a perspiring young curate in a clerical collar.

Presently Mr. Brace ushered a disappointed poet out of his office and called "Miss Rayefsky." "By appointment," he added, as those who were ahead of her moved restlessly in protest.

He pulled up a chair for her beside his desk, and picking up his blue pencil, began a little lecture on the advertising rate of the magazine page. It was ten cents a word. His blue pencil scratched out a sentence from one of her stories. It would certainly not do any one a dollar and a half's worth of good. It began to look to Yetta as if there would be nothing left except blue pencil marks. But he glowed with pleasure during the process. When he had come to the end, he announced with pride that he had killed at least twenty-five dollars' worth of padding. She wished he would let her go quickly. She was afraid she might cry if he jeered at her any more. [Pg 278]

"I hope we can arrange for some more of this soon," he said abruptly, handing her a check.

It was for seventy-five dollars! She had never had so much money at one time before in her life. And she had earned it in four days!

But this was a small matter beside seeing her story in print that afternoon. Here was a tangible sign of her progress to send Walter. She was just reaching the end of his outline of study, and she was already writing for the papers! Her pride was somewhat tempered as she reread her story and realized how much it had been improved by Mr. Brace's vigorous slashing.

Her new sense of importance became almost oppressive when, a few days later, they offered her a contract at what seemed to her a magnificent salary—to conduct a column on Working-girls' Worries.

Mabel also was enthusiastic about it. It was a great and unexpected chance to give publicity to their work of organizing women. *The Star* had more than a million readers. Yetta could never have hoped to reach so large an audience with her voice.

But when Isadore saw the flaring posters which blossomed out on the East Side, announcing that Yetta Rayefsky was writing daily and exclusively for *The Evening Star*, he was mightily disturbed. Such conscienceless journalism as Mr. Karner's seemed to him the worst crime of our civilization. He could hardly believe that Yetta had thrown in her lot with it. It shook him out of his reserve, and he rushed over to her room. [Pg 279]

In her new pride, in the excitement of her new career, Yetta seemed more disturbingly beautiful to him than ever. Face to face with her he forgot all his carefully thought-out arguments.

"Oh, Yetta," he blurted out, "is it really true that you're going to work on that dirty paper?"

"They have offered to let me conduct a column for working girls, and I've accepted," she replied defiantly.

"You know it's a dirty paper," he stuck to his point. "Dirty in every way,—in its news, in its advertisements. Most of all in its rotten politics. These yellow journals are the worst enemy Socialism has to face. They mislead the people. They're paid to. All the editors are crooked—sold out. But Karner's the worst."

"I haven't anything to do with their news nor their advertising, nor with Mr. Karner's politics—I've been talking to working girls as hard as I know how for the last two years. Suddenly I get a chance to speak louder, so that thousands will hear. I might just as well refuse to speak in some of the East Side halls, because on other nights they are used for rotten dances."

"Oh, Yetta," he broke in, "you don't know what you are doing. I know it isn't the salary that makes you do it. But that's sure to be big. And Karner's not a philanthropist; he's not giving you money for nothing. He's buying something. You've got to give him his money's worth. He's buying your name. He's after circulation. He's using your name—have you seen the posters? He's using your popularity, Yetta, to sell his dirty paper to our people. He's paying you to persuade our working girls to read the filthiest paper in New York. Yetta, you don't realize what it means. It's a sort of betrayal—"

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"Are you through?" she interrupted angrily.

"No, I'm not. I've got to say it all. Not because it's you and me, Yetta, but Comrade to Comrade, because we're both Socialists. They won't let you say what you want to. No capitalist paper could, least of all this rotten one. If the class struggle means anything at all, it means that they are our enemies. They won't pay you to fight against them. They'll tie you up with some sort of a contract and gag you. They are bribing you, fooling you with the promise of a big audience. But they won't—can't—let you say what you believe."

"Mr. Braun," she said, trying hard to keep her temper, but at the same time to annihilate him, "I've talked this over with a number of friends. They all urged me to accept. So you see there is room for difference of opinion. You are the only one who has opposed it. Much as I respect your opinion in most matters, in this case I must—"

"No. You must not!" he stormed, jumping up and losing control of himself more than ever before. "I say you must not."

"What right have you—"

"Right? Who's got a better right? You know I love you. I'd rather a thousand times see myself disgraced than you, Yetta. What do Mabel Train and the other women care? They see a chance to advertise their pet scheme. What do they care about your reputation, your self-respect? They think it will be good for their little Trade Union League. But I see you, Yetta—selling yourself to a bunch of crooks—not being able to do the good you want to—and always with the shame of it on you! Oh, it's too terrible."

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He sank down in the chair, his head in his hands. Yetta's hard words melted as she saw how he was suffering.

"I'm sorry we can't agree on this, Comrade," she said. "We do on most things. Of course I may be making a mistake. But I've got to do what seems right to me—haven't I?"

"Yetta," he said, looking up at her suddenly, "are you in love with Walter Longman?"

She stiffened up at the question, but Isadore cut short her indignation.

"Oh, I know, Yetta. Just loving you doesn't give me a right to ask that question. But sometimes I've thought you loved Walter. He's my best friend. He wouldn't want you to go into this."

He looked at her tensely. It was a minute before she took up his challenge.

"I care a great deal for Walter's good opinion," her voice was low, but even. "I am quite sure he would be glad I had this chance. But even if he thought it was unwise for me to accept it, he would not try to browbeat me."

Isadore had shot his last bolt, it had rebounded on his own head. He fumbled for his hat.

"Good night, Yetta," he said.

"Good night, Mr. Braun."

The first month, Mr. Brace went over Yetta's contributions in detail, cramming into her all the advice he could think of. About the time his stock of journalistic epigrams ran out, the reports from the circulation manager were so favorable, that he decided he could give his attention to other things. Mr. Brace, like all good newspaper men, was a mystic in such matters. God only knows what the public will like. It was his business to scatter seeds. If they took root and grew into "circulation," he had sense enough to leave them alone. And Yetta's column had "caught on."

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At the end of three months the contract was renewed with a substantial increase in salary. The posters which advertised her work became more flamboyant. The size of her mail grew daily. The letters dealt with all the worries working girls are heirs to. Some of them were frivolous, most were commonplace. But once in a while among the misspelt, poorly written scrawls, there would be a throbbing story of life. Such letters tore at Yetta's heart—giving her new determinations, new enthusiasm for her work. As their number increased Yetta knew that her audience, her influence, was growing. The Fates were smiling at her. She was earning more money than she had ever hoped. Better still, she had as much time as before for the League work. She was rarely kept in the office after noon. It did not occur to her that she might have demanded an increase in salary on the ground of the free advertising she was giving *The Star* by her frequent speeches.

She was disappointed, however, not to be able to establish more cordial relations with her fellow-workers. These newspaper people, men and women, worked under as great a strain as any sweat-shop girls, but they seemed more foreign to her—to her class—than the rich uptown women she had met through the League. They had many good qualities which she appreciated—their *esprit de corps*, their hearty, open manners, the camaraderie with which they lent each other money. But they were shot through with a cynicism which shocked her. The whole situation was typified in the case of Maud Ripley, a special story writer, who tried to "take her up."

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She was a tired-eyed, meagre woman of near forty. She was brilliant. Every one in the office referred to her for facts and figures instead of going to the encyclopædia. Some of the things she wrote appealed strongly to Yetta, others were utterly futile. Besides her signed articles, mostly interviews with prominent foreigners,—she was fluent in half a dozen modern languages,—she composed "The Meditations of a Marriageable Maid." She was rather proud of this cheap wit.

She seemed to like Yetta, but always introduced her as "*The Star's* new sob-squeezer." Apparently she saw nothing in the new recruit but a successful pathos writer—a rising star in the profitable business of starting tears.

This attitude, which Yetta encountered on all sides, hurt her. She read some of "Lilian Leberwurtz'" writings. She had discovered that the real name of this woman with whom she was expected to compete was Mrs. Treadway. It was hopeless slush; it sickened her. She tried vainly to picture the type of woman who could write such drivel seriously.

"Dine with me Sunday," Miss Ripley asked her one day. She always talked in the close-packed style of a foreign correspondent who telegraphs at a dollar a word. "My flat. People you ought to know."

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Yetta was essentially inclusive, she did not like to turn her back on any proffered friendship. So at one the next Sunday she rang the bell of the uptown flat where Maud lived alone. There was one woman and three men in the parlor.

"Who are they," Yetta whispered as she was brushing her hair in Maud's bedroom.

"Matthews writes 'best sellers'—doesn't expect his friends to read them. Conklin has money—afford to write high-brow books that don't sell. Have to read between the lines. I'm too busy. Potter's a decadent poet. A bore, but all the rage. Mrs. Treadway—Lilian Leberwurtz—motherly old soul. Never know to look at her that she's the best-paid woman in the game—come on."

Of course Yetta was most interested in Mrs. Treadway. She would hardly have called her motherly, although she sometimes referred to her son in Harvard and frequently used the phrase—"when you get to be my age."

She was a large-bosomed, gaudy person with an almost expressionless face. Her gown looked cheap in spite of its evident expensiveness, and her jewellery was massive. But it was not her appearance nor her ponderous condescension which troubled Yetta. Mrs. Treadway in her first half-dozen words showed herself to be utterly sophisticated. She did not try to hide the insincerity of her work—she seemed to glory in it. Her first concern was to make it apparent that she was not such a fool as one would judge from her sentimental advice.

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Matthews exuded prosperity from his lavender socks up to his insistent tie—but the brilliancy did not seem to go higher. Conklin was apologetic in comparison. His face was spare, and when he was amused, deep curved wrinkles formed on either side of his mouth like brackets. The parenthetical effect of his smile was heightened by the fact that the rest of his face remained sombre. The poet looked his part.

When Yetta arrived, they were all looking at the latest number of *La vie parisienne*. Mrs. Treadway was shaking—like a gelatine pudding—over the predicament in which one of Fabriano's naked women was portrayed. Potter began a ponderous argument on the humor of Audrey Beardsley's lines and the wit of Matisse's color. He pronounced Fabriano "too obvious." He was happily interrupted by the announcement of dinner.

The conversation rambled on through the meal. No one stuck to a subject after their epigrams had run out. Nobody was deeply interested in anything. Much of it dealt with things about which Yetta was proud of her ignorance.

The dinner was almost a disaster to her. "Of course," she told herself as she walked home, "this group is not typical. There are people, there must be people, who take their writing seriously." But the attitude of Maud Ripley and her friends had shocked Yetta deeply. The worst of it was that they respected her in a way—because she was "making good." But the fact that she was in

earnest did not interest them. She would not have dropped the least in their esteem if she had been utterly insincere. She felt as if she had been insulted. [Pg 286]

The next day a new incident increased Yetta's feeling of foreignness in the office. She was waiting in the reporters' room for a chance to see Brace. Cowan, the gray-haired sporting editor, was telling whimsical stories of the "old days" when he had been a cub. Although older in years than the others, he was the youngest-hearted of them all. Yetta felt more drawn to him than to any one else on *The Star*.

Suddenly a curly-haired Irishman, O'Rourke, burst in. He always entered a room with a deafening bang.

"Gee," he said—"some story this morning. A greenhorn bank-examiner, who didn't know his A B C, dropped into Ex-Governor Billings' bank yesterday and found a pretty mess. The old boy never had a bank-examiner come in unexpectedly like that before in his long and useful life. It nearly gave him apoplexy. And he just putting up his name for the Senate. But this blundering bank-examiner was not such a fool after all. The story goes that Billings had to come across with an awful wad to hush him up."

"Why? Did the examiner find something wrong?" Yetta asked.

"Yes, my child," O'Rourke said with playful pity. "He was that foolish."

"What did he find?" Yetta persisted.

"Unsecured loans. Billings had been lending himself the depositors' money, using his calling card as collateral."

"What'll happen to Billings?"

"It's a shame for you to go around town without a nurse," O'Rourke teased her. "It was decided a long time ago that Billings was to be the next United States Senator from the glorious State of New York. A little accident like this can't be allowed to interfere." [Pg 287]

"It's a rotten shame," Cowan said. He was old enough not to have to try to appear blasé. "They're going too strong—putting over a crook like that on the people. Everybody with any memory knows his record. In the good old days when yellow journalism was just beginning, before we got so respectable we couldn't print the truth, we showed Billings up—how he came through for the railroads on that Death Avenue grade crossing."

"Oh, that's ancient history. It's only six months ago—" another reporter began. One after another they added details to the Ex-Governor's record of infamy. But that afternoon's paper contained a eulogistic article on his patriotic achievement. An editorial which Yetta knew O'Rourke had written praised him to the skies, and said the people of the State were to be congratulated that so worthy a man had consented to accept the nomination. Yetta could not understand the psychology of these men who, having in hand the evidence to defeat an unworthy candidate for public office, did not use it. This was worse than cynicism—it was shameful.

As she was leaving the office a few days later, Cowan rode down in the elevator with her.

"If you don't mind, Miss Rayefsky," he said, when they had dodged the cars and had safely reached City Hall Park, "I'd like to give you a little advice. Perhaps I'm butting in where I'm not wanted. But you see, my youngest daughter is older than you are. And I guess breaking into a new job and a new crowd isn't the easiest thing in the world for a girl. I won't mind if you do snub me." [Pg 288]

"Let's sit down a minute," Yetta said. "I'd like to talk to you. I certainly do feel lost."

"Well—" He was evidently embarrassed. He seemed to give up hope of being tactful and dove into his subject. "I overheard one of the men say that you'd been to a dinner at Maud Ripley's. She's a clever woman. But I'd not like to see one of my daughters tie up with her."

"I didn't enjoy myself," Yetta said. "I'm not going again."

"Good. That's all I had to say. She probably wouldn't do you any harm—certainly wouldn't try to. But newspaper men don't think much of her—except her brain. Excuse me for butting in."

He started to get up, but Yetta detained him. She was very deeply touched by his kindly interest in her.

"There are a lot of things I would like to ask you, if you've the time."

She began on the affair of the Ex-Governor. Why did not Cowan and O'Rourke and the others use their knowledge against him? The answer to that was simple. They would lose their jobs. Karner and Billings were friends. But this did not satisfy Yetta. They argued it out for half an hour. Nobody saw the defects and limitations of journalism more clearly than Cowan, and yet he was utterly loyal.

"If my son doesn't turn out a newspaper man, I'll disown him," he said emphatically. "Now don't you go and get sore on newspaper work because it isn't all honest. It's one whole lot better than when I began. The Press is the hope of Democracy, and it is also its measure. Of course Karner's ethics are a bit queer. But no crookeder than the people will stand for. He'd be honest if it paid." [Pg 289]

"The people can have just as good and clean a paper as they really want. They get better and more democratic ones to-day than they did twenty years ago, and when they want one that is really straight, they'll get that.

"Of course it's bad if you want to look at it that way. It's a compromise game. But there isn't any class of people in the country who are doing more for progress than this bunch of cynical newspaper men. They are the real patriots. Every new recruit pushes the flag a little farther forward. But you've got to make up your mind to compromise."

"I haven't had to do it yet," Yetta said.

"Perhaps not yet. But sooner or later you will have to, if you're going to play the newspaper game."

"That's the trouble with you people," Yetta exclaimed, as if she suddenly saw a light, "you call it a game. I'm not playing with life. I've got to consider myself and my work serious. I won't compromise. If it's the rule of the game—why, I'll quit playing it."

The surprising thing was that she was not asked to compromise. Mr. Brace seemed to take very little interest in what she wrote. When he spoke to her about it, it was to make some technical suggestion about the use of "caps" or "italics." No party Socialist could have accused her contributions of lack of orthodoxy. She was giving her readers the straight gospel. Day after day Isadore read them and wondered.

Mrs. Karner also wondered. Coming home late one night, she encountered her husband in the hallway; he had just shown out some friends who had been playing poker. She swept by him with a curt "Good night." He was a little drunk. But she stopped halfway up the stairs. [Pg 290]

"I say, Bert. Explain to me the mystery of Yetta Rayefsky. Her column this afternoon is straight Socialism. What does it mean? Has a ray of light penetrated into the subterranean gloom of your office? Has the editorial staff fallen in love with her?"

Karner had been winning and was in good spirits.

"That's so. I've forgotten to thank you for suggesting her. She's a gold mine."

"Yes. But how can *The Star* stand the tone of decency she gives it?"

"Don't worry," he winked profoundly. "There'll be money enough for your trip to Europe. A column and a half won't hurt us."

"But why do you let her do it? What's the answer?"

"As simple as A B C. I'm surprised you don't see it yourself. The little lady's bugs on sweat-shops. And sweat-shops don't advertise. See? As long as she sticks to the East Side, she can damn any one she likes to. And as for Socialism—the girls don't vote."

"It was stupid of me not to understand," Mrs. Karner said as she went on up to her room. "Goodnight—Cynic."

She never realized how much her jibes stung her husband.

"Damn the women," he muttered. "She married me for my money and don't like the way I earn it."

Mr. Karner had loved his wife more than anything—except the pleasure of cutting a figure in the world. His paper made him a power in the community. Presidential candidates bid for his support. No one had dared to blackball him when he had recently put up his name at a club which was supposed to be composed of gentlemen. But his wife neither respected nor feared him. He stood gloomily in the hallway—the fumes of champagne making things oscillate gently—wondering whether he dared to go to her room. He decided he was afraid, and, calling for his hat and coat, went out. [Pg 291]

But to the other people who were asking the same question which Mrs. Karner had put to her husband, no answer was given. Isadora's daily amazement at Yetta's outspoken Socialism gradually grew into a conviction that he had been wrong. He wrote her a loyal letter of apology, and Yetta in a condescending reply forgave him.

But trouble came as Christmas was approaching. Some ladies from the Woman's Consumers' League called on Yetta, and, after praising her work for factory women, tried to enlist her aid in the cause of the department-store girls, who are so shamefully overworked in the season of holiday shopping. They wanted her to speak at a mass meeting. It was not hard to interest Yetta in such a cause.

"Give me some of the facts," she said, after she had promised to speak, "and I'll run some stories about it in *The Star*."

But her first department-store article did not come out. It had been "killed" in favor of a receipt for preserving the gloss on finger-nails. A copy-reader, being wise in newspaper business and anxious to gain favor, had run to the advertising manager with the proof. The advertising manager had rushed angrily to Mr. Brace. Brace had gone to Mr. Karner. Mr. Karner had thrown it into the wastepaper basket and suggested the finger-nail story. [Pg 292]

When Yetta called up Mr. Brace about it, she found him inclined to treat the matter as a joke. "After all," he laughed, "you know there are limits. You can't take a man's money for advertisement on one page and spit in his eye on another. There is plenty of work for your scalping knife among people who don't advertise."

Yetta began to understand. It was her first introduction to serious temptation. In six months newspaper work had got into her blood. Besides the pleasant thrill of it, there was the usefulness. There were hundreds of girls who depended on her largely. It was hard to give up such an audience. And it was pleasant work—well-paid. It was a wonderful thing for a sweat-shop girl to have climbed so high. Should she go on "playing the game"? For a while she tried to shift the responsibility to other shoulders. What would people think? She knew what Mabel and Isadore would think. Mabel would tell her to compromise. Isadore the opposite. What would Walter think? And then it suddenly came to her clearly that it didn't matter at all what anybody else thought. She had to decide it by herself. Whatever happened, she would always have to live with herself. Self-respect was more important than the regard of even the closest friend. They were asking her to do just what she had emphatically told Cowan she would never do. She put on her hat and went to Mr. Karner's office.

"This matter does not concern me," he said. "I employ Mr. Brace to edit the magazine page, and I trust his ability and judgment. If he considered it unwise to run your article, that ends it." [Pg 293]

"Mr. Karner, if *The Star* is afraid to touch department stores, I'll resign."

He spun round in his chair.

"Afraid? That's strong language."

"It's very easy to prove it unjustified," she said quickly.

He looked at her sternly for a few minutes, taking her measure. It was his ability at this process which had enabled him to build up his paper from a third-rater to its present position.

"Miss Rayefsky, you want a flat answer. We're in business to make money. We won't attack our heaviest advertisers."

Yetta got up.

"Don't be in a hurry. Nobody gets a chance to resign from my staff twice. Think this over for a couple of days. We've been satisfied with your work; I hoped you were. I hoped that you thought what you were doing was worth while. You can go on doing it indefinitely as far as I can see. You're about to throw up this work because you can't do the impossible. It isn't just *The Star*. It's a limitation of journalism. No editor in the city could print that story."

"Within twenty-four hours I'll mail it to you in print," Yetta said, moving towards the door.

"So!" he growled. "That's it, is it? Somebody else has offered you a better contract. You forget, of course, that we taught you how to write—that we advertised you—made you. You forget all that as soon as somebody else offers you—"

But Yetta had slammed the door in his face.

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Back in her room, she called up Isadore and told him the story.

"I'm mailing you the article to print in *The Clarion*."

So she made the honorable amend.

"I was half wrong, anyhow," he tried to comfort her. "I never would have believed they'd let you free as long as they did. And besides—you've learned to write. I hope you'll give us some more."

What hurt Yetta most was that a cable had come from Teheran saying that Walter had started homeward. He would hear of the mess she had made.

Mr. Karner, when he received the Socialist paper, with Yetta's article in it, vented some of his profane rage on his wife. The quarrel which resulted brought Mrs. Karner to life.

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## CHAPTER XXII WALTER'S RETURN

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When the Archæological Expedition reached Constantinople, the married men were met by their wives.

To the suburbanite who comes home after each day's work, the dinner is likely to seem as important as his spouse. The waiting wife has a deeper significance for the sailor and explorer. For three years these men had seen no white women, except in a Scotch Mission compound, four days' ride from their camp.

The Marquise d'Hauteville was much younger than her husband. She was a daintily gowned Parisienne of the *Quartier St. Germain*. She was on the dock with her two boys, seven and four.

The sight of her explained to Walter the nervous impatience which had kept the Chief pacing the deck restlessly ever since they had left Batoum.

Dr. Bertholet, the querulous specialist in measuring skulls, suddenly began to smile when he caught sight of Madame—a fat *bourgeoise* in black silk, who looked like *la patronne* of a café. Beckmeyer, the German authority on the ancient religions of Persia, waved his handkerchief wildly to a flaxen-haired Gretchen. They had lost a son while he was away, and when the gang plank was down, they rushed into each other's arms and sobbed like children.

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The unmarried men stood on one foot and then on the other until the first transports had quieted and were then presented to the ladies. The Marquis gave them a rendezvous in Paris for the next week. It was understood that the married men were to have a few days with their families before the expedition should formally report its return.

Delanoue, Vibert, and Walter rushed their baggage through the customs and had just time to catch the Orient Express. All three of them were in a hurry to reach Paris. The two Frenchmen were like bathers on a spring-board about to dive into the sea. They let their imaginations run riot, trying to devise a suitable orgy to recompense them for their three years of deprivation. Delanoue wished them both to be his guests. He proposed to lead them to his favorite restaurant and order everything on the bill of fare. Afterwards they would invade Montmartre. Unless Paris had seriously deteriorated, he felt sure he could make them realize how sad and colorless were the wildest dreams of the Arabian Nights.

Vibert gleefully accepted the invitation. But Walter quietly refused. He also was in a hurry to reach Paris—he hoped to find a letter from Mabel. When the train reached the *Gare de l'Est*, in spite of their jibes at his Puritanism, he left them.

At the Consulate he found three packages of mail. He hurried to a hotel and opened them eagerly. There was only one letter from Mabel, hardly more than a note. Yetta, she wrote, had told her that he had started homeward. She hoped the Expedition had been successful. She would be glad to see him again. She was, as usual, very busy, but both she and Eleanor were well.

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What a fool he had been made by hope! He had not been able to accept her definite refusals—he remembered them all now. These three years he had shut his eyes to reality and had lived in a baseless hope. A man needs something more than routine work to keep him going. In all the idle moments scattered through his busy, exciting life—the minutes before he fell asleep, the times some jackal's cry had waked him in the night, all the intervals of waiting—he had thought of Mabel. And always he had asked himself if their long intimacy was to lead to nothingness. It seemed impossible. Surely she would feel his absence, miss him from her life and want him back. His friendship must have meant something to her. She was proud and hard to change. But time would work the miracle. She would call to him. It seemed to be written in the stars, in the glory of the desert dawns, in the haunting afterglows of the sunset.

The last months this dream had been more concrete than any reality. When he reached Paris after his long exile, he would find her summons. Perhaps she would come there to meet him. There was only this cold and formal note.

In his barren hotel room he sounded the very depths of loneliness. Of all his recent comrades he alone was unwelcomed. He thought of the dainty Marquise d'Hauteville and her children. They had stopped off at Semmering in the Austrian Alps. He did not know where the Bertholets were celebrating their reunion. Beckmeyer and his Gretchen had gone up to their village home on the edge of the Black Forest. And somewhere on the side of *La Butte joyeuse*, Delanoue and Vibert were finding companionship and a hearty welcome. Here he was in his dismal hotel room, alone with the Dead Hope he could not forget, a misfit, a mistake—*une vie manquée*.

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The winter night fell over Paris, but he was too gloomy to notice the darkness. It was the cold which at last stung into his consciousness. He went to bed like a man who had been drugged.

The next morning he was awakened by a batch of reporters. Somehow the news that the Expedition had returned had leaked out. The reporters had heard some vague rumors of "the siege" when for two weeks the fanatics had attacked the camp, and how Walter, dressed in native clothes, had slipped through the lines and brought relief. But he refused to talk, taking refuge behind the etiquette which requires subordinates to hold their peace until the chief has spoken.

He had hardly got rid of the reporters, when Delanoue and Vibert broke in with an incoherent account of their adventures. They were both drunk and decidedly tired. While Walter was shaving, Delanoue fell asleep on his bed, Vibert on his lounge. And they were not quiet about it.

The coffee went cold in Walter's cup. What should he do? It was impossible to spend the morning listening to uneasy grunts and snores. Where should he go? On previous visits to Paris he had enjoyed himself. He knew many people. But he did not feel that they would amuse him this time. Anyhow it was too early to make calls. His coffee was hopelessly cold. He was trying to overcome his listlessness and ring for more, when the *chasseur* brought him a *petit bleue* and the announcement that a new swarm of reporters wanted to see him.

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"Hello, hello, Mr. Walter Longman," the *pneumatique* ran. "The morning papers announce your advent. Come around for dejeuner. By all means come. I'll lock the door. I warrant the newspaper men are hounding you. If you are one half as agreeable as you used to be, you'll rescue from the



very bottom of boredom an unfortunate woman who signs herself

Your friend

BEATRICE MAYNARD KARNER."

Walter had hardly thought of Mrs. Karner since leaving America. But five minutes after he had torn open the despatch, he had dodged the reporters and was out on the sidewalk. It was his intention to call a taxi and go at once to Mrs. Karner's, but he realized abruptly that it was much too early. He had an hour and a half to kill before time for *dejeuner*. He sat down in one of the Boulevard Cafés and tried to interest himself in the papers. But once more the ugly mood came to him. He let his coffee grow cold again. He sat there glowering at an indefinite spot on the polished floor—wondering dully if there was any further interest left for him in life. He felt so unsocial that he gave up the idea of going to Mrs. Karner's. He would be bored. But as lunch time approached he became disturbed at the idea of eating alone. Certainly anybody's company would be better than his own.

Mrs. Karner welcomed him gayly. She seemed bent on being merry. There was a subtle change in her manner of dressing. She was less of a *grande dame* than she had been in New York. She was feeling her way back to her youth. There was a dash of reckless uncertainty in her manner as of a boy at the beginning of his vacation or a convict just released.

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"How I envy you all the excitement you've been having! Tell me about it."

He had just started to reply when *dejeuner* was announced and they went out to the dining-room. He hardly remembered what they talked about—details of the Expedition mostly. But when the meal was ended and they went back to the salon, Mrs. Karner stretched out on a *chaise longue* and he sat down on the ottoman by the open fire. A constraint fell on them. For lack of a better remark he said—

"I've a pocket full of choice Caucasian cigarettes. Won't you try one?"

She accepted his suggestion, but he could think of nothing further to say.

"You're not exactly cheerful to-day," she said. "Anything wrong?"

He made a vague gesture.

"Bad news from home?"

"Home?" He tried to make his tone flippant. "Is there any such place?"

"Fine!" she said. "You're coming on, Walter. Your worst fault used to be your belief in such superstitions."

It was her turn now to hide her seriousness behind the mask of flippancy.

"Do you notice anything particular about the furniture in this room?"

"It's fine old Empire."

"Well, it doesn't matter whether it's *Empire*, or *Louis Seize*, or *Henri Quatre*, or *Chinois*. It isn't Gothic! That's the important point. Yes," she went on in answer to the question in his eyes, "I'm expecting the final papers any day. I'll take my maiden name. Beatrice Maynard."

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She threw back her head and blew out some rings of the fragrant smoke.

"It took me a long time to learn this trick," she said, as if it were a very serious matter. "The man who kept the Morgue on *The Star* taught me—in the old days."

But Walter hardly heard her irrelevant words. He was thinking of the implications of her smash-up, and overlaid on these thoughts was the impression that her throat was very beautiful. He had never noticed it before.

"Fine cigarettes, these," she commented, still watching the smoke rings to avoid meeting his eyes.

But Walter did not reply. A sudden pity for her flooded him. How hopelessly lost they both were, splashing about aimlessly in the great muddle of life. They sat silent for many minutes, staring blankly at the dead past and the future which promised to be stillborn.

It is strange how much we sometimes know of other people which has never been told. Mrs. Karner, although Walter had never taken her into his confidence, knew with amazing clearness the import of his barren romance. And he, in the same way, sensed what was wrong with her, felt the deadening tragedy which lay behind her mocking words.

She—frightened by the feeling that in this poignant silence they were becoming dangerously intimate—brought their reveries to an abrupt end by jumping up.

"We're a sorry couple, aren't we? We've messed things up frightfully, and we want to cry. It's much better business to laugh. Let's shake hands and cheer up."

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The wide sleeve of her morning gown fell back from her arm as she stretched out her hand to him. Her skin seemed inordinately, preposterously white to him as he stood up. But the thing

which impressed him most was the intricate network of tiny blue veins on the inside by the elbow.

"In France," he said, "I claim French privileges."

As she did not pull her hand away when he raised it to his lips, he kissed the blue veins inside her elbow. He did not realize what he was doing—what he had done—until he heard the sharp intake of her breath. The look on her face made the blood pound in his temples.

It was only a matter of seconds that they were both silent. But it seemed an interminable time.

Walter looked down into the glowing fireplace—struggling with the thing which burned within him more hotly than the coals. After all—why not? It is horrible to be lonely.

"You foolish boy," she said, with an uneasy laugh, "I didn't mean to be taken so literally."

"I guess it's the only way for us—if we want to cheer up."

He snapped his half-burnt cigarette into the grate and turned towards her. Her face suddenly went white, and she swayed unsteadily. One hand waved aimlessly in the air, seeking support. He took it in his.

The next few days the papers were full of the Expedition. The Marquis d'Hauteville came back from Semmering, and a large part of his statement was a tribute to Walter's ability and courage. The other members of the Expedition, with the delightful courtesy of the French, emphasized his part in the Siege and exaggerated the perils he had run while bringing them relief. Paris dearly loves such sensations. Nothing pleases the gay city more than to idolize a foreigner. He did the best he could to escape the lionizing.

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There was much work still to do in the preparing of the report. He moved from the hotel to a quiet cottage in Passy and settled down to work—and play. Beatrice scrupulously respected his "duty hours," but once he was free from his desk, he plunged with her into a swirl of gayety, such as he had never before permitted himself. The follies of the "*Transatlantique*" set—the rich Americans of the Étoile district—interested him from their sheer novelty. Beatrice's incisive comments on the bogus aristocracy—the Roumanian Grand Dukes and Princes of the Papal States—who fattened off the gullibility of his countrymen amused him immensely.

Their intimacy was strange indeed. Before his infatuation with Mabel, Walter had not been exactly a Puritan, but he had never experienced anything like this. No word of love ever passed between him and Beatrice. The hallowed phrases of affection were under the ban. They were feverishly engaged in trying to forget, in helping each other forget how hollow such words had proved. A feeling of delicacy restrained him from using the word "home," it had been such a mockery to her. And to have spoken to him of fidelity would have seemed to her rank cruelty.

Only once did they talk together of the past. What he had to tell was told quickly. Her story was longer, and part of it she did not tell.

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Her father had been a doctor. His death, when she was in college, had left her almost penniless, alone with an invalid mother. Literature had always been her ambition; so, leaving college, she had come to New York to try newspaper work. She had fought her way to a very moderate success. It was not the kind of work which interested her,—the dreariest kind of pot-boiling,—and it did not pay enough to keep her mother in the comfort she was accustomed to. There was no immediate prospect of bettering their position. Beatrice was very much discouraged. She thought she had it in her to write novels, but by wearing herself out with hack work she could not earn enough for her mother's needs and had no energy left for the things she longed to do.

Then Bert Karner had come along. He was a young millionaire from the West. He bought *The Star* on which Beatrice worked. Although rich, he was not of proud family. He never told how his father had made his stake. His outspoken ambition was "to make New York sit up and take notice." He had a decided genius for journalism. And it was not long before the steadily increasing circulation of his paper—and his piratical methods—attracted attention. There was no statute by which he could be sent to jail, so he became "a leading citizen."

At the very first he fell wildly and tumultuously in love with Beatrice. Although his passion for her was very real, it was not entirely free from calculation. His project of "being somebody" required a skilled manager. Beatrice was beautiful, she knew how to dress. She was witty, she would make a distinguished-looking hostess. He could also rely on her taste in selecting his neckties. He was morbidly afraid of appearing vulgar, and especially in this matter of neck-wear he was afraid to trust his own judgment. These considerations made him ask her to be his wife instead of his mistress. Her first refusal surprised him. But he was used to buying what he wanted, and he kept raising her price.

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If Mrs. Maynard had complained, her daughter would very likely have been more egoistic. But her mother, whom she always referred to as an Angel in Heaven, never complained. And so at last Beatrice sold herself. But—and this, for some unaccountable reason, she did not tell Walter—she had had an outspoken explanation with Karner. He knew what he was buying, knew that she did not love him.

Three months after the marriage Mrs. Maynard died suddenly. This was what had annihilated Beatrice. It was so horribly grotesque. If her mother had only died before the wedding! If the gods had only given Beatrice courage to hold out a little longer! To give her mother these three months of comfort, she had sold all her life.

In her first fit of despair she had burned the half-finished novel. What did a failure like herself have to tell the world? But her mother's death had not been Bert's fault. So at first she tried to fulfil her contract with him, did what she could to organize his home and help him in his social climbing. But the Fates had not finished their bludgeonings. Into this dumb indifference which followed her mother's death came a sudden demonstration of her husband's rascality. When she had married him, she had at least thought he was an upright man. If her spirit had not been broken, she would have left him at once. But she was too shattered to care any more. She had gone through the forms of life, seeking listlessly after distraction. The thing which had come nearest to reality had been her interest in the Woman's Trade Union League. She had gone on the Board because her husband urged her to make friends with Mrs. Van Cleave. It held her interest because her own hunger-years had given her a deep sympathy.

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Although she did not realize it, it was Yetta who had at last driven her to leave her husband. She had caught some of Yetta's life-giving faith. It takes us a long time to recover when once we are dead, and Mrs. Karner had been a long time dead. She did not know what was happening, but the grain of faith, which the little East Side vest-maker had planted in her, grew steadily. Slowly it had forced out roots into the dead matter about it, pushed the stem which was to bear fruit up through the hardened soil to the light. When Mr. Karner had profanely explained how Yetta had left his office, his wife suddenly realized that she was alive again. The sham was over. The next day she had called on a lawyer and had left for Europe shortly afterwards.

Walter and Beatrice did not have another serious talk for several months. He had nearly finished his work, and she at least had begun to wonder what would come next. An early spring day had tempted them to motor down the river to St. Cloud. After supper, Walter was contentedly filling his pipe, his back against a great chestnut tree, while she was repacking the dishes in the lunch basket.

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"If you want any help," he said lazily, "I'll call the chauffeur. He's paid to do such things."

She ignored his remark until she had finished. Then she came over and sat beside him.

"Walter," she said, "in three weeks now I'm going to leave Paris—for Switzerland."

"It doesn't begin to get hot here till the end of June."

"Well, I'm not going in search of coolness. Quiet is what I want. I've got to settle down to work—a novel. I must get away from this turmoil of a city and its disturbances."

"Am I one of the disturbances?" he asked after a moment's thought.

"Yes."

"It'll be very lonely for me when you go."

"Let's have a cigarette," she said.

It was not till it had almost burnt out that either of them spoke. She broke the silence.

"Yes. I will be lonely too. But it looks to me like my only salvation." She stopped to press out the spark of her cigarette on the sole of her slipper. "I'm not a success as a light-minded woman, Walter. I'm no good at dancing a clog. I rather think you saved my life. I've been leaning on you more than you have known, I guess. I've caught my breath—thanks to you."

He put out his hand in protest:—

"There's lots of thanking to be done, but it's the other way round."

But she did not seem to hear him. Her brow was puckered up trying to find words for the thing she wanted to say.

"I've got to stand on my own feet—alone. I didn't want to take any money from Bert. A good friend lent me some. Enough for a year or two, but I can't always be dependent."

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"Why not lean on me a little more effectively," he broke in impetuously. "Why not go on just as we are—at least till you find your footing."

"No," she shook her head decisively. "That wouldn't do at all. Look here, Walter, we're grown up—we can talk it out straight. What future is there for us if we go on? Only two alternatives. We'll get to hate each other—or—we'll get to—we'll become a habit. Woof! Habits are hard to break. No. If I'm really going to live, I've got to avoid habits as I would leprosy. There'll never be any decent life for me till I've convinced myself that I can go it alone. I've got a whole lot of things to fight out. My plan is best. Three weeks more of vacation, three weeks more of ribbons—and then armor."

"As you think best," he said.

The last day, he bought her ticket for her, engaged her berth in the morning, and then they went out again to St. Cloud to spend the day. After lunch they spread out a rug under the great trees.

"Boy," she began. She was not as old as he, but being a woman she liked to pretend she was. "I've come to a momentous conclusion about you. You ought to be married."

He sat up with a jerk.

"Don't be frightened," she said. "I'm not a candidate. I've had too much of it already. But seriously—you're different. I don't mean to be insulting, but you were made to be a family man. Our little holiday has been pleasant without end, but it's not what you were meant for. After all you're not too old to reform. You've been on the rocks. But there's a good deal left of the wreckage. I got into trouble because I didn't have the nerve to hold tight enough to my dream. Watch out that you don't make the opposite mistake. Let me diagnose your case."

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She moved around in front of him, and from time to time shook her slender finger at him solemnly.

"You've ability. Serious ability—the kind this old world of ours needs. And you've this 'social conscience' with which the younger generation is cursed. You won't be content to waste yourself. What are you going to do? Somehow you've got to find a place where you'll seem to yourself useful. If not, you'd better commit suicide at once. If you're going to run to waste, at least spare yourself the shameful years. But no. You're not defeated enough for the arsenic bottle."

"You've two kinds of ability. You pretend to despise this archæology—but nobody else does. The other ability is your grasp of social philosophy. For either career—and, wise as I am, I'm not sure which will be better for you—you need a quiet, orderly life, not a disturbing, disorderly romp like these last months. You need to be well kept, you need a wife."

Walter smoked away quietly, but his face had turned haggard.

"I don't want to hurt you," she went on relentlessly, "but Mabel Train isn't the only woman in the world."

"She's the only one I ever especially noticed, till you came along."

"Leave me out of this discussion. There's just the trouble. If you insist on keeping your eyes closed to the other women, you'd best run along and blow your fool head off at once. If you want a real life, open your eyes."

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"Well," he said with a wry smile, "I suppose you've got some victim to recommend. Whom shall I notice?"

It was several minutes before she took up his challenge.

"Why don't you notice Yetta Rayefsky?"

"Yetta Rayefsky?" he repeated in amazement.

"Yes. Why not? She's a fine girl, and she worships the ground you walk on."

"You're joking."

"Not at all. I know what I'm talking about. Perhaps she doesn't realize it herself, but she's very much in love with you."

"The poor little girl!"

"Yes. Of course. You ought to be sorry for her. You don't deserve it. But when it comes to that, did any man ever live who really deserved to have a woman love him? That's the tragedy of our sex. We have nothing better to love than mere men."

There were no heroics over their separation. They went to town for supper. They were both sufficiently civilized to keep up the appearance of gayety.

Just before the train started she leaned out of the window of her compartment and tossed him a final challenge.

"Walter," she said, "I'm more fortunate than you. I know what I'm going to do next. Better not waste time deciding. You know what my advice is. Go back to New York and get married."

But there was no agreement in his face as the train pulled out.

The next weeks were Hell for him. Left to himself, the bitter memories came back with a rush. The *Quatorze feuillet* brought him the Legion of Honor. He had often thought that it was the one distinction he would enjoy most. The investiture seemed a farce. What good are honors, when there is no one at whose feet to lay them? Then came the offer of a professorship at Oxford. It was a life berth, the highest scholastic honor to which he could aspire. After all, if these people valued his knowledge of Haktite and no one else valued him at all, why not accept?

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But he could not bring himself to a definite separation from Mabel. He decided to have one more try. He asked for a month to consider the Oxford offer and started home. He announced his coming by two cables—to Mabel and to Yetta.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE PALACE OF DREAMS

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When the cablegram from Teheran had announced that Walter was starting homeward, it became necessary for Yetta to rearrange her attitude towards him. As long as he had been an abstraction she had been perfectly free to love him according to her fancy. Evidently she would have to treat the real person differently.

Of course she was glad that he was coming back, but there was an undercurrent of sadness to the thought. It is very hard to give up habits which have become dear. And she was habituated to his absence. In a more tangible way his rooms had become dear to her. In this setting she had come into life. Almost every memory she valued, except those of her father, were connected with the place. She had read so many books in his great leather chair! She had learned to write at his desk. Even the two oil portraits, of his grandfather in a stiff stock and his grandmother in crinoline, had become in a way personal possessions. She must leave all this, must learn to live in new surroundings.

But this regret was only half conscious. There were more vivid sensations of expectancy. Above all she tremblingly hoped for his approbation. When the Great Jahwe had completed his six days' labor and was looking it over, the Earth must have had a palpitating moment of suspense while it waited His verdict. Yetta felt herself the work of Walter's hands. Would he say, "It is good"?

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Her love had made her foolishly humble. An objective observer would have doubted if Walter was worthy to unlace her shoes. The fairies had been generous at his christening. They had given him health and wealth and brains. He himself would have admitted that most of his talents had lain idle, wrapped in a napkin. Yetta had not been so richly endowed. At fifteen, with hardly any education, the Fates had put her in a sweat-shop. But she had been given one priceless talent—a keen hunger for an ever larger life. No slightest opportunity for growth had she let slip. Walter was a pitiful example of wasted opportunities compared to this young woman of twenty-two.

There was a more subtle disparity between them.

Yetta's beliefs were passionate faiths, Walter's were intellectual convictions. The dozen odd years' difference in age might have explained this, but it went deeper. Walter had never had the knack of being an intimate part of activity. He was an observer rather than a participant in life. He never got closer to the stage than the wings. And more often he sat in a box. Between her ardent faith and his tired disillusionment lay a chasm which was more than a matter of years. But she, being in love with him, and hardly knowing him at all—at most she had had a dozen talks with him—could not see this.

Would he give her more than approbation? As long as she could, Yetta tried to avoid a definite answer to this question. But it became insistent. She knew he had been in love with Mabel. Eleanor Mead's gossip had supplemented her own conviction. At first it had seemed the inevitable that he should love the wonderful Miss Train. But the last year had seen almost a quarrel between Yetta and Mabel. There were constant disagreements as to the policy of the Woman's Trade Union League. Mabel did not want it to become avowedly Socialist and Yetta did. Mabel felt that she had a discoverer's right to Yetta and was provoked whenever her *protégée* showed a will of her own. It is hard enough for men to keep friends in the face of serious and long-continued difference of opinion. Women, with lesser experience in the world of affairs, with a more personal tradition, find it harder. It had come to a climax over Yetta's resignation from *The Star*. Mabel had been very indignant and had called it a piece of stupid Quixotism. It had shown Yetta very clearly the fundamental gap between their points of view. They still called each other by their first names and professed undying affection. But it was hard nowadays for Yetta to realize how the wonderful Walter had ever loved this rather narrow-minded woman. She knew where Mabel bought her false hair. Surely Walter would get over his infatuation. Vague hopes inevitably mingled with her thoughts of the future. But she was almost relieved by his unexpectedly long stay in Paris.

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Walter had hardly seen the lights of Le Havre sink below the horizon before he began to regret his decision to go to New York. Once more hope had made a fool of him. What chance was there that Mabel would have changed her mind in these six months? Certainly she had not loved him when she had written that miserably cold note of welcome. His escapade with Beatrice would hardly help matters. What perversity was it that drove him home to receive a new humiliation?

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Two days out they ran into a gale, and Walter, who was a good sailor, had the promenade deck almost to himself. Standing up forward, an arm round a stanchion for a brace, the spray in his face, it seemed as if the cobwebs which had been smothering him were blown away. He could look at himself calmly, objectively. One question after another posed itself, and he sought the answers, not as an infatuated fool, but as a man who has "suffered unto wisdom."

What was there for him to hope for from Mabel? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Even if she relented, it was a sorry prospect. If now, after six years, after her youth had passed, she suddenly decided to pick up what she had so long despised, it would be in discouragement. He had more disillusionments than enough of his own. And Mabel in slippers was a revolting idea. The romantic thing for him to do, now that romance was dead, was to kill himself on the lady's front doorstep. But the age of romance had passed for him.

For the first time in six years he looked out upon a future in which Mabel played no part. Beatrice had said he must find some useful work. There was the Oxford offer. Of course every acquisition to the museum of human knowledge is worth while. But it was very hard for him to apply this theory to his specialty. What good did it do any one to have him piece together the broken fragments of a semicivilization, so long dead? He could think of no branch of study which more truly deserved Carlyle's jibe of "dry-as-dust." It was perhaps better than suicide, but was there no more human sort of utility for him? As Beatrice had said, the "social conscience" was keen in him. He wanted to serve the people of his day and generation.

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The one activity he could think of was suggested by the news in Yetta's letters of the English Socialist newspaper which Isadore Braun was editing and to which she was occasionally contributing. His surplus money, quite a lot of it had piled up in the last three years, would help immensely. Even if they could not raise enough to maintain a daily, his income would suffice for a weekly. The three of them would be a strong editorial combination. More and more the idea attracted him. They could make a representative publication of it. Isadore with his faith in the political party, Yetta in close touch with the trade-unions, and he to furnish a broader, more philosophical expression of the movement of revolt. They were three able, intelligent people who were not afraid. What better thing could he do with the remnant of his life than to weld them into an organized force? Gradually they would attract other brains to their group. Just such an intellectual centre was what the movement needed. The idea at least had the virtue of stirring a wave of true enthusiasm in him.

This line of thought brought Yetta to his mind—and Beatrice's advice. He smiled at the idea. Intellectually he might admit that it would be well for him to marry. But the Yetta he remembered was a frightened little East Side girl, who had not enough sense to keep out of the clutches of a cadet. Of course she had grown up, her letters showed that. And she had been a pretty youngster. If, as Beatrice believed, she was in love with him, it might possibly work out that way in time. But he was in no mood for romance. Hunger for a life of activity kept his mind on his project of work. The few times his thoughts touched on Yetta, he wrenched them back to what the three of them might accomplish with the paper.

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As the ship slipped into its berth, Walter leaned over the rail and eagerly scanned the upturned faces of the welcoming crowd on the dock. When at last he convinced himself that there was no one there whom he knew, he suddenly realized that once more the hope had tripped him up. He had been looking for Mabel. He went back to the smoking-room and tried to regain his self-respect by a glass of whiskey. As the cab took him through the familiar streets, he was grimly telling himself that it would never happen again; Mabel did not exist any more.

Yetta was waiting for him in his rooms. She had spent her last night there, and at eight in the morning had carried her valise—the trunk had gone before—to her new quarters on Waverly Place. She could not afford a place to herself and had gone in with another Socialist girl, Sadie Michelson, in joint control of a small flat. While she was waiting through the morning hours, she rearranged his business papers for the fiftieth time. There was a pile of receipts, year by year, each one numbered to correspond to its check. There were the check-books, each voucher pinned to its stub. The bank-book had just been balanced.

It was about eleven when the cab rattled up to the door. From her seat in the window she saw him get out. Casting a quick glance over the room to reassure herself that everything was exactly as he had left it, she opened the door and went out on the landing. "Welcome home," she called down to him.

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It did not occur to her that what she was doing was dramatic. But the lonely hearted man who was struggling up the narrow stairs with his two grips was deeply moved by her words and the vision which greeted his upturned eyes. A flood of light came out through the door of his room and illumined her as she stood above him on the landing.

"Hello," he said out loud. But to himself he said, "My God!"

Yetta's girlish promise of beauty had been richly fulfilled. Her figure had become more definite. There had been a sort of precociousness about the sweat-shop girl he remembered. The Yetta who greeted him now was a fully developed symmetrical woman. Her face, her arms, her neck had caught up with the rest of her body. There was nothing fragile about her any more. One no longer feared that she might be suddenly snuffed out and leave nothing but the haunting memory of her eyes. More striking, and at the same time more subtle, was the transformation from self-conscious awkwardness to the assured grace of a personage who has found a place in life. The Yetta he remembered had been impulsive—a creature of extremes—one moment lost in a childish abandon of enthusiasm, the next embarrassed and *gauche*. This woman was calm, restrained, and while perfectly conscious of herself was not self-conscious.

He had remembered her as pretty. Good food and a healthy life had taken from her the exotic, orchid-like charm of her girlhood. Yet she had grown greatly in beauty. Her face had gained immensely in "range"—to borrow a musical term. It held the capacity of a whole gamut of expressions it had before lacked. Her eyes were as beautiful as ever, and they had looked on many things. Her mouth had always been well-proportioned. Now any one could see that it was a perfected instrument. There were thousands of things it could say. Her cheeks had flushed or paled with a myriad of emotions and had grown more beautiful. And yet the mass of rich brown hair, which had always been the crown of her beauty, had not begun to lose its lustre.

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When Walter reached the head of the stairs and shook hands with her, she had changed from the dimmest of possibilities to a vivid desire.

"Did you have a good passage?"

"Fine. A gale all the way over."

There were a few more banalities.

"Good Lord, Yetta," he exploded. "How you've grown up and changed!"

Yetta had hoped for his approbation of her works. He was admiring her person. He was looking her over with frank pleasure. The blush hurt her cheek. She turned away to hide it.

"Here's a note Mabel gave me for you," she said.

Walter took it mechanically. He ought to have tossed it into the waste-paper basket. But the hope, the fool, the idiot hope grabbed him by the throat. Once more. He tore it open. This would be positively the last concession to the Dream.—Eleanor Mead was decorating a country house out near Stamford, Mabel had gone out to pass the week-end with her. She was glad to hear that Walter was back and looked forward to hearing about his adventures. She judged from the papers that he had had a lot—So! Spending a few days with Eleanor, whom she saw all the time, was more important than staying in town to greet him, whom she had not seen for years. He stuck the letter in his pocket and turned to Yetta, who was watching him closely.

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"How's 'Saph' coming on?" he asked lightly.

"I don't see much of her."

"Good," he laughed. "She was never exactly a chum of mine."

"Here are all your business papers," Yetta said, going over to his desk, "receipts and all that."

"Oh! bother the receipts," he said. "I want to talk. How's Isadore's paper getting along?"

"There isn't any money," she said with a grimace. "There's a note on yesterday's editorial page, which says if they can't raise five thousand this week they'll have to stop. I guess one thousand will keep them going. They'll get it. But in a couple of weeks it will be the same thing over again. I guess it's doomed."

"I've been thinking about it," Walter said, "and I've got a scheme. Isadore tackled too much in a daily. That costs such a frightful lot. There isn't yet a big enough Socialist audience to support it. A weekly—a good lively, red-hot weekly—is the thing."

He went on to elaborate his idea. Gradually the constraint which Yetta had felt at first wore off. She curled up on the window-seat and listened to his talk as she had done the first day in his room—as she had done ever since in her dreams. She knew it would be hard work to persuade Isadore to give up the daily, but she felt that sooner or later he would have to. And in Walter's scheme was the promise of collaboration and constant association with him. She could hardly be expected to bring forth any serious criticism.

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While he talked, she had the opportunity to look him over. After all he was not a god. The thing which surprised her most was his hair—it was shot through with irregular patches of gray. But this was only a detail. The soft life of the last few months in Paris had not quite killed the tan which the glare of the Persian sun had given him. He looked very rugged and strong—if his hands had been larger, he might have sat as a model for Rodin. And the halo of fame played about his forehead. The newspapers had given some space to him, and two or three lurid "Sunday stories" had been run about "the siege." They had recounted the various honors which had been given him. Yetta knew that the narrow red ribbon in his buttonhole was the Legion of Honor. And he was calmly proposing to give up what seemed to her a great renown for the obscure career of Socialist propaganda. Her love put forth blossoms.

"Gee," he interrupted himself at last. "It's long past lunch-time. Let's go over to the Lafayette. Any of the old waiters still there?"

Although Walter insisted that the cooking had deteriorated, it was a resplendent meal to Yetta. The proprietor came to their table and asked if he might present the French Consul, who was lunching there and who wanted to congratulate Walter on the red ribbon. The Consul made a formal and stilted speech on behalf of the French Colony in New York. Yetta was as much impressed as Walter was bored. When this disturbance was over, he made her talk about herself. The meal was finished before she was half through with her news.

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"Come on," he said. "It's too blazing hot to be in town. Let's jump on a ferry and go down to Staten Island."

"I ought to go up to the League."

"Oh! bother the League. One doesn't come home from Persia every day in the year. I want to celebrate."

All New York's four millions seemed bent on the same errand, but they managed to crowd into the "elevated," and after a breathless scramble at the Battery fought their way to places on the ferry, and at last found a fairly secluded spot on the beach. He listened through the afternoon to

the story of how she had spent the three and a half years of his absence. Just as at first, she still found it easy to talk to him. Sure of his quick understanding, she found herself telling him everything. She told him of Isadore's proposal. That disturbed him somewhat.

"Will it interfere with the three of us working together?" he asked.

"Why, no," she said, her eyes opening wider with surprise. "Of course not. I guess he's got over it. It was two years ago. But anyhow we've been working together all the time. He wouldn't let a thing like that interfere with work."

And Walter, judging Isadore by himself, decided that it could not have been very serious. Although Yetta did not know it, she was, in almost every word, showing Walter her love. There was a naïve directness in all her relations with people. It was always hard for her to act a part. She talked to Walter as a woman naturally talks to a man she loves. Even without Beatrice's hint, he would have understood. [Pg 323]

It was a new sensation to feel himself loved so simply and wholly. Such love is rare in this world, and no man sees it offered without a deep feeling of awe. What should he do? Should he turn her loyalty into a derision, as had been the fate of his own? His life counted for very little to him. It had been burnt out. That the love of this fine, clean, loyal young woman might be pleasant to him seemed to count relatively little. He did not feel particularly selfish, he was only a fool. He was sorry for her, and thought he could make her happy.

Beatrice, who knew him better than any other woman did, thought he could. Of course he realized that it was not exactly a romantic proposition. He had small use for romance. But if any one had charged him with planning to seduce Yetta into marriage under pretext of love, he would have indignantly denied it. What does love mean? Undoubtedly his feeling and hers were miles apart. But, after all, he was fond of her. Even in a most impersonal way he admired her immensely. He had liked her spirit from the first. He had not listened unmoved to the story of her struggle of these three years. There was nothing he admired more than such capacity for consistent effort. And it took a serious exercise of will power to think about her impersonally. It was so much easier to lie back on the sand and refresh his senses with the charm of her youth. [Pg 324]

Some one might have reminded him that emotionally he was very much of a wreck, that her youth had a right to demand its like, that his wearied disillusionment was no match for her fresh, exuberant faith. He would have answered that she was not a child, she was old enough to choose.

He listened and watched her and the sun slipped down among the Jersey hills.

"It's time to be going back," Yetta said.

"I'm quite happy here, and when we get hungry, there are restaurants about."

"I think Isadore will come to see you to-night. I told him you were due to-day."

"Oh, bother Isadore. Bother everything except this delectable breeze and the smell of the sea and you and me and the moon. Look at it, Yetta. It was at its unforgettable best last night—but it will be better to-night. It's going to be very beautiful right here where we are. And much as I like and admire Isadore, he isn't beautiful.

"Life," he went on in a moment, "and its swirl of duties will grab us soon enough, Yetta. We're going to be too busy on that paper, my friend, to hunt out such places as this. Let's sit very, very still and be happy as long as we may."

They both were very still as they watched the twilight fall over the Bay. The little red and green and white lights of the passing boats swayed softly in the gentle swell. A great liner crept up the channel towards the Narrows, row above row of gleaming portholes. Coney Island—section by section—woke to a glare of electricity. The blade of a searchlight at Fort Hamilton cut great slashes in the night. A strident orchestra in a restaurant behind them tried in vain to attract their attention. [Pg 325]

Yetta found it easy to be happy; she felt that Walter approved of her.

"Yetta," he said, rolling over closer to where she sat, her back against the rotting beam of a wrecked ship, "Yetta, I didn't expect to find you so good to look at. I wonder if you know how very beautiful you are."

The wreck against which she leaned cast a moon-shadow across her face, and he could not see the desperate blush which flooded her cheeks and neck. Something laid hold of her heart and told it to be quiet, to beat gently and not to make a noise.

"But that's not the way to begin, Yetta. It's hard for me to say what I want to, because—well—I'm past the poetic age. I couldn't sing now—nor play on a lute—if I tried. Perhaps it's just as well to talk prose, because it's all very serious."

"Since I've finished up this Persian job, I've been thinking a lot about what to do next. I could go on with that kind of work very easily. But I want some more concrete kind of usefulness. You'll know what I mean. I want to make my life count at something more than dry scholarship. And the only thing I can think of that seems worth doing is to pitch in and help Isadore on this paper. We'd need you in the combine. And that means thinking about you. I've done a lot of it. Wondering what manner of person you had grown to be. I was sure we'd be able to work well



together. But I did not expect to find you so wonderful. Less than four years ago you were only a girl. You've grown amazingly, Yetta, grown in wisdom and in beauty—beauty of soul and face.

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"I'm a lonely and rather battered old bachelor, Yetta. And no man really wants to be a bachelor. Sometimes, coming over on the boat, I thought about you—in that connection. But I couldn't help thinking of you as a young girl, lovable and very dear, but very young. And I'm getting old. My hair is turning gray, and many things turn gray inside, Yetta, before the hair turns. You don't seem so painfully young to me now, and the dream doesn't seem ludicrous. We're going to work together, Yetta, be partners and comrades. I've very little to offer you, but it would be a great thing for me if you would also be my wife."

"I thought you were in love with Mabel," she said.

The cool sound of her words startled her. With the heavens opening, could she speak in so commonplace a voice? They sounded so utterly inadequate that she would have given worlds to have them back, unsaid. It was a moment before he sat up and answered her.

"I was."

"I told you, Yetta," he went on in a moment, "that I'm a bit dilapidated, getting gray."

"Yetta," he began again, forgetting that he was going to let her choose freely, "you believe in the reformation even of criminals. Isn't there any hope for me?"

Her arms were about him, her sobs shook him, he could feel the moisture of her tears against his cheek. Except for the sharp rasp of her breath, they were very still. Suddenly he felt ashamed of himself. What did he have to give her in exchange for such vibrant love? But gradually the sense of contact, the pressure of her arms and her soft young body brushed aside this feeling that he was cheating her. Taking her face in his hands he turned it towards the moon and kissed her. When he held back her head so that the light fell on her face, its deep solemnity frightened him.

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"Can't you smile a little?" he asked.

The tears welled up in her eyes again, but a smile such as he had never seen came, too. A laugh rippled up her throat and rang out into the night.

"Oh, Walter, Walter, I'm such a little fool to cry. But if I hadn't cried, I'd have died."

They forgot all about the moon they had waited out to see. Like dozens of other lovers on the beach that night, they forgot about supper. They missed the one o'clock boat and sat outside of the ferryhouse in the shadow of some packing-cases till two o'clock. They decided that it would be fun to walk home through the deserted streets. When they could think of no further reason to pass and re-pass her door, she kissed him "a really truly good night."

"I'll wake you up by telephone in the morning," she said, "and come round and make your coffee."

For half an hour after she had undressed she sat in her window looking up at the moon above the airshaft. She did not want ever to forget how the moon looked that night. But fearing that she might oversleep and lose the chance to breakfast with him, she at last went to bed.

For an hour more Walter paced up and down in Washington Square, between the sleeping figures huddled up on the park benches or stretched uneasily on the hard dry ground. He was ill at ease. He wished he might go to a hotel, some place less saturated with memories of Mabel than his own diggings. Had he lied when he had used the past tense about Mabel? Did he love her still? Was it fair to talk marriage to Yetta with this uncertainty in his mind?

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"Morbid scruples!" he told himself disgustedly, and went to bed. But he dreamed about Mabel.

Far away in Stamford, she also was late in falling asleep. That evening she and Eleanor had played together for several hours. But at first the music had gone wrong. Mabel, like Beatrice, like Isadore—like everybody—knew that Yetta was in love with Walter. She was thinking about them, wondering about their meeting, and it had thrown her into discord with Eleanor. They had almost had a quarrel over it, for Eleanor guessed the cause. At last, with an effort of will, Mabel had lost herself in the music, a closer harmony than usual had sprung up between the two friends—it had ended as a very happy evening. But after Eleanor fell asleep, the thought of Walter and Yetta came back again disturbingly. Eleanor, Mabel told herself, was a fool to be jealous. She did not love Walter. She would not have left the city except that she wanted to give Yetta a clear field. She hoped they would marry, for she liked them both. But how she envied Yetta! There was no treasure she could dream of which she would not have sacrificed to feel herself in love as Yetta was.

A little after eight in the morning, Walter was shaken out of sleep by the noisy din of his telephone bell.

"Good morning, Beloved," Yetta's fresh voice came to his sleepy ears. "I couldn't call you up before—not till my room-mate went out. I could get dressed and round to your room in three minutes, but I'll give you ten. Put the water on. You can't have slept much, because a lot of times I felt you kiss me."

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"Well, don't waste time talking about it," he interrupted. "Hurry."

"All right," and he heard the click of her receiver.

The scruples of the night before had vanished at the sound of her voice. He jumped into his bath and clothes with a keen thrill of expectancy. He sat in the window-seat and watched for her coming. God! What a queer world it was! He had been thinking over the possible expediency of suicide, and now life was opening up to him in thrilling vistas.

He waved his hand when he caught sight of her, and pinched himself to be sure he was awake when he noticed her quicken her pace.

He pretended to scold her for being slow. A dozen times he interrupted the coffee-making at critical moments to kiss her. She said it would surely be spoiled, and he swore he did not care. Yetta pretended to be in a hurry to finish the dishes and get uptown to work. It was a very meagre pretence. And what wonderful plans they made! With his arm about her they explored the two rooms in the back, which the carriage painter used as a storehouse for his brushes and cans. He would have to vacate. One they would turn into a dining-room. Yetta spoke of the other as the guest-room. But Walter christened it "the nursery."

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE CRASH

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When it was time for lunch, Yetta said she would rather cook than go to a restaurant, so they raided a delicatessen store.

It was during the afternoon that the first shadow fell across their dream. Yetta asked him if he had heard about Mrs. Karner's divorce.

"Yes, I know."

There was a queer ring in his voice which made her look up; something in his face disturbed her.

"What's the matter?"

He took his arms from about her and got up.

"Yetta," he said, pacing the room, "I suppose I'm a fool to ask you. But how much do you want to know? Very few men in this world of ours live up to their own ideals. I certainly haven't. I told you I was getting gray. Well—she's one of the gray spots—inside. I'd rather not tell you about it. It will only hurt you. But I'm not a good liar. You noticed something at the bare mention of her name. But if you want to know, I'll tell you."

For a moment Yetta was silent.

"I think you'd better tell me," she said. "I'm not afraid."

But she was. She had accepted the idea that Mabel had preceded her in his affection. She had not thought of other women. This was disturbing enough. But what really frightened her was that he was reluctant to tell. If there was any one tangible thing which love meant to her, it was frankness. She had told him everything without his asking. Here was something he had held back. What it was did not matter so much as the different point of view it showed. It was startling to realize how very little she knew of his life.

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He pulled up a chair beside the window-seat where she lay, and told her about Beatrice; told it in a way that did not make her seem offensive to Yetta. He told the story as truthfully as might be, without giving its real explanation—his heartbreak over Mabel. He did not want to bring this in. If Yetta had asked him point-blank how long it was since he had been in love with Mabel, he would not have tried to deceive her. But the telling of it would only distress her.

"It may not sound to you like a pretty story," he ended. "I'm not proud of it. But I'm not exactly ashamed either. It's a sick sort of a world we live in. There are better days coming when the relations between men and women will be saner and sweeter—and finer. But I don't think more lightly of Beatrice because of this. She's a remarkable woman. Life has not been very kind to her. But she's fought her way to the place where she is through with pretence. That at least was fine about our friendship. We were not pretending. I haven't told it very well, perhaps I haven't made you understand. But I hope Beatrice can look back on it without being ashamed. I can."

Although Yetta listened intently, she was all the time thinking not so much of Mrs. Karner as of what she typified—the unknown life of the man she loved, the things he had not told her.

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"Am I forgiven?" he asked, kneeling beside her and taking her hand.

"Oh! Forgiven! That isn't it. Who am I to forgive you or blame you? It's that I don't understand. And when I don't understand, I'm afraid."

"You mustn't be afraid of the past, darling."

"I don't know about that. When it comes to love, I can't think of any past or present or future. It's just somehow eternally always and now and for ever and ever. I'm not sure we can get away from the past. I can't explain it very well, but some things are real and some aren't. I don't think I'll ever get rid of the real things which have come to me. They'll never die."

"Well, don't worry about Beatrice,—that was only an interlude—not 'real.'"

"And Mabel?"

"A dream."

"But some dreams are real," she insisted.

"No dream in all the world, Yetta, is real like your lips."

She wanted so much to be kissed, had been so frightened for a moment, that she sought his arms without questioning this statement. But a few minutes later the thought came to her suddenly that he had kissed Beatrice just as he was kissing her. He felt her wince.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm dizzy. Let me go a minute."

She got up and stood by the window. She was doing him an injustice. He had never kissed Beatrice as he had just kissed her. But women seem never to understand that it is an utter impossibility for a man to caress different women in the same way. Probably our Father Adam and Mother Eve are the only couple the Earth has seen who have not had words on this subject. If Yetta had spoken out what was in her mind, Walter also would have taken up the age-old argument—in vain. But Yetta did not speak. She was fighting with herself—striving to regain her self-control. She had always believed that jealousy was contemptible. But he had kissed Mrs. Karner just as—

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"Still thinking of Beatrice?" he asked quietly.

"Trying not to, Walter. Oh, Beloved, you must be patient with me. It is all so new—so dizzyingly new. I've got to trust you, Walter. I've got to believe every word you say. I know I mustn't have doubts. I've got to believe every word you say"—she repeated it as if giving herself a lesson—"and I do, Walter. I mustn't ever think when you kiss me that perhaps you'd rather kiss some one else—and I won't."

She reached out her arms to him, and blinded by tears she stumbled across the room to him.

Walter should have seized this moment to tell her the whole truth. There is one very strong argument for always telling the truth. It is so desperately hard to know which moments in our rapidly moving life are such as to make a lie fatal.

Most of us believe that ultimately truth will out. But most of us try to control its outings. On the basis of what we vaguely call "worldly wisdom," by silences, by false emphasis—sometimes by frank lies—we try to protect our friends and enemies from the vision of Truth in her disturbing nudity. And there is hardly one of us who would not give his right hand if, in some crisis of his life, he had only had sense enough to tell the whole truth.

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There were very real obstacles between Walter and his desire. Between their experiences and their outlooks on life there was a great chasm. But his best chance was to face things frankly.

Beatrice was only an incident. Mabel was a more important matter. But still he could have made out a good case for himself. When he was six—nearly seven—years younger, he had fallen romantically in love with her. He had followed that love with a fidelity which promised well for his future obligations. It had become a habit, and a six years' habit is hard to break. He had come to the realization that this blind infatuation was leading him to waste. With all the manhood he could muster he had tried to break the habit. Sometimes—possibly for a long time to come—the nerve-cells of his brain would fall back into the old ruts. But when this happened, it would be only the ghost of a dead desire. Even the ghost would be laid in time.

He could have told her that the very sense of life which throbbed within them—that made such questions seem of so great importance—laid upon them in no uncertain terms the imperious duty of the future. He had no Romeo-youth to offer her. Some of his hair was gray beyond dispute. But his strong and promising manhood was worth more than any hothouse flowers of romance. He could have offered her the finest of all comradeships, the communion of ideals, the life and labor shared together.

Yetta might have refused such an offer, refused to make any compromise with the love she dreamed of. The romantic thing is to demand that the prince's armor shall be as spotless as on the day he first rode out to seek the Grail. And Yetta was romantic. But Walter, with his larger experience with life, could probably have convinced her of the patent fact that most of us have to accept much more meagre terms from life than he offered. The ideal love is woefully rare, but there are a great many happy marriages.

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Walter did not recognize this as one of the moments which demand entire frankness. Why should he hurt her at this moment with another ghost story? Had he not bruised her enough for one afternoon with Beatrice?

Without realizing it, his attitude toward Yetta had changed subtly. The day before on the beach he had been impressed by her evident love for him. But the girl for whom he had been sorry had changed into the woman he ardently desired. So he kissed her tears away and taught her to smile again.

There had been enough left from the lunch purchases to serve their appetites for supper. They sat together in the window-seat and watched the twilight fall across the Square. All that was tangled in life straightened out before them, the future seemed a sort of paradisaical boulevard. In the days which were to come they were to have many hours of such sweet communion, hours when they locked the door against the world and talked or read together. And there were to be days of work. They were neither of them shirkers, and it was to be hard work. But whether it was work or play the sun was always to shine upon them, for there were to be no clouds of misunderstanding or discouragement. Side by side, how could they be discouraged? Walter was getting on towards forty, but all this seemed possible to him.

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At last they turned on the lights so Yetta could read to him some verses she had learned to love. And while they were still striving to find some fitting expression for their emotions among the poets, there was a knock at the door, and Isadore came in. Walter greeted him enthusiastically.

"Yetta," he said, "shall we tell him the great news?"

But there was no need to tell him. All the time he had been shaking hands he had been looking over Walter's shoulder at Yetta. His face went pale and rigid. He stiffened up perceptibly.

"I'm glad," he said slowly, looking squarely at Walter, "if you can make her happier than I could. I love her, too."

The words seemed to Walter like a challenge. For a second or two their eyes met. He was the first to look away. He could not meet the younger man's directness.

"Walter," Isadore said, "you're my best friend. Be good to her."

He hesitated a moment, irresolute, then turned abruptly and went away. Walter stood still in the middle of the room—dazed by the intensity of Isadore's emotions, realizing suddenly how many more of the priceless gifts of Youth there were in Isadore's hands than in his own. The shame which had flooded him at Yetta's first caress came back. Yetta, in her infatuation, could not see how little—even of love—he had to offer. She was too blinded to choose freely.

"Yetta," he said, coming over and sitting on the other end of the window-seat from her, "why didn't you tell me about this?"

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"Why, Walter, I did tell you. I said he asked me to marry him—two years ago."

"But I didn't realize that he loved you as much as this."

"Walter," she said, taking fright at his tone, "I never gave him any encouragement. I never—"

"It isn't that, Yetta," he interrupted her. "Oh! I don't mean that. But why didn't you marry him?"

It was her turn to be dazed and bewildered. She stood up before him, but he had covered his face with his hands.

"Why? How could I when I loved you?"

"Loved me? Yetta, you hardly knew me."

There was an earthquake in Dreamland. Just what was happening in his soul she did not know, but all things were a-tremble.

"Walter? Walter? What do you mean?"

He looked up at her with a haggard face.

"Don't you understand?" he asked seriously. "I'm more than a dozen years older than you are, close to ten years older than Isadore. Years don't always mean much, but these last ones have been very long for me."

"Youth counts for very much in this dreary world of ours. It means undimmed faith, it means courage, it means vibrancy and reserve power. Isadore has never been really defeated, Yetta, and I'm a mass of poorly healed wounds. The best of me is gone, some of it expended, more of it wasted. I come to you like a beggar, asking for all these precious things—faith, hope, incentive. My hands are empty. But Isadore could give you these things, when you need them—as you surely will some day, Yetta. If I'd been here all these years, you'd have seen the difference between us."

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"A long time ago, when you were very young, I seemed wonderful to you. I went away—stop and think a moment how very little you know of me—and you made a romance about me. Romance is a very dangerous thing. It's a sort of Lorelei song, Yetta. After all, our business is to push on down the River, not to stop and play with the fairies on the rocks. It's a real world we must live in, Yetta dear, not a dream, and the facts must be faced. Youth is worth more than anything else. Your kisses made me forget to think of you—Isadore reminded me."

"What are you trying to do, Walter?" she asked. "Don't you want me to marry you?"

"I want you to be happy, Little One."

Once more he buried his face in his hands, but she knelt before him and pulled his hands away.

"Do you think anything in all the world could make me as happy as your love?"

Suddenly—with a great rush of weariness—he saw clearly the gulf between them. He knew from his own experience what thrilling things the word "love" may mean. And he could no longer lay claim to it.

"What do you mean by love?" he asked drearily.

Yetta crumpled up in a heap at his feet. If he did not know what "love" meant, the Palace of Dreams was indeed crumbling.

"Don't you know?" she whispered.

The clock ticked dolefully while she waited for his answer.

"Yes. I'm afraid I do know what it means to you, Yetta. And I haven't got that to give you. I think love means romance to you. That is what Isadore and Youth have to offer. I had it once—years ago—enough and to spare. I gave it all away—where it wasn't wanted. There isn't any glitter left. [Pg 339]

"I came to you, Yetta, in quest of this very thing—which I have lost. I can't tell you how beautiful, how dazzling you look to my tired eyes—how much to be desired—how much above price—like the Song of Songs. And being selfish, I thought only of my want, of my hungry loneliness. I did not remember—till Isadore came in—that you too had a right—a much better right than my desire—to Youth.

"It would not be honest, Yetta, to accept your love, unless I made quite sure that you know me, know what you are doing, the choice you are making—stripped of romance, in its cold nakedness. It isn't a choice, Yetta, between me and Isadore. It's deeper than that, deeper than individuals. I must see that you make your choice with clear eyes. If you want romance—the grand passion—well—I haven't that to offer you. I—"

His voice trailed off into silence. Perhaps he was a fool. But for the first time in his life he was giving up something he wanted, something he could have for the asking. For the first time in his life he had utterly cleansed himself of selfishness. It was a momentous triumph over his nature, but it was only momentary. His desire for the girl at his feet came over him with a rush. She was resting her head against the ledge of the window-seat and—her clenched fist pressed against her lips—was staring at the black shadows under the table.

Perhaps a scrupulous definition forbade the use of the word "love" to describe his emotion, but it was none the less strong. The last twenty-four hours had been wondrously sweet to him. There was a grace to her clean, fresh youth, a charm to her caresses, her restrained but unhid passion, the timidities and spontaneous abandon of her maidenhood, which had enchanted all the roots of his being. And besides and above all this—though life holds little better than such emotions—was the hope that with her he might get into the swing of activity, the ascending curve of work and purpose. [Pg 340]

"I'm through pleading for you, Yetta. Let me plead a little for myself. What is it that makes me talk to you like this? It's not romance. Perhaps it isn't what you would call love. But I would call it that. It's a very desperate desire to forget all about myself and—as Isadore said—'be good to you.' Get up, darling, and sit here beside me. Let us talk over again all our plans of work. After all, work is more important than romance."

She got up rather unsteadily, but she did not sit down beside him.

"I think love is necessary," she said.

"Don't let's wreck things over a word, Yetta. 'Love' means so many things. Tell me what it is I feel for you. What is it that makes me thrill so to your kisses? What is it that makes me want you, Yetta, for all time and always? What is it makes me know I can win to usefulness, if you will help me? What is it that makes me risk losing what I want most in the world, for fear I may not be true and just to you? I don't care what name you give it. But isn't it enough? Let's try to think of realities, not words." [Pg 341]

"No. It's not the word I care about," she said. "But the reality is necessary. I love you, Walter, and I'm not afraid of the word. You know what it means to me—all that it ever meant to any woman—and more. It means thinking only and above everything else of the other—and more than that. It means giving one's self without any 'if's'—and more than that too. I can't tell you what love is—just because the reality is so much bigger than any words. But of one thing I am sure. There can't be any regrets in love. Are you sorry it isn't Mabel who loves you? I don't care about the past any more. I did for a minute this afternoon—because it surprised me. But I love you too much to care about the past. But, oh! the future, Walter? We daren't cheapen that! That's all there is left to us. And our life together—our future—couldn't be fine if you had regrets. If ever you had to hide things from me and had wishes I couldn't share. If you wished sometimes I was some one else. It's very simple, Walter. It's this way. If Mabel should come into this room and stand here beside me and say, 'I love you,' as I say it—which of us would you choose?"

"She'll never come into the room, Yetta."

"Oh, Walter! answer me! I know you won't lie. And I'll believe you for ever and ever."

And so he could not lie. He buried his face once more in his hands. He did not look up when he heard the rustle of her skirts. He did not see her as she picked up her hat and stood there, the tears in her eyes, waiting—hoping that he would say the word.

He did not look up until he heard the door close behind her. He paced the room aimlessly for several minutes, then filled his pipe and, turning out the light, went back to the window-seat. He was not exactly suffering. He felt himself miserably inert and dead.

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But one thing he saw clearly—and it made him glad. Yetta's romance had come while she was still young. She was only twenty-two. Life would pick her up again. It might be Isadore, it might be some one else. But her pulse was too strong to let her decay. There are many real joys in life if you get rid of romance early enough.

Time was when he had felt as she did, when nothing but the best seemed worth having. He saw clearly that what he could have given her would not have satisfied her.

Yetta had not stopped to put on her hat. Her eyes dimmed with tears, she had stumbled down the stairs and out across the street into the Square, towards home. Then she remembered that it was early, that her room-mate would be still awake. She could not go home. There were many people about, some stretched on the grass, some grouped on the benches, some strolling about. Many noticed the hatless girl who shuffled along blindly. And presently she ran into Isadore. He also was walking about aimlessly, his head bent, his hands deep in his pockets.

"Good God, Yetta," he cried in amazement, "what's wrong?"

She raised her tear-wet face to him, stretching out her hand towards the familiar voice.

"We're not going to get married," she said.

"Hadn't you better let me take you home?"

"Sadie'll be up. I don't want to go home."

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"Well, then, come over here and sit down."

Hardly knowing what she did, she followed him to an empty bench. Now, Isadore did not believe in guardian angels, but something told him not to talk.

"It's like this," Yetta said, feeling that some further explanation was necessary, "he's still in love with Mabel."

And Isadore had sense enough to say nothing at all. Yetta turned about on the bench and, resting her head on her arms, began to sob. Half the night through, Isadore sat beside her there on guard.

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## BOOK V

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### CHAPTER XXV ISADORE'S MEDICINE

Sadie Michelson, as she was making coffee the next morning, was cogitating over the fact that she had not seen her new room-mate since they had moved into the flat. What was the meaning of these late hours? She was convinced that this Mr. Longman, whose rooms Yetta had formerly occupied and who had just come back to claim them, had something to do with it.

Her speculations were interrupted by the telephone bell. Yetta also heard it vaguely in her uneasy sleep and dreamed that Walter was calling her. Sadie hurried to the receiver. She hoped to find a clew to the mystery. It was a surprise—and a disappointment—for her to recognize Isadore's voice.

"Hello, Sadie. Is Yetta up yet?"

"No. She got in very late last night and—"

"I know," Isadore interrupted. "I was out with her."

This was a new disappointment. Mr. Longman was not to blame after all.

"Don't wake her," he went on. "But I wish you'd take a message—put it under her door, where she's sure to see it. If she possibly can, it would be a great favor if she could help us down here this morning. We're awfully rushed. Locke's sick. There's a strike over in Brooklyn we've got to cover. And there's nobody here to do it. It would help a lot if Yetta could. Got that straight?—All right—much obliged."

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The noise of Sadie's leaving woke Yetta. Her first feeling was of escape from some dread nightmare. Surely last night's storm had been a tempest in the tea-pot. Her whole concept of Walter was that he was all-powerful, very wise and resourceful. Surely he would find some way to make things come straight again.

She lay still a few minutes, staring up at the unfamiliar ceiling. But all orderly processes of the mind were difficult. Her recent experiences had unloosed a flood of tumultuous feelings. A new personality had emerged from that first embrace on the beach at Staten Island. Something had

died within her at his kiss—something new and disturbingly wonderful had been born in its place. For a moment, forgetting the bitter reality, she let herself bathe in this dizzying sweet sensation. The hot blood rushed to her cheeks, but it was the blush of exultation. "Death" and "birth" did not seem to her the right words to describe the transformation. It was more of a blossoming, as when a butterfly unfolds its wings from a chrysalis. How wonderful it had been to feel his arms reaching out to her! How much more wonderful had been the feeling of reaching out to him.

The memory of their parting fell on her abruptly. It had all been a hoax. He did not love her. And that which a moment before had seemed so wonderfully right, now smarted as a shame. The butterfly wings snapped. She could find no tears. She looked forward, in dull pain, dry-eyed, to a life of abject crawling. [Pg 346]

There was the inevitable wave of bitterness. What right had he to teach her flight and then break her wings? But this mood could not last. She loved him. All her pride, all her ideals of life and work—everything firm—deserted her. Nothing mattered any more except not to lose him. There was no humiliation, through which she would not crawl to regain his companionship. What did this talk of Love matter? She wanted to be with him, to feel his arms once more about her. Her whole being cried out that she was "his," utterly "his." Had she not loved him since their first encounter? She would go to him, asking no terms.

In the rush of this passionate impulse, she jumped out of bed—and saw the note under her door. The dream came back to her. Walter had called her. She had wasted these miserably unhappy moments in bed, and all the while his message had been waiting her!

"Dear Yetta. Isadore called up about 8.30 and asked me to tell—"

The note crumpled up in Yetta's hand. And there, alone in her room, with no one to see her, she had only one idea. She must not make a scene.

She smoothed out the note and went through the motions of reading it. Every muscle was tense, her teeth were gritted in the supreme effort to dominate the storm of wild impulses within her, to keep her head above the buffeting waves of circumstance. Mechanically she bathed and brushed her hair and dressed herself. Her mind was rigid—clenched like her teeth. [Pg 347]

But subconsciously—behind this outward calmness—a momentous conflict was raging. In those few minutes, alone in her strange new quarters, with no one by to help or encourage her, she faced the fight and won. She did not win through unscathed,—modern psychology is teaching us that no one does come through such conflicts without wounds, which heal slowly, if at all.

In the din of the spiritual fray a new outlook on life had come to her. It was not so sharp a change as that which Walter's caresses had caused, but it was more fundamental—in the way that spiritual matters are always more significant than things physical.

Life as she had seen it was a ceaseless, desperate struggle, a constant clash of personalities, an unrelenting war of social classes. In an external, rather mechanical way she had been involved in this struggle. She looked forward to being "a striker" all her life. But she had always thought of herself as a part of the conflict. Now—and this was the new viewpoint—it seemed that the fight was taking place within her. The strategic position, the key to the whole battlefield, the place where the fiercest blows were to be exchanged, was her own soul. If she was defeated there, the fight was over—as far as she was concerned.

It was not to be until years afterwards that she came to a full understanding of what that half-hour had meant to her. It was to take many months before she could arrange her life in accord with this new outlook. But as she poured out the coffee, which Sadie had left on the back of the stove, she knew that she had won this first fight in the new campaign. For the moment, at least, she was the Captain of Her Soul. [Pg 348]

In the overwhelming sadness of victory, in the poignant wistfulness of triumph, she had regained her pride. She was not going to humiliate herself to gain the narcotic pleasure of kisses when she wanted love. Walter would come to her or he would not. That was for him to decide. In either case the battle of life was still to be fought. She must not desert.

It was half past nine, and no word from Walter. She could not sit there idly, waiting for him to change his mood. To escape from the pain of uncertainty she reread Isadore's message—understandingly. Here was the day's work concretely before her. She put on her hat.

Out on Waverly Place she suddenly realized that her feet were carrying her to Washington Square and Walter. The Enemy made a desperate assault—surprised her with her visor up, her sword in its sheath, her shield hanging useless on her back. Why not? He would not have the heart to send her away. She knew his kindness. If they were together, he would grow to love her. How could she expect him to change while they were apart? Together all would go well—

She had thought that the struggle of a few minutes before had been final—and here it was all to do over again. [Pg 348]

A white-haired old man was walking towards her, but she did not notice him until he stopped and spoke.

"Are you sick, Miss?"

"No"—she shivered as she realized the import of what he had said, how much worse it was than

he suspected—"Oh, no! I'm not sick."

But the old man stood still watching her as she turned down McDougal Street. He was half inclined to call a doctor. Soon Yetta realized that she had reached Bleecker Street. She turned across town to the Subway and so down to Newspaper Row and *The Clarion* office. [Pg 349]

It bore no resemblance to that of *The Star*. The loft of a warehouse had been cut in two by a flimsy partition. In the back was a battery of second-hand, old-style linotypes, a couple of type-frames for the advertisement and job work, the make-up slab, the proof tables, and the stereotyping outfit. The stairway opened into this noisy, crowded room. Yetta had to walk carefully between the machines to reach the editorial room beyond the partition.

A low railing divided the front room between the "editorial" and "business" departments. To the right was a long reporters' table, smaller ones for the "City" and "Exchange" editors, and a roll-top desk beyond for Isadore.

Levine, a youngster with very curly black hair, a wilted collar, and soaked shirt, jumped up to greet Yetta.

"Hello," he shouted above the din of the typewriters and machines. "Here's a note from Isadore. He's out trying to raise money. I hope to God you can help us. Locke's sick. I'm running his desk and mine and Isadore's this morning. Harry's covering the Party News and Woman's Page besides his Telegraph and Exchanges, so that Sam can cover the State Convention. How in hell they expect us to get out a paper so short-handed is—"

"Oh, stop your croaking," Harry Moore yelled from his table, hardly looking up from a pile of Labor Papers he was clipping. "Things are no worse than usual. We'll get her out somehow. We always do. God's good to drunks and fools and Socialists." [Pg 350]

One of the bookkeepers, from the "business" side of the railing, overhearing this "editorial" controversy, began to count at the top of his voice.

"One! Two! Three!"

At "Three" every one in the room, except Yetta and Levine, chanted in unison:—

"O-o-oh! Cut it out and work for Socialism!"

"You make me tired," Levine growled back at them, and sat down at his table with a despairing gesture.

Isadore's note told Yetta that a small but desperate strike had broken out among some paper-box factories in an out-of-the-way corner of Brooklyn. The workers were recently arrived immigrants who spoke no English. The regular papers had not mentioned the strike, and under cover of this secrecy, the bosses, who were allied with prominent Kings County politicians, were having everything their own way. He thought there was a big story in it. The publicity would certainly help the strikers. There was no one in the office to cover it.

Not a word of their last night's encounter.

"Comrade," Yetta asked Levine, "what time do you go to press?"

"One o'clock. Copy must be in by twelve-thirty. It's idiotic! Our Final Edition is on the streets before the regular papers lock up for their Home Edition. We can't get out a decent sheet in such —"

"One! Two! Three!"

"O-o-oh! Cut it out and work for Socialism!"

"They're fools!"

"Well," Yetta said, smiling for the first time that day, "I'll call you up about noon. Put a stenographer on the wire. That'll give you an opener for to-day. I'll have the whole story for a follow-up to-morrow. So long." [Pg 351]

About the time that Yetta was starting off on this assignment, Isadore came into the office of the Woman's Trade Union League.

"Hello," Mabel greeted him. Then, as a second thought, and somewhat less cordially, she added, "Stranger."

She was not in a happy mood. Of late she had felt her grip on life weakening. People upon whom she depended were deserting her. It had begun when Isadore had given up his work for the League to start *The Clarion*. When a new lawyer had been broken in, Mrs. Karner had left. It had been impossible to replace her. The Advisory Council was doubly hard to manage without her. There had been other desertions. Isadore seemed to have started a stampede. And Mabel did not feel these days the same buoyancy in meeting such emergencies. Her few gray hairs she was still able to hide, but there was no getting away from the tired look about her eyes. Her sudden irritabilities frightened her. She was haunted by the idea that she was getting "crabbed."

Isadore pulled up a chair and broke at once into his business. He wanted Mabel to persuade Yetta to take up some regular work on *The Clarion*. Yetta had a talent for writing which ought not



to be wasted. He would give them a column or so daily for their work of organizing women. "It would be helpful all round," he said. "Publicity for you. If it looks good to you, put it up to Yetta."

"It doesn't look good to me," Mabel said decisively. "You forget I'm not interested in your crazy little paper. What good is publicity to us among the couple of thousand hidebound Socialists who buy *The Clarion*?"

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"Our circulation is over ten thousand."

"Pooh! Nobody but party members read it. Most of your circulation is given away—and thrown into the gutter. You think working-men ought to read a Socialist paper. But they don't. They prefer a real paper with news in it and pictures and a funny page. Yetta was a fool to give up her work on *The Star*. That was real publicity.

"You want to get Yetta on *The Clarion*. You surely do need somebody who knows how to write! You want her to drift away from the real work of organization—just as you did. I see through your mutual benefit talk. Instead of helping our work, you want to get her away from us. Well, the less she gets mixed up with *The Clarion* and your little closed circle of dogmatists, the better I'll be pleased."

"Come to think of it," Isadore said, changing his tactics, "I would like to see Yetta give all her time to *The Clarion*. As you say, we surely do need good writers. But that wasn't in my mind when I came in.

"I'm worried about Yetta. She needs to be kept busy—busier than she is. Of course I wouldn't want her to know I was butting in like this. But she's worrying about something—"

Mabel, her mind made up to be disagreeable, interrupted him.

"I knew it wasn't interest in the League that brought you here. I owe this visit to your solicitude about Yetta."

"That's not just, either, Mabel—although it's nearer right than your first guess. Yetta's principal work is with the League. It's natural I should come to you. I am really worried about her. Something's troubling her."

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"What's the matter?"

"I don't know." Isadore was surprised at the ease with which he lied. "You don't have to know what's wrong to see that things aren't right. You'd have noticed it, too, if you had not been seeing her every day. But I haven't seen her for a long time"—he expanded his lie. "She came into my office this morning and it scared me. This 'what's-the-use' look. She's moody, sad. Going through some sort of a crisis. We all have them. Times when we wonder what God had against us when He made us, and all that. The only thing that helps is work.

"Yetta isn't doing much more for you than when she was studying or working on *The Star*. I guess it's the empty mornings that cause the trouble. Really, the way she looked startled me. I was coming uptown, anyway, and I decided to drop in and put it up to you. I really think the work I suggested—which would fill up her mornings—would help you fully as much as us."

Mabel bit the end of her pencil and looked out at the street. She was sure that Isadore had not told her all he knew. Probably Yetta had found Walter indifferent and was cut up over that. She would find out in the evening when Walter called on her. Perhaps more work would be good for Yetta. Not the job Isadore suggested. She had a decided hostility to him and this wild newspaper fad which had taken him away from "really useful work."

"You may be right about Yetta," she said, trying to soften her ill-humor. "I haven't seen any signs of a soul tragedy. But if she needs more work, I can give her more than she can handle right here—without urging her to waste time on your hobby."

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"Your hobby or mine," Isadore said, getting up. "I don't care much which. My idea in coming was to see that Yetta was kept busy. And I think you'll see I was right about it. So long."

He was really glad that things had taken this turn. The impersonal, Socialist side of him would have rejoiced in winning Yetta's support for *The Clarion*. But he knew that in a personal way it would have been harder to have her always about. The sharpest pain in Cupid's quiver is to watch the one you love break heart for some one else.

From the League Isadore went in search of Wilhelm Stringer, the "organizer" of the "branch" of the Socialist local to which Yetta belonged. For near forty years, Stringer had earned what money he needed as a brass polisher. But his real job was Socialism. He had long been a widower, his own children had died in infancy and his cheated paternal instinct had found an outlet in quiet, intense love for the "young Comrades." He was a kindly "Father Superior" to the whole city organization.

Isadore found him eating his lunch on the sidewalk, in the shade of the factory. They were old friends and could talk without evasions.

"Bill," Isadore said, "this is a personal matter. It's just by chance I know about it. Comrade Yetta Rayefsky is up against it. You can guess the trouble as well as I could tell you. What she needs is to be kept so busy that she'll forget it. She's in your branch. There must be some work which isn't being done that you could unload on her. Work's the best medicine for her."

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Very slowly Stringer chewed up his mouthful of cheese sandwich.

"Vell. Ve must send a delegate to der komität von education. Nowadays they meet three times a veek. That vill be a start. Und alzo ve commence soon mit the hauz to hauz mit tracts—for the campaign. That is much vork. Poor leetle girl. I guess ve can most kill her. Vork is gut medicine."

And Isadore, having stolen half a morning from his regular work, rushed downtown to the office.

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## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE CLARION

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Yetta found the strike of the paper-box makers more serious than she had expected. The conditions of the trade were appalling. The half dozen factories were only the centre of a widespread sweating system. More than half of the work was done in the tenements of the districts where the Child Labor Law could be evaded and where women could be driven to work incredibly long hours beyond the reach of the Factory Inspectors.

The strikers were not only isolated—lost in a backwater district of Brooklyn, out of touch with labor organizations, ignorant of the laws and of their rights—they were also weakened by the division of languages. All were "greenhorn" immigrants, who had not yet learned English. They belonged to diverse and hostile races—a disunited medley of Slovaks, Poles, Italians, and Jews. The bosses have been quick to discover how serious an impediment to organization is a mixture of races.

Yetta came to them in the same way that Mabel, three and a half years before, had come to the striking vest-makers—bringing detailed, practical knowledge of how to manage a strike. As soon as she had telephoned in a first story to *The Clarion*, she took up the work of bringing order and hope into the despairing chaos of the struggle. She called on the police captain, and her threat of publicity made him change his mind in regard to the right of the strikers to hold meetings. Before supper-time the effect of the *Clarion* story was evident. Half a dozen labor organizers and Socialist speakers turned up. With this outside help the paper-box makers were able to organize their picket, arrange meetings, and start plans for money-raising. A Socialist lawyer took up the cases of the dozen odd strikers who had been arrested.

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By ten o'clock the situation was immensely improved. Yetta escaped to a typewriter to get out her big "follow-up" for the next day's paper. She went at it with a peculiar thrill. She was realizing for the first time what a power in the fight a working-man's paper might be.

While she was working out her story, the semi-annual stockholders' meeting of the Coöperative Newspaper Publishing Company was called to order in one of the halls of the Labor Temple on East Eighty-fourth Street.

Walter had spoken of *The Clarion* as "Isadore's paper." In reality it was a coöperative enterprise. In the days when the working-men nearly elected Henry George as Mayor of New York, they had started to raise money to found a newspaper which would represent the interests of their class. It was decided that fifty thousand dollars was necessary, and a committee had been formed. In the first enthusiasm they had collected five thousand. Fresh efforts had been made intermittently, and the sum had grown to eight thousand.

When Isadore had returned from his vacation with the Pauldings, he had decided to centre his efforts on this project. He had studied the ways and means carefully, he had infused new life into the committee, and at last he had succeeded in organizing this coöperative publishing company. At their first meeting they had decided that fifty thousand was hopeless, and that they could begin with twenty-five. But after straining every nerve for six months, arranging balls and picnics and fairs, they had raised only twelve thousand. *The Clarion* was started on that amount. Every one who knew anything about modern journalism told Isadore he was a fool.

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At first the paper ran on its capital. But after a few months the income from circulation, advertisements, and job-printing reduced the weekly deficit to about five hundred dollars. This was met in part by the Maintenance Pledge Fund. About two thousand people, mostly members of the Socialist party, had pledged weekly contributions ranging from ten cents to a few dollars. The remaining deficit was met by pure and simple begging and by rebates from the wages. Never was a paper run on a more strenuous and flimsy basis. The lack of economy of such poverty-stricken operation would have shocked any business man, would have caused apoplexy to an "efficiency expert." The cost of every process was twice or thrice what it would have been if they had had more money.

But financial worries were only a small part of what Isadore and his little band of enthusiastic helpers had to contend with. *The Clarion* was the property of the democratically organized shareholders, who elected an Executive Committee of five to manage it. Of all phases of public life, Democracy has shown itself least prepared to deal sanely with this business of newspapers. As a whole the stockholders of the company were deeply dissatisfied with the regular newspapers and ardently desired one which would truly represent their class. But although they were making great sacrifices, were putting up an amazingly large share of their earnings to support *The Clarion*, their idea of what to expect from it was very vague. They knew nothing at all of the

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technical problems of journalism.

The Executive Committee had stated meetings every week, and seemed to Isadore to be holding special meetings every ten minutes. More of his time went to educating this board of managers, teaching them what could and what could not be done with their limited resources, than in actual work on the paper.

When the meeting of the shareholders had been called to order, Rheinhardt, the chairman of the Executive Committee, read his report. The circulation had reached twelve thousand. The weekly deficit had been reduced to \$400. The Maintenance Pledge Fund had brought in \$310. Gifts to the amount of \$66.50 had been received. The office force had receipted for \$23.50 which they had not received. For the first time in the history of *The Clarion* a week had passed without increasing the indebtedness.

Then the meeting fell into its regular routine of useless criticism. One desperately earnest Socialist vehemently objected to some of the advertisements which, he said, favored capitalistic enterprise. He was immediately followed by another Comrade who accused the advertising force of rank inefficiency in not securing more of it. A third speaker said it was foolish to waste space on sporting news. The working-class had more serious things to think about. Three or four others at once clamored for the floor. They all told the same story: the men in their shops bought the papers to see how the Giants were coming along in the race for the baseball pennant. They would not buy *The Clarion* because its athletic news was weak. So it went on as usual—every suggestion was combated by a counterproposal—and so it would have gone on till adjournment, if one of the Executive Committee had not lost heart in the face of this futile criticism and resigned.

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Wilhelm Stringer jumped up.

"Ve haf in our branch a comrade who is one gut newspaper lady. She has vorked mit a big yellow journal. I like to see gut Socialist on the komität, but alzo ve need some gut newspaper man. Und I nominate Comrade Yetta Rayefsky."

No one sought the nomination, for it was a hard and thankless job, so Yetta was elected by acclamation.

"Ve vill nearly kill her mit vork. Yes?" Stringer said to Isadore as the meeting broke up.

"Do you think she'll accept?" Isadore asked dubiously.

"Sure, she vill. It is a gut girl. I haf not as yet asked her, but now I vill write a letter und tell her."

He gave the note to Isadore to deliver.

Yetta finished her copy about midnight, but finding much detail still needing attention at the strike headquarters, she decided to make a night of it and sleep in Brooklyn with a family of strikers. It was three in the morning before she turned in—too tired to remember with any clearness that her butterfly wings had been broken. More than once during the day she had had to fight against her tears—to struggle against the desire to drop all this work and rush back to Manhattan and Walter. But always at the weak moment some one who was weaker had asked her help.

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It all had to be fought out again when she woke. She might not have won, if the conviction had not come to her during her sleep that somehow it must all turn out right in the end. When she reached "headquarters" she found so much to do that she had no time to mourn. The first mail brought in more than fifty dollars—the result of her yesterday's story. But better still was the fact that *The Clarion's* glaring headlines had forced the attention of the regular papers. The strike was receiving wide publicity. There is no other class of evil-doers who so ardently love darkness in their business as "unfair" employers. The bosses had not been much worried by the revolt of their workers, but they did not like to read about it—to have their acquaintances read about it—in their morning papers.

It was ten o'clock before Yetta could get away. Coming across on the elevated, she had her first chance to look at the yesterday's issue of *The Clarion*. It caused a revulsion from her feeling of enthusiasm over a working-man's paper. What a pitiful sheet it was! How different in tone and quality from the one Walter had talked of so glowingly! It was not only unattractive in appearance. There was not a detail which, to Yetta's trained eye, seemed well done. The headlines of her own story, which spread across the top of the front page, were crude. A dozen better ones suggested themselves to her. The mistakes they had made in expanding her telephone message to two columns were ludicrous and vexatious. What else was there in the paper? The rest of the front page was filled with telegrams which had been news several hours before it had gone to press! The second page—it was headed "Labor News"—offended Yetta especially. It was mostly "exchange paragraphs" clipped from trade journals. The original matter was written by some one who did not understand nor sympathize with the Trade-Union Movement, who evidently thought that every worker who was not a party member was mentally defective. The only spark of personality on the last page was Isadore's editorial. It was a bit ponderous and long-drawn-out, but at least it was intense and thoughtful. The cartoon was poorly drawn and required an analytic mind to discover the point. Yetta found it hard to believe that twelve thousand people had been willing to buy so uninteresting a paper when they could get the bright, snappy, sixteen-page *Star* for the same money.

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She was tired and discouraged when she reached the office.

"I'm not a headline writer," she said as she tossed her copy on Levine's table, "but I've ground out some that aren't quite so stupid as those you ran yesterday."

Without waiting for his retort she went on to Isadore's desk.

"Here's a note from Stringer," he said as a greeting.

She tore it open listlessly.

"Well! That's a nervy piece of business," she said, throwing it into the waste-paper basket. "Electing me without asking my consent."

"Won't you serve?"

"No."

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Isadore leaned back in his swivel chair and puffed nervously at his cigarette.

"Don't you think the job's worth doing?"

"It's worth doing well—but not like this."

It seemed to Isadore that a word of encouragement from her would have put new life into him. But she—like everybody else—had only criticism. He had a foolish desire to cry and an equally insane desire to curse. He managed to do neither.

"Well, what would you suggest? To bring it up to your standard of worth-while-ness?"

"It'll never be a newspaper till the front page gets over this day-before-yesterday look—for one thing."

"If you knew what we're up against," he said, laboriously trying to hide the sting her scorn gave him, "I think you'd be proud of our news department—as proud as I am. In the first place, of course, we have to subscribe to the very cheapest News Agency. Until we can afford some more delivery wagons—we've only got two now—we'll have to go to press by one. That means that the telegraphic copy must be in at twelve-thirty. The flimsies don't begin to come in till eleven. We can receive only one hour and a half out of twenty-four. And it's a rotten, unreliable, dirty capitalistic service—the only one we can afford. Half of it has to be rewritten. Harry Moore, who also reports night meetings, clips the labor papers, attends to the make-up, runs the 'Questions and Answers,' and collects jokes and fillers, has to read every despatch and rewrite most of them. Yes, I'm rather proud of our telegraphic department."

"Is the financial side so hopeless?" Yetta asked.

"Well, I don't call it hopeless. You're a member of the Executive Committee—at least till you resign—so you'd best look into the books."

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For half an hour they bent their heads over balance-sheets. It was an appalling situation. The debt was out of all proportion to the property. To be sure much of it was held by sympathizers, who were not likely to foreclose. But there was no immediate hope of decreasing the burden. Any new income would have to go into improvements. The future of the paper depended not only on its ability to carry this dead weight, but on the continuance of the Pledge Fund and on Isadore's success in begging about a hundred dollars a week.

"It's hopeless," Yetta said. "You might run a good weekly on these resources, but you need ten times as much to keep up a good daily."

"Well, if you feel that way about it, Yetta, I hope you'll resign at to-night's meeting." His eyes turned away from her face about the busy room, and his discouraged look gave place to one of conviction. A note of dogged determination rang in his voice.—"Because it isn't hopeless! Our only real danger is that the executive committee may kill us with cold water. If we can get a committee that believes in us, we'll be all right. A paper like this isn't a matter of finance. That's what you—and the other discouragers—don't see. You look at it from a bourgeoisie dollar-and-cents point of view. It's hopeless, is it? Well, we've been doing this impossible thing for more than a year. It's hopeless to carry such indebtedness? Good God! We started with nothing but debts—nothing at all to show. Every number that comes out makes it more hopeful. The advertising increases. The Pledge Fund grows. Why, we've got twelve thousand people in the habit of reading it now. That habit is an asset which doesn't show in the books. Six months ago we had nothing!—not even experience. Why, our office force wasn't even organized! And now you say it's hopeless—want us to quit—just when it's getting relatively easy. We—"

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Levine's querulous voice rose above the din of the machines—finding fault with something. A stenographer in a far corner began to count, "One! Two! Three!" Every one in the office, even the linotypers and printer's devil beyond the partition took up the slogan.

"O-o-oh! Cut it out and work for Socialism."

The tense expression on Isadore's face relaxed into a confident grin.

"That's it. You think we need money to run this paper? We're doing it on enthusiasm. And nothing is going to stop us."

"I'll think it over," Yetta said. "If I can't see any chance of helping, I won't stay on the Committee"

to discourage you. I've got to go up to the League now and make peace with Mabel. I was so busy in Brooklyn last night I forgot all about a speaking engagement she'd made for me."

As she rode uptown Yetta was surprised by a strange revulsion towards her old work and workmates. Why the shattering of her romance should have changed her outlook on life she could not determine. She seemed somehow to have graduated from it all. Even with wings broken a butterfly does not want to crawl back into the chrysalis. All her old life had become abhorrent to her. She hated the steps in front of the League office as she walked up them. She realized that she was dangerously near hating Mabel. More sharply than ever before she felt the chasm between this finely bred upper-class woman and herself. No matter how hard she tried she would never be able to climb entirely out of her sweat-shop past. Jealousy made her unjust. She attributed Walter's preference—which was purely a matter of chance—to this difference in breeding.

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Mabel, sitting within at her desk, was in no more cordial a mood. Walter had not called the night before. This had affected her more than she would have believed possible. It seemed typical of the way she was being deserted. A hungry loneliness had been gathering within her of late. The process of growing old seemed to be a gradual sloughing off of the relationships which really counted. Old age with Eleanor was a dreary outlook. She had not had many suitors this last year—none that mattered. As she had sat at home waiting for Walter to call, realizing minute by minute that he was not coming, the loneliness which had been only a hungry ache had changed to an acute pain. She was no more in love with him than before. But—although she had not admitted it to herself in so many words—if he had come, still seeking her, she knew she would have married him out of sheer fright at the doleful prospect of being left alone.

At the office that morning she had found a letter, which he had written the day before. He was sorry to have missed her. He was to be in the country only a few days, was leaving that afternoon for Boston—a collection he wanted to look over in the Harvard Museum—and was sailing from there to England. He told of the Oxford professorship he was accepting, and he was "Very truly yours." He did not even give his Boston address.

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It was his formal "*adieu*." It was the concrete evidence—which is often so distressing, even when the fact is already known—that another chapter was finished.

She had hardly finished this letter when a telephone message had come, asking why Yetta had failed to appear at the meeting. It was a small matter, but it seemed important to Mabel. Yetta, the reliable, the dependable, had failed her. Was this a new desertion?

The stenographers had made more mistakes that morning than was their general average for a week.

At last Yetta came in. Her haggard face shocked Mabel. She forgot her own discomforts in a sudden flood of sympathy.

"What's the matter?" she asked anxiously. "Are you sick? Is that why you didn't speak last night?"

"No," Yetta replied shortly. It irritated her to think that her heartbreak showed in her face. "I'm not sick. I forgot."

"Forgot?"

"Yes. I forgot all about it till it was too late to do any good telephoning. I was over in Brooklyn. And even if I hadn't forgot, I couldn't have come. This paper-box strike is a lot more important than that meeting."

"Paper-box makers? I did not know they were striking."

"If you read *The Clarion*, you'd find out about such things."

Yetta tossed her copy on Mabel's desk. The edge of each word had shaved a trifle off the traditional friendship between them. Mabel had not intended to lose her temper. The sight of Yetta had touched her deeply. But it seemed to her—from Yetta's first word—that she was being flouted. *The Clarion* was the last straw. Below the glaring headlines was Yetta's name at the head of the story.

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"So, you thought it more important to write an article for *The Clarion* than to keep an engagement for the League? I'd like to know whether you're working for me or for Isadore Braun."

Yetta had not intended to lose her temper, either. But she had been too tired and storm-tossed to be thoughtful. She was flooded by an insolent recklessness. Mabel Train did not need to put on airs, just because she had had a better education.

"Neither," she said defiantly. "I'm drawing my salary from the Woman's Trade Union League. If they don't like my work, all they've got to do is to tell me."

A stenographer giggled.

Yetta walked over to her letter-box and looked over her mail.

"Am I to understand that you are offering me your resignation?" Mabel asked.

"Oh, no! I was just making a general statement. Any time the Advisory Council want my resignation they can get it by asking."

Suddenly Yetta wanted to cry.

"What's the use of quarrelling?" she said contritely, coming over to Mabel's desk. "I'm all done up. Haven't had any sleep lately. Cross as a bear. I'll go home—a couple of hours' sleep will do me good. I'm sorry I—"

Her eye fell on the envelope of Walter's note. His well-loved handwriting stared at her—jeeringly. What did he have to say to Mabel? The apology died on her lips. [Pg 369]

Mabel was too deeply offended to make peace easily. She had felt humiliated by the snicker of her secretary. She kept her eyes turned away and so did not see the sudden spasm of pain which twisted Yetta's face. She waited a moment for the apology which did not come. Then she turned back to her work without looking up.

"I will certainly present the matter to the next meeting of the Advisory Council," she said coldly.

Yetta turned without a word and slammed the door as she went out.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

### NEW WORK

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Things seemed very muddled indeed to Yetta as she rushed out of the office of the Woman's Trade Union League. It was not until she reached the elevated and was on her way downtown that any coherent thought came to her. Then she was caught by one of those amazing psychological reactions, which escape all laboratory explanation. She was suddenly calm. All this turmoil of misunderstanding and quarrels was utterly unbelievable. It was quite impossible that her love for Walter, her long friendship with Mabel, should be wrecked in so short a time. With the fairest look of truth the whole muddle straightened out. That note on Mabel's desk had been Walter's definite break with her, an announcement of his new love. It was as plain as day. A letter like that would explain Mabel's raw humor. She would find Walter waiting for her on her doorstep. They would have supper together and never, never separate again. She began to smile at the thought of all the dumb, gratuitous misery of these last two days. She ran down the stairs of the Ninth Street station, dashed through the chaos of Sixth Avenue cars, and walked her fastest to Waverly Place.

Walter was not sitting on her doorstep.

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It was dark in the hallway—appallingly dark. But the light shone about her once more when she found a letter from him in her box. She ran upstairs, let herself into the apartment, locked her bedroom door, and tore open the letter. It was written on the paper of the Café Lafayette.

"DEAR YETTA,

"No word from you all morning—so I know you have decided to keep faith with your Dream. Perhaps you are right. I hope for your sake that you are—although it seems very like a death sentence to me.

"I should like to ask your pardon for all the pain this has caused you, but it's hard to apologize for having tried desperately to tell the truth. Feeling as your silence tells me you do about it, it must be better for both of us that Isadore's coming forced an explanation, forced us to an understanding—in time. I trust you, Yetta, to see clearly—perhaps not now, but sometime—how I tried above all things to be fair and honest to you. I wanted your love. You must never think I was pretending about that, Yetta darling. There is nothing I want more at this moment. And, although you will not agree with me—and may be right—I thought we could win together to a happy, useful life. I still think we might if you did not feel about such things as you do.

"But after all, it doesn't matter much what I think. You're a woman. You've lived long enough to make your own choice, to formulate for yourself the demands you will present to the Great Employer—Life.

"I don't feel that you are asking too much—I don't believe we can do that. I won't admit that you are asking more than I. But I doubt if you are asking wisely—for the Real Thing. Yet, for years on end, I made the same demand. Perhaps it is my defeat which has changed me from a romanticist to a realist. Nowadays I prefer something real to any Dream.

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"But you must make your choice according to your present lights. I can't ask you to accept my experience. And more deeply—more devoutly—than I wish for anything else, I hope that your Dream may lead your feet into pleasant paths—to the Happy Valley.

"Once my pen is started, I could write on and on to you. But this desire to commune with you is not what you think love should be, so it would be of no comfort. After all, there is nothing more for me to say. It was my business to make you see the choice

clearly. You did, I think. And you made it bravely. So I must say Good-by.

"I'm leaving in half an hour for Boston, and I will sail from there in a few days. The Fates have arranged a haven for me in Oxford. It is not what I would like most in the world, but it will do. Better chance to you.

"WALTER."

Very little of this letter reached Yetta's consciousness. The import of all these phrases was that he had gone. So there was not any hope. If Walter had loved her—in anything like the way she meant—he would not have gone.

Yetta had not cried very much, even as a little girl. Now, it seemed to her that, having lost control of her tears, she had lost everything. She wilted on to the bed, burying her face in the pillow to hide the shame of her sobs.

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Her body was utterly prone on the bed—but her spirit had fallen even lower. Why had she let Isadore divert her with the call to work? What did work matter, if she had lost Walter? Why had she not gone to him that first morning? He had waited for some word from her. She had let her stupid pride stand in her way. What was her pride worth to her? If she had gone to his room, she might have held something of him. She had demanded all and had lost everything.

As the minutes grew into hours, Yetta sank deeper and deeper into the Slough of Despond. She lost desire to struggle out. But gradually the wild turmoil of grief wore away, and she fell into a heavy sleep.

When she awoke, she heard Sadie moving about in the kitchen. The pride which she had cursed a few hours before came back to her. She did not want Sadie to see her defeat. There is a vast difference between the abstract proposition, "Is life worth living?" and the concrete question, "Shall I let Tom, Dick, or Mary see tears in my eyes!" She had wanted to die, and now she did not want to be ashamed.

So the will came to Yetta to hold her head high. It was six o'clock when she got up and washed her face. Sadie was preparing supper. She wanted to go out and help. But instead she sat down drearily. She did not have the courage to face her room-mate. The willing of a deed does not guarantee the power of execution.

She was dry-eyed now; the tears were spent, but she was utterly weak. She leaned a little sideways and, resting her cheek against the cool surface of her bureau, looked—unseeing—out of her window at the array of milk bottles on the window ledge across the airshaft. Where could she find help? It was the first time in her life she had wanted such assistance. Often she had needed advice, aid in thinking things out. But now she needed help in the elemental job of living. Often she had been at a loss as to what she ought to do, but now she knew. Yet instead of going out to help Sadie, she sat there—weak.

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If she had been an Italian, she might have crept out to the Confessional, whispered her troubles into a kind Padre's ear, and so found comfort and strength. But the solace of religion was unknown to her. In these latter active years, even the memory of her father had faded. She could no longer shut her eyes and talk things over with him. But without some external aid, she knew she could not go forward. She—the individual—was defeated. Like the little band of besieged in Lucknow there was nothing more that she could do. The ammunition was spent. In what direction should she turn in the hope of hearing the pipes of the rescuers?

In those few desolate moments she saw her situation clearly. She did not want to die. But unless relief came quickly the black waves of death which were beleaguering her spirit would close over her. Never as long as she might live could she ever be proud of her strength again.

What solid, basic thing was there for her to lean against?

Suddenly she caught the sound of the distant bagpipes. She rushed out into the hall and took down the receiver of the telephone.

"Hello, Central. Park Row 3900."...

"Hello. *The Clarion*?"...

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"One! Two! Three!!"

Sadie came to the kitchen door and looked out in surprise. The gaslight shone full on Yetta's face; it was drawn and haggard.

Harry Moore, who happened to answer the call in *The Clarion* office, did not recognize Yetta's voice, but he recognized the signal of distress.

"O-o-oh!" he shouted back. "Cut it out and work for Socialism."

Yetta's fixed stare melted into the look of one who sees a fair vision, the strained lines about her mouth relaxed into a glad smile.

"Thanks!" she said, and hung up the receiver.

After all, there was something bigger than her little personal woes—a Cause to work for even if

her wings were broken.

"I'm sorry to have slept so late," she said, coming out into the kitchen. "I was up on that paper-box strike in Brooklyn most of last night. Dead tired. I turned in about one this afternoon. I thought I'd surely wake up in time to get supper."

Sadie was aggrieved at Yetta's matter-of-fact tone. She knew that something was wrong. In spite of the firm smile, Sadie was sure something exciting had happened. She herself was used to telling her troubles to almost any one who would listen. That her ready sympathy should be allowed to lie fallow, hurt her. But she did not want Yetta to think she was prying. So she talked about other things. But when Yetta put on her hat after supper, Sadie could not help asking where she was going.

"Down to *The Clarion*. An Executive Committee. I hope I'll get back early. This all-night game is killing me." [Pg 376]

Yetta took little part in the Committee meeting, but she listened carefully to get the measure of the other members. Rheinhardt, the chairman, was a printer; he had some familiarity with that side of newspaper work at least. He was a quiet, earnest man, and as the evening passed, Yetta's respect for him grew. He seemed sleepy and indifferent most of the time, but whenever any matter of real importance came up, he was wide-awake. Paulding, the magazine writer, with whom Isadore had spent his vacation, was the strongest man on the Committee. But in spite of his deep interest in the paper, he was a bit restive, quick to voice any passing discouragement, impatient with the less-cultured working-men and their rather indirect methods of thought and work. Idle discussion, waste of time, made him fume. Yetta saw that if she was to do any real work on this Committee, it must be in coöperation with Rheinhardt and Paulding against the other two who were dead-wood—nonentities.

When the routine work had ended and they had reached, in the Order of Business, "Good and Welfare," Rheinhardt asked Yetta if she had any suggestions.

"Every improvement," she said, "seems to depend on getting more money. And that's got to be done by increased circulation. Our financial condition will never be sound so long as we are dependent on gifts and friendly loans. We've got about 12,000 circulation now, and I guess that's as many Socialists as we can count on. If we're to grow, it must be among non-Socialist working-men. So it seems to me that we must put our best efforts on the labor page. That page is very weak now. It's full of stuff about the unions, but it's written to interest Socialists. It ought to be the other way round. Until it is made interesting to working-men who are not yet Socialists it's useless as a circulation-getter." [Pg 377]

Paulding leaned forward and broke in impulsively.

"Comrade, everybody has knocks! Every page in the paper is weak. We don't have to be told that. How can it be improved with the resources at hand? That's the question."

"Nothing can be done without some money. But if we could raise one man's salary, I think we could make a great improvement. What's needed is a man who can give all his time to it, some one who has an idea of news-value, of up-to-date journalism, who understands the labor movement and can write about it without an offensive Socialist bias."

"And," Paulding growled, "how much would a man like that cost us? There aren't half a dozen men with those qualifications in the city. How much would Karner pay a man, who could make real circulation for *The Star* out of a labor page?"

"The kind of man I mean would value the freedom we could give him. Nobody who's sincere likes to work for Karner. We can get him for less."

"Well, I'm doubtful," Paulding said. "We're sweating our staff now worse than any sweat-shop. Look at this rotten office where we ask them to work. We're overworking them, underpaying them, and about every week asking them to sign off some of their wages."

"They do it willingly," one of the nonentities put in, "the Great Ideal—"

"Oh! that Great Ideal talk makes me tired," Paulding interrupted. "We can't get high-class men at such terms. I know two really able men; they give us a lot of stuff gratis. They've got the Great Ideal as strong as anybody, but they've also got families! They'd be glad to work for us if we could give them, not fancy salaries, but decent ones. We can't. The men we've got are wonderful. I take off my hat whenever I think of them. They're devoted to the limit. Very likely they're of high moral character"—his voice rose querulously—"good to their mothers, and all that. But there is no use shutting our eyes to the fact that they're not newspaper men. Braun had some experience on the *Forwaertz*. But there isn't a man in the office who ever saw the inside of a modern metropolitan daily." [Pg 378]

"What can we offer a man? Twenty-five dollars a week—at most. That's what Braun is getting—sometimes. It's a joke. A hundred a month to our editor-in-chief! That's our whole trouble. What we—"

"Could you offer twenty-five a week?" Yetta interrupted his despondency.

"It would be hard," Rheinhardt said.



"Sure we could—for a good man," Paulding contradicted him. "I could guarantee it myself. I've a lot of friends who are interested in *The Clarion*, but just dead sick of its sloppy appearance. I haven't seen anything in it for weeks that jolted me till this paper-box story of yours. Think of it! A Socialist paper which isn't afraid to tell the truth, but can't afford to hire the brains to do it! Yes, if we had a live-wire on the paper, I could find ten people who would pledge ten dollars a month. But what's the use of talking about it? The kind of man we need could get fifty a week—more. It's the same all the way through. We need keen men in every department and can't afford to pay their market value. If we got the right kind of a man for advertising manager—the kind we need—he'd be valuable to other richer papers. The right kind of a man for our circulation department would be worth ten thousand to a dozen other—"

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"I don't know anything about the business side of it," Yetta interrupted again. "But I know a lot of reporters. If you'll authorize me to offer twenty-five a week, I'll see if I can find one."

"No one can work on the paper who isn't a party member," the other nonentity said. "We can't ask the Comrades to put up money to support a broken-down capitalist."

"What's the use of discussing it?" Paulding asked Yetta, ignoring the nonentity. "Have you the nerve to ask a friend to take such a job? You wouldn't do it yourself."

Yetta suddenly remembered that she was probably jobless.

"On the contrary," she said, "if I had the right kind of training, I'd jump at it."

"Well," Rheinhardt said, suddenly waking up, "I think you come nearer to what we need than any one we're likely to find. If Paulding can raise twenty-five a week, will you accept it?"

"Yes," Paulding chimed in, "I'll get the money. Will you do it?"

"I haven't the training," Yetta laughed, not taking the offer seriously. "I've only had six months' newspaper work altogether, and that was very specialized stuff on the Woman's page. We need some one with more general and longer experience."

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"You don't answer," Rheinhardt said, slumping back in his chair; "we can't get the wonder you talk about. Even with your limited experience you can earn more elsewhere."

"Of course you won't take it," Paulding sneered. "Not that I blame you. I'm not taking it either."

"On second thought," Yetta said, "I will."

It was a complicated psychological process which caused Yetta so suddenly to throw in her lot with the struggling Socialist paper. She did not often act so impetuously.

The motive which seemed to her strongest was the distaste for her old life which had suddenly flooded her. She had emigrated spiritually. Fate had jerked her roughly out of the orderly progress, which had been typified by Walter's great leather chair. It seemed incongruous to go on with the old work of the League from the new flat in Waverly Place. Everything must be changed.

But a self-protective instinct, more subtle and less easily recognized, was equally strong. She was not so likely to be reminded of Walter in the rushing turmoil of *The Clarion* office. In learning the details of a new job she would have less time and energy for the destructive work of mourning.

Deeper even than this was a subconscious reaching out for help. Here she could find the strength she needed to go forward. She had tapped it over the telephone wire when she had been tottering on the raw edge of despair. She wanted to keep ever in touch with this indomitable little band of fighters. She had looked down upon them—rather despised them—from the false standard she had acquired uptown. They had seemed to her unkempt. But in her moment of greatest need it was to them she had turned. "Culture" and "gentility" had been no help to her. It was the handclasp of her own people that had given her strength to climb up out of the Slough of Despond.

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As a little child in whose brain is as yet no clear concept of "danger" clings, when frightened, to its mother's hand, so Yetta—knowing that her need had not passed, afraid of the future—wanted to keep close to the protecting enthusiasm, the dauntless faith which had proven her only helper—her one hope of salvation.

But it was not until many months had passed that Yetta woke up to a vital, emotional attitude towards her new work. The deeper side of her personality had been stunned by the crash of her romance. She walked through life a high-class physical machine, a keen, forthright intellect. But it did not seem to matter very much to her. Nothing did. The moments came when she cursed the Fates for having sent Walter to rescue her from Harry Klein. That could have been no more painful, and it would have been over quicker. The years she had spent studying seemed only to have increased her capacity for suffering.

Each day was a task to be accomplished. The very uncertainty of *The Clarion's* existence fitted into Yetta's mood. Any moment the flimsy structure might collapse. She thought of the future as little as possible. Can I get through another day without breaking down? Can we get out another issue? These two questions seemed almost the same to her. She and the paper were struggling desperately to keep going until they found firmer ground underfoot.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII YETTA TAKES HOLD

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But if Yetta did not think her work mattered very much, Isadore and Rheinhardt and Paulding and all those who had the welfare of *The Clarion* at heart thought very differently about it. Gradually she transformed the labor page into a vital force in the trade-union world.

Organized labor is fighting out the same problem in democracy which our larger community is facing. "How shall elected delegates be made to represent their constituents?" The rank and file of workers cannot attend all the meetings of their central organizations any more than we can spend all our time in watching Congress. Labor bosses, like political crooks, love darkness. Yetta, taking a suggestion from the progressive magazines, turned the light of publicity on the weekly meetings of the Central Federated Union. She made the Monday afternoon labor page a verbatim report of the Sunday session. Among the delegates to the C. F. U. there were many fearless, upright men who were as much opposed to gang politics as any insurgent senator at Washington. Yetta knew them from her old work and drew them into a sort of informal Good Government Club. Every day she tried to run some story dealing with this issue of clean politics. More and more the "labor grafters" denounced *The Clarion*, and more and more their opponents came to rely on it as their greatest ally. The percentage of "crooked" and "straight" among the unionists is about the same as in any church membership. The circulation grew among the honest workers—the vast majority.

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Her influence was not confined to her own department. Her experience in the Woman's Trade Union League had made her an expert beggar; more and more she helped Isadore, relieving him of some of the burden of money-raising. This freed more of his time and energy for his page. He listened more docilely to her suggestions about bettering the style of his editorials—adding snap to them—than he had done when Paulding had tried to help him. The improvement was noticeable. During her apprenticeship under Mr. Brace Yetta had absorbed some of his "sense of make-up." Harry Moore often appealed to her judgment. In time *The Clarion* began to look almost attractive.

One day Yetta's old friend Cowan, the sporting editor of *The Star*, met her on the street.

"I hear you're working on this Socialist paper," he said. "How goes it?"

"I like it better than *The Star*," she replied.

"I've looked over some of the copies," he said. "You people aren't handling local news the way you ought to. Why don't you tear the lid off this Subway scandal? I'm not a Socialist. But I hate to see such good stories going to waste."

Yetta rather wearily went over the long story of their limitations. She had learned to recite it as glibly as Isadore or Paulding.

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"It's too bad," Cowan said, as he left her. "I didn't realize you were up against it so hard. I sure hate to see some of these hot stories unused."

A couple of days later, Yetta received a long, unsigned typewritten manuscript. It was a well-written story of a session of the Public Service Commission. A witness had made a statement which seemed to offer the key to the whole situation in the tangled effort of the city to get decent transportation. A few more questions promised to bring out the fact—generally suspected—that a well-known banker was obstructing progress. The chairman had unexpectedly adjourned the sitting. When they reassembled, the old witness—the only one who had ever shown any willingness to remember important things—had left town. Then followed from official court records a list of the cases in which the Chairman of the Commission had served as personal attorney for the banker who was under suspicion. It was a wrought-iron story, hardly a word in it was not public record; chapter and verse were cited for every allegation. Yetta called up Cowan and asked him about it. He denied all knowledge of it so ardently that she was sure he had sent it. They made a screaming front-page story of it. The regular papers denounced it as "a malicious and audacious lie"—which was good advertising for *The Clarion*. More anonymous stories followed. They attracted a new class of readers. The circulation grew. Gradually Yetta and *The Clarion* found firmer ground underfoot.

Despite her strenuous work for *The Clarion*, Yetta did not lose interest in, nor neglect, her vest-makers union. She was not alone in her ambition to see all the garment trades allied in a strong federation. There were many Socialists in the various unions, and there were many who, while not party members, had been influenced by the propaganda of the Industrial Workers of the World. As the months passed the sentiment for "One Big Union" grew steadily. At last, when Yetta had been about a year on *The Clarion*, a convention of all the garment trades was called to consider the matter.

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The victory of Yetta's faction was by no means sure. Each union had its own ambitions, which it was loath to sacrifice for the common good. In all the unions there were little groups of "officials"—some of them afraid of losing their salaries in the proposed new arrangement, more who feared to lose their influence. A union man who is elected to the executive committee by his fellows has all the personal pride in the matter that a college graduate has in being on the board of governors of his club. The union man has the same temptation to resort to petty intrigues to hold his place. Officialdom always distrusts innovations—is always conservative. Working-men

are surprisingly like the rest of us—especially in these little personal jealousies and meannesses.

There was also the hostility of the American Federation of Labor to overcome. Within that great organization the same struggle between industrialism and the old-fashioned craft-unionism was waxing more bitter every year. A bitter opposition was growing against the rule of Samuel Gompers and his *satellites*. No one denied that this group had done great service to the cause of labor—ten, fifteen, twenty years ago. But the younger union men—especially those most in sympathy with Socialism or the I. W. W.—said these "leaders" were getting old, that they were out of touch with the times. Naturally these leaders did not look with favor on the spread of such ideas.

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Yetta and her friends saw at once that their only hope of success lay in appealing to the rank and file. So during the first days of the convention, while the official delegates were denouncing the principles of Industrial Unionism, Yetta spoke at noon factory meetings, two or three times each evening, and devoted almost all of *The Clarion's* "Labor Page" to the same subject. This is the secret of democratic politics. If the mass of the people can be stirred into watching and controlling their representatives, Democracy is safe. The mass of the garment workers believed in federation. They made their wishes heard even in the Convention Hall,—it is rare, indeed, that the will of the people control such assemblies,—and when the crucial vote was taken, the resolution of the industrial unionists was carried by an unexpectedly large majority.

For close to five years, Yetta had been working towards this end. At first she had been laughed at and snubbed. The victory made her wild with joy—but also she felt very tired. The meeting did not break up till after one in the morning. The last week had been a ceaseless rush. She felt that if she went to sleep she would not wake up for a month or so. It was important to have the story in the morrow's *Clarion*, and Isadore ought to write an editorial on the victory. She decided to go to the office, hammer out the "copy," leave a note for Isadore, and then go home to sleep with a clear conscience.

The elevator was not running at this hour, and Yetta had to climb up the six flights to the *Clarion's* loft in the dark. There is something eerie and weird about a deserted office. The feverish activity of the day haunts the place like a ghost, even in the stillest hours of the night. Although Yetta knew the room was empty there was a very distinct feeling that some one was there. She was not afraid of the dark, but it was a decided relief when, after much fumbling about, she found the way to her table and turned on the light. The electric globe hung low, and the light was so concentrated, by a green glass shade, that it shone glaringly on the table and typewriter, but did not illumine the rest of the room at all.

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Once Yetta had a sheet of paper arranged in her machine, the feeling of weirdness left her, and soon the spirit of composition made her forget that she was tired. For an hour she hammered the keyboard without interruption. It was not till she had finished her "story" that the fatigue reasserted itself. She ought to look over the copy to make corrections. She ought also to write a note to Isadore about the convention and to say that she was going home to sleep a week. She stretched herself energetically to drive away the drowsiness and—unconsciously—her arms went down on the table, her head down on her arms, and she was hopelessly asleep.

Isadore was generally the first of the editorial force to come to the office. His "eight-hour" workday was from 4 A.M. till noon. On his way to the office in the morning he picked up the early editions of the other papers, clipped the news he wanted worked up for their afternoon edition, and got his day's editorial finished before the rest of the staff turned up. It was his theory that if he had an evening engagement,—a committee meeting or a speech to make,—he would sleep four hours in the afternoon. If he had work in the afternoon, he went to bed before nine. So he got in seven hours of sleep every day—theoretically. But it so often happened that he had work to do both afternoon and evening that the week was rare when he averaged more than five hours sleep a day.

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He generally found the office empty when he arrived. But this morning a light was burning in the back of the loft—"the composing room." One of the linotypers, who was also a mechanic, had come a few minutes before him to repair one of the machines which had gone wrong, and so save the expense of bringing in an expert. It was a violation of the union rules, but this linotyper was a Socialist.

"Comrade," he said, when he saw Braun, "it's a crime. This linotype is worn out. I'm getting it so it will run again, but it's dead slow. And it'll break down again in a couple of days. It ought to be scrapped. It costs more to keep it going than the interest on the price of a new machine. It's uneconomic."

Isadore said he would talk it over with the executive committee. He made his way through the shadowy machines to the front part of the loft, which was by courtesy called "the Editorial Room." No one who has not experienced the expensiveness of poverty can realize how maddening it is to throw money away because you are not rich enough to save it. Isadore knew there was very little chance of buying a new linotype. He turned the end of a long bookcase and suddenly saw the light burning over Yetta's table; he saw her stretched out motionless across her work. He had never seen her asleep. With an awful sinking of the heart the thought came that she might be dead. He sprang towards her and called her name. In the semidarkness he upset a chair with appalling clatter.

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Yetta, startled out of profound sleep, sprang to her feet. Her head struck the light, which hung

low, broke the glass shade; the jar dislocated the fragile film of the lamp. In the instant before the light went out, the only thing which Yetta realized was that her surroundings were unfamiliar. She had never been so frightened before in her life. When they told her afterwards that she had screamed, she could hardly believe it. She could not recall having done so. The first thing she was conscious of was that some one's arms were about her and Isadore's voice was saying,—ungrammatically but convincingly,—"It's me."

After the hideous nightmare of fright, his accustomed voice, his strong arms about her, were utterly comforting. She told herself afterwards that she must have been partly over the verge of fainting, for Isadore kissed her and she made no motion—had no idea—of resistance. First, in the darkness, his hand had found the way to her neck and face; then she had felt the hot wave of his breath,—murmuring words which made no sense to her,—and then his lips on her cheek and mouth. She was never quite sure if she had kissed him back. Whether she had or not she knew she had been very close to doing so.

But the moment of forgetfulness had been interrupted by the linotyper, running towards them and asking the cause of the commotion. At the idea of an onlooker, Yetta disengaged herself from Isadore's arms—just in time. The linotyper turned on a light. Isadore tried to laugh.

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"We scared ourselves nearly to death," he explained. "Comrade Rayefsky had fallen asleep. The sight of her scared me into upsetting a chair. That startled her awake. She jumped up so quick she broke the lamp."

The linotyper was a good fellow. He unscrewed a lamp from another socket and substituted it for the one Yetta had broken, and went decently back to his work.

Isadore seemed on the point of coming towards her, and Yetta retreated back of the chair.

"How stupid of me to fall asleep. We won out at the convention. I came down to write it up. I must have just started to look it over when I went to sleep. You'll have to grind out an editorial on it. I'll finish it up at once."

She sat down to her work.

Isadore found it harder to bring his wits together. But her movement of retreat had been like a blow in the face to him. It steadied him a trifle—but only a trifle. He had kissed Yetta. All these years he had loved her. Suddenly—utterly unexpectedly—the Heavens had opened. He had held her in his arms, he had kissed her.

The foolish idea came to him that he would like to look at his lips, which—after waiting so long—had at last found their goal. As there was no mirror in the office, this was manifestly impossible. But his hand—at least he could look at that—it also had caressed the beloved face. His hand was stained with blood. For an instant he was dazed. Yetta—her cheeks aflame—was bent over her work. A little stream of blood ran down her neck, where a bit of the broken lamp-shade had cut her in its fall.

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"Yetta, Yetta!" he cried, "you're wounded."

"What?" she said in amazement. She had been preparing a crushing answer in case he started to make love again. The emotions that were tearing her were too violent to let her take note of a little cut.

"Look," he said, showing her his hand. "Broken glass. On your neck. Let me see."

Impressed by the sight of blood, she bent her head for the examination. But Isadore's ideas of treating such a wound were sentimental rather than scientific.

"Oh, don't. Please!" she protested, agonized by shame. She struggled up to her feet, but somehow she had forgotten the crushing retort she had prepared. "It isn't serious. It doesn't hurt. Please let me finish this work."

Isadore retreated before her distressed eyes.

"Wipe the blood off your lips," she ordered sternly.

Then she sat down again, utterly confused. It seemed such a stupid, inane thing she had said. It was all her fault, she unjustly told herself. If only she had kept her wits that first moment instead of being so childishly frightened. She felt humiliated. It took an extreme effort of will to turn her attention to the garment workers and the article she must correct. It would have helped if she could have heard the scratching of his pen or the rustle of his newspaper. There was not a sound from his desk. She did not dare to look around.

At last the task was finished. She put on her cloak and hat and wrapped the muffler about her throat before she found courage to look at Isadore. He was sunk down in his chair, watching her hungrily. She bit her lip at the sight and had trouble speaking.

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"Isad—Comrade, here's the copy. I hope you can make an editorial out of it. It's awfully important for Organized Labor.—This convention has finished me. I'm dead tired. I'll take a vacation tomorrow—I mean to-day—and sleep."

Isadore did not reply. He just looked at her, a dumb plea in his eyes—which she did not want to seem to understand.

"So long," she said.

She was almost out of sight before he spoke.

"You'll come back? When you're rested?"

"Why, yes," she said. "Of course."

It was at least half an hour before Isadore pulled himself together and got to work. But the editorial which he wrote on the Federated Garment Trades was very creditable.

Yetta walked home through the dawn. She was very tired, and she tried not to think. But she could not free herself from the insistent question—"Did I really kiss him?" She looked at herself in the glass, just before she turned out the gas and went to bed. "Did I really kiss him?" she asked her reflected image. She got no answer, and, as though vexed at this silence, she spoke defiantly. "If I did, I'm sorry. I don't love him." This rather comforted her, and she fell asleep at once.

But when she woke up in the early afternoon, she felt worse about the night's adventure than ever. Very emphatically she told herself that she loved Walter. That had been *La grande passion*. No. Not "had been"; it "was." It was a treason to think of it as "having been." She had told Walter that love had no tenses, that it was "somehow eternally always and now and for ever and ever." Romance still dominated all her thinking. The books and poems said there could only be one real love. She was sure that her love for Walter had been real—hence, in strict logic, she loved him still and always would and could never love any one else.

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Although she really believed this—wanted to believe it, felt that life would be impossible on any other hypothesis—she was beginning to realize that somehow the Romantic Explanation of Life does not quite explain. For the poets it was beautifully simple—either you loved or you did not love. It was the crudest sort of dualism. Things were black or white. The gray tones were not mentioned.

But while she did not love Isadore as she had loved Walter, he was certainly in a different category from all the other men whom she did not love. The men at the office, for instance. She was the best of chums with them; she respected them, admired them, liked them—and did not love them. But it was different with Isadore.

The hungry look in his eyes haunted her. The memory of his sudden, unexpected ardor—the rough vehemence of his caresses, his stormy outbreak of passionate tenderness—disturbed and distressed her. She had never taken him quite seriously before. She had deliberately, but unconsciously, refused to look the matter in the face. It is very hard to be sympathetic and just to a love we do not return. It had not occurred to her that Isadore's love was as painful to him as hers for Walter had been. That startling contact in the dark of the office had opened her eyes to the reality of his passion. What a mess it all was! Isadore loved her. She loved Walter. Walter loved Mabel!

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The sun was resplendent, and Yetta—having promised herself a holiday—walked over to Washington Square and took a bus up to Riverside Drive. It was zero weather, the sun shone dazzlingly on the blanket of snow, which had given an unwonted beauty to the Jersey shore. Yetta walked up and down the Drive till the sinking sun had reddened the West with an added glory. It was not often that she had such outings. The crisp air stimulated her. She was happy with the pure joy of being alive and outdoors in a way she had not known since Walter went away. To be sure her mood was tinged with melancholy. She was sorry for Isadore. But less sorry than usual for herself. Somehow she felt less bitterly the appalling loneliness.

As she was going downtown in the dusk she noticed a poster of the Russian Symphony Orchestra. It offered a programme from Tchaikovsky. She had some neglected work she ought to finish up. She had barely enough money in her pocket for a ticket—and a hundred things she ought to use it for. But in a sudden daredevil expansiveness, she dropped off the bus, got a scrap of supper at a Childs' restaurant, and went to the concert.

Under the spell of the music she forgot all her preoccupations. Her intellect dropped down into subconsciousness. She did not think—she felt.

Music can be the most decorative of all the Arts—or the most intellectual. The trained musician, who knows the meaning of "theme" and "development," who can recite glibly all the arguments for or against "programme" music, who will tell you offhand in what year this Symphony was written, whether it is a production of the composer's "first period" or a mature work, cannot avoid bringing a large assortment of purely intellectual considerations—historical and technical—to the appreciation of music. But to the naïve listener, like Yetta, music is decorative. It appeals solely to the emotions. It is never interesting—it is either pleasing or displeasing. Yetta sat dreamily through the concert—half the time with closed eyes—and found it wonderful. There was too little chance for the play of sentiments in her life. Every waking hour she had to think. Tchaikovsky laid a caressing hand over the tired eyes of her intellect and showed beautiful things to her heart.

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The next morning as Yetta went to the office she thought with some uneasiness of meeting Isadore. As usual in such matters she decided to face the affair frankly.

"Good morning," she said, going at once to his desk; "I'm sorry about what happened the other night. I was startled and bewildered."

Isadore knew that she had been taken unawares—that the kiss did not belong to him by rights.

"If there's any apology necessary," he said, "I'm the one to make it. I was as much startled and bewildered as you were. I'm sorry if you feel bad about it."

"We'll forget it," Yetta said.

Isadore did not look as if he were certain on this point.

They fell again into the accustomed rut of comradeship. Neither of them spoke again of the outburst. No one in the office noticed any change in their relationship.

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But there was a change. Isadore could never forget that wonderful moment; he could never be quite the same. And Yetta—when in time the memory of it lost its element of excitement, when she got over being afraid that Isadore might begin again—found that she also had changed. The fact that Isadore loved her passionately had taken a definite place in her consciousness. She could not ignore this any more, as she had done before. In a way it made him more interesting. She did not for a moment think of marrying him—she loved Walter. But she was sorry for Isadore. They had this added thing in common—the pain of a hopeless love.

It seemed wildly unjust to her that she might not in any way show her sympathy to him without encouraging his love—making him "hope." She knew when he was tired and discouraged; she would have liked to cheer him. She sometimes sewed on a button for Harry Smith. She ordered Levine about severely. She did not like either of them half as much as she did Isadore, but she must not show him any of these womanly attentions. It was stupid and vexatious that just because Isadore loved her, she must be carefully and particularly unfriendly to him.

Paulding was raising Yetta's salary among his personal friends, and his check came to her directly without passing through the general treasury. Her work kept her out of the office most of the time, and it was not until her second year that she chanced to be at her desk on a Saturday morning. About twelve-thirty Harry Moore came in from the composing-room, where he had been attending to the lock-up. He leaned back in his chair and stretched wearily.

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"About time for the 'ghost' to walk," he said.

"Not much of a ghost this week," the pessimistic Levine growled.

A few minutes later Mary Ames, the treasurer, bustled in. Her face was round and unattractive; she was short and had been fat, but her clothes hung about her loosely as though she had lost much flesh.

"It's a bad week, Comrades," she announced cheerfully. "Thought I wasn't going to be able to meet the union pay-roll to-day. Six dollars short. But the ten o'clock mail brought in twenty. Isadore went out and touched Mrs. Wainwright for fifty, and Branch 3 just sent in eleven from a special collection. So I've seventy-five for you. Who comes first?"

"Locke's wife is sick," Levine said mournfully.

"That's twenty dollars, isn't it?" Mary said, counting off the bills. "And you know Isadore hasn't had full pay for months. We must be a hundred and fifty back on his salary."

"Twenty-five to him," the stenographer said. "It'll give him a surprise."

"Surprise?" Levine said gloomily. "It'll give him apoplexy."

"That's forty-five gone," Mary said. "There's thirty left."

"How much do you need, Nell?" Moore asked the stenographer.

"I'm nearly a month back on my room rent. I'm in a bad hole, but I could get along with ten."

"Oh, make it fifteen," Harry said. "Girls always need money for ribbons and ice-cream sodas."

"That leaves fifteen for us, Harry," Levine wailed. "It's what I call a dog's life."

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"Oh, cheer up." Moore pocketed the fifteen dollars. "Come on up to Sherry's for lunch.—It's on me."

Linking his arm in Levine's, he led him, still grumbling, out of the office.

Mary Ames sat down heavily in a chair and began to cry.

"If I wasn't so ugly," she said, "I'd just like to kiss those boys."

She shook the tears out of her eyes and jerked her chair up towards Yetta's desk.

"I know you think I'm a sentimental old flop—crying like this. You're always so calm. But I can't help it. You might think I'm discouraged—rushing round all week begging money, and every Saturday morning having to come in and tell the boys I've failed—that I haven't enough to pay their salaries. But it isn't discouragement that makes me cry, it's just joy! I wouldn't have the nerve to peg through week after week of it if it wasn't for being the ghost on Saturdays. It's those two boys, Levine always grumbling and Harry Moore making jokes. And—I know—sometimes they don't have enough to eat. And you ought to see the hole they sleep in!"

Her lips began to twitch again, and perfect rivers of tears ran down her cheeks.

"I wish I could stop crying. But it's just too wonderful to work with people like this. I've been a bookkeeper in dozens of offices—everybody selfish and hating each other and trying to get on. I've seen so much of the other. It's hard for me to believe in this.

"I don't know much about Socialism," she went on. "I ain't educated like you young people; I haven't read very much. Keeping books all day is all my eyes are good for. But I just know it's right. If it wasn't the real thing, there'd never be a paper like this. How can you sit there so calm and cold and not cry? It's the biggest thing in the world, and we're part of it."

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Yetta put her arms about the older woman.

"I love it, too," she said. "But it doesn't make me cry. Somehow it's too big for me. It matters so little whether I'm part of it or not. It would go on just the same—if I wasn't here. It isn't mine. I could cry over a little baby—if it was mine. But not over this—"

She was surprised to find that her tears were contradicting her words. Once started, it was hard to stop. It seemed very sad to her that a young woman of twenty-three should have nothing more personal to cry over.

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## CHAPTER XXIX WALTER'S HAVEN

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While all these things were happening to Yetta, Walter was settling down into the rut of University life easily—almost contentedly. He was employed to be a scholar rather than a teacher. And while conducting classes is always a dismal task, study—to one with any bent that way—is a pleasant occupation. He was not dependent on his salary, and so escaped from the picturesque discomfort of the quarters assigned to him in the mediæval college building, to a "garden cottage." There was a lodge in front and a lawn running down to the river behind. He had found an excellent cook, who was married to an indifferent gardener. And, although his lawn was not so smooth nor his grape crop so plentiful as his neighbors', he was very pleasantly installed.

Sometimes, of course, he thought regretfully of the might-have-been life in New York. But the more he studied the Haktites, the more interesting they became. He had also revived his project of a Synthetic Philosophy.

On his return from the Christmas holidays of his second year at Oxford, he found a book in the mail which was waiting him. It was a novel—*The Other Solution*, by Beatrice Maynard. It had been sent to his old New York address. On the fly-leaf she had written, "Merry Xmas." It was an unexpected pleasure to have some one remember him at this holiday season. He had not received a Christmas present in years.

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He hurried through his supper to begin it. Beyond occasionally filling his pipe he did not stop until the end.

It was, he decided, just such a book as he would have expected her to write! There was the patience of real art in the way it was done. Not a great book, but packed full of keen observation, and its finish was like a cameo.

It was a simple story of a very rich girl in New York. One hardly realized that it was about the Smart Set. Beatrice knew her people too well to have any illusion about their nobility or their special depravity. The men changed their clothes rather too often, but were on the whole a kindly meaning lot. The women were a bit burdened with their jewellery, but very human, nevertheless. They were all bored by their uselessness. There was a cynical old bachelor uncle, who gave the Girl epigrammatical advice about the virtue of frivolity and the danger of taking things seriously. There was a maiden aunt—the romance of whose life had been shot to pieces at Gettysburg—who had sought solace in a morbid religious intensity. She was always warning the Girl, in the phraseology of Lamentations, against light-mindedness and the Wrath to Come. The "Other Solution" proved to be a very modern kind of nerve specialist, whose own nerves were going to pieces because of overwork and the cooking of an absinthe-drinking Frenchwoman. He was just on the point of beginning to take cocaine, when Beatrice persuaded him to take the Girl, instead.

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"Good work," Walter said as he closed it.

For some moments he sat there wondering what sort of an anchorage Beatrice had found. Such a book could not have been written in a hurry nor in unpleasant surroundings. He had never heard from her. At first he had been too heavy of heart to care. But as the months, growing into years, had somewhat healed his hurts, he had often thought of her. But not knowing exactly what sort of memories she held of him, he had felt that if the long silence was to be broken, it should be done by her.

He was glad she had cared enough to do it. He swung his chair around to the table and wrote to her. There was praise of the book and thanks for the remembrance. In a few paragraphs he gave a whimsical description of his bachelor establishment and of his work, and asked news of her. He addressed it in care of her publishers, a London house.

A few days later her answer came to him at breakfast-time. His letter had caught her in London, where she had come over from Normandy to arrange about her new novel. Could he not come up to town during the few days she would be there? If he wired, she would let everything else slip to keep the appointment.

He sent the gardener out with a telegram and went up on an afternoon train. It was tea time when he found her in the parlor of her hotel.

"I hope I haven't begun to show my age, as you have," she greeted him.

"You haven't."

She had both hands busy with the tea things, so he could find no opportunity to be more gallant. [Pg 404]

"I see by your note," she said,— "is it two lumps and cream or three and lemon?—that you did not follow my advice."

"No, not exactly. Two lumps, please. I tried to. I've often wondered if you realized what irresponsible and dangerous advice it was."

So he told her about Yetta.

"I never thought she'd be such an idealistic idiot," Beatrice commented.

"Of such are the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Walter, I believe you were in love with her and did not have the sense to say so."

He waved his hands as a Spaniard does when saying, "*Quien sabe?*"

"What's your news?" he asked.

She told him of the charming little village she had discovered in Normandy, of her roses and poppies and of her big writing-room, which overlooked three separate backyards and gave her endless opportunity—when the ink did not flow smoothly—to study the domestic life of her neighbors. What fun it was to write! How happy she was to get back to it again! Altogether she was going to write ten novels, each one was to be an improvement, and the last one really good. And then the Sweet Chariot was going to swing low and carry her home.

"I'm getting into the stride," she said. "*The Other Solution* came hard. I'm so glad you liked it. I'd go stale on it. Have to lay it aside, so I've three coming out close together, now. I'm just finishing the proof of number two, *Babel*. It's about those crazy *Transatlantiques* we played with in Paris. And the next one strikes a deeper note. I think I'll call it *The Mess of Pottage*. It's almost finished—a couple of months' polishing. I've been working on all three of these at the same time. But from now on it's one a year—regularly." [Pg 405]

The conversation rambled back and forth. It jumped from the criminal code of the Haktites to Strauss' *Electra*, and that brought them to Mrs. Van Cleave, whom Beatrice had encountered in the foyer of the Paris Opera at *Pelleas et Melisande*. Mrs. Van Cleave reminded them of a thousand things. The two years since they had seen each other fell away, the old intimacy returned. Beatrice suddenly reverted to Yetta.

"Don't blame me if you muddled things up. I advised you to marry her—not to get into a metaphysical discussion with her. I'm not sure but you're the bigger fool of the two. '*De l'audace et encore de l'audace et toujours de l'audace.*' They say that Danton was a successful man with the ladies."

"The answer to that is," Walter said, "that you write your next novel in Oxford."

"Oxford! Why, a university town is no place for audacity!"

"It's the place for you," he said decisively. "To-morrow I'll rent the cottage next to mine—it's bigger. I noticed a 'To Let' sign on it this morning. It's a love of a place. And quiet! There isn't a corner of Philadelphia that's as quiet Sunday morning as Oxford is."

But Beatrice refused to consider his suggestion.

"I'm doing very well as I am, thank you. Having just got on my feet at last—no more entanglements for me!" [Pg 406]

But two days after the summer recess began, Walter dropped off the train in her little Norman village.

"It's no use struggling, Beatrice," he said, before she had recovered from her surprise at his invasion. "You're going to write your next novel in Oxford. I've rented the larger house, and as soon as the French law allows we'll get married."

"Nonsense!" she said.

He came over and stood in front of her chair and talked to her in a quiet third personal tone—as if he were the family lawyer.

"B., here we are, two unattached and lonely individuals of the opposite sexes. You said that morning in Paris that we were a sorry couple who had messed things up frightfully and wanted to



cry. Well, we've got a bit more used to the mess, don't want to cry as much as we did—but—well, we want to live.

"I was a fool to ask Yetta to marry me, and she was very wise to run away. After all, she and I were strangers. She did not understand me any more than I did her. She was in love with a very nebulous sort of a dream—which I didn't resemble at all.

"It's different with us. At least we've 'the mess' in common. I don't know whether you've tried to forget our—escapade. I haven't. It seems to me, when I think of it, an immensely solemn thing—a memory I want to treasure. Somehow out of our misery a sudden understanding and sympathy was born. I'm inclined to think it was the most fundamental, the most spontaneous and real thing that ever happened to me. I'd chatted with you half a dozen times, had had only one real talk with you back in New York. There in Paris, in two minutes—no, it was a matter of seconds—we knew each other better than—well—it's hard to say what I mean, because I'm not much of a mystic. But never before or since have I experienced a deeper feeling of nearness. Two years pass without a word exchanged, and, in a tawdry hotel parlor in London, with a string of people walking past the open doors, I find the same sudden understanding.

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"I don't need to tell you that there in London I wished the people were not walking past the door, that right now I wish your *bonne* would disappear, so I could—

"But I don't want to talk about that. I'd like to get over something a lot deeper. It's this fundamental and immensely worth-while agreement and sympathy.

"And just because I have this conviction of understanding, I'm sure you're lonely, too—just as lonely as I am. We both of us have a desire for 'the accustomed'—for Lares and Penates. Even an escapade as delightful as the last one wouldn't quite satisfy either of us any more. 'The Other Solution' is the big house in Oxford—with a work-room for you, a study for me, and the other rooms for us."

He shook his shoulders as though to shrug off his seriousness.

"You say you don't want to get married again. That's idiotic. Haven't you lived long enough to escape from fear of this 'marriage bond' bugaboo? With all your talk of emancipation, you're still as conventional as Mrs. Grundy. Marriage will save us from tiresome ructions with the neighbors, but as far as being afraid of the ceremony—why—I'd just as lief marry a person as lend her ten dollars.

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"Where does the *Maire* live? I'll go down and tell him to dust his tricolor sash."

"No."

"B., *il faut de l'audace*."

"It would be foolish after Paris."

"*Et encore de l'audace*—"

"Besides I've leased this cottage for two years."

"*Et toujours de l'audace*."

"Well," she said, "if you're as flippant about it as all that, I don't suppose it matters much."

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## CHAPTER XXX EVALUATION

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The first two years on *The Clarion* were a desperate struggle for Yetta. But after all, struggle is the surest sign of life. To herself she seemed dead. The collapse of her romance had left a hollow place in her spirit, which could not be filled by work—not even the frenzy of work by which each issue of *The Clarion* was achieved. But all this time life was gathering force within her, preparing to assert itself once more.

Our literature is full of the idea of Man, the Protector—a proposition which crumbles before the slightest criticism. The protective element in life is overwhelmingly feminine. No one of us would have survived the grim dangers of childhood except for mothering. Adult men—even though unconscious of it—are pretty generally dependent on their womenfolk.

A function unused surely turns into an ache. Because Yetta felt no one dependent on her, life seemed barren and painful. The outer wrapper of herself—the hands with which she banged out copy on her typewriter, the feet which carried her about, the eyes and ears with which she watched and listened to the conflict of labor, the tongue with which she argued and pleaded for money, the brain with which she pondered and planned—all were busy. But this hurrying activity did not touch the subtle inner substance of herself. For this there was only the barren, empty ache.

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Coming downtown one night from a union meeting in the Bronx, Yetta's eye caught a paragraph in the paper which told that David Goldstein, proprietor of the Sioux Hotel, who had been shot

two days before in a gang fight, had died in the City Hospital.

It was the first Yetta had heard of her relatives since she had left them. She stayed on the car until she had reached the centre of the Ghetto. A policeman, who was standing outside the Sioux Hotel, went inside for her and found her aunt's address. It was not far off, and in a few minutes Yetta found herself in the dimmest of three-room flats. Half a dozen dumb, miserable old women sat in the kitchen. It was with some difficulty that Yetta made out which was Mrs. Goldstein.

"Aunt Martha, don't you remember me?" she asked in Yiddish.

But Mrs. Goldstein was too dazed to reply. From the other women, Yetta learned that her aunt was entirely alone and penniless. The son had not been seen for several years. Rosa had disappeared. As soon as might be Yetta drove out the Kovna *lands leit*, and when they were gone, she knelt down beside the old woman.

"Don't you understand, Auntie Martha? It's little Yetta come back to take care of you. You won't ever have to worry any more. I'll take care of you."

Tears came suddenly to the old woman, the first in a long, long time, and Yetta got her to bed. Two decidedly noisy young men lodged in the front room. Yetta was rather frightened; it took her a long time to fall asleep in the stuffy bedroom beside her aunt. [Pg 411]

It was easy to reconstruct the process by which the Goldstein family had disintegrated. Isaac was in prison. Rosa had probably gone off to live by herself—tired of bringing home wages for her father to guzzle. She would be living alone in some dismal furnished room. She had been too poorly endowed by Nature to "go wrong."

But despite the squalor of the flat and the heavy air of the dark bedroom, Yetta woke up with a new and firmer grip on life. She had found some one who needed her. The first of the next month she moved her aunt to a flat nearer *The Clarion* office. There were four rooms and a bath. The parlor she rented to Moore and Levine. It was a great improvement for them, and Mrs. Goldstein's cooking was less expensive and more nourishing than the restaurant fare on which they had been subsisting. Yetta shared the bedroom with her aunt.

The metamorphosis in the old woman was startling. Yetta remembered her as a very unlovely person, hardened and bitter. It had been a reflection of her environment. Now in clean and decent surroundings, in the midst of those who treated her with respect, under the sunshine of her niece's affection, she changed completely. Yetta was continually surprised to find how much her aunt reminded her of her father.

The struggle in the office was as intense as ever, but now Yetta had a home. Her wounds were healing rapidly.

Some months after her new establishment had been founded, Yetta came into *The Clarion* office and found confusion. Every one talked at once, and it took some minutes to get a connected story. Isadore had caved in. For several days he had been rather surly—excusing himself on the ground of a headache. That morning about nine o'clock he had tumbled out of his chair, unconscious. Dr. Liebovitz—the Comrade whom Yetta had heard speak at her first labor-meeting—had been called in. He had pronounced it typhoid fever. [Pg 412]

"We had him taken up to our room," Harry Moore said; "Levine and I will take his. It's no place for a sick man. And besides, when the nurse goes, your aunt can take care of him."

A sort of helplessness had fallen on the little group, now that their leader was stricken. But Levine in this crisis changed his character—or let his true character shine through his crust of pessimism. He pushed every one back into their places and set the wheels going again.

When the forms were locked up and the next day's assignment made, the office force was loath to separate. It is regrettable that the virtues of our friends are like our kidneys—we never notice them till something goes wrong. For the first time they were realizing what a tower of strength Isadore had been. As the days had passed they had more often been impressed by his occasional bursts of nervous irascibility, his unaccountable stubbornnesses. He had walked about among them, with his bent shoulder, his wrinkled, lumpy face, as far removed from Mary Ames' sentimentality, or Harry Moore's flippant optimism, as from Levine's ingrowing surliness. His most salient characteristic seemed to have been that he was "always there." Now he was gone. [Pg 413]

"He's so modest and simple," Harry said, "that we never noticed how strong he was."

"I wish there was something I could do for him," Nell sniffled.

"Well, I guess the best medicine we can give him," Yetta said, sticking the pin in her hat decisively, "is to report every week that the circulation has jumped."

The accustomed streets were a blur as she walked home. The idea that Isadore was sick, helpless, was as disturbing as if the paper had announced that the Rock of Gibraltar had escaped from its moorings and was floating away.

In the dining-room she found her aunt, with Jewish gloominess, predicting the worst. Yetta went down the hall and knocked lightly at the parlor door. It was opened by a nurse. The room was darkened, but she caught a glimpse—which was to stick in her memory—of Isadore's haggard face above the sheets. The nurse put her finger to her lips and came out into the hall.

"It's typhoid, all right," she said.

"Dangerous?"

"It's always dangerous. But there isn't a better doctor in the city for typhoid than Liebovitz. He'll be in again in a few minutes. I'll go back now."

Yetta stood there in the dim hallway, appalled, looking more closely into the face of Death than she had ever done before. There was something unbelievable in the thought that Isadore might die. All the fibres of her strong young body revolted at the idea. But beyond the closed door the dread fight was in progress. The pale face she had glimpsed was unconscious of it all. As far as Isadore was concerned Death had already won. Liebovitz and the nurse would have to do his fighting for him. [Pg 414]

She heard her aunt admitting the doctor. She had never seen him when he was working before. With a curt greeting he strode past her and entered the sick-room. She stood in the doorway unnoticed.

"What's the temperature?"

"105."

There was a string of questions and answers given in an unemotional tone. They seemed almost flippant to Yetta, impious, in the face of the great tragedy. She felt hurt that he did not do something at once.

At last Liebovitz took off his hat and turned abruptly to the bed. After a moment's scrutiny of the patient's face, he turned down the covers. It seemed to Yetta that he was suddenly transformed into a pair of Hands. The rest of him melted away. His half-shut eyes were fixed blankly on the wall as his wonderful, infinitely sensitive hands played about Isadore's heart. Then he knelt down and became an Ear. His eyes were quite shut now, as he listened, listened—the intense strain of it showing on his rigid face—to the almost inaudible rumble of the battle raging within the sick man's chest. Then he straightened up, the mystic appearance left him; he became once more the ordinary, cold-blooded professional man.

"You've a telephone?" he asked the nurse. "Good. You can get Ripley any time this afternoon if you need some one quick. Call me up at the Post Graduate at five minutes to four. I've a lecture—till five. I can leave it if necessary. I'll come down right afterwards, anyhow." [Pg 415]

Yetta tried to detain him in the hall to ask about the chances.

"Too busy to talk," he said. "Anyhow I'm no wizard. I can't prophesy. He's pretty sick. But he'll have to get a lot sicker before we let go. Really, I can't stop now. I've got a confinement, a T. B. test, and an operation before four."

Yetta went out into the kitchen and set her aunt to work getting supper for the nurse. Then, feeling suddenly very tired, she went to her room. But she could not sleep. The wonder of a doctor's life had caught her imagination. It dizzied her to try to realize what it must mean to rush, as Liebovitz was doing, from a desperate struggle with death to a childbirth.

Again and again the vision came back to her of Isadore's shrunken, pallid face.

When the doctor came down after his lecture, Yetta asked if she could be of any help in the sick-room.

"No," he replied shortly. "You'd only use up good air."

She had never felt so useless before in her life. The next few days passed—in dread. Most of the time she spent at the office. She had taken on Isadore's editorial work. There was some comfort in that. His other tasks had been divided between Locke and Moore and Levine. A big strike broke out in the Allied Building Trades; it meant extra work—but also increased circulation. After the day's grind, Yetta came back to the hushed home where the great battle was being fought out and where she was perforce a non-combatant.

There were a hundred questions she wanted to ask the doctor, but he was generally too busy to talk. One night after Isadore had been sick more than a week Liebovitz came down from a lecture in a genial mood. [Pg 416]

"I hope your aunt has cooked a big supper," he said. "Nothing to eat at home. The good wife is house cleaning."

"Well. How's it going?" Yetta asked, as he came out of the sick-room and sat down to a plate of steaming noodle-soup.

"We've done our part. It's up to him now. We've pulled him through the regular crisis. If he don't take it into his head to relapse and if he really wants to get well, I guess he will."

He answered her questions in monosyllables until he had stowed away the last of Mrs. Goldstein's cooking. Then, lighting a cigarette and putting three lumps of sugar in his coffee, he began joking with the old woman in Yiddish. But Yetta kept interrupting him with more questions.

"You want to know what I think?" he said, turning to her severely. "Well, listen. I think Isadore

will get well. I hope so. It wouldn't do any good to have him die. None of you people would read the lesson. But he don't deserve to. For ten years he's been violating all the rules of health regularly. You're all intelligent enough to understand some of Nature's laws, but you're too utterly light-minded to obey them! Isadore started out with a wonderful constitution and now is so run-down that an insignificant little typhoid germ gets into his mouth and nearly kills him. Good God. You all want to blame the germ. But they can't do any harm unless you're already sick—made yourself sick, as Isadore has. I'm not afraid of them—my business takes me right where they live. I'm as hard as nails. And you ought to see my kids. They're as sound as I am."

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"What do you mean by his making himself sick? Overwork?"

"Overwork? Thunder! I don't get as much undisturbed sleep as he did. I've been 'overworking' longer than he has. Work doesn't hurt people—not if they are living sensibly. You people—all of you—are abnormal, almost hysterical, in your attitude towards life. You take the little jobs of life too seriously and aren't serious enough about the big job of living.

"Isadore doesn't realize—never has—that a man needs rest and relaxation. He doesn't know what play means. Treats his body as a machine. He ought to be married. Ought to have a wife and children to think about besides his work—some one to play with. Some one to beat him over the head, if necessary, to distract his attention from the rut his mind has fallen into. He thinks too much over the generations of the future, not enough over this one and the next. And then he just naturally ought to have a wife, as every man who wants to be normally healthy does. Living like a monk and trying to do a real man's work! But what's the use of talking? You won't listen. It'll get you, too—just as sure as sunrise. Then you'll come yelping to me to help you out."

"Why, I'm well," Yetta protested. "I don't know any one in better condition than I am."

"Humph," he snorted.

He finished his coffee, and getting up, stamped about the room impatiently.

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"Yetta, why do you suppose Nature divided the race into male and female? For more millions of years than we can count Nature has been at work making women, shaping their bodies by minute steps, forming intricate organs within them—for a special task. Back of you are myriad generations of females. You wouldn't be alive to-day, you'd never have been born, if a single one of them had neglected her woman's work. Do you think that all of a sudden you can break this age-old habit? That you can waste all the pain and travail of your myriad mothers with impunity? You're twenty-four now. For more than five years now you've been thwarting life, rendering barren all the vast time, the appalling agony, the ceaseless struggle, it has cost Nature to produce you—with your chance to pass on the flame of life. Out of all these millions of mothers, thousands and thousands have given their life that the line might be preserved. It doesn't matter at all what reason you can give for not having had children. I admit there are a few good reasons. But Nature is insistent in this matter of the next generation—as cold as a sword's edge. It seems almost like human spite. But you can't blame her. It's such appalling waste to throw away all the toiling, suffering generations back of us. You can't expect Nature to be indifferent; it has cost her so much. And she's got this advantage over God, her punishments come in this life. Four, five, perhaps ten years, you can go along without noticing it. Then you'll come to me. 'I have headaches, backaches. I'm irritable. I don't sleep.' I can give you drugs to deaden the headache, dope which will make you seem to sleep. I can ward off a little of Nature's revenge—but I can't cure you. There are plenty of accidents and some kinds of sickness that you can't blame a person for, but drying up into barren, unlovely old maidhood ought to be forbidden by law.

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"Lord," he exclaimed, looking at his watch, "it's late. I promised to speak at a Socialist meeting up in the Bronx, but I've got to look in at two cases first. So long."

For a moment Yetta sat still, pondering over what the doctor had said. The thing which impressed her most was the stupendous idea of the unbroken line of mothers which stretched back of her to that dim epoch when the new element of life first appeared on the shores of the primordial sea.

But in thinking back about it in after years, it did not seem to her that the doctor's talk had influenced her very much. She was a fearless person and the threat of personal ill-health would not have daunted her. Her feeling towards Isadore had already changed.

It was the long months of common work and mutual aspirations which had drawn her closer and closer to him. The change in their relationship had been so gradual that it needed some shock to open her eyes. The sudden realization, the day he had fallen sick, of the sharp contrast between his former strength and his utter weakness, had been the beginning. At first, when she saw that she had come to love him, it had been hard to believe. But the day after the crisis, while helping the nurse to change the bed linen, she had had to lift him. His emaciation had appalled her. And in his delirium, he had called her name. It was then that she saw clearly.

One night, not long after he had given her the lecture, Liebovitz came out of the sick-room.

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"He's clear-headed now, and he's worrying about the paper. Go in and talk to him. Give him good news if you have to lie, and get him to sleep."

Isadore opened his eyes as she leaned over him and smiled when he recognized her. He had forgotten all about *The Clarion*. But she had to say something to keep back the tears; it was so painfully wonderful to mean so much to another.

"The circulation has gone up to 20,000."

But he had already dropped back to sleep at the bare sight of her.

It had not been a lie. The circulation was growing steadily. Isadore's sickness had seemed a spur to the energy of every one connected with the paper. The news that he was recovering had given them all a new hope, a new determination to put it on a firmer basis against his return.

Isadore gradually fought his way back to life. But it was a long and dreary convalescence. There was snow on the ground when he fell sick. Summer had begun in earnest before he was able to walk across the room. One Saturday afternoon, Yetta came in joyous and found him stretched out on the lounge.

"What do you think, Isadore? When the ghost walked to-day, every pay envelope was full. What do you think of that? It was a revolution. Mary Ames didn't have a chance to cry, and Levine couldn't find anything to grumble about. They were both unhappy."

"I don't see why I worked so hard to get well," he said wearily. "You're getting along better without me than when I was there."

"I hope you're ashamed of yourself," she said, taking off her hat and sitting down beside him. "I bring you home some good news and that's all the thanks I get." [Pg 421]

Isadore blinked his eyes hard, but in spite of himself two great tears escaped down his cheeks.

"What's the matter, old fellow?" Yetta asked in dismay.

"Oh, nothing. Only I'm so foolishly weak still. Of course I'm glad. Only it's easy to get discouraged." The tears escaped all control. "It's dreary coming back to life."

Above all other advice, Dr. Liebovitz had insisted that Isadore should not be excited. But Yetta forgot all about that. She knelt down on the floor beside him.

"Isadore, when you were very sick, you talked a good deal in your sleep. Do you know who you talked about?"

"You."

"Is it just the same as ever, Isadore?"

"*Far immer und ewig*," he said slowly.

Yetta had always shared her father's dislike for Yiddish, but somehow his dropping back into their mother-tongue seemed to her like a caress.

"I guess that," he went on in the same language, "is what makes it seem so dreary to me—the lone-someness."

"Hush, Isadore," she said breathlessly. "You musn't talk like that. The Pauldings are going to Europe this summer. They told me you could go up to their camp, if there was any one to take care of you.—I'll go with you—we won't either of us be lonely any more—Oh Dear Heart.—Oh, it isn't anything to cry about—just because I've made up my mind to marry you. Dr. Liebovitz will give me an awful scolding if he finds you taking on so." [Pg 422]

A Christian Socialist minister married them, by a ceremony of his own concoction. It was quite as fantastic as his creed—but at least it was legal. As soon as Dr. Liebovitz would allow Isadore to be moved, they set out for the mountains.

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## CHAPTER XXXI

### YETTA FINDS HERSELF

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The first days in the woods were distressing for Yetta. The strain of the journey had prostrated Isadore; she was afraid he was going to have a serious relapse. But he slept off the fatigue—fourteen and eighteen hours a day at first. And he soon regained his appetite. They got fresh milk and eggs and garden truck from a near-by farmer, and three times a week a man came in a boat with other provisions from the town at the foot of the lake. Isadore began to put on flesh and very gradually to regain his strength.

When the first worry was over, Yetta entered into a period of perfect peace. The conviction which had grown on her gradually—unnoticed at first—that she "really loved" Isadore, solidified. She had counted on finding it pleasant to take care of him; she had found it so in the city, it proved unexpectedly sweet here in the woods. In New York she had been only an accident; a dozen others could have nursed him just as well. Here she was all he had. Here too she could give all her time to him. He was as helpless as a baby at first, and submitted docilely to her loving tyranny. She had never "kept house" for any one before. In the kitchen of the little cabin—walking about on tiptoe, so as not to disturb his health-bringing sleep—she found a very real [Pg 424]

delight in the new experience of cooking a meal for her man, in washing and mending his clothes.

Even more pleasant to her was the utter intimacy which their isolation forced on them. Whenever he was awake, they talked—of everything under the sun, except *The Clarion*. They had agreed to forget that. After a couple of weeks, when he had grown a little stronger, she read to him. She found it embarrassing at first, almost as if it were immodest. She had never read aloud before. The joy of books had been something entirely individual. She was unaccustomed to launch out on the adventure of a new point of view in company. But after the first diffidence had worn off, it proved an undreamed-of delight. Now and again one or the other would interrupt the reading to think out loud. "Let's hear that again," he would say. Or, "I must read that passage over. Isn't it fine?" she would break out.

Almost all of Isadore's reading had been historical or scientific. He had no idea of grace in writing. "Force" and "Truth" were the only literary qualities he recognized. Meredith, who had been one of Yetta's favorites rather weakened under his incisive criticism. Zola's "Labor" they both liked. Poetry generally went wrong. Swinburne, whose luxurious music hypnotized Yetta past all comprehension of what he was talking about, disgusted Isadore—until Yetta came to "The lie on the lips of the priests and the blood on the hands of the Kings."

"That's good business," Isadore said. "Why didn't he stick to that style?"

It was the other way round with Henley. He fared better at first. Isadore liked the hospital verses. But when they came to "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul," Isadore revolted.

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"Do you really suppose he believed that rot?"

"Of course," Yetta said. "Don't you?"

"Not for a minute. You've been the master of my fate these last few years."

Naturally Yetta forgave him for disagreeing with Henley.

But there was a cloud in the sky—even these delicious, peaceful days. Yetta vaguely dreaded the time when Isadore would be quite well. She was no longer the unsophisticated girl who had promised to live with Harry Klein without knowing what it meant. She knew it was impossible to continue this pleasant relationship of nurse and patient. Sooner or later he would revolt from his rôle—he would want something quite different from nursing.

Contrary to her custom Yetta did not face this situation frankly. She tried to avoid thinking of it. When it forced itself on her, she told herself, "Of course I want children." Almost every time she had heard this business of maternity referred to, its painful side had been emphasized. She had heard a great deal about the "heroism of motherhood." Her attitude towards the sexual side of marriage was very like her attitude to the dentist. And no matter how firmly we have decided to go to the dentist, we are a bit reluctant about starting. Yetta did what she could to postpone the duty she had firmly decided to perform stoically and gamely.

She really thought about this matter surprisingly little. All she had read in the poets about the joys of passionate love she thought of as romantic, and she was in full reaction against romance. In real life she had never encountered any one who even remotely resembled Heloise or Francesca or Melisande or the Queen Isolde. The married women she knew, the mothers of children, did not give any sign of such dizzying emotions.

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The reality of love she had decided was a spiritual matter. The night Isadore had kissed her in the dark of the office, she had been too frightened to appreciate it as a caress. He had never stirred her emotions as Walter had. She was not afraid to think of them both at the same time any more. She calmly knew that her love for Isadore was the more real. But still she could not look forward to his complete recovery without a slight tremor.

When Isadore seemed on the point of talking about this, she adroitly changed the subject. She always came to his room to kiss him "good night," and the first thing in the morning after she was dressed she came to his bedside and kissed him "good morning." But although she was naturally demonstrative, she carefully avoided any disturbing caresses.

As Isadore gained strength the crisis inevitably approached. One moonlight night, out on the Lake in their guide boat, Isadore, who had been lazily rowing, rested on his oars.

"Yetta," he said. "Sometimes I have a horrible thought—I wonder if you really love me."

Yetta, stretched out on the cushions in the stern-sheets, had been perfectly happy—at least as happy as she knew how to be—before he spoke. She knew at once what he meant, and it troubled her.

"Why, what do you mean?" she said, to gain time.

"I wonder if you know what it means—what love means—to a man?"

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"I know what it means to a well man," she said.

Isadore began rowing again. Of course Yetta did not know what love means to a well man. She knew that she did not know. She was shocked at herself for the spirit of hostility which had shown in her answer.

"Isadore," she said in a few minutes, "dearest, I love you very, very much. Aren't you content? It seems so sweet to me, just to be together like this. Aren't you content?"

Isadore—like many men of his race—was instinctively wise in regard to women. He did not have to think over his reply.

"No," he said laconically.

He rowed on in silence for several minutes. He did not understand, but he sensed, Yetta's trouble. She was trembling on the threshold of the Great Mystery. When he spoke again, it was to calm and reassure her. Ashore, they sat for a long time in the moonlight, hand in hand. He did nothing to frighten her, and she felt flooded by his tenderness.

A week later he brought up the subject again. They had climbed a mountain in the morning. To be sure, it was a small one, but still a mountain. He had slept most of the afternoon. When supper was over, she read to him a while, and then sent him to bed. When she came to his room to kiss him "good night," he put his arms about her and—as though to show that he was really strong again—he crushed her tightly in his embrace.

"Dearie," he said. "Is your name Yetta or *Not-yetta*?"

"Not-quite-yet-ta," she panted.

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The black fly season had passed, the leaves had begun to turn, before they packed up their meagre belongings to go back to the city and work. It had commenced to get cold, but on their last day the sun came out as if it were July.

They rowed across the lake to bid farewell to a great pine tree they had come to love. It stood alone on a little promontory, a hundred feet above the water. Its mates had fallen before the storms. Its loneliness emphasized its magnificent grandeur. There was a rich cushion of needles at its foot, and the view across the lake was exquisite.

The last month of their stay in the woods had been a veritable honeymoon. There was no spot on the lake so closely associated with their ardent emotions as this giant pine tree. Many times during the hot spell of August they had brought rugs and pillows and spent the night at its foot—bathing in the water below at sunrise.

When they had moored their boat and clambered up the steep bank, Isadore sat down, leaning against the trunk of their tree. Yetta stretched out on the carpet of pine needles and rested her head on his knee. Isadore ran his hand through her hair and now and again caressed her cheek. For some time they were silent—both rather oppressed by the idea that on the morrow they must go back to the city. They would no longer be alone together; much of this dear intimacy would have to be sacrificed to work.

Yetta suddenly turned and looked up into his face.

"Ib," she began. This name which she had concocted out of his initials—in spite of its absurdity—had the most tender connotation of any word in their vocabulary *à deux*—"Ib, there is something I want to tell you."

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And then she stopped. Isadore, impressed her by seriousness, waited patiently for her to speak.

"It's hard to find words for it," she went on at last. "But I want you to know that I've been happier these weeks than I ever dreamed any one could be. This—" their vocabulary *à deux* had many lacunae—"It's been so different from what I expected. It isn't that I was afraid—only I was a little. I didn't think love would be like this. You see I hate to darn my own stockings—but I really enjoy darning yours. I guess that's inherently feminine. No service is really unpleasant when it's for the one we love. And I was ready to do any service for you—gladly. Can you understand what I'm trying to say? Well. It's been a surprise—a dizzying, joyous surprise. It isn't a service at all. It's—" Once more words failed her. "You remember one night you asked me if I really loved you. I thought I did then. I didn't know what I was talking about. But now—now that I know"—she brushed the foolish tears out of her eyes and reached up her hand to his cheek—"I really, really love you.

"Please. I don't want to be loved just now. I want to talk.

"What bothers me," she went on in a moment, "is that I was ignorant. Why? Why didn't I know about this? I knew about the physiology of love, but that is only so very little of it. I'd read Forel; everybody says that is the best book on sex. But that did not tell me. I've talked with a few women. They either haven't said anything or they've been hostile—they spoke of the 'burden of sex' or of 'woman's sacrifice to man.' Why did not some one tell me the truth, so that I would not have been dismayed? So I might have been altogether glad? It seems so evident that ignorance is bad—and dangerous."

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"Of course it's dangerous," he replied. "There is only one thing more dangerous than ignorance—that's misinformation. That's where young men suffer. I've thought about this a lot, Yetta. It's hideous. Long before any one ever told me anything that was true, I had learned so much that was false. Men learn their first lessons of sex from women—poor, pallid women who have never known what love was. It doesn't matter whether a boy goes to them or not. Indirectly, if not

directly, he learns their lore. The older boys who tell him about women have learned from them.

"Prostitution is the blackest blot on this civilization we Socialists are trying to overthrow. In spite of the hypocrisy which tries to ignore its existence it is just as fundamental an institution as the churches and armies. Present society could not exist without these women any more than it could without its warships and worships. It's hideous in so many ways. But the point we don't hear about so often is that these women, whom we despise and consistently degrade, are the teachers who instruct our youth in this business of sex. It is the holiest thing in life. Its priestesses are the most polluted class in the community. Not that I blame them. They are victims. But they get their revenge—a horrible revenge.

"Our girls are kept in ignorance about sex. It's very few of them, Yetta, who have read a book like Forel's. And the boys are sent to school in the brothels. Most brides come to this business of sex, thinking of it—a bit timorously—as a Great White Sacrifice to Love. Most men think of sex as the climax of a spree. That any such marriages are happy is a wonder to me."

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"But why doesn't some one have the courage to tell the truth?" Yetta exclaimed.

"It isn't as simple as that," he replied. "It isn't so much a question of courage as it is of ability. You,—if a young woman asked you,—could you tell her? I couldn't if a boy asked me. I could tell him about the mechanism of sex—just as Forel and a dozen writers have done. There are plenty of technical words. But I'd have to stop there. The reality can't be expressed in scientific language—and the gutter words are false when you talk of love. I'll warrant that you wouldn't like to tackle the job."

"It would be hard," she admitted. And then—"But isn't there any hope? Must there always be this misunderstanding?"

"Oh, no! At first, with primitive man, there wasn't any such *mis*understanding—there was just lack of understanding. Love is such a new thing in the history of life that we are just vaguely beginning to understand it. Man—we say—is an animal who has gained consciousness of self. But this did not happen suddenly. It must have taken thousands and thousands of years. The process is not yet complete. Out of general consciousness the animal that was becoming man, gradually, in one point after another, won self-consciousness. Gradually sex became a little more than the simple reflex act that we see in the lower animals to-day—forgotten as soon as accomplished. It was not until what we call the Middle Ages that man became conscious of something more in love than physical passion. The love affairs of Mary, Queen of Scots, would seem very unspiritual to us to-day. And think how very recent that was compared to the date of the Stone Age. It was only in the last century that the romantic idea took possession of literature. Like all new ideas it was full of extravagances. Now we call ourselves Realists—the necessary reaction. But there is more of the new spirit of love in Zola than Shakespeare ever dreamed of. I doubt if he would recognize a modern production of *Romeo and Juliet* any more than Christ would recognize his service in a High Mass.

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"As we begin to get used to this startlingly new concept of love, we'll develop the words to express it. It's too big a task to be accomplished by one brain or one generation."

They fell silent again. Yetta, looking off across the lake,—unconscious of the beauty of the view,—was thinking desperately of this matter of love, and was realizing with pain, as all who try to write must do, her utter inability to express what this Mystery of Love meant to her. She could not even tell Isadore.

Her girlish romance about Walter seemed to her now almost as empty as her affair with Harry Klein. She had at first given herself to Isadore on a rather intellectual basis. She knew him profoundly before she had married him. She had been quite sure of a life of loving comradeship and mutual understanding. From a matter of fact, work-a-day point of view the marriage was to be as satisfactory as she could imagine. And to all this had been added an unexpected element—this mystic, unexpressible joy of sex. Yetta had the sense to know that she was fortunate above most women. She looked up at the dear face above her, hoping to find some gesture to express the overflowing happiness for which she could find no words. She was struck by the look of intense thought on his face.

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"What are you thinking about, Ib?"

He started, as he came back from his reverie.

"I've been thinking," he said, "that we'll have to be awfully tactful when we get back to the office. Smith and Levine have been running things so long by themselves that it's only human for them to be a bit jealous about our coming back."

These words caused a very complicated mix-up in Yetta's mind.

The hereditary woman in her, the part of her which was formed by the myriad wives who had been her ancestors, shuddered as though under the lash at the idea that on this very last day his thoughts had gone so far away. Every cell in her brain had been intent on him. She had just decided that no one had ever loved any one as much as she loved him—and he had been thinking of the office. A tidal wave of tears started instinctively towards her eyes.

But all that was modern about Yetta, all that part of her which had learned to reason, was suffused with tenderness, as the other part of her would have been by a caress. She was proud of



the single-minded devotion of her man. She was not surprised at the tangent along which his thoughts had flown. She had the immense advantage over most brides, that she knew her husband. She knew the depth of sincerity which was sometimes obscured by his pedantic phrases. She had learned to love *him*. She had been spared the pain of discovering a reality back of a dream of love. The only new thing she had learned about him since their marriage was the wealth of tenderness back of his rather rough exterior,—the gentle consideration that lay under his rugged manners,—the undreamed-of sweetness which was hidden to most eyes by his evident force. She was not disillusioned by intimacy.

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For a few minutes she let him talk about the work that was awaiting them. She was as much interested in it as he. But at last the hereditary woman within her reminded her that after all this was their last day of solitude. She stopped listening to him and considered the matter from this point of view for a moment. Then she shamelessly interrupted him in the midst of a ponderous sentence.

"Ib," she said, "I love you."

They had been back in the city many months before their faces lost the mark of the sun. In due course of time Comrade Yetta Braun qualified to edit the "Mother's Column."

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## CHAPTER XXXII

### OLD FRIENDS MEET—AND PART

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Four years after their marriage Yetta and Isadore received a tangible token of the respect in which they were held by their Comrades. They were chosen among the delegates to the International Socialist Congress which was to meet in London. No one who is not an active worker in the Socialist party can appreciate how much this election means to the Comrades. Every three years the party has to choose half a dozen of its members as most worthy to represent them in the international councils. It is a real honor.

They were, after their four years of unremitting work on *The Clarion*, in need of a vacation. They had not had one since their honeymoon in the woods. But, except for the eight lazy days in the second cabin of a slow steamer, they found very little rest at the Congress. Besides the regular sessions, so much time went to getting acquainted with the European Comrades, whose names they had long revered, whose books they had read. It took a big effort to escape long enough to have a look at the Houses of Parliament and the Abbey. That was all the sight-seeing they did in London.

The next to the last day, when Yetta reached her seat in the convention hall, she found a letter on her desk. She did not at first recognize the handwriting.

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"DEAR YETTA.

I suppose you've quite forgotten me. But try to remember.

Can't you and Isadore come down to Oxford for a few days after the Congress? Walter noticed your name in the paper among the delegates. We are both anxious to renew the old friendships. When can we expect you?

Sincerely,

BEATRICE LONGMAN."

Yetta was glad that Isadore had been detained in the corridor. She put the letter in her pocket before he joined her. All day long this invitation was flitting back and forth from the back of her brain to the front. In every moment of half leisure she thought about it, and more and more she wanted to go. It was partly curiosity to see what sort of a life Walter had made for himself, partly a desire to exhibit her own happiness. She did not want him to think she was still broken-hearted. And it was partly a very real tenderness for these old friends who very long ago had meant so much to her. But it was not until they were alone together in their modest hotel room at night that she spoke to Isadore about it.

"Oh, I forgot. Here's a letter that came from Mrs. Longman.—You remember she used to be Mrs. Karner."

"Well," he said, when he had read it, "that's simple. We're too busy."

"But I'd like to see them again."

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"You would?" he asked in surprise—and a little hurt. "All right; of course, if you want to. I've got to rush back. But there's no reason why you shouldn't stay."

"Don't be foolish, dear," she said. "You know I won't stay a minute longer than you. I wouldn't think of going alone. We could leave here after lunch Thursday and stay in Oxford for dinner and

catch our boat all right. You see, dearest, it's sort of like dying never to see people who meant so much once. You don't know how much I grieve about Mabel. She was my first friend—the first real friend I ever had. It was my fault that we quarrelled. I wouldn't like to feel that it was my fault if I lost all touch with Walter and Mrs. Karner—I mean Mrs. Longman. They've asked us to come in a friendly spirit. I think we ought to go."

"Very well," he said. "Wire that we'll come. But it sounded to me like a sort of duty note—not exactly cordial."

As a matter of fact it had not been in an entirely cordial spirit that Beatrice had written.

One morning Walter, who very rarely disturbed his wife when she was writing, knocked at the door of her work-room.

"May I interrupt a minute," he asked apologetically.

"What is it?" she asked.

He came over and laid a newspaper on her table, pointing halfway down a column which was headed, "International Socialist Congress." Among the names of the delegates from the United States were those of Isadore and Yetta Braun.

"You'd like to have me invite them out here?" she asked.

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"Yes, if it isn't inconvenient. I'd like to see them again."

For the next few days Beatrice's work went wrong. More often than not she found herself looking up from her paper, staring out through the window, across the lawn to the grape arbor. She would catch herself at it and turn again to her work. Finally she decided that she had best fight it out. So—forgetting to put the cap on her fountain-pen—she walked out into the garden.

There was no possible doubt of it. She was afraid of Yetta—jealous! She tried to laugh at herself, but it hurt too much. Yetta was years younger than she.

Isadore she had scarcely known, was not quite sure whether she had the name attached to the right vague memory, but she held an impression that he was an unattractive person. Yetta had probably married him in discouragement. Undoubtedly she still loved Walter. In these last four years Beatrice had been constantly discovering that he was more lovable than she had realized before. Yes; Yetta was probably still in love with him. Would she accept the invitation?

A telegraph boy turned into their gate. She had not opened a despatch with such unsteady nervousness in a long time.

"Arrive Oxford thursday afternoon four o'clock leave ten for Liverpool Yetta"

Beatrice walked slowly back to the house and into Walter's study. It was as dissimilar from her very orderly work-room as well might be. There were three large tables, but each was too small for the litter of books and charts and drawings and closely written notes it carried.

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"They're coming to-morrow at four," she said, handing him the telegram.

"Good."

"I suppose we'd best have tea and then sight-see them around the colleges till dinner."

"I guess the tour is obligatory," he said with a grimace. "Has the Muse been refractory this morning? I saw you rambling round in the garden."

"Yes," her lips twisted into a wry smile. "Had to fight out a new idea. It's provoking. You get things nicely planned out, everything marching placidly to a happy ending—then something unexpected turns up, some eleventh-hour disturbance. Something you've got to take time off to think out."

"Fine," he said. "You're growing into a more realistic vision of life all the time, B. And that means constantly improving novels."

He got up and walked about the room, developing into quite a speech his ideas on the Unexpected Element in Life and how it deserved more recognition in literature. But all the time, while she was appearing to listen in rapture to his wisdom, she was telling herself bitter things about the literal-minded, uncomprehending male.

Thursday afternoon as Yetta and Isadore found their places in the train for Oxford they both had an unusual feeling of tongue-tiedness. They were quite tired and it was a relief to have sleepiness as an excuse for not talking. Yetta was not conscious of any stress between them. She believed that Isadore was as sleepy as he pretended to be. It seemed to her the most natural thing in the world to renew old friendships.

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She opened her eyes now and then for a glimpse at the unfamiliar countryside. But most of the time she dreamily lived over again "the old days." She was generally too busy to think these things out leisurely—as you must if you are to think of them at all. She found it hard to recognize the picture of herself which she drew out of her memory. The few years, which had passed since her marriage, seemed to her much longer and fuller than all her life before. She, a mother of two children, found it very hard to sympathize with the *jeune fille*, who had been so very much in love

with this man she had scarcely seen a dozen times. She was half sorry she had accepted the invitation. She was no longer the same person whom Walter and Beatrice had known. Instead of renewing an old acquaintance, her visit to Oxford would be that of a stranger. It would be embarrassing if Walter treated her like the girl he had known. But it never occurred to her that Isadore was suffering from jealous apprehension.

"Oxford's the next station," Isadore said.

It jerked her out of her reverie. As they got off the train there was a kaleidoscopic moment, an impression of many people rushing hither and thither in a senseless chaos. Then suddenly the vagueness dissolved, and there were Walter and Beatrice, the blank look on their faces just melting into a smile of recognition. Everybody shook hands, the women kissed each other, and Walter and Isadore rushed off to check the bags.

Yetta's motherhood had changed her subtly. She could not have been called matronly. In fact, Beatrice, who was childless, was poignantly conscious that she looked the more like a regulation matron. The contrast hurt her.

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The thing which Yetta saw was that Beatrice had come to reflect the gracious refinement of her surroundings. There was a sudden longing that life might have thrown her into an environment where she too could have given time and thought to being beautiful. It was rare indeed that she could devote ten minutes to "doing her hair." It took all the time she could spare to keep herself clean and neat. Beatrice's appearance suggested that the selecting of even her underwear was a matter of careful thought. Yetta, also, was poignantly conscious of the contrast.

When the men rejoined them, they all—still under the constraint of stock-taking—climbed into the dogcart and drove through the quaint Oxford streets to the house.

Yetta talked busily—a bit raggedly—about her two children. Walter pointed out the towers of some of the colleges. Neither Beatrice nor Isadore added much to the conversation. The tea-table was set on the lawn, but the constraint was still on them. Yetta told with slightly forced enthusiasm of the little house and lot they had taken in a Building and Loan Association on Long Island. Isadore at last rallied in reply to Walter's questions and talked about the International Congress. The thing which had impressed him most was the widespread growth of revolutionary, nonpolitical labor organizations. The growth of industrial unionism in America was closely paralleled by the *Syndicaliste* movement in Europe.

"I never gave you sufficient credit as a prophet, Walter," he said. "I'm an orthodox party member still, but this 'direct actionism' doesn't seem so much like heresy to me as it did. It's too universal to be all wrong."

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When they got up from the table to wander about in the University, he and Walter walked ahead, still in the heat of this discussion. The women brought up the rear. Yetta found that the easiest things to talk about were the babies and Beatrice's novels. She had read and liked them very much.

They sat down together in the grounds of Christ Church, and Isadore began to tell about *The Clarion*. Yetta joined in the men's talk, and Beatrice felt herself decidedly out of it. She was glad when the time came to go back for dinner. But that was no better, for still the talk clung to *The Clarion*. It interested them so much that she could not find heart to change the subject.

The moon came up royally as they took their coffee on the terrace. Without any one suggesting it, they strolled down the lawn and along the river. Great trees stretched their branches overhead across the stream. It was a warm night, and many boats were out. Their gay lanterns glistened over the water. Here and there a song floated through the dusk. The predominant note of the scene was laughter.

But the riverside did not seem beautiful to Isadore; Beatrice had never cared less for it. Walter and Yetta were walking on ahead.

Beatrice found a sort of whimsical sympathy for her companion—realizing that he also was troubled by the turn things had taken. The unrest of each infected the other. It required all the social tact she could command to keep up the semblance of a conversation.

Yetta had taken Walter's arm, and for a while they walked in silence. But somehow the constraint suddenly fell away, and she felt in him the old friend to whom it had always been so easy to talk.

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"It's strange," she said, "how very often I have taken your advice and found it good. More and more I realize what a big factor you've been in my life. A dozen times I've been on the point of writing to you. But it's so hard to put on paper the deeper sort of thanks."

Walter tried to protest.

"Oh, yes," she insisted. "I've lots of things to thank you for. It's hard to put it into words. But now that it's ancient history, now that the wounds have healed, I want to talk about it. When you told me to marry Isadore, it seemed like the cruelest words that could be spoken. You were right in smashing up my romance. But of all the lessons you ever set me, that was the hardest to learn, the bitterest. I could not take your word for it. I had to learn it for myself. But if you had not driven me to it, I would have been a romanticist still—always weaving dreams. I would never have found the wonder and beauty of life as it is."

"I guess any suffering is worth while that teaches a real lesson. I can be philosophic about those tear-stained months now. But they were dreary enough—and sometimes worse. I don't believe there was anything that Job said about the day he was born that I did not echo.

"Isadore was wonderful those days. He didn't give me any advice nor try to comfort me. He just called me up in the morning and gave me enough work for six people. I did have a little sense left. I could see that work was my only hope of pulling through. *The Clarion* office was the busiest place I could find—so I cut loose from the League and went down there.

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"But Mabel has never forgiven me for leaving her. I've hardly seen her since."

They walked on for a moment in silence, and then she took up her story again.

"My real ignorance used to be that I thought there could be no love without romance. I thought they were the same thing. And that's the wonder of reality, it calls out something so immensely deeper than dream-love. I see Isadore's crooked shoulder as clearly as any one. I know the words he insists on mispronouncing. I know the little, uncontrolled hooks of his temper that things are always catching on. I don't for a moment think he's a god. Perhaps it is just the fact that I know him so very much better than other people do that would make me laugh at any one who said I didn't truly love him! And then the babies! Think of it, Walter. I've got two of them. My very own! You said something like this once—that flesh and blood were more wonderful than any dream. It was a hard, painful lesson to learn, but I guess it's the one I want to thank you for most."

"It's a truth," Walter replied, "which Beatrice has helped me to rediscover very often these last years. We love each other with a big E. It certainly didn't start with the romantic capital L. It's just the opposite of that proposition—of the flaming beginning that gradually peters out. It's something with us that's alive—growing every day."

Her hand on his arm gave him a friendly, understanding squeeze.

"It's so wonderful a world," she said, "it almost hurts! There's so very, very much to do. The minutes are so amazingly full. And somehow it all seems to centre around the babies. They've given Socialism a new meaning to me, have brought it all nearer, made it more intimate and personal, more closely woven into myself. Isadore and I were used to the tenements, they'd ceased to impress us—till the babies came. I'm glad my little brood can grow up in the sunlight and fresh air, with a little grass to play on. But the thought of all the millions of babies in the slums has become the very corner-stone of my thinking. It's for them. We've just got to win Socialism for the babies! I wish you could see mine. I'll send you a photograph."

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Her mind switched off to more concrete problems; she talked of immediate plans and hopes. Meanwhile, Isadore kept looking at his watch, and each time he pulled it out, Beatrice asked him what time it was. At last it was necessary to turn back to catch the train.

\* \* \* \* \*

Conversation lagged as the Longmans walked home from the station. Walter was wrapped up in some line of thought and Beatrice's first efforts fell flat. The silence became oppressive to her as they entered their house.

"Walter," she said, "I'd bid as high as three shillings for your thoughts."

"Keep your money. These are jewels beyond price." He tumbled himself lazily into a big leather chair. "What they tell about that paper of theirs is amazing. I'm beginning to see some reason for the hostility which the working-class has for the 'intellectuals.' If Isadore had asked my advice,—or any of the college-bred Socialists in New York,—he'd have been told that it was absolutely impossible to pull through with a daily. Well, the working-class knew what they wanted and darned if they didn't get it! It's amazing!"

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"Walter, if I really believed that was what you'd been thinking about, I'd kiss you."

"I don't see why you shouldn't do both," he said, making room for her in the chair beside him. But seeing a suspicious glitter in her eyes, he sprang up. "Why, B.! You're crying! What's the matter?"

She put her hands on his shoulders and looked searchingly in his face.

"Honest? Cross your heart to die? Weren't you thinking about Yetta?"

"You little idiot," he said, with the glow which comes to a man who is being indirectly flattered. "Been jealous, have you?"

He picked her up in his arms.

"Let's go out on the porch. I'll tell you everything she said to me—and then we'll look up at the moon."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Well," Yetta said, settling herself in the compartment of the train, as the lights of Oxford slipped past the windows, "I'm glad we visited them."

Isadore moved uneasily.

"It wasn't unpleasant?" he asked in Yiddish—so that the other passengers might not understand.

"I don't feel as if I showed up very well in comparison to Walter."

She leaned forward so she could look him squarely in the face.

"Isadore!" she said in an aggrieved tone, "can't men ever understand women—not even the very simplest things? Three years I wasted dreaming—no; I won't say 'wasted.' I haven't any quarrel with my girlhood. Three years I dreamed about him. But it's four years now—four years—that I've lived with you. Can't you understand how immense that difference seems to a woman? There are some of my ideas, perhaps, some of my intellect that he's father of. But, Isadore, you're the father of my children." [Pg 447]

"Yes," he said, somewhat comforted. "I think I can understand a little of that—but—well, I never wished I had money so much before. I wish I could give you the things Walter would have."

"Don't you do any mourning about that," she said brazenly, "till I begin it."

She slipped her hand into his, indifferent to the other passengers. Her conscience hurt a little on this score, for after all she had envied Beatrice's opportunity to be beautiful. They sat silent for quite a long interval.

"I'm glad we visited them," she went on. "But I'm gladder that we're started home again. I'm crazy to get back."

"Worrying about the kids?"

"Oh, yes! Of course, I worry about them all the time. Aunt Martha's as good to them as she knows how, but she's so old-fashioned. But I'm glad for another reason. I never realized before the real difference between Walter and me. It's a wonderfully beautiful life, that cottage of theirs, the books, the old colleges, and the river. You can't deny that there's a graciousness about it. But it would kill me. He's happy thinking about things. But I'd die if I wasn't doing things! Love isn't enough by itself. I'd starve. I'm hungry to get back to work. That's the Real Thing, we got, Isadore. It makes our Love worth while. Our Work." [Pg 448]

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