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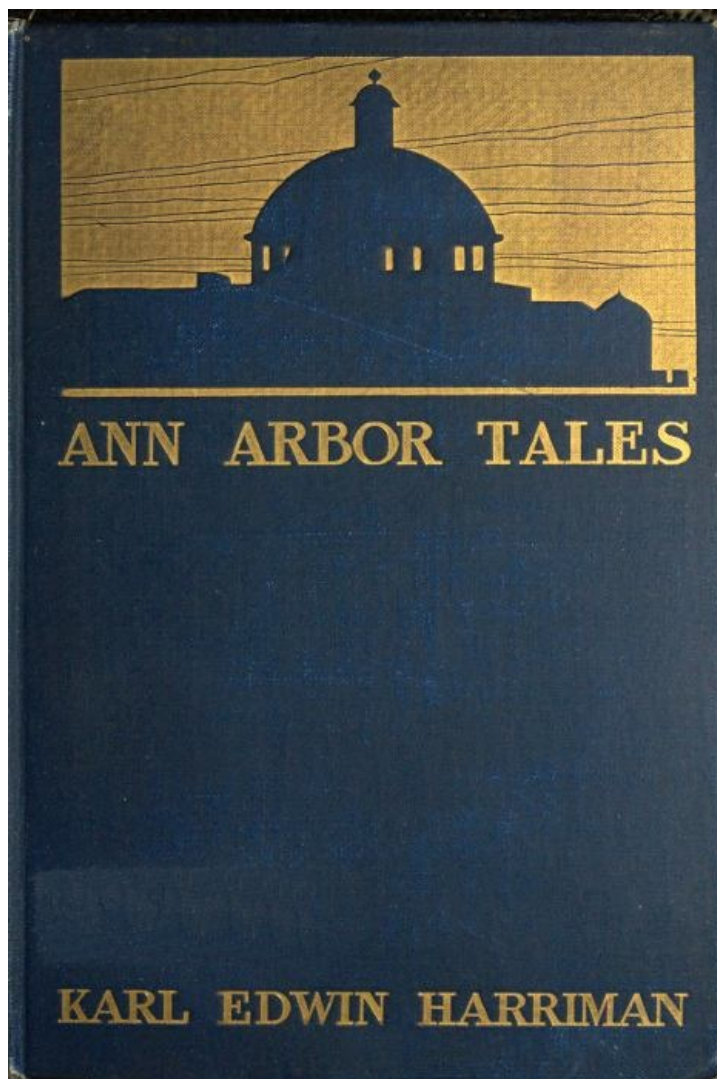
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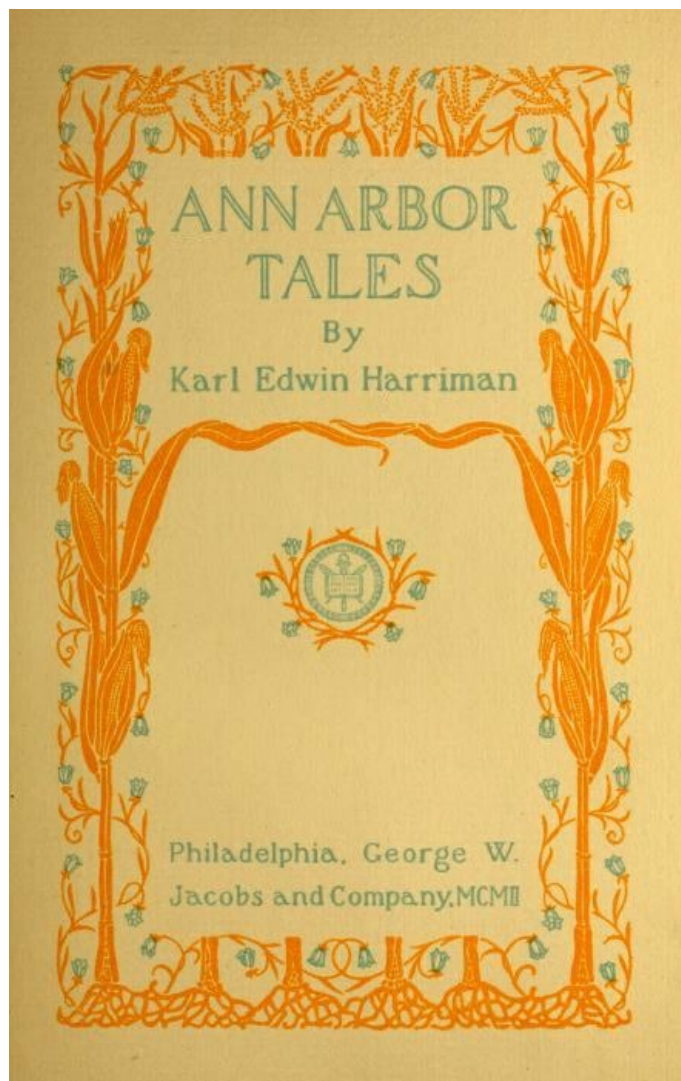
**Ann Arbor Tales**

[Pg 1]



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[Pg 3]



**ANN ARBOR  
TALES**  
By  
**Karl Edwin Harriman**

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MCMII

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[Pg 4]

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***TO MY PARENTS***

[Pg 5]

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**Contents**

[Pg 7]

	PAGE
THE MAKING OF A MAN	<a href="#">11</a>
THE KIDNAPPING	<a href="#">61</a>
THE CHAMPIONS	<a href="#">97</a>
THE CASE OF CATHERWOOD	<a href="#">123</a>

THE DOOR—A NOCTURNE	<a href="#">177</a>
A MODERN MERCURY	<a href="#">207</a>
THE DAY OF THE GAME	<a href="#">259</a>
THE OLD PROFESSOR	<a href="#">303</a>

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## THE MAKING OF A MAN

[Pg 11]

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### The Making of a Man

[Pg 13]

Florence affected low candle-lights, glowing through softly tinted shades, of pale-green, blue, old-rose, pink; for such low lights set each coiled tress of her golden hair a-dancing—and Florence knew this. The hangings in the little round room where she received her guests were deeper than the shades, and the tapestry of the semi-circular window-seat was red. It was in the arc of this that Florence was wont to sit—the star amidst her satellites.

It was one's privilege to smoke in the little room, and somehow the odor of the burned tobacco did not get into the draperies; nor filter through the *portières* into the hall beyond; and the air of the *boudoir* was always cool and fresh and sweet.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday—every night—and Sunday most of all—there were loungers on that window-seat, their faces half in shadow. It was hard at such times to take one's eyes off Florence, sitting in the arc, the soft light of old-rose moving across her cheek, creeping around her white throat, leaping in her twisted hair, quivering in her blue, soft eyes.

[Pg 14]

When she smiled, one thought in verse—if one were that sort—or, perhaps, muttered, "Gad!" shiveringly under the breath.

Well may you—or I—shake our heads now and smile, albeit a bit sadly; but then it was different. We have learned much, too much perhaps, and the once keen edge of joy is dulled. But then we were young. Youth was our inheritance and we spent it, flung it away, you say, as we knelt before the Shrine of Beauty set up in a little round room where low lights glimmered among deep shaded draperies.

We realized that it was a serious matter—a deadly serious matter; just as did a score or more of our fellows on the campus in whose hearts, as well, flared the flame of the fine young love that we were feeling in our own.

For you—and I—loved Florence.

Dear little room! Dearest, dearest Florence! Many are the men who never learned; in whose hearts your image is enshrined to-night. And few are they who ever learned and really knew you, dear.

Some few thought they did and called you a "College Widow," because they could remember a certain tall, dark-browed senior who danced ten times with you at the Jay Hop of '87. Others were convinced through them; but these were mostly freshmen upon whom you had not sought to work your magic. How far wrong they were! Yet even you, Florence, I am thinking, were wont, at least in blue moments, to take yourself at the scant valuation these few saw fit to place upon you.

[Pg 15]

But in the end you, even, saw and understood.

I am glad, my dear, that I may tell the story. And if those who read it here shall call it fiction, you, and Jim, and I, at least, shall know it for the truth.

And then, when I have done, and you have put aside the book, to hide your eyes from him who holds you fonder far than you can know, remember, dear, the glory of it and be glad.

## I

It was June.

The rain had been plentiful and the green things of earth rioted joyously in their silent life. In the trees were many birds that sang all day long, and in the night the moon was pale and the shadows were ghostly and the air was sweet with roses that hung in pink profusion from the trellis.

The grass was soft beneath the quick, light tread of the lads; and the laughter of the summer-time was in the eyes of all the maids.

[Pg 16]

Many the gay straw-rides to the Lake; frequent and long the walks through leafy lanes, down which the footfalls echoed; sweet the vigils on the broad stone steps distributed about the campus with so much regard for youthful lovers.

Too warm for dancing; too languorous for study, that June was made only for swains and sweethearts.

At least Jack Houston thought as much, and casting an eye about the town it chanced to fall upon fair Florence. Older than he by half-a-dozen years—older still in the experience of her art—her blue eyes captured him, the sheen of her soft hair, coiled high upon her head, dazzled him; and the night of the day they met he forgot—quite forgot—that half-a-dozen boon companions awaited him in a dingy, hot room down-town, among whom he was to have been the ruling spirit—a party of vain misguided youths of his own class, any one of whom he could drink under the table at a sitting, and nearly all of whom he had.

The next night, however, he was of the party and led the roistering and drank longer, harder than the rest, until—in the little hours of the new day—sodden, unsteady, he found his way to his room, where he flung himself heavily upon his bed to sleep until the noonday sun mercifully cast a beam across his heavy eyes and wakened him.

[Pg 17]

This life he had led for two years and now his face had lines; his eyes lacked lustre; his hand trembled when he rolled his cigarettes, but his brain was keener, his intelligence subtler, than ever. The wick of his mental lamp was submerged in alcohol and the light it gave seemed brighter for it. There were those who shook their heads when his name was mentioned; while others only laughed and called it the way of youth unrestrained.

There was only one who seemed to see the end—Crowley—Houston's room-mate, nearest pal—as unlike him as white is unlike black, and therefore, perhaps, more fondly loving. It was because he loved him as he did that Crowley saw—saw the end as clearly as he saw the printed page before his eyes, and shuddered at the sight. He saw a brilliant mind dethroned; a splendid body ruined; a father killed with grief—and seeing, thus, he was glad that Houston's mother had passed away while he was yet a little, brown-eyed, red-cheeked boy.

His misgivings heavy upon his heart, he spoke of them to Florence. At first, her eyes glinted a cold harsh light, but as he talked on and on, fervently, passionately, that light went out, and another came that burned brighter, as he cried:

[Pg 18]

"Oh, can't something be done? *Something?*"

They walked on a way in silence, and then she said, quietly, as was her manner, always: "Do you think I could help?"

He seized her hand and she looked up into his eyes, smiling.

"Oh, if you could!" he cried; and then: "Would you try?" But before she could answer he flung down her hand saying: "But no, you couldn't; what was I thinking of!"

They were walking by the river to the east, where, on the right, the hill rose sheer—a tangle of vivid green—from the heart of which a spring leapt and tinkled over smooth, white pebbles, to lose itself again in the earth below, bubbling noisily.

At his expression, or, more at the tone he employed in its utterance, she shrank from him, and then, regardless of her steps, sped half-way up the hill, beside the spring course. There she flung herself upon a mossy plot, face down.

Crowley called to her from the road, but she did not answer; he went to her, and stooping touched her shoulder. Her whole body, prone before him, quivered. She was crying.

He talked to her a long time, there in the woodland, silence about them save for the calls of the birds.

[Pg 19]

She turned her wet eyes upon his face.

"Oh, to think every one doubts me!" she murmured. "You laughed at me when I asked you if I could help—you think I'm only a toy-like girl—a sort of great cat to be fondled always."

She seized a stick, broke it impetuously across her knee and rose before him.

"I will help!" she cried, "I will—and you'll see what I'll do!"

Afterward—long afterward—he remembered her, as she was that moment—her golden hair tumbling upon her shoulders; her eyes blazing, her glorious figure erect, her white hands clenched at her sides.

So it was Crowley—Jim Crowley the penitent, yet the sceptical—who brought them together, just as it was Crowley who waited, who counted the days, who watched.

## II

From the walk he saw them on the tennis courts one evening a week later.

Unobserved he watched their movements; the girl's lithe, graceful; Houston's, strong, manly. He was serving and Crowley noted the swift sweep of his white arm, bare almost to the shoulder, and was thrilled. Florence had slipped the links in her sleeves and rolled her cuffs back to dimpled elbows and her forearms were brown from much golf.

[Pg 20]

Crowley approached the players after a moment and they joined him at the end of the net. The flush on the girl's face gave her beauty a radiance that he could not recall ever having noticed before. Usually Florence was marbly calm. Houston was warm, glowing.

"Gad, you're a fine pair; I've been watching you," Crowley blurted.

The girl shot him one swift glance, then her lips parted over her strong, white, even teeth, as she laughed.

"Aren't we?" she cried gaily—"just splendid——" And made a playful lunge at him with the raquet.

"Venus and Adonis playing tennis, eh?" Crowley said.

"Oh, cut it out," Houston exclaimed.

"They didn't play tennis, did they?" Florence asked.

"He ought to know," Houston put in, "he's working for that Rome scholarship—but he'll never get it any more than I shall the Athens...."

"They used to play hand ball—the gods did——" Crowley explained professorily. "And in a court, too. I suppose your tennis is merely a survival of that old Greek game." [Pg 21]

The three sat at the edge of the court while Crowley discoursed learnedly upon the pastimes of the ancient Greeks. The deep throated bells in the Library Tower rang out the hour of eight across the maples and the amateur lecturer rose lazily.

"Do you want to go down town, Jack?" he asked indifferently.

Had Houston known how breathlessly Crowley hung upon his answer he would not have taken so long to make it. As it was he glanced up at his room-mate and across at Florence whose eyes met his with a look of inquiry. He looked away then and Crowley glanced at the girl, and in her eyes he seemed to see a challenge.

"He's not going down town," she said, quite definitely, though still smiling; "he's going home with me."

Crowley shrugged his shoulders.

"Are you, Jack?" he asked.

"She says so," was the light reply.

"Well, as I'm not invited I guess I had better be moseying along."

"Oh, you can come if you want to," Florence said naïvely.

"Oh, ho; if I want to! Well I guess not!" Crowley exclaimed and moved away, calling over his shoulder: "Good-night to you—Venus and Adonis." [Pg 22]

"Isn't he a good sort?" Florence asked as the youth's tall figure disappeared around the corner of the red museum.

"Ripping!" Houston replied emphatically, "only I wish he weren't such an old Dryasdust...."

He carried the raquets under his arm with his coat wrapped about them. At the door of her home he started to put on his coat.

"You needn't," she said, perceiving his intent—"leave it off; it will be cooler. Shall we go in?" She took the coat and flung it over a chair in the hall and led the way into the little round room.

"Don't light up," he said—she was feeling along the top of the teak-wood rack for matches—"Don't you think this is nicer?"

In the shadow, and half-turned from him as it was, he could not see her face nor the smile that swept across it as he spoke.

He flung himself on the seat between the two windows, and she sank upon a low, old-fashioned stool before him, her elbows on her knees, her chin in her two slim hands. They talked commonplaces for a space, and gradually silence fell upon them. After a while he fumbled for his tobacco and little book of cigarette papers. [Pg 23]

Divining the purpose of his search she glanced over her shoulder and asked archly in a half-whisper:

"Wouldn't you rather have a made one?"

She rose before he could reply, and took down from the rack across the corner a Japanese jar into the depths of which she plunged her hand. She held out to him a half-dozen of the little white tubes. Selecting one he lighted it.

Puffing contentedly: "Doesn't your mother mind?" he asked.

She shook her head and sat on the circular seat beside him.

"She's not here," she added. "There's a social at the church; she's there...."

"Oh," he muttered.

While he smoked, she looked out the window into the silent street now almost dark. Afterward she watched him blow thin, writhing rings; leaning toward him, supporting herself on one hand, pressed hard against the cushion.

"Why don't you smoke?" he ventured after a few moments, emboldened by the deepening shadows in the little room.

"I've a mind to," she said in a half whisper.

He crossed the room straightway and dove his own hand into the jar and held out a cigarette to her. [Pg 24]

"I'll get a match," he said.

"Don't," she cried, "let me light it from yours."

They leaned toward each other on the window-seat until their faces were very close and the fire of his cigarette touched the tip of hers. Across the frail white bridge and through the pale cloud that rose, their eyes met and his gazed deep into hers, the depths of which he could not fathom. Then they drew back their heads with one accord and his hand fell upon hers where it lay on the cushion. Nor did she withdraw her hand even as his closed over it. The contact sent his blood tingling to his heart; he leaned nearer her. Their eyes, as now and then they saw in the little light the glowing coals of their cigarettes gave, did not waver. He ceased smoking, and so did she. His cigarette dropped from his nerveless fingers. Quickly he flung an arm about her and drew her toward him, holding her close, breathlessly. The perfume of her hair got into his brain, and deadened all but the consciousness of her nearness. She did not resist his impulse, but lay calm in his arms, her face upturned, her eyes melting, gazing into his.

"Dearest," he murmured—"dearest—dearest—"

"Kiss me—kiss me—Jack." The whisper was like the faint moving of young leaves in the forest. [Pg 25]

He bent his head.... Their lips met.... He saw the lids fall over her fathomless eyes like a curtain, and night became radiant day that instant love was born....

Suddenly he drew his arms away, rose and strode nervously into the hallway, leaving her in a crouching attitude upon the seat.

She waited eagerly, voiceless.

She perceived his figure between the *portières* and heard him say:

"I'm sorry—perhaps I must ask you to forgive me—I know I've been a fool—I shall go now—"

She glided toward him with a silent, undulating movement. He felt irresistibly impelled to meet her. Afterward he recalled how he had struggled that moment; had fought; had lost.

He felt her cool, soft arms against his cheeks.

"Don't go,—Jack," she whispered.

He raised his hands and seized her wrists as though to fling her from him.

"Why?" he muttered hoarsely.

"Because,"—her face was hidden against his shoulder and her voice was faint—"because—I don't want you to."

She flung back her head then and he looked down into her face, and kissed her. He kissed her many times, upon the forehead, lips and eyes, while she clung to him, murmuring fondly. [Pg 26]

He wrenched himself from her close embrace, at last, and rushing into the hallway, snatched his coat from the chair where she had flung it.

Standing passively where he had left her, Florence heard the outer door slam, followed by his swift tread upon the walk and the click as the gate latched.... Then there was silence.

For a long time she stood there, one hand clutching the back of a quaint, old-fashioned chair. A shudder passed over her. She went to the window and looked out, but in the darkness of the street she could see nothing but the vague outlines of the houses across the way and a blot where the lilac-bush was in the yard.

Sinking upon the seat she proceeded to uncoil her heavy hair, braiding it deftly over her shoulder. Gathering up her combs from the cushion, she went into the hallway and pressed the button regulating the lights. In the white glow she regarded her face in the mirror over the fireplace shelf and smiled back faintly at the reflection.

As she turned to the stairway she perceived a white card lying on the floor. She picked it up and turned it over in her hand. It was a little photograph of a young, sweet-faced girl and written across the margin at the bottom she read—the writing ordinary—"To Jack, from Susie." She turned and stared an instant at the vestibule door. Then she mounted the stairs, slowly. [Pg 27]

Her mother's voice from the hallway below awakened her.

"I'm here, dear," she called back. "I went to bed—I was so tired."

### III

There is this to be said of Jack Houston: whenever he took liquor—which was often—he took it like a man. None of the alley-door for him; through the front door, as sturdy and frank as a Crusader or not at all—that was his way. Let a faculty man be coming toward him half a block distant, there was no hesitation; not a waver. He—if such were the circumstance—would nod and pass directly beyond the double swinging screens, and not give the incident another thought. Nor were bottles ever delivered to his room in boxes marked "Candles." Indeed the outward signs were that he took pride in the bravado with which he carried on the business; for there on the boxes were the stenciled labels—plain enough to be read distinctly across the street—"Perth Whiskey." But it was not that he had a pride in what certain of his fellows were wont to call his "independence." It was simply that he drank—drank when he chose; paid for what he drank; and drank it like a man—a Southern man, honorably. The real trouble was not that he saw fit and cared to drink, or what he drank; but that he drank so much.

[Pg 28]

And he was in love now; reveling in a multitude of agreeable sensations, which, perhaps, he had not even dreamed himself destined ever to experience in such fulness. Analyzing his emotions he marveled at the condition he discovered. He set himself apart and regarded the other Jack Houston critically. He denied his heart's impeachment; the other Jack sneered and called him a fool. He laughed; the other Jack said,—or seemed to say: "Laugh away; but it's a serious business all the same." He flaunted; the other adhered to the original charge. In the end he stood before that other Jack and held out his hand, as it were, and—like a man—confessed. And it devolved upon him forthwith to celebrate the discovery of a cardiac ailment he had not experienced before as he was experiencing it now. So, with barbaric, almost beautiful, recklessness, he got drunk; thoroughly, creditably drunk.

The next morning, heavy-headed, thick-tongued, he shifted his eyes sheepishly about the room, while Crowley, from the high ground of his own invincible virtue, talked down to him roundly. He did not interrupt the steady flow of malediction in which his immaculate room-mate seemed determined to engulf him; but when the lecture was ended, he looked up, steadily, and said: "Never mind, old top, it's the last; on the square it is."

[Pg 29]

As he had a perfect right to do under the circumstances, Crowley shrugged his shoulders, and looked out the window into the green of a maple.

"All right, old top," Houston driveled on pathetically—"mebbe I've said it before; but this time I mean it—see if I don't." And he reached across the table for a bottle of bitters. He poured half a small glass with shaking hands. Over the edge of the drink he perceived the sneer on Crowley's face. He set the glass and bottle on the *chiffonier* carefully.

"Confound you! don't you believe me, you white-ribbon parson!" he cried.

Crowley smiled broadly.

Houston seized the glass. "There!" he exclaimed—"Now do you believe me?—Not even a bracer!" And he flung glass and liquor into the waste-paper basket.

Crowley laughed aloud at that, and went down-stairs, and Houston, as he finished dressing, heard him talking to the landlady's collie on the front porch.

[Pg 30]

For that afternoon—it being Saturday—he had planned a boating trip, with a picnic supper, down the river. The care-taker at the boathouse helped him tote the canoe around the dam, while Florence, her face shaded by the blue parasol she carried, stood on the bank by the railway. Her hamper was stowed away securely, and while the man held fast to the frail craft, Houston lifted her fairly from the ground and set her, fluffy and cool, in the bow where he had arranged the cushions. To the attendant music of many little cries of half fright, the canoe, at one sweep of the paddle, shot into midstream.

The river was unusually high; the spring rains had been frequent and plentiful, and now the water ran flush with the green banks on either side. Past the ivy-hung station they drifted with the current. Florence sat silent among the cushions watching the rhythmic, graceful sweep of the paddle, strongly, evenly manipulated by her flannel-clad gondolier.

It was an occasion for unvoiced enjoyment. On the left rose the hills—threaded by the winding, white boulevard—thick with greenery, through which now and then were to be caught glimpses of The Hermitage—poised obliquely on the hillside, a sheer declivity falling from its broad canopied piazza. Skirting the bank, the passage of the canoe wrought havoc among the birds, and they flew to and fro across the stream, or, hopping nervously from branch to branch, screamed their displeasure at the rude invasion of their domestic quiet.

[Pg 31]

Florence removed her rings, and, dropping her hand over the low rail, let it trail through the dark-green water, alive with the shivering reflections of the bank verdure.

The boat glided beneath the old wooden bridge at the boulevard beginning, and two small boys who were fishing from the weather-stained structure forgot their lines to watch the passage of the silent craft. Further on, the current ran more swiftly and Jack ceased paddling, relaxed,

steered merely.

They talked of many things in the stillness. Now and then they were moved to outbursts of sentiment occasioned by the beauty of the hills and the little surprises of charm that nature, at each curve of the wandering stream, brought into view. Overhead, feathery clouds, almost opalescent, floated in a turquoise sky; and the breeze that was wafted across the hills kissed cool their faces.

Florence drew in her dripping hand and dried it on her handkerchief. The sun was obscured and she closed the blue parasol. Finally she said: [Pg 32]

"Jack—Jack dear—why did you do it?"

She did not lift her eyes as she spoke, but, rather, regarded the tip of her parasol, pressed against the toe of one little patent-leather slipper.

"What?" he asked calmly; so calmly that she could not tell whether he were dissembling ignorance of her meaning.

"You understand," she said—"last night——"

"How do you know?" he exclaimed suddenly; but before she could reply he added, gently, "I'm sorry—I'm dead sorry!"

She was moved to lift her eyes by the note of contrition in his voice. Her lips parted the least bit over her teeth and she smiled.

"How—how could you, dear?" she went on; "after—after—that night. I've been thinking about it all day. I didn't mean to mention it at first—but—but—I couldn't help it. You don't really like to do such things; do you, Jack? There, I know you don't. It's just what they call—spirits—I suppose ——"

He laughed aloud, and his laugh was echoed back across the river. "Yes," he cried, gleefully—"that's it—*spirits!*"

She glanced up at him reprovingly. "You know I didn't mean that. I don't think you should laugh. But Jack dear,"—she gazed steadily, soberly, at him now—"you won't do it any more, will you?" [Pg 33]

He did not answer.

"Can't you promise me, Jack—*me?*" she asked, tenderly.

Long afterward she recalled to him that instant of hesitation before he replied.

"I promise," he exclaimed, finally, with a brave note of resolution in his voice.

She sighed and settled back more comfortably among the cushions.

"I knew you would," she said.

After a moment: "Do you care so very—so very, very much?" he asked.

"Of course I do," she answered, quite gaily.

"Why?"

The eagerness in his voice startled her. It may have been that which induced the little tremor she felt pass over her. She closed her eyes as he, leaning forward, watched her.

"Dearest—dearest," she heard him whisper; "is it because—because——"

She opened her eyes then, dreamily, languishingly, and in them he seemed to read her answer, and was satisfied.

They had reached the point where they had planned to spread their picnic supper. He drove the canoe into the soft earth of the sloping bank and steadied it with the paddle while she, gathering up her fluffy skirts, stepped out. He dragged the boat upon the bank and handed her the hamper. They climbed up to a shelf of rock over the edge of which a spring sent whirling to the road below a glistening rope of water. They set the basket in the cool shade, at the edge of the shelf, and descending again followed the road along the stream. The air was filled with the sounds of joyous Nature. The world was glad and gay; glad for the tall, strong youth in flannels who strode beside a yellow-haired girl; and gay for the girl. [Pg 34]

In the evening they waited on "their rock," as she called it, until twilight rose and the birds became quiet and the wild life about was still.

Over the shoulder of the hill across the river the moon rose, round, high, white, to light a gleaming path along the stream.

Paddling back, Houston displayed his skill, for it was no child's work against the current. She watched him; the strong, even movements of his arms, as he fairly bent the paddle blade before his steady strokes. Rounding a bend the lights of the town twinkled into view.

"We're nearly home," he called, and the words came quick and short from the effort he had made. [Pg 35]



"And you're tired," she murmured.

"No, not tired," he replied—"I only wish it were longer—"

"But we can come again—before you go home."

"Florence—I don't want to go, now." He hesitated a moment. "I might make the governor believe that the summer school would materially benefit his son," he added.

She laughed at the mockery in his voice. "I'm afraid I should be your only professor," she said.

"I would hope so," he replied.

"No, dear," she said, seriously, "don't this summer—next, perhaps."

"Will you write me then—often?" he asked.

"How often?"

"Don't you suppose you could—I shan't say every day—but every other day?"

"Yes."

And his heart leaped in his breast at the tone she employed.

"I love you," he whispered. "Oh, how I love you!"

"And you will keep your promise?" She smiled back at him.

"Yes."

"Dearest Jack!"

[Pg 36]

"I'm going to tell the governor when I get home, Florence," he suddenly exclaimed.

"No, no, dear, don't; not yet." The haste of her reply was startling—"I don't think I would," she added more calmly, seemingly herself conscious of it. "Perhaps he'll come on, next year; then he could meet me; and he could see— Perhaps he might not—might not—like it—"

"Not like it!" he cried. "Yes, you're right; he might fall in love with you himself! Yes, he might," he added in mock seriousness, "I hadn't thought of that...."

They walked slowly through the silent streets to her home, and in the darkness of the little round room he held her close in his arms and kissed her.

"Has it been a happy day?" he whispered, his cheek pressed to hers.

He felt the quick pressure of her hand upon his arm.

"So happy," she murmured.

After the door closed behind him she stood as she had that first night, and in the darkness about her she seemed to see the sweet face of a young girl—the girl of the picture.... She brushed the back of her hand across her smooth forehead and sighed....

In another week he was gone.

[Pg 37]

He came back to her after many weeks and although she did not ask, he told her he had kept his promise.

#### IV

During the winter that followed, Houston's constant attention to Florence was generally accepted at its face-value. That they were engaged few of their intimates doubted; and among the faculty members of their acquaintance there were many smiles and sidewise glances.

At a Forty Club dance one night Mrs. Longpré, a *chaperon*, said to Mrs. Clifford, another, lowering her lorgnette through which, for some moments she had stared, rather impertinently, as was her custom, at Jack and Florence, "I find that couple quite interesting."

"Why, pray?" Mrs. Clifford asked, roused suddenly from the doze into which she had lapsed, due to *ennui* that she made no effort to conceal.

"That Mr. Houston seems a very nice young man," observed the worthy dame, patronizingly, and as though speaking to herself, "but what he can see in that girl is beyond me."

Mrs. Clifford squinted. She refused to add to her generally aged and wrinkled appearance by wearing spectacles.

"Isn't she a proper person?" she asked.

[Pg 38]

Mrs. Clifford had a proper daughter—a very proper daughter—who at that precise moment was sitting prim and solitary on the lowest step of the gallery stairs.

"Well," Mrs. Longpré observed, significantly, "there have been stories. Of course one is quite

prepared to hear stories and whether they are true or not one never knows," she added, defensively. "But the girl's mother allows her to have her own way more than I should, if she were my daughter. She is old enough to be his aunt, besides, and always has half-a-dozen young men dancing attendance upon her."

"I suppose it's just another college engagement that will end when he graduates," Mrs. Clifford ventured. "Is the girl in college at all?" she inquired with a smothered yawn.

Mrs. Longpré smiled. "Hardly," she replied, drily. "If she had continued—for she started I am told—she would have graduated quite seven years ago." There was a tart venom in the last speech.

"You don't say," mused Mrs. Clifford who was new to Ann Arbor, her husband, the professor, having been called from a little Ohio college to fill the chair of Norwegian Literature. And she immediately lapsed into another doze from which she did not emerge—being quite stout, and pleasantly stupid—until the orchestra overhead began the last dance—"Home, Sweet Home."

[Pg 39]

Mrs. Longpré's point-of-view as regarded Jack and Florence was that of nearly all the faculty women who knew them. Indeed, there was but one among them, the jolly little wife of the assistant professor of physics—who did not know much and did not feign more—who championed them. And her support was little more than a mere exclamation at the girl's beauty, now and then at a "reception," or a wide-eyed admiration, feelingly expressed, of Houston's charming manners and exquisitely maintained poise.

If Florence in the slightest measure realized how she—for what her judges were pleased to call her latest "affair"—was held by those judges she did not express her knowledge even by a sign. As for Houston, he saw precisely how the companionship was regarded by the small people among whom decency required him to mingle, and the knowledge irritated his nerves.

"The fools!" he exclaimed to Florence one day, "don't they think a fellow can really care for a girl—ever!"

She laughed and told him not to mind, and he was satisfied.

In the beginning Houston had planned to work for the Athens scholarship, an honor within the University's gift much sought, but seldom won save by weary plodders in the library, who when they graduated carried from the campus with their neatly rolled and tubed diplomas no remembrance of the life of their fellows, or of friends made, or of pleasant associations formed.

[Pg 40]

At first Houston's effort was brave, but at the end of the first semester of his freshman year he was conditioned in one course. The receipt of the little white slip marked his first lapse from academic virtue. Afterward, his course was plainly indicated—a trail clearly marked by empty bottles.

One afternoon in the early part of his junior year, Florence and he were driving on the middle road to Ypsilanti. Below the Poor Farm they turned in at a side lane, over which the branches met. The sun, shining through the green canopy, stenciled the way with shadows that shifted and changed design as the soft wind moved the leaves.

"Jack," Florence said quite seriously, "what made you give up your idea of going in for the scholarship?"

He flicked the horse impatiently with the whip.

"What was the use keeping on?" he replied. "I fell down straight off the bat. I'd like to win it; that's sure enough. It would be fine. I like to work, too; but it's too late now." He sighed. "But there," he exclaimed, turning to her with a smile, "what's the use of crying over spilt milk?"

[Pg 41]

She was still serious.

"Don't be silly," she reproved. "Why don't you go on with it now? Can't you, dear? Please. Oh, how I'd love to see you win it; and you can if you'll only try!" She clasped her hands eagerly and leaned in front of him.

"Do you suppose I could?" he asked, with some show of earnestness.

"Of course you could!" she cried. "Do try, Jack, dear; please do; for my sake."

The shade was deep where they were, and he stopped the horse and they remained there a space. She planned for him gaily.

"If I could only help you," she murmured tenderly.

"You can—by loving me," he said.

She looked away.

"If I do take up the work to win," he went on, "it'll mean I can't come down so often. How would you like that?" he asked, playfully.

"I shouldn't care." Then she added quickly, a little frightened by the look he gave her. "You know, dear, I didn't mean that! I mean I could stand it—I could stand it for your sake."

[Pg 42]

"So we both might be happier in the end."

At his words she looked away again.

"Yes," she repeated slowly—"so we both might be happier in the end. Won't you try?" she asked eagerly, after the moment's silence that ensued.

He did not answer her at once. Then suddenly he flapped the reins upon the horse's back and touched the sleek animal with the whip.

"Gad! I will!" he exclaimed. And looking at her he saw a mist in her eyes, and that she had drawn her lower lip between her teeth, which were white upon it.

Moved by her emotion he asked, gently:

"Are you glad?"

"Oh, so glad!" she answered, and there was a tremor in her voice. "I know you'll win," she went on after a moment. "I know, at least you'll make the effort, for you've promised me. You always keep your promises to me, don't you, Jack?"

He laughed lightly. "I couldn't do otherwise," he said. "I couldn't if I tried."

He felt her hand upon his arm, and his heart at that moment filled to overflowing with love for her....

"Crowley, you old parson, I'm going to win that Athens scholarship or bust—or *bust*; do you understand!" he exploded, later in the day, before his room-mate. [Pg 43]

Crowley looked up from the three open books on the table over which he was bent.

"Good for you!" he cried. "Gad; you're more apt to win it now than I am the Rome—the way the work is going."

"You'd better look to your laurels," was the bantering reply. "You just note your little Johnnie's smoke. If he doesn't make the rest of the bunch that's on the same scent look like thirty cents, a year from next June, he'll go jump off the dock; and upon you will devolve the cheerful duty of telegraphing papa!"

And the next day he began.

It was an Herculean task that confronted him and he realized fully the labor necessary to its accomplishment. He dove into the work with an enthusiasm that augured well for the achievement of the end he had in view. He outlined a system; he drafted a schedule of diversion and recreation, which he promised himself he would adhere to. It permitted of meetings with Florence on only two nights of the week. For a month he did not swerve a hair's breath from this plan of employment, but at the end of that period he sent her a brief note breaking an engagement to drive with her on the Sunday following. He beseeched Crowley to call upon her and explain, which Crowley did, while Houston, locked in his room, studied. [Pg 44]

During that call Crowley suffered an embarrassment he had never before experienced in Florence's presence. The John Alden part he had been so summarily cast to act, he felt did not fit him. As for Florence, she perceived his discomfort and surmising something of its cause adapted herself to the situation delicately.

"Do you think he'll win?" she asked eagerly after Crowley had made the necessary explanations.

"Win!" he exclaimed. "He'll win or go clear daft, if he keeps on working like he's been doing the past three weeks. He's getting thinner, too," he added—"actually getting thinner; hadn't you noticed?" And he laughed with her at the thought of Houston wearing himself to a shadow over books of archeology. It *was* very absurd.

Understanding well that Florence had had some hand in the change of Houston's fortunes, he hesitated upon the point of asking her to tell him all about it. They had been very candid in the past. He recalled their walk by the river and the conversation of that afternoon bearing upon Jack's misdeeds. But, for some reason that he could not, for his dulness, fathom now, he *did* hesitate. Houston had never told him what was the precise relation between him and Florence, and for him now, he thought, in the event of a secret engagement, perhaps, to seek to learn from her what that relation might be— It was too delicate, he concluded, altogether too delicate. [Pg 45]

"I do hope," she said, "you won't let him get sick working so hard."

"Oh, you needn't worry," he replied, significantly, "I don't think there's any immediate danger."

After a moment she said, bluntly: "You haven't any real faith in him, even now, have you, Jim?"

He was a little startled by her question. Had she, he asked himself, been sitting there reading his mind as though it were a show bill, printed in large type? He felt, for the moment, decidedly uncomfortable.

"You haven't, have you?" she repeated.

"Why, yes," he replied, somewhat indefinitely. "Why yes I have, too."

She shook her yellow head and smiled. "I'm afraid not," she said quietly.

And that instant Crowley came nearer achieving a complete understanding of Houston's case than he was destined to again—until long after. He was glad to leave the little round room at the end of half an hour.

[Pg 46]

For months Jack and Florence had made plans for the Junior Hop of his third year, but the first of February came and with it a realization to Florence that her hopes were destined to be shattered. Jack explained to her, as best he could, that the three days' respite from work after the first-semester examinations could not be that for him.

"I'm up to my eyes, dear," he said—"besides I know you don't care much; you've been to a lot, and as for me I shouldn't care a snap to go over to the Gym. and dance all night. I'm going through the exams, great. I know, dear, I've worked hard, but I must work harder. You understand, don't you?"

Of course she understood. Hop? What was a Hop to her? Pouff! That for them! The same always; a great bore, usually, after one has been to three or four. That was what she said to him, but deep in her heart she was disappointed; not keenly perhaps, but disappointed, nevertheless.

Through the last semester she saw him less frequently, even, than she had during the earlier part of the year.

"I've decided to stay over for summer-school, dear," he said to her one afternoon in mid-June.

[Pg 47]

She was quite joyful at the prospect.

"We shall go on the river!" she cried. "We shall, shan't we?"

"Of course," he said, earnestly.

But not once did they go. From week to week the excursion was postponed, always by Houston, save once. Then Florence's mother was ill. He was quite prepared on that occasion and suffered some displeasure.

"Never mind, we'll go in the fall, when you come back," Florence said.

In order that he might work during the scant vacation permitted him he carried to his southern home, in August, a case of books.

"You'll write me, dear, often—awfully often, won't you?" he said to Florence the night before he left.

"Of course," she assured him.

And she kept her promise though his letters were infrequent and brief during the interval.

He met her in the little round room the first night he was back. He had carried away with him an impression of her in a soft, fluffy blue gown, but now it was autumn, and she was dressed differently. When she came into the room, his senses suffered a shock from which he did not immediately recover.

[Pg 48]

She seemed much older. He wondered if it might not be her costume. He could not recall ever before having seen her in gray. He caught himself, once or twice, regarding her curiously, somewhat critically, and marveled at the phenomenon.

She did not chide him for his neglect in not having written her oftener during the two months he had been away. He offered no excuses. It was as though, now, each had forgotten in the other's nearness. Leaving her, he felt that, on the whole, he had got through the evening rather miserably.

The weeks sped on fleet wings. He was deep in his work. He perceived that what, a year before, had appeared but a remote chance of winning the coveted scholarship had now resolved itself into a certain possibility; even more, he considered, with a sense of pride—a probability.

The campus saw little of him, the town scarcely a glimpse, save occasionally of a Saturday evening when he walked to the post-office for his mail. On such evenings he usually stopped at Florence's home on his way to his rooms. The conversation between them at these times was confined almost wholly to his work. All his efforts were concentrated upon the accomplishment of the task he had set before himself.

[Pg 49]

For the Christmas vacation he went home.

"Father's coming in June," he told Florence on his return. "Said he'd be here big as life and twice as natural—going to bring a cousin of mine—Susie Henderson—you've heard me speak of her."

"Oh...."

"What is it?" He was startled by her exclamation.

She laughed—"I didn't mean to frighten you," she said—"but I pricked myself with this pin"—and she flung upon the table the trinket with which she had been toying.

On his way to his rooms that night he reviewed, casually, his college course; he built air-castles for the days ahead. There would be a year in Athens—perhaps two. Should he and Florence marry before—or after? They had not planned definitely. Of a sudden the idea that they had not

smote him forcefully. They had really been living only from day to day; it was wrong; quite wrong, he decided. A settlement should be made at once—at once. He was quite determined. In his room, bent over the books upon the table, he forgot forthwith the resolution he had made. The next day he recalled it—and the next.

Spring came. His winning was now a certainty. The *U. of M. Daily* accepted his success as assured and dismissed the matter at once with all the cocksureness of collegiate journalism. Now, the hard work done, he could loaf.

[Pg 50]

Loaf!

The prospect appalled him. Loaf? He had forgotten how! But Florence should teach him all over again, he mused, and smiled.

He went to his dressing-table and picked up her portrait given him two years before. Across the margin at the bottom he read:—"To Jack, from Florence."

After a moment he put the photograph down and searched among the others that littered the table. A little look of puzzlement came into his eyes.

He turned to the front window and gazed out across the maples, their leaves silvered by the moonlight. He stood there some moments watching the face of the night. Then he turned back to his books, doggedly.

"What's the use?" he muttered, sinking into the chair before his study table.

## V

He realized fully the significance of the extreme to which his course had brought him. If he might only talk to Crowley; if he might only tell him everything, how like a cad he felt, what a cad he believed himself to be, he must sense a deep relief. But would Crowley understand; could he understand?

[Pg 51]

He smiled at the thought the question prompted. Poor old Crowley—Meister Dryasdust—he understand a situation so delicate—so exquisitely delicate? It was absurd. Houston laughed aloud; but the laughter died at once and was like ashes on his lips.

He had not deceived Florence; not wilfully; though perhaps in the end it was as though he had. But now the thought that he had not consoled him. Still she had his promise. He had hers as well, to be sure, and in his present state of mind he only wished that she might be as willing as he to forget—he could not *think*, forgive. At the conjecture his pride suffered a shock. Still, if it were only true—if there were even a remote possibility of truth in the circumstance he imagined—that she might have undergone a change; that she might have awakened; that she might have—drifted away. He was coldly analytical enough *now*, to turn back a year and hear himself, as he was *then*, being told by her that she had erred, had made a dreadful *faux pas* of the whole business.

A grim smile curved his lips as the situation presented itself more clearly to his mind. He snapped away his cigarette impatiently.

[Pg 52]

Leaving his room an hour before he had felt cool-headed enough, but now he experienced a growing nervousness with each step he took. It was just such a day as the one on which they had canoed down the river and the promises had been exchanged. Would it not be well, perhaps, he considered, to propose another little voyage, and, perhaps, on the very shelf of rock where they had spread their luncheon—a dainty luncheon it was, he remembered—tell her? He put the thought away at once as absurdly theatrical.

No, there was but one thing to do—to go to her, to go to her now, and, like a man, *tell* her. It would be over with in half an hour—no longer, surely, he thought—and then—how good the air would taste, how blue the sky would seem.

He had not noticed where his steps were leading him, but now that a determination to act in the course left open to him had formed, set, and hardened in his mind, he lifted his eyes and looked about him.

He was approaching a corner. It was a very familiar corner. There on the left, ridiculously close to the sidewalk, was the brown house from the lilac bush in the scant front yard of which he and Florence had often, of an evening, stolen armfuls of the fragrant blossoms. A street car dragged along, its one flat wheel thumping, thumping, thumping, with a deadly sort of iteration. Standing there, he lighted another cigarette. When would he be here again, he mused. Perhaps in five years he might come back to a class reunion. Five years would bring many changes, many confusing changes. The lilac bush, for instance, might not be there in the front yard of the brown house. He recalled the changes the four years he had lived in Ann Arbor had brought to the vicinity of his freshman rooming-house. Come to think of it, he could not even now, familiar as he was with the town, remember whether that house stood in Ingalls or Thayer Streets. He could find the place, certainly; that is, he might locate it after a bit, but—

[Pg 53]

"Houston, you're a fool!"

He upbraided himself aloud, unconsciously. Then, flinging away his half-burned cigarette, he

turned the corner and walked briskly down the street.

The maid admitted him and he waited in the little round room. The shades were low and the place was filled with shadows, shadows that made the close walls seem very far apart, and the teak wood bookcase quite remote. To satisfy himself of the illusion Houston thrust one foot forward until it touched the lowest shelf. He settled back among the cushions on the circular seat, then, quite satisfied.

[Pg 54]

He heard the soft, cool swish of skirts on the stairs and the next instant the *portières* parted and framed Florence. In passing she had opened the outer door and the light, streaming about her, as for an instant she stood there, filled the little room with a soft, white glow that seemed to radiate from her. He did not move; gazed at her simply before she glided silently to where he sat, and stooping, kissed him.

She held her cheek close to his an instant then drew away, and moving to the window raised one of the shades. Her face was turned from him.

"Jove!" he muttered, "but you're beautiful, Florence—in that—in that blue thing."

She turned, at his exclamation, and a little pale ghost of a smile hovered about her lips. She came to him and sat beside him and took one of his hands in both hers.

"Jack, what is it?" she asked, quietly.

Their eyes met as she spoke, and before his could fall, she said: "Tell me, tell me what it is——"

[Pg 55]

It seemed to him, that instant, that he ceased to breathe.

He fairly wrenched his eyes from hers. "Flo"—it was not often of late that he called her by this name of his own invention—"Flo, I—I——"

"Tell me," she whispered, leaning toward him.

"Flo, it's all off."

He got up quickly and strode out into the hallway, and back again.

He stood beside the bookcase and looked at her, across the room, where she sat between the windows, the little smile, only, perhaps fainter now, still hovering about her lips.

"I understand, dear," she said simply.

The relief her words carried to him filled him with as keen and as complete a joy as he had ever felt.

"I knew you would," he said; "I knew you would—you're so sensible about things."

The smile flickered an instant brighter as she replied, with a little pout, "Oh, Jack, never call a girl '*sensible*': it's as bad as calling her '*nice*,' and that's like throwing a stone at her."

He laughed, a little stridently.

"Come here, dear; sit here and tell me all about it." She made room for him beside her and held the cushions against the wall till he sank among them.

[Pg 56]

"Is it your father, dear; did you tell *him*?" she asked quietly.

"No, it isn't," he blurted, frankly. "I wish to Heaven it were."

"So it's you; just yourself; oh, Jack!"

How grateful he was for that little note of gay mockery in her voice she never knew.

"Can't you tell me all about it?"

He did not answer at once.

"Then shall *I* tell *you*?" she said. He glanced at her appealingly, but she was still smiling.

"Well—let's see,—where does it begin? Oh, yes. There was once a boy came to college, and he fell in with other boys and had the best sort of time till he met an ogre—no, I mean an ogress—and after that he didn't have a good time at all——"

He was smiling now, with her.

"——And in some foolish way he began to think he liked the ogress—whom he shouldn't have liked—and she, well, she liked him too, and they became pals—regular pals—and one day he told her he loved her. He thought he did. He didn't *really*; but he was to learn *that* afterward. So they became engaged—this fine fellow and the ogress. Silly, wasn't it? Silly of the fine fellow and silly of the ogress. And for a little while—no,"—she mused—"not a *little* while; quite a long while, they were happy; very, very happy. And all the time they were drifting closer and closer to the edge of a precipice over which they were sure to take a tumble one day. But before that day came the fine fellow woke up, for, you see, he'd only been dreaming all the time. And the ogress wasn't an ogress at all, but just a girl—a *sensible* girl...."

[Pg 57]

He glanced at her reprovingly.

"... just a sensible girl," she went on, "who, when he told her it was all a dream, said it had been a happy, happy dream, but that perhaps the awakening had come just in time. Perhaps it has, Jack," there was a note of seriousness in her voice now. "Perhaps it has; who knows? We shall think so anyway; shan't we? It will make it easier...."

"Yes, it will make it easier," he muttered, all the light gone out of his eyes, the smile from his lips.

"Jack; you *will* tell me one thing, won't you, dear?"

He looked up into her face wonderingly.

"What is it?" he said.

"Was there another—another besides the ogress who turned out to be the sensible girl? Tell me, Jack; it's all I want to know. I don't know why I should want to know even that; but I do. I guess a girl always does. Perhaps it's because it usually tends either to light-up things or to make her still more miserable. I don't know which; only it's at such times that a girl wants either light or more misery. One seems to do as well as the other. Tell me—was there, Jack?"

[Pg 58]

He met her eyes frankly, as he spoke.

"Why Flo—I—you see——" He looked away.

She settled back among the cushions.

"Flo, you wouldn't understand," he managed to say. "You see, it's——"

"But I know now," she exclaimed—"and somehow it makes me feel better——"

"Flo!"

She perceived the reproof in his tone and added eagerly: "Don't think I meant to mock you, dear; I didn't truly. I meant just what I said—and just that way...."

Presently he stood up before her and looked down into her face.

"Flo,"—he spoke earnestly, almost passionately—"Flo, you're a girl in a million!"

"There!" she cried gaily, "that's better than '*sensible*.'"

He smiled.

[Pg 59]

"In a million," he repeated as though to himself. "I can never, never forget you——"

"Oh, Jack!" Again the old note of playful raillery crept into her voice. "Now you've gone back. Of course you can't forget me; at least you mustn't, really you mustn't; it wouldn't be fair."

He took up his hat from the little table.

"Are you going?" she asked.

"I'd better," he said, simply.

"And shan't I see you again?..."

Before he could reply she cried: "But I can see you graduate! I can see you get the Athens scholarship; and I shall too. And oh, Jack, when I read some day about you I shall be so glad—so glad I'll cry!" As she spoke he saw the thin mist that he remembered seeing once before, gather over her eyes again. He touched her lightly on the cheeks with the tips of his fingers, and, stooping kissed her forehead.

"Good-bye," he said.

She took his hand and pressed it.

"Good-bye—and the best luck in the world!" she cried.

She heard the door close behind him. For a long time she did not move from among the cushions. Finally she rose. From the top shelf of the teak wood bookcase she took down a Japanese rose jar, and from it drew out a little card portrait of a young sweet-faced girl. She stood at the window and lifting her eyes from the portrait gazed off down the street.... The pink faded from her cheeks.... The photograph slipped from her fingers.... She sank upon her knees and hid her face among the cushions.... By and by she rose and went out into the hallway and up the stairs....

[Pg 60]

Her mother, entering below, called to her.

"I'm up here dressing, dear," she answered. "I had a note from Ed Trombley—you remember him, mother—a '90 man. His class is having a reunion and he's back for it. He has asked me to drive to the Lake with him—you don't care do you?"

"No child...."

And the frail, gray-haired woman went quietly into the little round room with her sewing.

## The Kidnapping

[Pg 63]

### I

The glimpse to be caught of the outer world through the wide west entrance of the main building, as a scurrying undergraduate, now and then, leaned sidewise against the heavy door and pushed it back, was not cheering. There was snow upon the ground; snow that lay not white and glistening in a strong light, but smudged and indelicate beneath the low hanging smoke. At either side of the broad, rounded tar walk, now covered with ashen gray ice, Paddy's plow had piled the snow in two rows. The maples were gaunt, skeleton-like, and the wind that cried in their branches was chill to the ear and to the cheek.

When the thick door was flung back to permit the passage of a youth becomingly dressed for the season in loose trousers that, not infrequently, were rolled into high russet lace boots; closely buttoned coat, above the throat of which rose the blue tower of a sweater collar; or to allow the entrance of a girl in tam-o'-shanter and furs, her few books hugged close to her breast, the various notices and handbills on the bulletin board at the left of the corridor fluttered, often to be torn from the clips and sent soaring down the hall.

[Pg 64]

On the square marble-topped radiator in the middle of the floor opposite the door of the president's office sat Kerwin. Another youth was slouching beside him.

Kerwin knocked his heavy heels against the pipes of the heater and looked down at his loafing acquaintance with eyes that twinkled unceasingly. Kerwin was not beautiful. He was round of face—all but his jaw; that was square. His hair was red and grew in divers "cow licks" that rendered brushing futile. On the backs of his hands, despite the season, were large, circular freckles. The frat. pin he wore on the breast of his blue sweater suggested certain of his characteristics with singular precision. It was a kite-shaped affair, bordered with tiny pearls and emeralds, alternating, and the Greek letters across the middle were Delta Psi Phi. Not by the Greek, however, were the owner's characteristics indicated—unless, of course, to Kerwin himself—but by the symbols of the order the insignia of which it was and which consisted of a weird, staring, human eye—the "white" enamel, and the "pupil" emerald—, a flat lamp of the sort they are making in Germany and digging up in Pompeii, and a round, moon-face.

[Pg 65]

The little freshman at the radiator had been eyeing the pin curiously for some minutes.

"Say," he said finally, and Kerwin looked down.

"What?"

"Tell me the meaning of that eye."

The twinkle grew in Kerwin's own.

"That!" he exclaimed, burying his chin in the huge collar of the sweater and pulling out the garment like the cuticle of the elastic-skinned boy, the better to examine the badge. "Oh, that is the all-seeing eye of the frat. It means that the fellow who wears our pin—it means that I am next, that I'm on—up to the game; that no hot air goes with me. See?"

His eyes met the little independent freshman's squarely and soberly.

"Oh, does it," the latter replied with interest. "Then what does that thing mean?" With a chubby forefinger he indicated the lamp.

"Now, that's different," Kerwin continued, none the less grave. "That is symbolic of brilliancy. It indicates brilliancy of the highest order. Yes, siree; a chap's got to be *mighty* brilliant to wear that!"

Again their eyes met and the little independent's were alight with interest still.

[Pg 66]

"And that?" It was the moon-face at the bottom of the pin that next came in for an explanation. The little fellow grinned back at it feelingly.

"Ah, that's the best of all," Kerwin exclaimed. It was quite as though he were telling a pretty fairy story to a child. "That denotes geniality, joviality, and—there's another 'ality' in the list, but I've forgotten it for the moment. You understand, though, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, I understand."

And then—this is hard to believe—what did that little freshman do but ask:

"Say, what do you think my chances are of ever wearing a pin like that?"

Kerwin almost fell off the radiator. He had heard of freshmen as fresh as this one, but at the stories of such he had always smiled, regarding them as pleasant fictions. Recovering, he realized



that his duty was to disillusion the youth who awaited his reply, with a look of anxiety in his clear eyes. So—

"Very slim," he replied, brutally, sliding off his marble perch. "Very slim indeed! You see," he added, buttoning his coat and measuring with his eye the distance to the transverse corridor, "you're too bloomin' fresh ever to wear anything but a cornflower, or a wood-violet at best."

[Pg 67]

He ran then, and, even before the little independent realized the full significance of the speech, was out of sight.

It was quite two minutes later by the clock above the president's door that the blush began to mount the youngster's cheeks. He gathered his books under one arm and tiptoed down the corridor, staring at the floor and regretting heartily that he had even so much as mentioned the pictures on his classmate's—his wiser classmate's—pin.

But the displeasure that he suffered so keenly, the chagrin that forbade a lifting of his eyes, and the realization—harder to bear than the rest—that he had displayed his freshness so frankly, were emotions of the moment only, for when, two weeks later, his "stringer" came up before his class as the fraternity candidate for the toast-mastership he cast his ballot for him regardless of the fact that his own independent brethren had put forward a man as well. For, you see, that was Kerwin's way of making friends; perhaps not the best way, to be sure, but, in Kerwin's case, justified by its success.

On behalf of their man the independent faction waged a valiant fight. Campus legend told them that for many years their class ancestors had seen victory wrested from them, once almost at the moment of victory, so in caucus they decided that they had "stood it long enough."

[Pg 68]

"Winning or not," an enthusiastic speaker cried on that occasion, "we'll show 'em a few things."

And show them a few things they did, but the things didn't count, in the wholly unexpected incident that occurred, of a sudden, to cast them into confusion, panic, chaos.

Norse was their "man." After the first ballot all was rosy for a little minute and then what did Norse do but rise in his seat, and with a calmness that was appalling withdraw in Kerwin's favor! It was a proceeding entirely unprecedented. The jaws of the fraternity men dropped. As for the independents they merely gazed at one another, blinking, their cheeks colorless.

In the silence some one with a grain of reason left in working order moved that Kerwin's election be made unanimous. The independents forgot to vote. There was not a solitary "nay." It was the succeeding cheer that aroused the independents finally. They hissed; they wrangled; and a girl was seen quickly to draw away from a group near which she was standing, for a youth with eyeglasses and long hair had used a few words that were hardly delicate.

[Pg 69]

As Kerwin was rushed down the room to the rostrum he heard some one ask, with cutting sarcasm, "Is Norse looking for a bid from your frat.?"

Kerwin took no note of the irony, replying, "He ought to have one." As he stepped behind the chairman's table he turned suddenly, and brought his fist down hard, exclaiming: "By Jove! I see now how it was!"

"How?" a henchman at his elbow asked, eagerly.

"Why, I helped out Norse in the entrance exam. in geometry. Never occurred to me till this minute. He sat next me; told me in the hall geom. was what he was afraid of. I didn't pass him a pony but I gave him a couple of cues. I guess this is his way of repaying me. Wait a second." He broke through the crescent that had formed in front of the table.

Deserted by all his former champions who, with sneers and dire threats flung in his direction had left, Norse still sat by a window at the back, bent over a copy of that day's issue of the *U. of M. Daily*. Kerwin went to him and held out his hand, which the other took, grinning. They talked in undertones a minute and as Kerwin joined his heelers at the table Norse strode out of the room.

[Pg 70]

"That was it!" the victor exclaimed radiantly. "That's why he did it—what I said. I asked him straight out if it was to curry favor with the frat. crowd and he said it wasn't. Said he couldn't join one if he wanted to. His father thinks they're no good. I told him maybe the gang would try to even up with him for withdrawing. He grinned and said 'let 'em.' He's all right, fellows. We've got to play square with him. I offered him the best toast on the list right off the bat—"The Girls"—but he wouldn't accept it. Said he guessed he'd rather not. Said he's no good talking to a crowd, and doesn't know enough about girls to have an opinion one way or the other."

"Better take him over to Ypsilanti," a youthful Don Juan cried.

"Gee! He is fresh!" another ventured.

"What does he want, anyway?" was asked.

"Nothing. Wouldn't it kill you?" Kerwin replied. "I told him he'd better look out they don't try to do him up."

"You'd better keep your own eye peeled," was suggested by a little fellow on the outer edge of the crescent. "They're sore clear through—turned down for ten years running. Better stay in nights, or you'll show up at the banquet with no hair or an iodine-face, if you even show up at all—"

[Pg 71]

"Don't you believe it!" Kerwin exclaimed, with rare bravado. "Norse said he'd help me if they get funny. He's a husky guy; did you get a good look at him, fellows? I'm not worrying about the independents any; it's the sophomores I'm going to keep my eyes on. I inferred from what Norse said, there's something in the air. If he finds out what it is he'll put me next. We can depend on him, fellows. He's a regular crackerjack!"

"Well, don't be too sure of yourself," was the significant warning that caused Kerwin to exclaim:

"Rot! Let 'em come—let 'em *all* come! Don't you fellows lie awake nights worrying about little Willie. He's old enough to sit up and take notice."

And the crescent in front of the table broke.

It was gratitude simply that prompted Kerwin to take Norse to Ypsilanti one evening during the week following and make him known to a Miss Myrtle Green of the normal school. It was obvious to Kerwin that Norse's ignorance of girls was not due to any disinclination on his part to abolish that state. Indeed he seemed to hunger for knowledge on the subject. As for Miss Green she seemed quite willing to instruct him. He became a regular caller. The other girls learned to speak of him as "Myrtle's steady." And Myrtle seemed agreeable that he should continue just that.

[Pg 72]

## II

February promised to go out like a thousand lions. Toward noon on the twenty-fourth it began to snow, listlessly, at first, but more thickly as nightfall approached. The next morning the townsfolk awoke to find their homes half buried in a white, downy mass as thick as the height of the fences.

It was a morning of fine sport. Old men and young turned out with a will to clean the walks of the city. It was hard work for strong hands manipulating broad wooden shovels, for so deep was the snow that after a few feeble attempts Paddy, the plowman, was forced to give in and urge his plunging horse back to the stable. His plow was useless.

The oldest resident experienced such pleasure as had not been his for many years. He reveled in vague recollections of the winter of 1830 when the snow—according to him—had fallen "a mite deeper," and the farmers, living along the main highways, had been compelled to combine their genius and their strength in digging tunnels to the market!

That day and the following were clear and crisp. Every one wore green spectacles. Cases of snow-blindness were numerous; and then, toward evening on the twenty-sixth, the mercury, which for thirty-six hours had hovered near the zero-point, began slowly to rise. At midnight a weak, half-hearted rain set in. The next noon, with that mischievousness in which the elements of our zone not infrequently indulge, a strong piercing wind, straight from the north, swept down the state. At seven o'clock that night the common thermometers registered five degrees below zero and a shimmering crust of ice an inch thick lay upon the land.

[Pg 73]

Across the fields and over the fences the farmers drove, in heavy bob-sleds, into town. In the southwest corner of the state a new sect was born whose leaders proclaimed the dawn of the Age of Ice and beseeched the people to look to their souls, before the final congealment of all things.

In town a season of gaiety ensued. Numbers of art students proceeded to the open spots upon the campus, and, with hatchets, cut out of the crust gigantic caricatures of well-known instructors. With the zeal and yo-heave-ho of lumber-jacks they raised the figures upright supporting them with props, and the campus became, as if by magic, adorned with profile statues of professors!

General as was the interest in the unique entertainment a kind nature had provided, there were certain sophomores who, shunning the spectacle afforded by the decorated campus, sought the seclusion of a certain back-room down-town where they evolved a plan of hazing that promised to be entirely overlooked in the interest otherwise occasioned.

[Pg 74]

Thus far Kerwin had not been molested and had begun to think that at least one banquet was to pass without a recurrence of those adventures which for years had made it notable among the events of the college year.

"There's too much else to interest them," he said to Norse, one morning in the State Street Billiard Hall. "If they were up to any stunts we'd have heard before this, with the banquet coming off day after to-morrow. It's all easy sailing, thanks to the ice."

Norse, however, was not so certain. "You can't tell," he said, with a significant wag of his head. "Maybe this keeping-still now means action at the last minute. What do your own freshmen say?"

"There's not one in the frat. who thinks they'll attempt anything," Kerwin replied. "And as for the sophomores, they say there's too much going on for them to waste time fooling with a dinky freshman toastmaster."

Norse's doubts were not, however, to be so easily dispelled. "You'd better keep an eye out," he advised. "I'll help you all I can. If I get next to anything I'll let you know."

[Pg 75]

But neither that day nor the day after did he hear a word that sounded in the least suspicious, but on Friday he did; and thus wise:

At noon he met Kerwin again in the billiard hall.

The toastmaster drew him to one side. "I'm fixed," he whispered with a grin of satisfaction.

"How?" Norse asked.

"Got my dress suit hid."

"Where, in the furnace?"

"No; better'n that. You know that built-in closet in my room? Yes. Well, the top of it is lower than it seems to be from the front, and I've put my suit, and dress-shirt, and all, up there. Such a simple way of hiding the stuff they'll never think of, if they get into the room while I'm away."

"Anybody know about it?"

"Not a soul but you."

"Good. It does look as if they were going to let you alone, but you can't be too careful the rest of the day. What are you going to do this afternoon?"

Kerwin was going to do many things; he was going to be busier than a puppy with a bone, he said. [Pg 76]

"You see," he explained, "I want the affair to go off as smooth as oil; and, by Jove, it's going to, if I've got anything to say about it. What were you going to do?"

Norse had planned to go skating.

"Go on," Kerwin urged, then perceiving that his friend hesitated, he added, slapping him sturdily on the back, "Don't you have any fear for me. Go on. I wish I might go but I simply can't; and that's all there is to it."

"If you think it's safe, all right," Norse said.

"Safe!" Kerwin exclaimed, flauntingly. "Of course its safe. Go on!"

So Norse went.

It was half-past five, and quite dark, when he clambered over the high iron fence at the Michigan Central station, and started to climb the slippery State Street hill. The chimes, ringing out from the library tower in the crisp air, were clear and genuinely musical. For four hours he had skated over the flats above the pulp-mill. He noted mentally, now, that he would telephone Myrtle in the morning and have her come over for the afternoon. Skating alone is all very well for exercise, but not much in the way of pleasure, he considered. His skates, dangling from a strap over his shoulder, clinked, musically, as he picked his way with exceeding caution along the icy pavement. A moon was due in an hour and the street-lamps were unlighted. When he reached the top of the hill and saw ahead of him the street flooded with the golden glow of the store illuminations, he suddenly recalled the box of flash-light powder that he had, till now, forgotten. Myrtle had expressed a desire for a picture of her room to send "back home," and he had promised to take one. He would, he thought, secure a box at once and have done with it. He recalled having read in one of Heenan's *U. of M. Daily* advertisements that a full line of photographers' supplies was carried. He noticed several cameras and plate-holders in the window as he entered the store. It was the supper hour and the single salesman was busy with a customer at the rear. She was examining the stock of tissue paper. Innumerable rolls lay before her on the table. Taking advantage of her indecision, the salesman served Norse, then returned to the girl who couldn't quite make up her mind whether she desired her lamp-shade to be pink or pale blue. [Pg 77]

On a table in front of the fireplace, across the store, stood several tall piles of a new and exceedingly popular magazine. Norse lingered a moment to read the announcement poster. Thus engaged there fell upon his ear the sound of voices. Unconsciously listening he made out a word now and then of what seemed an earnest conversation carried on in undertone. And then he heard mentioned a name that caused him to start and cast a quick glance to the rear of the store where the salesman was still busy with the girl who could not make up her mind. The speakers whom he could not see were on the other side of the piles of magazines, in front of the fireplace. Norse craned forward, eagerly. He heard a throat cleared, and then these words, quite distinctly: [Pg 78]

"At seven o'clock, eh? Ain't it funny he's not to be at his frat. house?"

"No; not under the circumstances," was the indefinite reply. "He doesn't suspect anything."

Norse grinned with sardonic delight.

"Don't you think it's a bloomin' long way to take him, Billy?"

"Oh, I don't know," was the reply. "It ain't over three miles."

Every muscle in Norse's body was tense, every nerve on edge.

"I know," he heard, "but it's so blasted cold. We don't want him to freeze on our hands."

"He won't. Morton lugged an oil stove out there yesterday. We can get some blankets at the livery." [Pg 79]

Norse felt all hot, yet he shivered.

"Say."

He held his breath.

"What?"

He gripped the edge of the table.

"Do you think the place is really haunted?"

Could Norse, that instant, have given way to the rare delight that overcame him, he would have flung his skates through the great plate-glass window of the store in a very riot of joy. His eyes became all alight. He drew away noiselessly.

As he slipped out of the store he was observed neither by the interested clerk nor by the two stocky young men to whose conversation he had listened with such rapt attention, and who, that instant, stepped from behind the counter into the aisle. Before they reached the door he was speeding up State Street, past Tut's, past the Congregational Church, past the First Ward School, past Newberry Hall, thoughtless of the icy pavement, and, apparently, of the fact that a slip might mean the failure of the plan he outlined as he ran.

### III

Kerwin's fraternity house stood on a prominent corner three blocks above the book-store. Norse rushed up the steps and inside without stopping to take breath. There was no one in the smoking-room; that is to say, no one but a high school pledgling, who sat in front of the fire, reading, and pledglings don't count. [Pg 80]

"Is Kerwin here?" Norse gasped, leaning heavily against the door.

The youth at the fire turned, nonchalantly, and removing a cigarette from between his lips, as calmly as though panting freshmen with obviously loaded minds were but ordinary phenomena, replied:

"No. Saw him going out just as I came in. Said he wouldn't be back to dinner."

"Where did he go?"

"No idea." The pledgling flicked the ash from his cigarette.

"Well, I'm going up to his room a minute," Norse cried, turning back into the hallway.

"Told you he isn't there!" the infant called after him; but Norse did not seem to hear.

He knew the location of Kerwin's room from previous visits. Now he found it deserted. He perceived all the appointments with one sweep of his eyes—the signs, the tennis-net draped between the front windows and sagging with photographs, the huge Japanese umbrella dependent from the ceiling with many little favors and a multitude of dance cards dangling from the rim, the black-oak study-table, the swivel chair in front of it, the Comedy Club poster on the door, and the closet that projected rudely into the room. [Pg 81]

A hand-bag lay on the floor in a corner. Norse did not pause to reflect, as, being the leading man in a stirring melodrama, he should have done. He acted without reflection, mechanically almost; but when he started back down the stairs, which he took in three leaps, he carried the hand-bag, stuffed, now, and fat.

"What you got there?" the pledgling called as the figure passed the smoking-room.

Norse did not waste breath replying.

The library clock was striking six as he issued into the street. He had the work of an hour to accomplish in twenty-five minutes. Some freshmen, under the circumstances, would have gritted their teeth and cursed. Norse only gritted his teeth, for he was of another sort. Up South University Avenue to Washtenaw he ran. There, on the northwest corner, was a huge stone, set, doubtless, to prevent delivery boys from running their wagons over the curbing. The wind had blown the snow clear of this stone and Norse sank upon it, half exhausted. He proceeded to fix his skates to the soles of his heavy shoes without waiting to regain his breath. He stood up to test the clamps. They gripped viciously. Ahead lay the road, gleaming in the pale light. Norse smiled. Through the handles of the satchel he passed the skate strap and thrust his head through the loop, that the bag might swing against his back. He dug the point of one skate into the gritty crust, struck out with long, even strokes, and began a swift ascent of the Scott Hill on the Middle Road to Ypsilanti. [Pg 82]

### IV

Fifteen years ago there were four distinct and widely separated haunted houses in the vicinity of Ann Arbor. One, in West Huron Street, was for years pointed out to naughty children as the home of the original bogey man. On an occasion,—so the story goes—three seniors resolved to spend a night in the ticklish place for the purpose of determining scientifically the causes of the strange

knockings and human groans that previous tenants had complained of. The results of their investigations were never known. The seniors were never seen again!

That is the tale. The circulation of it tended to make their abiding-place secure to the spirits for many years. But at last an owner braver than those before him, and fortified by innumerable expressions of contempt in which a picturesque and virile profanity played a leading part, proceeded without more ado to raze the ancient structure to the ground.

[Pg 83]

His action gave rise to a second story. It became generally understood that the spirits, their own home gone, joined forces with the ghostly occupants of the second haunted house in nightly carryings-on. Then this house was rent asunder.

Thus it went until the time of this story when there remained but one authentic haunted house in town. Its location added to the mystery supposed to surround it. It capped a bleak hill on the left of the so-called "Middle Road" to Ypsilanti. Behind it loomed a dense wood and to the right and left stretched dreary fields, deserted save by the gophers and chipmunks whose superstition seemed not to warrant their leaving the premises after establishing or disestablishing the presence of ghostly occupants in the bleak house on the hill.

The place was consistently pointed out to strangers as the midnight carnival-ground of the devil and his imps, and it was further gravely averred that horses shied in passing after nightfall.

Such was the weird spot to which Norse, independent freshman, skated, one freezing night, on the crust of that famous winter, to save a friend from the hands of the enemy.

[Pg 84]

At the bottom of the hill he stopped to *reconnoitre*. The blue-black of the heavens seemed strangely less dense above the house. Now and then a weird shimmer passed back and forth across the ragged wall. No light shone anywhere. Several of the windows gaped black, like open mouths, waiting to devour. Others were boarded. Up the path from the gate the door careened on one rotting hinge. In the summer this path was a shallow of tangled weeds, but now the crust lay level across it.

Norse advanced stealthily to the open door. The silence was thick. He removed his skates and tiptoed within. A breath of wind whistled through the warped clap-boards and the old house sighed. Tumbling stairs led to the floor above. Stooping, and feeling the steps ahead of him, he ascended.

At the top of the flight he struck a match, shielding the flame with his curved palm. In the faint illumination he perceived the second story to consist of two connecting rooms of unequal size with the larger at the front. Against the rear wall of the back room stood an old bin, at one time probably used for storing grain. In the corner of the front room was an oil stove; near it, a can. Lighting another match Norse deposited the satchel and his skates in the bin and tested the cover. The hinges did not creak and seemed firm. He looked at his watch. It was half-past seven.

[Pg 85]

He went into the front room and crouching, peered through a crack between the boards of the window. As far as he could see in either direction the road was deserted. A pale moon was rising behind black clouds.

In all probability Kerwin would be accompanied by two—possibly three—kidnappers. He would be bound, of course, and, more than likely, gagged. His guard would observe the greatest care. He would not be misused.

Norse ceased procrastinating. He realized that in one hour the representative freshmen would be gathering around the banquet board, spread in Nickels Hall on State Street, away back in town. Undetermined as to the means of accomplishment he was none the less conscious of the work that lay before him. It rested with him—with him, alone—to produce the toastmaster at the banquet, if not at its beginning, in time, at least, to announce the first toast....

He heard a slight scraping noise outside and crouching peered through the crack again. That instant the thin moon mounted the bank of clouds and cast a ghostly light upon the scene.

[Pg 86]

A hack on runners had drawn up at the gate. The door was opened from within and two men alighted. One of them stood at the step while the other held a whispered conversation with the driver; then, with his companion, he helped a third man out of the carriage. The hack drew away at once, turned and started back in the direction of town.

The young man at the window could not distinguish the features of the two men supporting a third between them who seemed to be hobbled, for the brims of their hats were pulled low over their faces. Save for the slight crunch as the trio advanced toward the house there was no sound. Norse tiptoed back into the smaller room. He held out his arms and his fingers touched the corner of the grain-bin. He heard footsteps that advanced, then stopped, on the floor below. He heard the crack of a match as it was struck. He lifted the cover of the bin carefully, threw one leg over the edge, felt the floor under his foot, drew the other leg after him, and sank, lowering the lid as he did so, like a trap-door.

The bin was sufficiently large to permit of sitting with a certain degree of comfort. With his fingers he detected several cracks in the front wall. By twisting he could bring his eyes to the level of them. Groping he touched the hand-bag with his right hand and drew it nearer. The next moment he heard the stairs creak. He held his breath as the trio entered the room in front. One of them carried a dark lantern and in the pale illumination it afforded, Norse recognized Kerwin's

[Pg 87]

captors and smiled.

Kerwin was blindfolded. The gag he wore was a tightly twisted handkerchief drawn taut through his mouth and tied behind. His hands were tied at his back. The taller of the kidnappers carried two horse blankets over his arm, one of which he flung upon the floor beside the oil stove. His companion set the lantern in the corner and stooping in front of the stove proceeded to light it. Kerwin stood in the middle of the floor. The man who had spread the blanket came around in front of him and placing a hand on either shoulder pushed him back. Bumping him into the wall he bore down upon him growling in a voice obviously assumed and grossly piratical: "Sit there!"

Kerwin slumped upon the blanket. The stove lighted, the kidnappers squatted in front of it and one of them produced a pipe and pouch of tobacco. Striking a match he said: "Well, how d'ye like the banquet?"

[Pg 88]

Kerwin shook his head.

"Let's take out that gag; he dassent yell," proposed the second outlaw.

"Aw right...."

They untied the handkerchief. Kerwin had worn it so long it was difficult at first for him to get his mouth back into its normal shape. For an instant his face resembled that of a gargoye.

"Cold?" he was asked.

"A little," he replied. There was an utter absence of rancor in his tone.

The bandit nearest him drew the second blanket over his legs.

"Say, won't you fellows tie my hands in front of me.... I'm sittin' on 'em and they feel as though they were dead...."

"Sure we will, turn over."

He offered no resistance.

"You sure you ain't cold?... We don't want you to catch cold."

"No, I'm not cold," the captive replied.

Silence ensued which lasted some minutes.

Finally one of them ventured, glancing over his shoulder: "Well, we ain't seen any ghosts yet, have we, Billy?"

"Nope," was the dogged reply.

[Pg 89]

Billy extended his leg and kicked Kerwin on the ankle.

"Ever in a haunted house before?" he asked.

"Not that I remember," Kerwin answered.

"Guess you'd remember if you had been," suggested Billy. "Used to be one down in my town about six years ago. Fellow murdered there once, they said. Funniest things used to happen.... A hand would open the doors in front of you. You could see the tracks of a man's bare-feet in the dust when you went up-stairs...."

"Aw, shut up, Billy, cancha!" his companion muttered edging near him. "What's the use talkin' such stuff?"

"Why, I was just tellin' you," Billy replied, defensively. "I never took any stock in the stories, but one day, a fellow by the name of Thurber—Hank Thurber, regular dare-devil sort of chap—swore *he'd* spend the night in that house or die in the attempt. Next morning he didn't show up. The town marshal went to find him. He found him all right. It was in one of the up-stairs' rooms, and there he sat in a busted chair, stone dead, with his fishy eyes staring at a hole in the wall. They got a bundle of old letters out of the hole. Seems it was a sort of secret cupboard in the first place, and had been plastered over. That wasn't all though; they found Thurber's dog jammed into the fireplace of a room down-stairs, with his neck broken...."

[Pg 90]

"Good Heavens! Billy! Billy! What was that!"

The story-teller caught himself quickly and he and his companion turned frightened eyes upon each other. In that moment's stillness they noted that the wind had freshened. Something creaked somewhere. Billy clutched his companion's leg.

"What was it?" His whisper rasped.

"Thought I heard something click...."

"Sure?"

"Sure's I'm sittin' here...."

"Where'd it seem to come from?"

"I dunno; thought it was—in there." He indicated the little room behind with a jerk of his head.

"Aw, 'twasn't anything; old rusty nail snapped, probably, in the wind." Billy swaggered with a monstrous assumption of bravery. There was more silence for a moment, then Billy went on:

"I was just tellin' you 'bout that haunted house down home...."

"Say, Billy, shut up, cancha? I don't care a *darn* 'bout that haunted house, I'm...."

"Come off! You ain't really afraid of ghosts, are you?"

"Well, maybe I ain't, but...."

[Pg 91]

"What's the matter with you, anyway?"

"Never you mind, I——"

He broke off suddenly and his face went ashy pale.

"Did you see that?" he cried. "Did you see that! Like a blue flame!"

He got upon his feet unsteadily. His mouth was open; his eyes were staring.

"Why, what's the matter? You ain't drunk, are you? What did you see——?"

"*See! Look!*"

Billy wheeled like a flash. A light of dazzling brilliancy shone for an instant, and in the smaller room, through the doorway of which they gazed as though transfixed, floated a gossamer of unholy, blue smoke. Then, before the instant became an æon, they saw rise, as though from the very heart of the dazzle, the upper-half of a white, shrouded form. One arm waved sweepingly toward them. Before the æon died an unearthly screech rent the silence, followed by a scuffle and thug as both youths rushed down the stairs. They sped into the road and the deep shadows of the woods swallowed them.

## V

Blindfolded, Kerwin had seen nothing, but the dazzle had pierced the covering of his eyes and he had felt the light, and he had *heard*. His head was like thistle-down borne on the wings of a zephyr. He attempted to move, to call out. A deadly nausea overcame him. He realized that he was fainting. Then, of a sudden, his melting senses took form again, as he heard a familiar voice cry:

[Pg 92]

"Kerwin, old chap!... By Jove! We'll fool 'em yet, if you hurry!"

And at that the handkerchief was torn from his eyes and he looked up blinking into the beaming countenance of Norse.

Norse did not wait to explain. He cut the twine binding his friend's hands and flung down the satchel within the circle of the lantern light.

"What are you looking at?" he asked, tersely, stooping to open the bag and noting Kerwin's steady gaze fixed upon him.

"*For Heaven's sake what have you got on!*"

"What ... got ..." And Norse burst out laughing.

"What have I got on?" he cried. "I've got on your dress-shirt—— Made me look more like a ghost." He whipped the garment off. "And now you get into it just as quick as you can!" he added.

For a brief moment a light of puzzlement lingered in Kerwin's eyes.

[Pg 93]

"Here's the collar and tie." Norse handed them to him. "And here's your dress-suit—— You see I overheard them talking it over—— I looked for you—— Then I came out here—— I'd a box of flash-light powder in my pocket—— That's all. I thought it was all up when they heard the satchel click. You see I'd opened it to get out your shirt. I had to put a good deal of trust in Providence!..."

"But Norsey...."

"Never mind talking! Hustle, man! Hustle!"

"I know, but...."

"There; there are your trousers.... Freeze if it wasn't for that stove, eh? Thoughtful of them, wasn't it? Here's your vest! What's the matter? Can't you button your collar? Scott, man, you've got to hustle! Touched her off just the right time, eh? Worked themselves all up talking about that other haunted.... Here's your coat! Say, you've got to hustle to make it; there's not over twenty minutes to spare!..."

"But, Norsey, it's no use. I can't get back to town in twenty minutes. Why, it will take two hours, walking over that crust...."

"You're not going to walk.—Gad! Here, let me tie that bow for you! Say, but you've got to hustle!..." [Pg 94]

"Not going to walk! You don't mean to say you've got a carriage...."

"Hardly. Just time to get here myself."

"Well, I'd like to know, then, how...."

"*You're going to skate back to town, that's how—on my skates!*"

He rushed into the little room, and returning, held out his skates to Kerwin. Kerwin didn't seize them. He seized the youth's hand.

"Norsey," he muttered, with the faintest suggestion of a tremor in his voice, "you're the best old pal a chap ever had...."

"Oh, never mind the bouquets," Norse broke in. "Lemme see; you got all your clothes on? Those shoes are pretty bad for a swell function; but they'll be under the table. Yes, I guess you're all right. Take these skates and clamp 'em while I pack your other clothes in the satchel. Lucky you told me where you'd hid 'em.... Say, you've got to carry this bag back, Kerry.... I lugged it out."

"Of course, I'll carry it back; but Norsey"—Kerwin lowered his voice and glanced about him—"you don't suppose they're hanging around here somewhere, do you?"

Norse looked up from the packing. "Hanging around here!" he exclaimed. "Around *here!* Great Heavens, man! They're a million miles from here and runnin' yet if they're still alive and not scared to death. You ready?" [Pg 95]

Kerwin slung the satchel over his shoulder. "Am I all right?" he asked.

Norse stepped back and regarded him curiously, a little smile playing around his mouth. Kerwin's face was very grimy. It looked almost black in the shadow above the white shirt-bosom, and there were three or four unmistakable smudges on that. Moreover it was a cold night for a man to skate three or four miles in evening clothes.

"My! You look funny!" Norse laughed. "But what's the difference?" he added. "Come on...."

Taking him by the arm he steadied him down the creaking stairs. "Now you can go it like the wind, right up to the door of Nickles," he said at the gate. "Are you ready?"

Kerwin dug the toe of his right skate into the crust and crouched like an animal about to spring.

"Go!"

For a moment his body was poised like a blot above the brow of the hill, then it disappeared.

Norse heard his name shouted. He ran forward and peered down.

"What's up?" he called.

"Nothing. I just wanted to say I'll suggest the toast 'The Kidnapping' and then you'll tell the whole tale. It'll make 'em look like a postage stamp...." [Pg 96]

Norse laughed. "Why, I'm not going to your darn banquet," he said.

"Not going! The idea! You are, too, going."

"No, I'm not," Norse contended, "I've got something else to do...."

"What?"

"I've got to go over to Ypsilanti and tell Miss Green I can't take that picture of her room till next week. I'm as near there now as I am home...."

Before Kerwin could call to him again he turned on his heel and walked away.

Fifty yards along he glanced back over his shoulder. What he saw caused a sort of Mephistophelian grin to curve his lips.

Smoke, like a billowy veil in the moonlight, was rolling from the unboarded windows of the haunted house, and through the cracks he glimpsed the dance of flames.

"The stove must have been kicked over in the shuffle," he muttered, unctuously.

A moment he stood there watching the growth of the fire, then, resolutely turning his face to the east, he moved on down the icy road.



## I

"You can't do it, Nibs,—you can't do it—you may have the spurt speed, but you haven't got the wind."

"Rot—why, you don't know what you're talking about, Jimmy; I can beat him forty ways. *Look at those legs!*"

And the lank creature thrust them into view and patted them affectionately between the knee and the hip.

"Oh, I know you've got the legs, Nibs," was the indifferent reply, "it's the wind you're shy of."

"What does wind amount to in a hundred yards, I'd like to know? All a fellow needs is a good breath at the pistol. A good one will carry him over the string." The speaker leaned across the table; "Now, on the square, Jimmy, don't you think I can beat Billy Shaw?" he asked eagerly.

The young man opposite, tilting back his chair, eyed his companion critically from under half-dropped lids. He flicked the ash from his cigarette, scrupulous that it should not dust his clothes, and said slowly, and more as though by way of encouragement than expressive of an opinion—"Well, of course, there's a chance."

[Pg 100]

Nibs smiled broadly, at that, and settled back, apparently quite satisfied.

"I knew you were joking," he said.

It was a Saturday evening. Had the dial of the Court House clock been illuminated, it would have shown the hour to be half-past seven. On the corner, a gasolene lamp was burning at the top of a weather-stained post. In front of the Opera House an Uncle Tom's Cabin band was straining at the melancholy air, "Massa's In de Col', Col' Ground," played in *circus tempo*. Now and then was heard the scuffle of hurrying feet on the tar walk outside.

Nibs Morey and Jimmy Hulburt sat in silence for a space.

No one had ever been able—if, indeed, any one had sought—to fathom the friendship that for two years had been maintained unbroken between these two. Perhaps it was due to the counter effect of Hulburt's derision of Morey's abundant conceit, for had Nibs Morey been asked to cite an instance of Jimmy's championing him, he, positively, would have failed. It was the one's lack, or expressed lack, of confidence in the other, that evenly balanced the other's really splendid confidence in himself.

[Pg 101]

When first Nibs had expressed his intention of posting a challenge to Billy Shaw on the Bulletin Board in the Main Hall, Jimmy had sniffed and sneered derisively.

"What's the use making a Jack of yourself?" he asked.

"Who's going to?" Nibs replied, tartly.

"You are. He'll beat you by a rod," was the cool retort.

"Don't you believe it."

"Well, I do."

"You needn't."

"All right; we'll see."

And Jimmy did see, and it was a glorious sight—a splendid picture of a righteous triumph in which the best man won; to revel in the joy of victory a space, and then to meet, and join in combat, with a foeman vastly worthier of his steel. For, in spite of Jimmy's discouragement—which could not have been that, really, and perhaps was not even meant for that—Nibs posted the challenge.

It was written in huge letters, that all who ran might read, and was made doubly conspicuous, by its poster style, among the score or more announcements of class-meetings, conferences, and graduate-events that fluttered with it on the Board.

[Pg 102]

Nibs hung up the challenge one evening while the janitor's back was turned. He carried it into the corridor folded beneath his coat. Satisfied that they were not observed, he drew it out and spread it upon the long, marble-topped radiator, and invited the criticism of Jimmy, the which Jimmy was not loth to utter.

"Big as a barn, eh?" he said, sniffing.

"But I want him surely to see it," the author of the broadside replied, tilting his head and viewing his work admiringly in the dim light of the slim chandelier above.

"Well, I'm still thinking you're a fool,—a blamed big fool."

"Don't you think he'll accept?" Nibs asked eagerly, passing lightly over Jimmy's expression of what appeared at least superficially to be a definite opinion.

"Of course he will, that's just it; he'll see it and he'll accept it, and he'll beat the life out of you," was the discouraging rejoinder. "Hurry, hang it up," he added, "I don't want to wait here all night." And Jimmy slouched away in the direction of the great door.

So the document challenging Billy Shaw to run against Nibs Morey in State Street, on the evening of October nineteenth, at seven o'clock, was forthwith tacked upon the Board to the complete concealment of one bill announcing the publication of the Palladium, and another displayed to notify the scornful that the Dramatic Club would—at an early date—repeat its marvelously successful and delicately artistic performance of "Among the Breakers."

[Pg 103]

"There! I guess he'll take notice, now!" exclaimed the joyous Nibs, stepping back from the board, and gazing at the poster proudly.

"And so will all the University," replied Jimmy, not, however, without a secret pride in the valor of his friend, after all; for Billy Shaw, the prospective opponent, had brought with him to Ann Arbor a country record for swift running that was not to be considered lightly, even by a sprinter of the attainments of Nibs Morey.

All efforts to match the two had thus far failed. It was Nibs' zeal, purely, though tempered, of course, by his fine conceit, that prompted the posting of the challenge now—a zeal to prove—perhaps to Jimmy, more than to the others—his wisdom, and the justification of his own abundant confidence. And the challenge thus publicly offered achieved the end that Nibs had hoped it might.

There is record in undergraduate history of the excitement that prevailed upon the campus the day after its publication. No one seemed to doubt Billy Shaw's acceptance of it. He would have to run now, or ever after hold his peace,—they said—an alternative not to the relish of a youth of his temperament. And he did accept the challenge, and he did run; and bets were made, and money was won and lost, all to the undying credit of Alma Mater, who looked on, smiling, proud of her sons in their glorious youth, their honor and their prowess.

[Pg 104]

## II

For a week, now, the Gown had been speculating; placing its bets with the Town eagerly, enthusiastically, and many of those bets—sad to relate—were on the wrong side of the book, so far as Nibs Morey was concerned. When Jimmy, learning the way of the wind, informed his friend of the odds against him, with all the coldness of a perfect enmity, Nibs experienced his first twinge of uneasiness. For the Gown, loyal to its foreign upholder, Billy—in the excess of its patriotism and without regard to possible consequences such as unpaid laundry bills, and staved-off tailor accounts—had wagered against poor Nibs, who, though he was *of* the Gown, cannot be said to have been *with* it. He suffered the misfortune of having been born and reared within a scant stone's throw of the main building, the which, it may be noted in passing, he had, for half a dozen years, held as a grudge against his parents, to the perplexity of his sister Wilma, who found only a keen enjoyment in her college home and in the shifting aspects of the college life around her.

[Pg 105]

The event that Nibs longed for was only a week away, and his friend seemed to take rare delight in deriding the hardihood that had prompted the posting of the challenge.

"Well," Nibs said, at last, breaking his long legs at the knee, and rising from the table, laboriously, "maybe he will beat me,—but he won't do it hands down—he won't do it in a walk, anyway."

"Oh, I don't know," was the cool retort of Jimmy, and stepping down into the street he added, "you can't always tell."

Nibs had not once chided his friend for his seeming lack of confidence; he bore it simply, and gave no sign that it produced an effect, unless an occasional weak smile, as when the other became too atrociously insulting, might be taken for such a sign. For there were things that even Jimmy had no knowledge of. He did not dream for instance that, on many a night after Nibs had, with a plea of study, begged off from going "down town," he had dressed himself in a thin undershirt, loose, full breeches and spiked shoes, and wrapped in a bath-robe and crouching in the shadow, had sought the solemn, ghostly cemetery, there to run among the white stones, glistening in the pale light, to his full heart's content. Later, on those same nights, tired out, he had sneaked back to his room unobserved in the silent streets. No, Jimmy did not know of this strenuous course of Nibs' training. He knew his legs were wiry, elastic, to be sure; but *how* wiry, *how* elastic, he did not dream. And though deride him he did, in his cheerful confidence and self-assurance, when, on the Monday following their meeting in Nat's low-ceiled bar-room, a particularly venturesome sophomore laid him a wager of five to three on Billy, Jimmy took the shorter end of the bet with amazing alacrity.

[Pg 106]

During the week immediately preceding the day for which the race was set, interest in the event increased with the passage of the hours. Posey's billiard-room on Main Street became the betting-green, where Town met Gown, and Gown flung its challenges into the teeth of Town,

which Town at first snarled at, but eventually bit into and clung to tenaciously.

Once, during the tempestuous seven days, Nibs encountered Billy face to face. The latter was leaving the president's office; Nibs was approaching the door. [Pg 107]

As their eyes met, a spark flashed between them, and their faces became hard and set. There were several loiterers in the corridor who witnessed the meeting, and one of these, "Pinkey" Bush—a lawyer in Chicago now,—never tires of recalling the incident. You have but to mention it to him to hear him say, with a brilliant twinkle in his eye:

"Gad! It was great! Simply great! There they stood, face to face; Nibsey, long, thin as a lath, glaring down at Billy, who was shorter, but just as gaunt. Their eyes gleamed like new shoe buttons, and their hands were clenched tight at their sides. A second? It seemed an age! They didn't speak; just drilled little wells in each other's eyes with their own—and it was over. The door of the president's office closed upon Nibsey; the big west door rattled shut after Billy. It was like a dissolving view—great, while it lasted, but soon ended. I thought every instant—and held my breath—that one of 'em would shoot out his fist and land it on the other's jaw. No reason, of course; but it wouldn't have surprised any of us who saw the meeting, if one or the other had."

Two days before the race, the entire student body became divided in its sympathy; wordy quarrels were hourly occurrences on the campus; nor were bodily assaults infrequent. [Pg 108]

The next day the excitement was as tense as the air before a cyclone. A million pounds of young animal spirits, the highest explosive known to science, were encased in delicate human bottles, needing but a jar to touch them off.

At six o'clock, men passing in the streets gazed mad-eyed at one another, their jaws set square, their lips drawn tight across their teeth.

### III

Friday came, eventually, as Fridays have a way of doing, and it came like a breath from the Northland where ice and snow and cold are. The air set one's teeth on edge and one's flesh a-tingling, but there was no frost. That was destined to come a week later, and, over night, convert the summer into the pageant of autumn, the scarlet king at its head, his crimson, gold and purple banners flaunting gaily.

When Nibs appeared on the campus in the morning, he was besieged by a horde of the faithful, who wanted to know if the weather was "going to make any difference."

"You bet it won't; not to me," he replied, with a sort of vocal swagger, and with a marked enunciatory underlining of the pronoun. [Pg 109]

"You don't mean to say you're going to prance up and down State Street in those dinky flapping white pants of yours, bare-legged, in such weather as this, do you?" inquired Jimmy, with a most perceptible sneer in his voice.

"Yes, I am. I shan't think of the cold," was the brave reply.

"Rah! Rah! Rah! Nibsey!" yelled a little pug-nosed freshman on the edge of the crowd, and the cry was taken up lustily.

"Oh, shut up, you fellows," said Nibs, blushing; "leave your yelling till after the race, can't you?" But he sensed an expansion of his chest, just the same, an expansion that, for the moment, made his waistcoat feel uncomfortably tight.

Meanwhile, Billy Shaw was being besieged in precisely the same manner at another point on the campus. With considerable less than Nibs' braggadocio he informed his followers and backers that so far at least as he was concerned, there would be no postponement of the race. And he, too, was cheered forthwith.

Thurston Hubert, a Law, large with importance,—he had been chosen to fire the pistol for the start—was in the little crowd that surged around Billy. He gave it as his opinion that the weather was "great for a running event—simply great." But by six o'clock the mischievous mercury had dropped another five degrees. [Pg 110]

They were a muffled, overcoated lot of young men, who, an hour later, began to gather in State Street.

From all directions they came, and they formed in double line from the Psi Upsilon House to the end of the course, precisely one-quarter of a mile. Waiting, they shouted, jeered one another, spoke disrespectfully of a whimsical Nature that had given them without warning so keen a touch of winter, and otherwise disported as college men have a way of doing, when they are waiting for something to occur.

Along the outer edge of the street's double course were many vehicles, for the Town's interest in the extensively advertised event was almost as great as the Gown's; and in that day the lines between the two were not so closely drawn as they are now. Girls, there were, waiting in several of the carriages; young women of the institution; serious-faced girls, but still girls, and being such, interested in deeds of prowess, and devoted, with a sort of holy devotion, to the doers, as

were the women of Greece in the olden time.

It was quarter-past seven when the familiar figure of the president was seen to issue from his house and come down the South Walk. Knowledge of his approach was passed along the double lines. The jeering ceased; the disrespectful allusions to the weather ended, and at the top of the course a sophomore, in a tall-collared sweater—then a novelty—who was bolder than his fellows, shouted, "Rah! Rah! Rah! The President!" The good man stopped, and, turning his head slowly, surveyed the ranks seriously. Then he smiled such a smile as fifteen thousand men and women in this country, and far countries, remember with a little tightening of the throat that comes with the memory. Removing his hat, he bowed, acknowledging the cheer, the sign of genuine, deep affection, that had greeted him. And while he stood there on the walk, smiling, a louder cheer ripped the atmosphere, a cheer that rose and rose, higher and higher until it seemed the heavens above must crack from the detonation. For THEY had appeared; and the president turned to glance up the course, and what he saw caused the smile upon his kindly face to broaden, and he laughed, but the laugh was low, and not heard in the turmoil.

[Pg 111]

They approached the starting point from opposite directions. Billy Shaw was accompanied by Thurston Hubert, he whose function it was to fire the pistol, his hat cocked over one ear, a cigarette between his lips, the smoke of which he artistically exhaled through his nostrils without removing the tube—a feat that none but an upperclassman is known ever to have accomplished.

[Pg 112]

Billy was wrapped in a blue and green bath-robe, the hem of which was not deep enough to hide his bare, big-boned ankles. He wore his spiked, soft shoes, and had walked from his room—not without some little triumph—in the middle of the street. He was bareheaded, as was Nibs.

The latter's lank form was enveloped in a great mackintosh with a deep cape. He carried his running shoes in his hand.

As the two came face to face at the starting point their eyes met a second time, and again a challenge leaped between them.

In the excitement attendant upon their arrival the crowd did not take notice of the little things, and the significance of that meeting and the look was lost. That is, lost to all but one man—whom no one knew; a stranger, who thus far had looked on smiling. He had crossed the street some ten minutes before and joined the crowd unobserved. He had spoken only once. When the throng cheered the president he had touched on the arm a youth who stood beside him, and asked, "Who's that?" Informed, he had continued to smile saying, "I thought so;" at the same time taking a cigar from his waistcoat pocket and lighting it. He was tall, this stranger, and his face was long and thin, but not unhandsome, for his eyes were brown and gentle. His little, flat hat sat close upon his head. Of unusual height, his lengthy legs were concealed by the long light overcoat he wore. From his shoulder, by a strap, after the manner of the day, dangled a fat hand-bag. He had not cheered thus far. He had only smiled and pulled at his cigar, sending up huge feathery clouds of opalescent smoke.

[Pg 113]

Leaning forward now, he glanced along the line to the starting point. The moment had arrived. The contestants had flung off their wrappings and stood forth in their trappings. It made one shiver to see them; clothed only in their gauze, sleeveless shirts, and the white flapping breeches of the sport.

Hubert and Jimmy conferred aside, while the bare-legged Mercurys stood, now on one foot, now on the other, blowing in their hands, and flinging their arms transversely across their breasts to counteract the cold.

The crowd cried its impatience. The stranger craned forward again.

"Back up!" called Hubert. "Keep back down there, you fellows!" and the crowd obeyed, forming a splendid gantlet of spirited youth.

[Pg 114]

The contestants took their places side by side.

Hubert's arm rose, and seeing the pistol pointed heavenward several of the young women in the carriages screwed their fingers into their ears.

"Ready!"

There was a dead silence. The arms of the champions shot forward and back, rigid.

"Sett!"

Like perfect machines, they crouched at the word with one accord.

At the crack of the pistol there was a swift in-taking of breath along the lines.

As they shot forward the double ranks of the gantlet fell together like a house of cards and the crowd surged upon the heels of the runners.

The president had proceeded to the end of the course. Looking back he saw them coming. He saw them straining, neck and neck, the nerves and cords below their ears standing out round, like ropes. He saw their lips drawn back, thin and livid over gritted teeth. He saw their bulging eyes, eyes that in turn saw nothing; and he heard the crowd at the rear.

Closer and closer—they seemed abreast—and then—and then—

A scant fifteen feet from the string, Nibs Morey leaped and plunged forward. Such a spurt had never before been seen on State Street. Even the president, flinging aside his well-worn dignity, cheered on the long, lank figure, which hurled itself that instant across the string, and fell limp and panting into his open arms!

[Pg 115]

"Well done, my boy," he cried,—“and you, too!” This to Billy, who was upon him a fine fraction of a second later. “You are both champions,—I am proud of you.”

And as they relaxed, weak and faint, he seized a hand of each in his own and shook them strongly. Then he threaded his way back through the seething crowd that had come up. Cheer upon cheer rent the atmosphere—cheers for Nibs, and cheers for Billy, who had done his best and failed, with greater honor to him, than if he had won without effort.

#### IV

At the bottom of the course, with the long-heralded event slipping with the moments into history, and surrounded by their cheering fellow-collegians, the eyes of the contestants met again, nor did they waver, nor did a challenge leap between them. They smiled; their hands shot forth with one accord, met and clutched, and it was then that another cheer arose unlike those that had gone before—a cheer that was a cheer. As it ended, Jimmy Hulburt, in a moment of fine frenzy, for him, cried:

[Pg 116]

"I'm willing to bet ten dollars at two to one that Nibsey Morey can beat anybody runnin' that walks!"

Even that brave if paradoxical cry was cheered, and the sportive Jimmy looked about him valiantly. He felt a hand upon his arm in another instant and heard a voice above him. Lifting his eyes, he looked up into the stranger's face.

"What was your bet?" the soft voice inquired. Jimmy repeated it, none the less vigorously, at the same time pushing back to survey the uncouth figure of the man in the long coat, with a satchel dangling from his shoulder.

"I'll take it," the stranger said, simply.

Some one laughed, another called: "Shut up." As for Jimmy, he only stared at the absurd person before him, who had with such aggravating nonchalance picked up the glove that he had so bravely flung down.

"Are you a student here?" he asked.

"I entered to-day," was the reply, spoken in the same calm tones.

"Where you from?"

[Pg 117]

"Niles."

"So you want to take that bet?"

"I'm willing." He smiled most exasperatingly.

"When do you want to run?"

"Suit yourself."

"Say," Jimmy exclaimed, perhaps a shade angrily, "are you fooling? To hear you talk anybody'd think you wanted to run now."

"That would be all right. I will run now."

The laughter became general. The stranger only pulled at his cigar more quickly.

"Where are your togs?" Jimmy inquired scornfully.

"I've got them on." So saying he flung back his overcoat. He was ordinarily dressed.

The laughter broke out afresh.

Jimmy hesitated just one instant.

"Wait a moment, may be we can fix up a race," he cried, and pushing through the crowd he ran across the street to a confectionery store, where Nibs had gone with Billy for a soda. He burst in upon them out of breath. He told them of the wise fool over the way who needed a tuck taken in him.

"Will you run, Nibsey? Come on," he cried.

Nibs looked at Billy.

"Do it, do it," the latter urged.

[Pg 118]

"All right," Nibs agreed, and arm in arm with his backer he issued into the street, clutching his mackintosh about him.

The stranger had, meanwhile, walked back along the course followed by a great throng, anxious to witness what to them promised to be a *fiasco* of immense proportions. Only three carriages had waited. The occupants perceiving the crowd at the lower end of the street had lingered for developments. In one of the carriages was Nibs Morey's sister Wilma. She called a youth to the wheel and questioned him concerning the throng which still surged in the street. The freshman explained gaily.

"And will Nibs run that great tall thing?" the girl inquired anxiously.

"Oh, don't you worry, Miss Morey," the little freshman replied consolingly. "He'll beat him so far he won't know he's running."

"But he's all tired out," she expostulated.

"Oh, no, he isn't. Only a little over a hundred yards."

A cry rang out just then, down the course, and Wilma, turning, caught a glimpse of her brother, surrounded by his supporters—and all the crowd supported him now—approaching the start.

She was moved to call him, to demand his instant withdrawal from this silly, useless race; but her voice—this she realized—would not have been heard above the shouting. She sank back upon the seat, her face flushed, her forehead furrowed with little lines, her fingers locking and unlocking. [Pg 119]

Some one had stopped just behind the carriage. Afterward she was wont to say she had "felt" the presence; for, looking around and down, her eyes met those of the stranger. His were the first to drop before her unflinching, flashing gaze. Why he had stopped just there, the centre of a little group of the curious, he could never explain. It was only an instant, merely for the exchange of that glance perhaps, for he moved on again almost immediately, up the course, half running, stepping high, gracefully.

The double lines of spectators now were not so long nor so thick as they had been; nor did they manifest those signs of interest that had marked the earlier event.

At the start, the tall stranger removed neither his long overcoat nor his satchel. His cigar had gone out, but he still held it, cold, between his teeth.

Little Thurston, who was to fire the pistol a second time, exclaimed, amazedly: "Aren't you goin' to take off those things?"

"No, guess not," was the cool reply. "What's the use!" [Pg 120]

Nibsey Morey, Billy Shaw and Jimmy exchanged glances; Billy smiled outright.

"Say," Jimmy snapped somewhat angrily. "Let's get a hustle on and end this—you willing?" He nodded toward the stranger.

"Quite."

"Then—ready!" cried the starter.

Again two figures, sadly matched, crouched at the start.

Another second and the pistol cracked.

Following the report, there was a little instant of dead silence in the street, then there broke forth pandemonium, for half way down the course, his coat tails flying, his satchel standing out behind, the cold cigar gripped tight between his teeth, the stranger led Nibs Morey by a rod. Twenty-five feet from the string, he turned, and running backward, beckoned with a crooked forefinger to the straining Mercury that he faced.

Not in all undergraduate history is there recorded an event which created more excitement on the campus after its occurrence than this.

Nibs Morey had defeated Billy Shaw; and a stranger who had sprung from the earth had defeated Nibs as no man before had ever been defeated.

They shook hands, honorably, after the event, but those who witnessed the incident forgot it immediately in the overwhelming curiosity regarding the newest risen champion among them. [Pg 121]

"Who is he?" was the question on the lips of every youth and every maid—"Who is he?"

His name was Bunette, they said. His home? A tiny town on a west Michigan sand hill.

"What is he, then?" the voice of the campus cried. And it became known that he had entered the department of Medicine and Surgery.

And thus was a new god raised among men at whose shrine none worshiped with devotion more intense than Billy Shaw, and the erstwhile idol, Nibsey Morey, and to them and their brethren for all time he was given a name, and the name was "Bunny of '85."

## I

"Stop!"

The command from the rostrum brought the class up in their seats. Every eye was bent upon Catherwood standing at the end of a bench in the second row.

Some one snickered.

Catherwood stared at the floor, a blush of shame mounting his cheek and melting into his thin, bristly red hair at his freckled temples.

The assistant professor of history glared through his spectacles.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he exclaimed, "this is most unseemly! Mr. Catherwood, you may be seated! I should advise you, ladies and gentlemen, to devote a little more time to this course; and a little less, perhaps, to the Junior Hop. I am sure you do not wish me to make general the mailing of conditions next week. As you know the examination is set for nine o'clock on the morning of February 10th. I trust you will act upon the suggestion I have given you...."

The gong in the corridor clanged just then and the class shuffled out of the room.

[Pg 126]

Shunning his acquaintances in the hall Catherwood disappeared. The blush did not recede from his face until he banged the wide door shut behind him and the cold of the crisp February morning smote him full.

He walked swiftly down Williams Street to his room, not once lifting his eyes from the pavement, which was dirty white from the much trampled snow.

Another flunk! The third in as many weeks! Catherwood with a muttered imprecation reviewed the succession of class-room disasters.

"Confound history!" he growled as he strode into his room. He flung his books upon the bed and himself into the deep Morris chair by the window. A sparrow was hopping on the porch roof without. He rattled the window violently and the sparrow flew away in fright.

"Go it, you imp," he snarled; and again he condemned all history and its study to the deepest depths.

It was bad. The assistant professor had been lenient, but fate seemed to have composed that particular section of every history hater in the junior class.

Catherwood realized this—or thought he did—as he sat staring out of the windows into the skeleton branches of the trees, and from the thought he obtained a modicum of consolation.

[Pg 127]

He had worked. He had worked hard—but for some unknown reason he couldn't bite into the course, couldn't dig his teeth into the subject. He did not fear; on the contrary he was certain—as certain as a man can be—that his semester's work in class-room was of sufficiently high a grade to assure him his full credit in the course. And yet, he considered, there was the examination, five days away. In two hours he would be required to write out in a thin "blue book" all he was supposed to have learned in twenty weeks.

He ruminated.

How much of what he had learned had stopped in his head? He asked himself this, seriously, then smiled. He confessed to himself that he had worked merely from recitation to recitation with no effort to hold the subjects in that mathematical brain of his that caused his forehead to bulge.

And the examination only five days away!

As he reviewed the situation Catherwood's brow darkened and he scowled. For a space he twiddled his large thumbs and glared at a horse hitched to a grocery wagon across the street.

"I wish you'd freeze," he muttered viciously to the horse; but of course the horse did not hear for the window was down.

[Pg 128]

Catherwood counted his flunks on his fingers. Five; five clean, perfect flunks, altogether, he recalled. Not so bad, he considered; that is, not so *very* bad.

But there before him like a great monster with dripping jaws and green, slimy body, was the examination; and it was creeping, creeping upon him with the passage of the minutes.

He stood up and shook himself nervously.

From the window he saw the assistant professor approaching his home next door. He carried several bulky volumes in his arms, hugged to his breast lovingly.

Catherwood watched him sourly.

There was the man, he mused, in whose hands—now covered with gray-striped woolen mittens—lay his fate! Pretty serious business—one's fate lying in hands covered with gray-striped woolen mittens.

The courses in mathematics Catherwood did not fear; nor those in shop work; not the one in elocution, to be sure, for that was a snap; nor yet the two in political economy; indeed, those were rather fun. But history! Ugh!

The assistant professor turned in at the gate of his house next door, and as he vanished the scowl fled from Catherwood's brow and his face lighted. [Pg 129]

He would drop in on the assistant professor within the week and call. Admirable! He wondered if the date might be anywhere reasonably near the birthday of one of his children. A box of sweets might work wonders; a china headed doll greater wonders. He marveled that the idea had never before occurred to him. And, too, he considered, there was the president.

The president!

Ah, *that* would be different. There were no little tads in the president's family. Then he quickly recalled having read in the '*Varsity News* of the day before that the president was in the east and would not return until the thirteenth.

Three days after!

Futile—absolutely futile!

And Catherwood scowled again and stared out the window, idly twisting his trunk-check watch fob.

He saw the assistant professor's wife on the walk below with the little Mary.

It was the psychological moment and Catherwood recognized it. Snatching his hat from the book rack he plunged down the stairs. He pulled himself together at the door and stepped, unconcernedly, out upon the porch. [Pg 130]

"Good-morning, Mrs. Lowe," he called quite gaily. "Ah, and there's little Mary—sweet child. Come here, Mary, won't you?"

He squatted in the snow at the gate and held out his hands to her. She ran to him with a little cry of delight. The mother's face was radiant.

"Oh, good-morning, Mr. Catherwood," she called.

He smiled and nodded. On the instant he made a vague calculation of the value of Mrs. Lowe's good-will.

He flung his arms around the child and lifted her clear of the walk to her great delight as attested by the cries of glee that escaped her.

Mrs. Lowe stopped at the gate.

"Such a dear child," Catherwood gurgled, holding the tot close to him.

"Do you think so?" the mother murmured.

"So strong and so well," Catherwood added, weighing little Mary in his strong hands.

"Yes, she *is* heavy," Mrs. Lowe said.

Then the child cried in her pretty *patois*:

"Pleese frow Mary up an' catch her."

"Oh, ho," Catherwood exclaimed gaily, "so *that* is what Mary wants, is it? Well then, here goes."

"Careful, Mary daughter," the mother cautioned, smiling. [Pg 131]

Catherwood never before had felt his strength as keenly as he did that moment. It had for him, then, a definite, precise meaning; even a value; yes, an incalculable value.

"Frow up Mary 'n' catch her like farver do," the child urged.

He tossed her into the air.

"There!" he said as she left his arms.

His hands—broad fine hands—were outspread to catch her.

Afterward, when recollection of that vivid, scarlet instant returned to him, he was never quite able to explain to himself how it had happened. Perhaps he did not reckon with his various courses in physics—certain laws of falling bodies, accelerated motion, and such uninteresting things. In any event it was as though his hands had not been there; for before he could clutch at the little furry ball of falling femininity it had shot between those groping hands of his and in an infinitesimal space of time had struck the low snow-drift beside the walk, no longer a furry ball but a sprawl of screaming child.



"Oh! Mr. Catherwood!" cried Mrs. Lowe.

There was an instant's silence and then the atmosphere was punctured by the piercing yelps of the little Mary. [Pg 132]

Mrs. Lowe snatched her daughter from the drift and, clutching her close, cooed to her, consolingly.

"Did the great horrid man drop mother's darling?" she murmured.

Catherwood, stricken momentarily dumb by the accident, finally found his voice though it was unsteady and very much in his throat.

"Mrs. Lowe," he exclaimed, despairingly, "I'm very sorry; believe me; I guess, I must——"

She shot him one glance of injured motherhood, and without replying turned and strode out of the yard still hugging close to her maternal bosom the wailing Mary.

The shrieks had penetrated to the study of the assistant professor and as she turned in at her own gate he appeared upon the porch.

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

"The young man next door dropped Mary on the tar walk."

Catherwood clearly distinguished below the child's still frantic yells the grunt of the man who waited on the steps.

He was prompted to shout: "You lie; it was a drift," but a quick second thought restrained him.

As it was he took the stairs in the darkened hallway in three bounds and, rushing into his room, raved impotently. He kicked the legs of the Morris chair; he kicked the legs of the table; he kicked the backs of the books on the lowest shelf of the rack. He seized a pillow from the divan and proceeded to punch it violently, viciously. Then he flung himself face down upon the divan, and from the heart of the cushions came the muffled words: [Pg 133]

"I wish the confounded kid had never been born!"

After some minutes he rolled over and for a space stared blankly at the ceiling. Then he rose, took a book from the rack and flinging himself into the Morris chair by the window opened it upon his knee.

It was a volume of the marvelous and enthralling adventures of the redoubtable Sherlock Holmes.

## II

There are two kinds of hazing, as practiced by undergraduates at Ann Arbor; the plain and the ornamental.

The first may be a mere practical joke, as the "stacking" of a room, the kidnapping of a freshman toastmaster, or the "losing" of a fraternity initiate in the broad fields that lie between the town and the North Pole.

But ornamental hazing is quite a different thing. It is the sort most indulged in by practical hazers, professionals, as it were; by juniors; even by seniors; and as such is found to have many and varied forms. Moreover it differs from the plain brand in that a genuine injury is, by its application, wrought upon the hazee. Thus, a man may be lost in a swamp and made to find his own way home by the tenets of the plain hazing code; whereas, if, in the swamp, he is "injured," that is to say if he is painted with iodine, if a broad pink parting is shaved across his scalp, or if his hair is cut off in scrubby patches, he may quite properly consider himself to have been allowed a taste of the ornamental sort. [Pg 134]

It may be seen from these distinctions therefore, that plain hazing is really harmless; no one is hurt, unless, as not infrequently occurs, and justly, the hazers, themselves; and as a consequence of this the University authorities seldom concern themselves in these really feeble attempts to smirch the honor and destroy the valor of the freshman class, which in most instances is sufficiently lusty an infant to take excellent care of itself.

For instance, no excitement is created by the appearance on the campus, or even in the corridors of the recitation buildings, of a lanky youth in exceedingly snug knee breeches who drags about behind him by a long string a gaudy little horse on squeaking wheels. Indeed, men whose height reaches a flat six feet have not infrequently ridden to classes on very small tricycles to the ecstatic delight of certain upper classmen and to the pitying sneers of their instructors. [Pg 135]

As has been observed, the authorities of the University are not wont to interest themselves in such manifestations of under-class idiocy.

But a hazing of the second sort!

That, truly, is a different matter.

There was the case of Cleaver, for instance, whose disappearance from Ann Arbor on a wet night in March six years ago was telegraphed to every paper of consequence in the country and which furnished a delectable topic of conversation at faculty dinners for the entire two months of his absence.

Hazed?

Of course he was hazed.

He was *persona non grata* to the sophomore class as represented by the fraternity contingent and that contingent had simply done away with him temporarily. When he *did* return it was a wan and haggard figure that he presented. The belief gained currency that his people had known his whereabouts, but no one ever knew to a certainty. As for Cleaver himself, he would not—or perhaps could not—tell what had been done to him or who had planned and carried out the adventure of his disappearance. The faculty was nonplussed. No one else had been missed. Who, then, could have accompanied Cleaver to his dungeon, if dungeon had been his residence for two months? No one, to this day, has solved the mystery. As for Cleaver, he was given his credits and permitted to graduate in due time. And to-day whenever he speaks of a certain individual—now a lawyer in Syracuse—who was a sophomore during his own freshman days, it is with a twinkle in his eyes. But he still keeps a sacred silence.

[Pg 136]

Ann Arbor was shaken to its foundations by the incident. Shaken, too, has it been by circus riots; but it is doubted if ever within the period of the University's establishment has it been so tremendously excited, for a little period, as it became over the case of Catherwood.

In the first place Catherwood had incurred the enmity of no one. A student of fair attainments and average record who, during his three years in the University, had taken but small part in undergraduate activities, he found himself, of a sudden, standing in the blinding lime-light of an official investigation. And an official investigation at the University of Michigan is not to be considered lightly. All over this broad land are men who have the questionable privilege of looking back upon a time when they were the unwilling subjects of such investigations.

[Pg 137]

Catherwood's case, to be sure, was different in that he was the sufferer from others' depredations, but the odium of participation rested upon him nevertheless, and so delicate and shrinking was his nature that he was known to suffer miserably from the publicity of his position.

For three days he was conscious that every man's eye was upon him; that every finger pointed at him, that every tongue discussed him. An attempt was made to heroize him, but he withdrew to the seclusion of his room and would see no one. His, indeed, was a case to defy, in its solution, the most subtle reasoner, the most invincible logician on the faculty.

In detail it was as follows:

Mrs. Turner, Catherwood's landlady, a most estimable woman who had moved into town from a not-distant farm for the purpose of "putting Willie through school," was away from the house all the evening of February ninth. A "social" at the Congregational Church—socials were her chief, indeed, her only, diversion—on the arrangement committee of which she was most active, delayed her return until nearly midnight. Willie accompanied her to the church and at nine o'clock was put to bed in a pew up-stairs. Therefore Mrs. Turner could not know what had transpired in one of her second-floor rooms between the hours of seven-thirty and twelve on that momentous night. Moreover, as Mrs. Turner varied the monotony of house work with "plain sewing by the day" and was, all the morning of the tenth, at the Alpha Phi house "fitting" Miss Houston, she did not set about to "do the room work" until eleven-thirty.

[Pg 138]

At that hour, tired beyond measure,—Miss Houston had been so finicky about the hang of the skirt—she suddenly realized that if she did not make haste Mr. Catherwood would return from college to find his room in the condition of untidiness that he, presumably, had left it on going out.

So she dragged her leaden limbs up the stairs and from force of habit knocked on the door of the second room, back. There was no reply. She had expected none. She pushed open the door.

The scene of chaos that met her gaze defies description. The room had been completely and most effectively "stacked." Strewn about the floor were papers. The inverted waste-basket was cocked rakishly upon an arm of the chandelier. Books from the rack were lying everywhere. The rack lay flat on the floor. The face of every hanging picture was turned to the wall, and the Morris chair, which had been carefully taken apart, was piled upon the writing table. Mrs. Turner at a single sweep of her eye noted these details and also certain splotches that were unmistakably ink spots on the walls and on the carpet.

[Pg 139]

The divan had reared itself and now stood upon one end. Three chairs were piled upon the bed.

These Mrs. Turner noted last.

She understood the meaning of the chaos. Someone, during his absence, had entered Mr. Catherwood's room and "stacked" it. And as she calculated the time necessary to complete a restoration of its usual neat appearance, the poor woman sighed deeply.

Suddenly she started.

Was it an echo of her sigh she heard? Surely she had heard a human sound. She peered,

stooping.

"Mr. Catherwood!" she called; her face pale.

A distinct, graveyard moan was the answer.

The blood fled from Mrs. Turner's lips and her eyes bulged. She cautiously approached the bed, whence, seemingly, had come the moan. She peered between the legs of the chairs. Then, with a cry that rang through the house, she fled from the room, down the stairs and into the freezing out-of-doors.

[Pg 140]

As she ran down the walk, slipping, stumbling, the bells in the library tower rang out twice, musically clear on the frosty air—fifteen minutes past twelve. And approaching, she saw her neighbor, the assistant professor of history, returning from the examination.

Mrs. Turner flung herself heavily upon him. His spectacles slipped from his nose. The armful of thin "blue books" he was carrying littered the walk. He parried awkwardly with hands that were encased in gray-striped woolen mittens.

"Madame! Madame!" he cried, "what the—what is the matter—are you crazy?"

Mrs. Turner gasped—gasped like a pickerel dying on the grass. It was quite half a minute before she found her voice and when she spoke it was with many vocal quavers.

"Oh, Professor Lowe! Professor Lowe!" she wailed, "Mr. Catherwood—Mr. Catherwood——"

"Well, well; what of him, madame, what of him?"

The assistant professor spoke sharply.

*"He's been murdered!"*

"WHAT!"

She seized him by the arm.

[Pg 141]

"Come—come, quick," she cried. "He's on the bed: his face is all blood."

"Yes, yes," he replied, stooping and hastily gathering up the "blue books"—"I'll fling these in the hall; you run on ahead—I'll be right there."

From the doorway he called to his wife,

"Young man murdered next door, Jenny," and from the porch at the end nearest Mrs. Turner's house he leaped into a snow-drift. He floundered out and into the house as his wife appeared upon the porch wringing her hands and moaning.

He bounded up the stairs in the wake of Mrs. Turner and brushed past her into the room of horror.

He brought up stock still and looked about.

"There's the corpse! There; over there on the bed!" the woman wailed, frantically.

He pulled away the piled chairs, and seizing the body rolled it upon its back. Over Catherwood's eyes was bound a strip of cloth and a gag made of a stocking was tied across his mouth. The assistant professor unknotted the gag with trembling fingers and tore away the blindfold and Catherwood blinked up at him owlshly.

"Are you dead?" the assistant professor asked with bated breath.

Catherwood's mouth worked convulsively and then he muttered hoarsely: "Water! water!"

[Pg 142]

Mrs. Turner hurried to the bathroom and returned with a cup, which the assistant professor took from her and held to the young man's lips. He gulped eagerly.

"Look at his face!" cried Mrs. Turner.

It was streaked and spotted with a brown stain.

"Is it blood?" The woman shivered.

The assistant professor sniffed.

"Iodine," he exclaimed. "And see," he added, stooping, "here's the bottle." He held up the phial that had caught his eye where it lay on the floor at the foot of the bed.

"Untie my hands," Catherwood gurgled—"Here, behind me!"

They were tied securely by two handkerchiefs knotted together. The assistant professor fumbled at the loops. He disengaged the swollen wrists and Catherwood sat up in bed. He loosened the bindings of his ankles himself and stood up.

"Whew!" he whistled.

He caught sight of his brown-streaked and spotted face in the dresser mirror.

"Cæsar!" he exclaimed, "that was a fine job!"

Satisfied that a rescue had been accomplished in good time, the assistant professor said:

"Sit down, Mr. Catherwood, and explain, if possible, the meaning of this—this hazing. I observed you were not present at the examination to-day." [Pg 143]

Mrs. Turner, who till now had stood by wringing her hands, commenced, with mechanical precision, to wrest order out of chaos in the room.

From time to time during Catherwood's recital she stopped in her work long enough to voice an ejaculatory "oh," or exclaim—"Well, *I* declare."

"It is clearly a case of hazing—hazing of the most malicious sort," observed the assistant professor, "and as such merits the fullest investigation on the part of the faculty, which I have no doubt the faculty will undertake. Do you know your assailants, Mr. Catherwood?"

"Yes—and no," the young man replied, rubbing a red and swollen wrist.

"Why do you say that?" the assistant professor inquired, significantly.

"I thought I did from the writing of the note I received yesterday afternoon——"

"Ah—you received a note then?"

"Yes—wait." Catherwood dove a hand into the inside pocket of his coat. "Here it is," he said, and held out to his questioner a crumpled bit of paper written in a hand obviously disguised. [Pg 144]

The assistant professor examined the writing closely.

"This, Mr. Catherwood," he opined finally, "is, as you see, 'back-hand.' Moreover, it is quite clear to me that it was penned by some one who used his left hand, although he is, naturally, what we call 'right handed.'"

The professor remembered his "The Count of Monte Cristo."

"Ah——"

At Catherwood's exclamation he looked up quickly.

"That's why I could not identify it," the young man added.

"But, Mr. Catherwood," the assistant professor continued, "isn't it rather odd that you did not see—did not recognize the two men who assailed you; for of course there were two—the note reads \_\_\_"

He looked down at the crumpled sheet again—"We shall call at your room this evening.' Isn't it rather strange?" He awaited Catherwood's reply, calmly.

"I think there was but one!"

The assistant professor started.

"*One!*" he exclaimed. "Why it is more mysterious than ever—and you didn't see him, Mr. Catherwood?" [Pg 145]

"No, sir, I did not."

"You did not?"

"No, sir..."

"Well, *I* declare," ejaculated Mrs. Turner.

Mr. Lowe smoothed over the note and folded it. "I shall take this," he said—"that is, if you do not mind."

"No—no—of course not——"

"And, Mr. Catherwood," he added, "I am to assume, am I, that you can throw no light on this—on this most mysterious matter...?"

At that instant a knock fell on the door.

"Come in," Catherwood called.

The door was pushed back and a young man with a note-book in his hand stood on the threshold.

"I'm Green," he explained. "I'm on the '*Varsity News*. You're Catherwood, aren't you? Yes; well, we got wind of the case. Fellow heard your landlady yell and telephoned us. What does it amount to——?"

The assistant professor, squaring his shoulders, assumed the privilege of answering the breezy youth.

"Perhaps," he said, "it might be as well not to go into details just now. Mr. Catherwood was assaulted in his room last night and was found gagged and tied in his bed not an hour ago. It is a [Pg 146]

case for official investigation. Mr. Catherwood was made, much against his will, naturally, to miss an important examination this morning—I may say a very important examination. There is a meeting of the faculty to be held to-night when I shall present the facts of this most shocking affair as I have gathered them and I am confident that an official investigation will follow. You may say as much...."

The reporter had been busy with his note-book.

Now looking up at Catherwood, he asked: "What's the matter with his face?"

"I believe it is iodine," the assistant professor replied, frigidly.

Little Green grinned.

"You're a sure beaut," he exclaimed.

"I think that will be all," observed the assistant professor drily.

"Oh yes, yes—that's all—thank you very much; good-morning." And the journalist vanished.

The eyes of Catherwood and the assistant professor met.

"I think I should wash my face, if I were you," suggested Mr. Lowe. "You may be able to remove some of the stain." [Pg 147]

Catherwood went to the stand in the corner of the room. For a space he sputtered the water in the bowl. "Any better?" he asked, at length.

Mr. Lowe shook his head sadly.

"No—it won't come off. You had best see a doctor."

He rose.

"Now, Mr. Catherwood," he said, "as I have said, this is a case for the most thorough investigation. You need not give yourself any uneasiness. The University authorities will, you may be sure, sift matters to the bottom. You have been maltreated; abused, tortured, and, I may say, disfigured."

Catherwood, with a sigh, sank into the Morris chair by the window.

"I shall take the matter up this evening at faculty meeting. Mark my word, we shall discover your assailant or assailants at once; for despite your belief to the contrary, it is my opinion that two men, if, indeed, not more, had a hand in your undoing. We shall see. I shall talk of the case to several this afternoon and I suppose you would have no hesitancy in appearing at the meeting to-night, if your presence there should be deemed desirable."

"No," Catherwood replied, weakly, "not if they want me." The hand he passed across his brow trembled. [Pg 148]

"I observe you are nervous," the assistant professor said. "Get a little rest this afternoon." He shook his head slowly. "It is very unfortunate," he added, "that the president is away; however, I am confident we shall have the case cleared up before his return. You, of course, Mr. Catherwood, have no reason not to assist us in every way possible?"

"None at all." The young man leaned back and closed his eyes, and sighed deeply.

"However, I must say, you have not seemed to me as interested as——"

Catherwood sat upright.

"I'm half sick," he cried, "half sick. It's so strange. I know no one who would have a reason for hazing me; I can't understand it; it's like a bad dream."

He rose and paced back and forth the length of the room.

"Ah, yes, to be sure," the assistant professor murmured, consolingly. "Now, I shall go. You will hear from me later—perhaps very soon."

Catherwood stood motionless in the middle of the floor until he heard the outer door close, then he descended the stairs slowly, and encountering Mrs. Turner in the kitchen begged the privilege of taking dinner at her table. [Pg 149]

"This face," he explained. "I can't go to 'Pret's' with this face."

And she, gentle motherly soul, bade him be seated, and fed him well, and consoled him; while Willie, fascinated by the streaked and horrid face of the self-bidden guest, allowed his rice-pudding to grow cold while he gazed at him.

### III

Little Green, the pink-cheeked reporter of the *'Varsity News*, was not that at all, and on this occasion he gave his name the lie direct.

Little Green possessed a nasal organ keenly atuned to news. As he hastened back down town after his summary dismissal from Catherwood's room, he calculated accurately the latent story value in the assistant professor's indefinite account of his pupil's case.

He glanced at his watch, snapped the case, thrust it back into his pocket—and ran.

He estimated the time with reference to the publication hour of the Detroit afternoon papers.

He saw before him, as plainly as he saw the snow banks, one hour and thirty minutes. The period was material, tangible. Little Green, as he turned into Main Street and sped on toward Huron Street, not only saw it, but felt it; almost *tasted* it. [Pg 150]

"Here, you!" he cried, bursting in upon the indolent operator in the little, box-like telegraph office.

He seized a block of blue-white paper that lay on the counter.

"What's up?" asked the operator dreamily.

By way of answer little Green thrust a sheet of the blue-white paper at him.

"Get that on the wire—hurry—it's a scoop."

The operator smiled sadly and checked off the words. He glanced up at the clock—regulated electrically from the observatory—and scribbled the "filing time" at the bottom of the sheet.

Little Green fidgeted.

"Say, cancha hurry?" he asked anxiously.

"Plenty time," replied the operator calmly; and so there was, but little Green was enveloped in a haze of zeal that set perspectives all awry.

Presently the little machine on the glass-topped table began to click.

Little Green, standing at the counter, counted the clicks.

*Clickety—click—click—clickety—click—clickety.*

"You got 'em?" he asked eagerly.

"Yep." Calmly. [Pg 151]

Little Green emitted a sigh of relief and proceeded, carefully but hastily, to fill sheet after sheet torn from the block of blue-white paper. He scratched out, wrote in, amplified, condensed. He wrote in many tiny paragraphs; for little Green was wise beyond his years.

And while he wrote, oblivious of the *clickety—click—click* of the little machine on the table, of the droning tick of the electrically regulated clock, of the rasp of his pencil on the paper, the indolent operator looked up.

"Rush three hundred," he called with a yawn.

Little Green grinned. Another page and he brought his "story" to a snappy end with a tiny, quick little sentence.

He knew the run of his own "copy."

He was conscious that he had exceeded the order by sixty words, approximately, and he hesitated an instant. Then thrusting the numbered sheets at the operator, he exclaimed: "Here, take it; I'll wait for another order."

In half an hour it came. It was for a photograph of Catherwood.

How little Green procured that photograph even after Catherwood's threat that he'd kill him if he used it, is a story in itself—a story for another time. But in less than an hour after the receipt of the telegraphic request it was in the post-office bearing on its plain wrapper a special delivery stamp. [Pg 152]

It has been suggested that little Green was wise beyond his years. He was just wise enough not to tell *all* his story to an afternoon paper at so late an hour.

So, with a confidence born of a short but crowded experience, he sent out by wire eight queries to as many morning papers in the middle- and the further-west.

Meanwhile that occurred which little Green had been far-sighted enough to expect would occur.

The tall, angular, boy-faced agent of the Associated Press in Detroit wandered into the office of the *Journal* shortly after one o'clock.

Passing the city desk he tickled the man sitting there, on his round, shiny, bald spot, and as he looked up with a scowl, asked blandly:

"Anything doing?"

The city editor growled and resumed reading the typewritten page that lay before him.

The agent wandered into the office of the state editor, where a man with long hair sat, fidgeting in a swivel chair and mumbling to himself under his breath.

"Anything?" asked the agent, tersely, at the same time reaching for the proofs that dangled from a hook at the side of the desk. [Pg 153]

The state editor looked up, scowling. He disliked being annoyed when talking to himself.

"Pretty good one from Ann Arbor," he snapped. "Find it there."

The agent ran hastily through the proofs and retained one. The others he hung back on the hook.

"Much obliged," he said, and strolled out of the office.

At six o'clock that night the story was "on the A. P. wire," and being ticked off in every newspaper telegraph room from Portland to Portland, for the night manager at Chicago had called it "bully good stuff."

And when it came clicking into those offices to which little Green had wired shortly after noon, the desk men in charge recognized the incompleteness of the "A. P. story," and forthwith telegraphed their unknown correspondent for more. Regular correspondents were totally disregarded. Little Green was supreme; and no one realized that supremacy more keenly than little Green himself. He was the king of the night with his story; and sheet after sheet he filled with his jagged, irregular chirography, and the dreamy operator kept up with him.

But there came an end to his work at last, as there comes an end to all things; and when the end came in this particular case, little Green whistled, slipped his pencil into his pocket and sauntered out of the telegraph box jauntily. He did not recall until he reached the office of the *'Varsity News* that he had not eaten since morning. He glanced at his watch. He would write the "story" for his own paper now—and then—Supper. [Pg 154]

All of which may explain to the reader of this veracious tale why it was that the president of the University, as he glanced over his *Providence Journal* in Providence the next morning, suddenly started in his chair, and calling for a telegraph blank sent this message to the dean of the Department of Literature, Science, and the Arts:

"Take no action in Catherwood case. Sift it. Leave for Ann Arbor at once."

And likewise it may account for the sudden exclamation of the dean himself, as at breakfast, earlier that same morning in Ann Arbor, his eye chanced to fall upon a column-and-one-half story with a two column display head, that blazed forth to all the world many details unknown to him in the case of Frederick Edward Catherwood.

He had attended the faculty meeting the night before, when the case was threshed out to the finest grain, and he had heard no such explanation of the affair as stared at him now in cold black type from the front page of his morning paper. [Pg 155]

A *secret* secret society in the University, the function of which was to haze every one big or little who for one reason or another, might fall under its bann! He had never heard of any such organization. And yet—and yet—

Oh, little Green! Oh, little Green! Little did you dream to what ill end your rare invention, your insane imaginings, would result!

For, after partaking that night of a luncheon and dinner rolled into one big steak in "Tuts," little Green sought his room where he slept the sleep of vigorous youth till a beam of the winter sun, shining through his alcove window, fell athwart his eyes and wakened him.

As for Catherwood, he had not been commanded to appear before the faculty. Indeed, of what transpired at that momentous meeting he never knew; that is to say, definitely, but every one learned, in a general way, something of the wordy resolutions that were passed and the learned opinions that were there put forth, all of which tended to no purpose save to obscure more thickly, rather than illumine more brilliantly, the strange affair.

The dean presided—a large man with reddish hair and pleasant eyes and a jerky, nervous manner. [Pg 156]

Inasmuch as it was assistant professor Lowe who had found Catherwood, gagged and tied, that *savant* was asked to give his opinion, first.

With much natural evasion of the subject, and a cloud of "ahs" and "aws," he explained as lucidly as his slow moving mind would permit how he had rushed into the room to discover his pupil stowed away upon the bed behind a barricade of chairs.

"And, professor," inquired the dean, "you can throw no light upon the case; you have learned nothing—that is to say—oh—ah—nothing that might serve as a clue to the apprehension of the offenders?"

The room became as still as the royal ante-chamber whilst the king dies beyond the arras.

The assistant professor fumbled in his pockets and finally drew out the crumpled note that Catherwood had given him, which he offered the dean, meekly, as becomes a serf in the presence of his master.

The dean pursed his lips and looked down at the sheet.

"Oh—ah," he muttered. And then added, passing it back to the assistant professor, "I—oh—ah—make nothing out of this—nothing at all. It is very simple. It shows that Mr.—oh—ah—Catherwood was assaulted by two—two—persons. But, *that*, gentlemen, we already know. What we now wish to learn is: *Who were they?*"

[Pg 157]

The assistant professor shook his head, wearily.

"Yes, yes," he muttered.

At this point an aged man at the rear of the room rose, and clearing his throat asked in a dry, metallic cackle: "Am I to understand that the young gentleman is a member of a fraternity?"

It was quite apparent that no one appreciated clearly the significance of the old gentleman's question.

The dean stared inquiringly over his glasses at the assistant professor of history.

"He is not—"

"He is not," echoed the dean.

"Oh," cackled the old gentleman and sat down. His prejudice against fraternities was well known. Several of the younger men present, who wore their pins on occasion, glanced at one another and smiled.

"It would—oh—ah—seem to me," began the dean, when he was interrupted by that dry, metallic cackle a second time.

"Does he contemplate joining a fraternity?"

"No," Lowe shouted.

"Oh"—and the old gentleman sat down again.

In the second row there rose a round, boy-faced man with a pompadour, who, after clearing his throat, began:

[Pg 158]

"It would seem to me, gentlemen, that we are on the wrong track; what? It would seem to me that there is a way—a sure way—of apprehending the villains who seem to have worsted our young friend, Mr. Catherwood; what?"

Every man in the room leaned forward, and again the hush became awesome.

"And it is?" observed the dean, very soberly.

*"That we compare the handwriting of that note with all the students' signatures in our possession; what?"*

There ensued a general exchange of puzzled looks and then the dean exclaimed:

"A very good idea, my dear professor—oh—ah—a most ingenious idea; but—oh—ah—would *you* be willing to undertake to make the suggested comparisons?"

"Well I thought the clerks in the registrar's office might—"

"Very good—*very* good!" said the dean—"I believe there are about thirty-five hundred such signatures—oh—ah—quite a week's work for the entire office force—quite—"

Several of his colleagues openly congratulated the boy-faced genius who seemed to them to be the only man with a plan worthy of adoption.

[Pg 159]

Amid the general exchange of felicitations before which the genius blushed and stammered his confusion, assistant professor Lowe rose and caught the eye of the dean.

"Order—oh—ah—order, gentlemen!" the latter called. "Professor Lowe seems to have a word—"

"It's just a word," was the reply, "but, gentlemen, the plan suggested can be of no avail and for a very simple reason—" He looked down at the boy-faced junior professor in astronomy who had formulated the plan referred to and who looked up at him, weakly, sufferingly.

"And what is the reason?" inquired the dean severely, loth to have a theory declared impracticable which he had seemed to favor.

"It is that this note was written—ingeniously I am willing to admit—by a right handed person, who, to disguise his writing, wrote with his left hand in what we call the 'back-hand' style. All writings, under such circumstances, are alike. My authority, gentlemen, is Dumas; of whom some of you may have heard." And with this cuttingly sarcastic speech the assistant professor of history sat down.

There was an instant's silence, broken by the old gentleman at the back of the room who had fallen asleep some minutes before. Awakening, just as assistant professor Lowe delivered his retort, he had heard but a word, and that word was pleasant to his aged ear.

[Pg 160]

"What's that?" he called.



No one assumed the task of explaining to him and he dozed off again.

As it was, for three hours, upward of seventy-five full-blooded, able-bodied men wrangled over an affair that little Green had assumed the responsibility of making clear to the wider world outside. Theories, opinions, solutions, were flung at the dean until he felt his head swim, and saw double.

In the entire assemblage there was but one who had taken no active part in the discussion, but, rather, had appeared to look on merely, an interested, if at times annoyed, spectator—the professor of French.

He was observed occasionally to yawn.

During a lull he got upon his feet and straightway, without clearing his throat—said:

"Gentlemen, it seems to me we are as far from a solution of this affair as we were when we assembled. For one I am getting tired and am going home,"—he was quite independent for there was a standing "call" for him from an eastern institution.—"Now I have a suggestion to make. It is this: Suppose we all go home, and await the return of the president. Meanwhile let us keep our eyes and ears open, and our mouths shut; perhaps we may see and hear things that will indicate the proper course for us to take. In any event, it would seem wisest for us to await the return of the president. Good-night, gentlemen."

[Pg 161]

And buttoning his overcoat about him, the professor of French left the room.

It was not until then that the futility of their discussion dawned upon his colleagues. Some one moved that the meeting adjourn. The motion was carried. The old gentleman voted the single nay.

The dean walked home with assistant professor Lowe. Their conversation was wholly upon the case in hand. And when the dean left the younger man at the latter's door, he said: "I—oh—ah—I confess to being more puzzled than ever. A very mysterious affair—oh—ah—a *most* mysterious affair."

And so it was that the puzzlement of the worthy dean deepened next morning as he read little Green's sprightly, suggestive story.

But the frown vanished from his brow and the wonder from his eyes, when, as he left the house, a messenger handed him the president's telegram. And he hastened to the campus to make known to his colleagues the glad tidings that had come to him in the depths of his perplexity.

[Pg 162]

#### IV

The various and varying newspaper accounts of the affair awoke Ann Arbor from its peaceful slumber and for a space the town lived. For two days interest developed with the passage of the hours. Speculation became general. Opinions were as many as those who offered them; until there was not a man or woman from the Cat Hole to Ashley Street who did not advance a theory, new or old.

A like puzzlement, but one tempered by more original conjecture, characterized the attitude of the undergraduate body as a whole. For two days Catherwood had not appeared upon the campus, but at all hours friends and mere nodding acquaintances called at his rooms only to be refused admittance by Mrs. Turner, whom he had bade inform all callers that he was ill, very ill, quite too ill to be seen.

Little Green was one of these callers. He had expected the refusal of admission which Mrs. Turner, with many apologies, gave him and straightway he telegraphed his papers that Catherwood was dying as the result of the great bodily injuries he had received at the hands of his unknown undergraduate assailants. For little Green knew by instinct what many a reporter requires long years to learn—that a "story" is "good" just as long as there is a drop of "life" blood left in it, and not an instant longer.

[Pg 163]

Little Green fairly reveled in the commotion he had caused. The regular college correspondents, anæmic, frightened little fellows, were at a loss to know who had beaten them in their own papers. It was little Green's game, absolutely his, and he purposed playing it alone, aided and abetted in the achievement of this purpose by the various telegraph editors whom he sought to serve. And so far as the faculty was concerned, the frequenter the dispatches, the more woefully addled did the professorial brain become.

Out in the state, and in adjoining states, wise editors, looking down, as it were, from some high place, wrote venomous and vicious editorials in which the legislature was called upon to pass laws abolishing hazing in institutions of the commonwealth by making the practice of it a felony, punishable by imprisonment. Parents in the further west with sons and daughters at Ann Arbor feared for their children's lives. School boards passed resolutions. Guardians wrote to the heads of various university departments asking if their wards were quite safe, alone and unprotected in Ann Arbor. A New York newspaper, on the second day, dispatched its most ingenious "woman reporter" to the scene of action and in three hours the sprightly creature had woven a fictional fabric beside which the tale of Ali Baba was the glowing, gleaming truth. She revived all the half-forgotten stories of ancient hazing rites, dead these many years, and wrote of them as of contemporary practice. And the imaginative artist in the home office illustrated her vivacious

[Pg 164]

article elaborately, seeking to convey to the eye horrors of undergraduate torture that words were useless to describe.

Skeletonized, the story was wired across the sea and the ponderous *Times* gave forth an editorial in which it averred that such refined cruelty had never been heard of in English academic life; not even in the palmiest days of Rugby and of Eton at the height of the fagging system.

Amidst the wild excitement, little pink-cheeked Green grinned at his reflection in his mirror and exclaimed:

"Gad! You've got 'em goin', Greeny; you've got 'em goin'. Greeny, *you're it!*"

And he was; for three swift, brilliant days.

For then the president came.

[Pg 165]

He came unannounced save by the telegram the dean received at breakfast on the second day.

He was driven direct to his home; and ten minutes after entering the front door he issued from the back and hastened across the campus.

The registrar met him in the main corridor.

"What is this I have been reading?" he asked sharply. "This that the papers are full of? What is it?"

The registrar followed him into his private office where, as the president unlocked his desk, he explained accurately, tersely, the frenzy that had seized the University, and the town; the state, the nation, and the world.

As he spoke he was interrupted again and again by the characteristic "ah" of the president, who as he listened, toyed with a steel envelope opener.

"And those are the facts in the case as you—that is to say the faculty—know them; are they?" he asked, when the other had done.

The registrar nodded.

"Ah, yes," murmured the president—"now let me see if I have them correct and in their order;" and he recited the story as he had heard it from the other's lips, accurately, succinctly, with no point missing.

"Those are the facts, doctor," the registrar corroborated.

[Pg 166]

"Ah yes,—quite simple—yes."

The registrar was about to move away.

"Ah, just a moment," the president called. "You know Mr. Catherwood's address——"

"One hundred and three, Williams Street——"

"Ah, yes." And he hastily wrote a note which he folded and addressed.

"Have this delivered to Mr. Catherwood at once at his rooms."

The registrar nodded.

"And if he should call here at the office, have him wait, please—have him wait. I wish a word with professor Lowe."

He vanished into the corridor.

He was absent ten minutes and as he passed through the waiting-room to the inner private office he glanced into the office of the registrar.

He closed the door noiselessly and seating himself at his desk, proceeded with slow deliberation to open his accumulated mail.

\* \* \* \* \*

The bells in the library tower clanged twelve o'clock. As the last detonation sounded through the high corridors of the main building a timid knock fell upon the door.

The president glanced up quickly. He drew from an inner pocket of his coat two envelopes, which he laid on the top of the desk.

[Pg 167]

Then:—

"Come in!" he called.

The door opened and Catherwood, streaked of face and hollow eyed, stood upon the threshold.

The president rose.

"Ah, Mr. Catherwood," he exclaimed, smiling.

He advanced upon his caller with outstretched hand.

Catherwood was not conscious of the warm clasp; he only knew one thing—that he had been summoned and that now he was in the presence of the genius of the institution of which he himself was a little part.

"You—you sent for me, sir," he managed to say.

"Yes—ah—you got my note of course. Sit down."

The president seated himself at his desk and wheeled that he might face the odd creature near the door.

"Well, well, Mr. Catherwood," he exclaimed, after a moment, "they appear to have been treating you rather badly, eh?"

Catherwood pleaded with his eyes alone.

"Well, well; what does it all mean, Mr. Catherwood?" he went on, kindly. "You've no enemies here, have you——" [Pg 168]

The young man brightened perceptibly—"Not one, sir; that is to say, not one that I know of," he added, less brightly.

"Ah, so I'm told. How do you account for this attack upon you, then?"

Catherwood's eyes dropped to the carpet. The president watched him covertly, fumbling the seal that dangled from his watch-chain.

"I can't," Catherwood replied at last, looking up.

"No, of course you can't. I hardly expected you could," the president exclaimed. "But, Mr. Catherwood"—he spoke slowly—"have you no *idea* who it was committed this most dastardly assault upon you?"

There was an instant's silence during which Catherwood followed the scroll design of the carpet up one row and down another.

"Yes, sir—*I have.*"

"Who?" The president leaned forward.

"I don't feel justified in saying, sir."

Catherwood did not look up as he spoke.

The president leaned back and passed his hand across his forehead.

"Ah, yes; I think I understand, Mr. Catherwood—you—you—perhaps fear the blame may be placed where it should not—a fine sense of justice; Mr. Catherwood—a very fine sense of justice—I congratulate you upon it, sir." [Pg 169]

Catherwood glanced up now, moved to a sort of secret impatience by what he assumed to be a note of sarcasm in the president's voice.

But the face his eyes encountered was most kindly.

His eyes fell again.

The president took up the envelope opener and placed the steel point to his lips.

"Mr. Catherwood," he began, and hesitated.

"Yes, sir."

"Of course you know," he went on, "that since my return the facts in your case have been placed before me by certain members of the faculty who are familiar with them."

"Yes, sir," Catherwood murmured.

"Now, Mr. Catherwood, while they have told me many things of interest, there is one little detail that seems to me to have a very important bearing upon the case, but which, for some unaccountable reason, they all seem to have missed. Perhaps you can throw some light upon this dark place." The president indulged here in a round, full laugh.

Encouraged by the infinite kindness of this voice, Catherwood lifted his eyes.

"Yes, sir; if I can—what is it?" [Pg 170]

"Ah, yes." The president cleared his throat. "Mr. Catherwood," he resumed calmly, twirling the envelope opener between his fingers, "what I wish so very much to know is *how you managed to tie your hands behind you!*"

"Why I——" Catherwood began, and stopped. He tried to wrench his eyes from those of the president,—calm, blue—but could not. The room whirled. The design in the carpet became the design of the walls and of the ceiling; and there were no windows in the room, or doors—and all

was black—black—black, save for two points of light; for there were those calm blue eyes, shining back at his.

And then as though it spoke from some great height he heard the mellow voice in his ears again.

"Go on, Mr. Catherwood," the voice said.

At last he managed to wrench his eyes away and stood up, and strode over to the window and looked out upon the white world. He saw two sparrows poise an instant on the crest of a drift.

"Well, Mr. Catherwood——" The voice again.

He turned slowly. His face was pale beneath the disfiguring streaks and stripes of brown.

"I—I—I confess, sir—I confess."

He flung himself into the chair at the end of the desk and covering his poor face with his two hands, sobbed aloud. [Pg 171]

The president waited for the paroxysm to pass.

"Why did you do it, Mr. Catherwood?" he asked, quietly.

"I—I—was afraid of that history examination." The reply came faint.

Turning his face away, he stood up. He groped for his hat.

"But wait a moment, Mr. Catherwood."

Shame-faced the impostor turned, his hand upon the knob of the door.

"You have, I believe, neither credit nor condition in that course. Professor Lowe was at a loss which to give you; and awaited my return. Ah, sit down, Mr. Catherwood."

He obeyed, meekly. He fumbled his cap.

"Ah, Mr. Catherwood." The voice still was calm and even.

"Yes, sir," Catherwood murmured without changing his position.

"Mr. Catherwood, this is a delicate case—I may say a most delicate case. It is unique in my experience. Indeed I believe it is *absolutely* unique. Moreover, honesty compels me to say that it was most ingeniously managed—*most* ingeniously."

The president coughed and raised his hand to his lips. Catherwood looked up an instant and then away again. [Pg 172]

"Now, Mr. Catherwood," the president went on in the same dispassionate tone, "let us look first at the case from your point of view. You were zealous to pass your history course, ahem, too zealous, perhaps. However, be that as it may. And I am right, am I not, when I infer that your zeal, your desire in the matter, is still unabated?"

Catherwood nodded, slightly.

"Ah, I thought so. So be it. It is your zeal, then, that induces a certain definite longing for the credit in that course? Am I right?"

"Yes, sir." Weakly.

"Ah, yes. But, Mr. Catherwood, there is that beside our zeal to which we must listen. There is our conscience."

Catherwood shifted uneasily.

"Consult *your* conscience, Mr. Catherwood. Shall I tell you what it whispers? Very well. It bids you ask for a condition—a condition, Mr. Catherwood."

"Give it me, doctor; give it me."

The suddenness, the eagerness of the request caused the president to raise his eyebrows. The pale ghost of a smile lingered an instant about his lips.

He held out a restraining hand. [Pg 173]

"Just a moment, Mr. Catherwood," he said. "There is another point of view. Mine."

Catherwood had sunk back into his previous attitude of dejection.

"I may state it briefly," the president continued. "My interest in the proper conduct of this University, Mr. Catherwood, bids me give you a condition in the course to which we—ah—have referred. But—and I say this frankly—my interest in you, my boy, bids me hesitate. You are young. Your whole life is before you. A misstep now might mean the ruin of that life."

Catherwood caught his breath with a little spasm of the throat.

"Far be it from me to be the cause of such a misstep." The president spoke less rapidly now. "Too, you have brains. This—ah—your recent exploit is proof of that. Such ingenuity properly directed

might work great good for not only you, but—ah—the country at large. Mr. Catherwood,"—every word was voiced with a cutting precision—"my genuine interest in you prompts me to give you your credit in this course; but—"

Catherwood started in his chair. The face he turned to the president was aglow; the eyes alight.

"*But*," the speaker emphasized—"I am not permitted to do this, Mr. Catherwood. Had you taken that examination you might—mind you I say 'might'—have passed. Again you might not. There would have been, you see, an element of chance. Mr. Catherwood, we shall let Chance hold the scales this morning." [Pg 174]

The young man looked up wonderingly.

"I don't understand, sir," he said, weakly.

In his hand the president held two envelopes.

"Mr. Catherwood," he said, "you see these envelopes? Yes. Well, in one of them—I do not know which one—is a credit-slip; in the other is a condition. The envelopes are sealed."

He held them out to the limp creature at the end of the desk.

"Choose," he commanded.

Catherwood shrank back. "Oh, sir," he murmured, brokenly.

"Choose."

Their eyes met then; and there was that in the president's that forbade his disobeying.

He put forth a trembling hand. His fingers touched the smooth paper. He drew. He crushed the envelope in his hand.

"Is—is—that all, sir?" he begged, falteringly.

"That is all, Mr. Catherwood, good-morning."

And he seized his cap and rushed from the room.

The president, alone, leaned back in his chair and stared at the ceiling. Then he looked down. He still held the second envelope. [Pg 175]

He ran the slim blade of the ebon-handled dagger beneath the flap and ripped it open.

He drew out the slip that it contained.

A queer little look came into his eyes. Then he pursed his lips, and smiled.

He tore the slip into tiny flakes and let them fall from his open hand like snow, into the wastebasket.

Just then the bells in the library tower clanged out four times.

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed the president. "Half-past one! I shall be late for luncheon!"

And gathering up his coat and hat he left his office, hurriedly.

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## **THE DOOR—A NOCTURNE**

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[Pg 177]

### **The Door—A Nocturne**

[Pg 179]

There is a pale moon, consequently the electric street-lamps are unlighted. The setting is nowise picturesque. The street is narrow, unpaved, and fringed on either side with maples in leaf. It is late June. To right and left, are to be discerned behind the trees rows of characterless frame houses, that, for the greater part, are set well back in yards, where, here and there, are lilac bushes, rose trees, smoke trees, and silver birches, ghostly in the thin light. The moon's rays, glimmering upon the latched green blinds of the lower stories—which seem black—streak them with white.

At the end of the block, on the east side of the street, stands a house markedly different from the others. It is three stories in height, whilst they are two; the lawn, cut by a gravel path, slopes gently to the walk, and is close cropped; across the front of the house and continuing unbroken along either side to the back is a broad, covered porch with a spindled rail at its edge like a little fence. The only door is at the top of the path, in front. In a window directly above the door is a card the legend on which the moon makes clear—"Rooms to Rent." There is no fence about the place. On the south side another gravel path, narrower than the one in front and bordered with box, links the sidewalk to the porch. The main path prongs to still another set of steps on the

[Pg 180]

north side. The house is white and looms big in the paleness. In a pear-tree near the south porch-steps a katydid scrapes her dreary tune; whilst, on the north steps, a vagrant cat sits in silent adoration of the night, contemplating, presumably, the joys thereof. A stillness made the more tangible by the katydid's song pervades the scene.

The deep throated bells in the library tower on the campus ring out six times—ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong. Accurately it lacks but fifteen minutes of being midnight.

Suddenly the song of the katydid ceases, and the cat, seized with panic, leaps from the north steps and vanishes beneath the grape trellis at the back. Footfalls sound on the cement, and presently a couple slant across the lawn to the porch, issuing from the shadow of the trees into the white light that floods the lawn. He is seen to be a well set up youth who looks twenty-three. It is the moon, for he is twenty. Upon his blond head is perched a slouch hat of a dirty gray color and bound with a wide black band. His trousers, turned up at the ankles, are baggy at the hips and bulge beneath the belted Norfolk jacket that he wears. His hat is pulled down rakishly in front. She is a head shorter than he, and plump. Were it high noon her face would glow ruddy. She wears a straw sailor-hat such as no sailor ever wore; a shirt waist, and a white duck skirt that flares at the hem and appears somewhat crumpled. Her steps are mincing; he slouches. Between them they carry by its two out-springing handles a small luncheon hamper. He is a junior; his walk gives the clue to his class. So is she; so does hers. At the porch he sets the basket on the lowest step and turns to her:—

[Pg 181]

JAMIE. Well, we beat 'em; didn't we?

HILDA [*fumbling in her finger purse*]. Uh huh. Let's go up-stairs and wait.

JAMIE [*doubtfully*]. Had we better? Won't your landlady think—— It's awful late.

HILDA [*testily*]. We don't pay her three dollars a week to think; besides, they'll surely be here in a minute. We couldn't have been more than a mile ahead of them. They're at the livery now, probably. [*During this speech she fumbles in her purse.*] Oh, dear!

JAMIE [*endeavoring to smother a yawn*]. Wha's mat'r?

HILDA [*looking up at him and making a little mouë*]. I can't find my key!

[Pg 182]

JAMIE [*with a quick show of interest*]. You haven't lost it, have you?

HILDA [*snappishly*]. Well, it isn't here, anyway. Oh, oh, oh, how mad it makes me to lose things—but—I remember now; I left it on the *chiffonier* while we were dressing. Just to think I should have come away and left it lying there—oh, dear! [*She gazes up at him appealingly.*]

JAMIE [*a note of resignation in his voice, perhaps, which she, however, does not seem to perceive*]. What's the difference? We'll wait for 'em. Minnie'll have hers, won't she? It'll be nicer waiting out here, anyway. Look at that moon! Beaut, isn't it? [*He takes up the basket and moves away.*]

HILDA. Where are you going?

JAMIE [*perhaps significantly*]. 'Round on the side porch; this is too near the street.

HILDA [*following him, and aside*]. I can't see why they don't come. [*Aloud.*] Can we hear them?

JAMIE. Sure! [*He sets the basket beside one of the pillars of the north porch. They both sit on the top step, she with her elbows on her knees, her chin in her two hands. For a space he whistles softly between his teeth. Thereafter they converse in half-whispers.*]

JAMIE. They'll be along in a minute.

[Pg 183]

HILDA. I hope so. They will unless Herbert's persuaded her to go hunting for flowers by moonlight. I wouldn't be as crazy over botany as he is for all the degrees the old university gives. [*She edges nearer him and, taking his hand in one of hers, draws his arm around her waist. Sighing.*] Oh, dear!

JAMIE [*bringing his face closer to hers*]. What is it—angel?

HILDA [*with infinite—or, almost infinite, tenderness*]. Oh, nothing. I was only thinking about the day; how happy it has been.

JAMIE [*tenderly*]. Has it been, dear?

HILDA [*her head against his shoulder*]. You know it has—lovely—perfect!

JAMIE. What made it?

HILDA. You know what....

JAMIE No, I don't; tell me. What?

HILDA [*with tender impatience*]. Why you, of course, foolish—because we were together, and all that....

JAMIE. Oh!

HILDA. Now, what did you say "oh" for?

JAMIE. I don't know—because I'm glad you enjoyed the day, I guess.

HILDA. Did you want me to enjoy it—very much?

JAMIE. Of course I did, dear; I want you to be happy all the time— We are going to be happy [Pg 184]  
always, aren't we?

HILDA. Are we?

JAMIE. Aren't we?

HILDA [*tenderly*]. Y-e-s— [*Their lips are very close. The moon rushes behind a cloud.*] There!  
Now you've shocked the man in the moon!

JAMIE. I guess he's used to it. I wish I had a dollar for all the times he's seen that!

HILDA. And just think! There isn't a soul he can talk to about it!

JAMIE. Maybe he tells Mars; you don't know.

HILDA. Oh, Jamie, you ought to take course one in astronomy! Mars and the moon are miles and  
miles apart!

JAMIE. Are they?

HILDA [*tapping his hand*]. Yes, and you ought to know it.

JAMIE. But I don't know as much as you do, dearie.

HILDA. That's a very pretty speech, but you do, all the same. Sometimes I think you know just a  
little bit more.

JAMIE. Well, I don't; besides, how could I? You're working for Ph. B., and I'll only get a cheap old  
B. L.

HILDA. That's your own fault. You could have selected Ph. B. Herbert did.

[Pg 185]

JAMIE. But Herbert knows more than I do, too. [*He grins, away from her.*]

HILDA. Why, Jamie, he doesn't either! He doesn't know *anything* but botany. I'm glad you aren't an  
old prosy botanist.

JAMIE. Maybe I'm not a very good botanist, but I've prided myself on my taste in flowers—

HILDA. Now what makes you say that? You don't know a cowslip from a hollyhock!

JAMIE. Maybe not, but I fell in love with you, didn't I?

HILDA [*snuggling very close*]. Dearest! [*Again the modest man in the moon hides his face behind a  
cloud.*]

JAMIE [*reminiscently*]. Do you remember what happened a month ago to-night?

HILDA [*softly*]. Of course I do.

JAMIE. What?

HILDA [*more softly*]. You proposed.

JAMIE [*stroking her hair*]. Where?

HILDA. Why, where we were to-day—at Whitmore—in Mr. Stevens' sail-boat.

JAMIE. Yes, that's so. I thought maybe you'd forgotten....

HILDA [*drawing back*]. Jamie! Forget! Never! Why that's the greatest thing that ever comes into a [Pg 186]  
girl's life! Forget it? How could you!

JAMIE. And you're just the same?

HILDA [*her head against his shoulder again*]. Always!

JAMIE. The old lake looked somewhat different to-day, didn't it; so many of the cottages open, and  
such a crowd around?

HILDA. Yes, but it wasn't so nice as it was that day. I thought there were just a few too many  
around to-day, didn't you?

JAMIE. Yes—once—or—twice—

HILDA. Why?

JAMIE. Oh, because I wanted to walk on and on alone with you—just you. I wanted to talk to you as  
we're talking now, but I couldn't with so many folks everywhere. But I had my chance when we  
started for home. I looked for interference; that's why I suggested separate carriages.

HILDA [*indifferently*]. I knew it.

JAMIE. You did? Now that shows you know more than I do. I didn't think you'd understand.

HILDA. Did you really think me as dense as all that?

JAMIE. I'm afraid I did. But I shan't again. I shall tell you everything, hereafter. I find I might as well.

HILDA [*earnestly*]. Yes, you might, just exactly as well, for I shall know, anyway.

[Pg 187]

JAMIE. I wonder if they had a good time.

HILDA. Who; Herbert and Minnie? Of course they did.

JAMIE. Do you think they care anything for each other?

HILDA. Do I think so? Why, how should I know?

JAMIE. You're her room-mate, aren't you?

HILDA. Oh, yes, I'm her room-mate; but I might as well not be for all she tells me about herself.

JAMIE. Does she ever say anything about him?

HILDA. Not a word.

JAMIE [*somewhat sarcastically*]. She seemed willing enough to go to the picnic; and I don't remember that she protested very violently when I suggested we go in separate carriages.

HILDA. Of course she wanted to go. Any girl likes a good time now and then on a Saturday, after working hard all the week. And Minnie does work hard. But her wanting to go doesn't prove anything. And as for the separate carriages, no girl likes to be bundled in with a crowd.

JAMIE. Yes, maybe that's so. As far as I'm concerned, I'm glad she didn't protest.

HILDA. So am I. Do you think Herbert cares for her?

[Pg 188]

JAMIE. Oh, I don't know. I'm not very well acquainted with him. He's always stuck in that musty old laboratory. I don't see him often. I'd never have thought of including him in the picnic, to-day, if you hadn't suggested it.

HILDA. Oh, well, there wasn't any one else; I couldn't go and leave Minnie. He'd called here two or three times, and he took her to the Forty Club once; I thought he'd do.

JAMIE. He did, I guess. They hadn't much to say to each other, but maybe they had a good time all the same.

HILDA. Well, you know, she never has very much to say, nor he either, for that matter.

JAMIE. I know it; all I could think of, seeing them up in front of the boat, was a pair of owls.

HILDA. Don't make fun of them, Jamie. Minnie's *awfully* bright. Why she's made up her mind to come back next year and take her Master's degree. Think of that!

JAMIE. Is that so? I wonder if Herbert's coming too.

HILDA. I don't know. I've never heard him say. I don't believe Minnie knows either. He's a splendid student, too. [*Anxiously.*] I don't see why in the world they don't come. Jamie, maybe they've had an accident!

[Pg 189]

JAMIE. Oh, no, they haven't. That old giraffe of theirs couldn't run away. They're walking up from the livery now, like as not, just as we did. They'll be here in a minute. Maybe we came in faster than we thought. It's a good ten miles, and with their horse it would take 'em half again as long as it did us.

HILDA. Maybe.

JAMIE [*irrelevantly*]. Jove! What a magnificent night this is!

HILDA. Isn't it? And see how round the moon is—it's perfectly lovely.

JAMIE. Dearest!

HILDA. What?

JAMIE. I love you.

HILDA [*pressing his arm*]. Sweetheart!

JAMIE. I do. [HILDA *murmurs incoherently.*]

Tired of scurrying, the silent moon shines down upon these two of all the world, regardless. They lapse into silence—he holding one of her hands—and gaze at the pale orb of night floating up the sky. A couple turn the corner, south of the house. The young man is tall and angular. He wears huge spectacles. His face is thin and wan, very like that of the girl beside him. Indeed, they have many physical characteristics in common. She, too, wears spectacles. Her mouth is straight, her complexion cloudy, but her eyes give evidence of an active brain behind them. He carries a luncheon basket awkwardly. At the corner they stop and he turns away as she lifts her dark cloth overskirt, and searches for her pocket. The quill, riding her curled-brimmed straw-hat at an angle

[Pg 190]



of danger, sways impatiently.

HERBERT [*calmly*]. Something appears to annoy you—have you—

MINNIE [*impetuously*]. I've lost my key! Now isn't that aggravating! To think anything so perfectly absurd should—

HERBERT. The others haven't yet arrived apparently. Possibly we might—

MINNIE [*with surprise*]. Oh, I wouldn't have you wait for the world! It must be one o'clock! [*She glances up at a window of the second floor.*] No, evidently, they haven't come. There's no light. Of course Hilda would wait. Well, we'll ring and arouse the landlady; that's all.

HERBERT [*solicitously*]. Please don't think it would annoy me to wait for your room-mate and her friend—here on the porch. It wouldn't in the least, I assure you. Besides, it always puts one out to be awakened late at night, and I dare say your landlady isn't a young person. [Pg 191]

MINNIE [*smiling*]. It's *very* good of you. She *isn't* young; she's quite old. Quite as old, I think, as my mother. Still I *could* ring, you know.

HERBERT. Oh, don't, please don't; that is, don't on my account. This isn't late for me. I often study till two. Besides, to-morrow will be Sunday, and one isn't required to be about so early on Sunday.

MINNIE [*still smiling*]. I think it would be a trifle more accurate if you had said, "This is Sunday." I am positive it is after midnight. Have you a watch?

HERBERT. I am exceedingly sorry, but—but I didn't wear my watch to-day; being around the water, I thought—I thought, I might lose—

MINNIE. Yes, one does have to be careful around the water. I've lost my key, I know!

HERBERT. I can't tell you how sorry I am.

MINNIE. And the injustice of it is that you must be the one to suffer—waiting here for Hilda.

HERBERT. I shan't suffer; it will be a pleasure, believe—

MINNIE. It's very good of you, of course; but you are quite sure I hadn't better ring?

HERBERT. Quite. Don't do it, really. It's a lovely night, and—

MINNIE. Well, we'd better sit on the porch, then, it's rather damp here, don't you think? [*She moves toward the south steps.*] [Pg 192]

HERBERT [*following*]. Yes, I believe it is rather damp. There's been a heavy dew. One can't afford to get one's feet wet with so much bronchitis about.

MINNIE [*sitting on the top step*]. No indeed—I can't imagine where they can be! They were ahead of us all the way in. Why didn't we think to ask at the livery if—

HERBERT. I'm sure it wouldn't have done any good. You see they didn't get their horse where I got ours.

MINNIE. Oh, yes, to be sure. [*Anxiously.*] But where in the world can they be?

HERBERT. I recall having read once—in some French book if I remember rightly—that one should never count upon an affianced couple being in a given place at a given time.

MINNIE [*smiling at him*]. I'm not sure that isn't true. Still, Hilda is usually quite discreet, and I can't—

HERBERT. Doubtless they'll be here in a moment; I shouldn't worry.

MINNIE [*suddenly*]. Why, how very impolite of me. To allow you to sit there all this time holding that basket. Won't you set it on the porch? [HERBERT *has held the basket on his knees with his hands spread out over the cover.*] [Pg 193]

HERBERT. Oh—ah—I wasn't thinking of—there, I guess that will be safe. [*He sets the basket on the porch at his side.*]

MINNIE [*leaning forward and gazing past him toward the street*]. I wish they'd come! Wasn't it perfectly absurd of me to lose my key? Keeping you here! Are you quite sure you'd just as lief?

HERBERT. Yes, indeed—really—I like to sit out—really, it doesn't matter, not in the least.

MINNIE. Well while we are waiting we might as well go on where we left off. You were saying, on the way up from the livery— [*Hardly for a moment has HERBERT taken his eyes off the girl at his side.*]

HERBERT [*floundering*]. Oh, yes, as I was saying—the—oh—ah—I was say—what *was* I saying, Miss —

MINNIE. Have you forgotten so soon? I'm afraid the subject couldn't have held all your thought. You were telling me about the triliums.

HERBERT [*brightly*]. Oh, yes, to be sure; of course—the triliums. I was telling you they were to be found on the plains—of all places in the world—right in the heart of the great American desert—as I'm told.

[Pg 194]

MINNIE [*earnestly*]. Are they, indeed? Really, I never heard of such a thing. Gray says positively, I am sure, that they are to be found growing only in damp soil; near rivers, for instance, or in marshes. I've never succeeded in finding them around here anywhere except down by the Huron River or out State Street at Tamarack Swamp. And to think of them growing away out there! It is the strangest thing I ever heard of—why, there's no water for miles, is there?

HERBERT. Not a drop. I'm told they've been found in the most barren places; flowering alongside cacti and sage-brush.

MINNIE. You are quite sure they were the trilium, are you? It's possible of course—

HERBERT. That my informant might be mistaken—yes; but I don't think he was. They look precisely the same, and they analyze the same. I've seen his specimens. The leaf is identical in form. It is a trifle larger, that is all. I've never been able to distinguish any other variation, however slight.

MINNIE. Have you ever mentioned it to Professor Yarb? I'm sure—

HERBERT. Yes, I told him about them, and last summer I sent him a box. He analyzed them and is as much mystified as I. He's going to write a paper on the subject for this year's meeting of the American Society.

[Pg 195]

MINNIE. How I should love to see some! I wonder if it would be too much trouble for you to send me a few; just one or two. You have some pressed, doubtless. I'd like to take a hand in solving the riddle. I intend to keep up with my botany, no matter where or what I teach, finally.

HERBERT [*joyfully*]. Do you? Do you, really?

MINNIE [*earnestly*]. I do indeed.

HERBERT. Of course I'll send you some. I'll mail you a box as soon—

MINNIE [*with a protesting gesture*]. Oh, I wouldn't have you go to that trouble for the world. Just two or three, in an envelope. They will do quite as well. [*She leans forward again and gazes past him down the street. He does not draw back as he did before.*] Why in the world don't they come? I shall have to talk to Hilda, severely.

HERBERT. Oh, don't be hard on her. They're in—that is to say, they think a very great deal of each other, and no doubt—

MINNIE. But it is so terribly late!

HERBERT. I know, but it's very pleasant—such a night—much pleasanter than it is inside. And as for sleep, why one can sleep any night, while such a moon as that, up there, one can't see often.

[Pg 196]

MINNIE [*quickly*]. I do believe you're sentimental. I'm not a bit, so we'll never get on.

HERBERT [*gazing into space*]. I don't think two people ought to be alike— [*He catches himself, stares at the moon and whistles without whistling. Minnie regards him curiously from the end of her eye.*]

MINNIE [*examining the cuff of one sleeve*]. What do you mean by that?

HERBERT [*again floundering*]. I—oh—ah—I was just thinking— We had a lecture on some such subject in psychology the other day.

MINNIE [*with a little sigh*]. Do you enjoy psychology?

HERBERT. Very much.

MINNIE. Have you ever made any experiments?

HERBERT. Only a few, just the more common ones. I've only had one course in it, you see.

MINNIE [*making a thrilling conversational leap*]. I've no doubt it is all very fascinating, but I don't think I should care to marry a psychologist.

HERBERT [*quickly; edging nearer*]. But I'm not a psychologist! I'm a botanist.

MINNIE [*very softly; looking away*]. What do you mean—I—

HERBERT [*seemingly about to run madly into the face of the storm, but recovering himself*]. I—oh—ah—I was just defending myself, you know. But why wouldn't you care to marry one?

[Pg 197]

MINNIE [*sighing again*]. Oh, I don't know. I think I should be in mortal terror all the time that he was just analyzing me and every one of my motives.

HERBERT [*dreamily*]. I don't think you would have occasion. If he loved you he couldn't—

MINNIE [*trying to laugh lightly and succeeding in emitting a rather tame cackle*]. Love me! The idea! Who would ever love a spectacled old thing like me?

HERBERT. Oh, you don't know, you know. Besides you shouldn't talk that way about yourself.

MINNIE [*smiling full at him*]. I should tell the truth, shouldn't I?

HERBERT [*locking and unlocking his fingers*]. But it isn't the truth.

MINNIE [*looking down*]. Oh!

HERBERT [*with real courage*]. That's the truth! You see the difference, don't you?

MINNIE. Well, I'd like to know what I am if I'm not that. No one ever intimated before that I am anything else. My little brother has maintained it ever since he learned to talk.

HERBERT. Well, you're not; you're— [He hesitates. Thereafter he speaks quite as a locomotive puffs on a steep grade. There are two or three large, lusty puffs followed by a chain of spasmodic little puffs.] [Pg 198]

MINNIE [*encouragingly*]. Yes?

HERBERT. You're not! You're a—oh, don't you understand? I can't keep from telling you any longer, really—I tried to in the carriage, but the road was so bumpy, I— It seems as though I must make you understand. Please try to—I— Don't you see! I care for you very, very much and—I wrote my people all about it and—oh, don't you see, Miss— I mean Minnie— I want to ask— Will you—

MINNIE [*they are very close. She looks up at him feelingly*]. Herbert! [*The moon, aghast, dazed, thrown into a veritable spasm of lunar consternation, darts behind a cloud. But these two do not notice. The moon is forgotten—all is forgotten—the stars, the earth, the hour—even botany! Their heads are near together; thus they remain a long time, without speaking. The katydid has ceased again her dismal song, and long since the cat slunk away behind the grape-trellis to seek new fields. The intense stillness of the hour absorbs them and makes them a part of itself. After a myriad æons a bird, somewhere, pipes a warning note, which is taken up by another bird. The couple on the further porch stir. Her head has been resting against his shoulder and for a little time she has slept. In one hand he holds a bit of angel's food, left over from the luncheon, which he from time to time has nibbled indifferently.*] [Pg 199]

JAMIE [*flinging the cake away and stretching*]. Gee whiz!

HILDA [*starting, sleepily*]. Wha—what is it?

JAMIE [*grumblingly*]. Aw, nothin', I just wish they'd come, that's all.

HILDA [*plaintively*]. Aren't you happy, dear?

JAMIE [*yawning*]. Oh, I'm happy enough, I suppose, but this porch isn't exactly downy; I feel as though I'd been sitting here a month.

HILDA [*sighing*]. Well I can't see where they are, either—for the life of me.

JAMIE [*bitterly*]. The darned fools!

HILDA [*with horror*]. Jamie!

JAMIE. Well, aren't they?

HILDA [*with some show of spirit*]. No, they're not; and if you're so sick of sitting here, why don't you go home; I can wait. I'm not afraid.

JAMIE [*yawning again*]. Don't be silly.

HILDA. It seems to me you're the silly one; just as though you couldn't—

JAMIE [*impatiently*]. Well, if you think it's fun sitting here all night waiting for two soft heads that don't know enough to ache when they're in pain, you're *mistaken*; that's all. [Pg 200]

HILDA [*moving away from him*]. I should think you'd be ashamed!

JAMIE [*with rising impatience*]. That's right; now get *mad*!

HILDA. I'm not mad; so there! But—I— [She begins to sniffle suspiciously. For some time neither speaks. The moon has waned and a strange, new light, of a sickly cast, is rising in the eastern sky. A restless bird in a tree near by pipes one nervous note; then all is silence again.]

JAMIE [*stretching and again yawning*]. What are you crying about?

HILDA [*swallowing two or three times, chokingly*]. I—I—I'm not crying—

JAMIE [*indifferently and quite as though he felt he must say something*]. You are, too; what about?

HILDA. Nothing.

JAMIE. [*He mutters.*]

HILDA. What did you say?

JAMIE [*doggedly*]. I didn't say anything.

HILDA [*coming a little closer*]. You did, too, and I want to know what it was.

JAMIE [*impatiently*]. I didn't say anything, I tell you!

HILDA [*choking up again*]. That's right; now be ugly; just as though it were my fault; when you yourself suggested that we sit here. [Pg 201]

JAMIE. I didn't think it would be for all night!

HILDA [*sticking to the point*]. Well you did suggest it, didn't you?

JAMIE [*jerking his head*]. Oh, I suppose so! [*He sits with his elbows on his knees, his chin in his hands, and gazes at the rising light.*]

HILDA. I'm just as tired as you are.

JAMIE [*sneeringly*]. Yes, I've no doubt!

HILDA [*hopelessly*]. Oh, Jamie!

JAMIE [*with a fiendishly sarcastic grin that she doesn't see between her fingers*]. And you're catching cold, too.

HILDA [*recovering*]. Why, I'm not either; what makes you say that?

JAMIE [*with withering sarcasm*]. Oh, aren't you? I thought you were—by the sniffles!

HILDA [*with some return of her former spirit*]. You're a mean, horrid, old thing, just as mean and horrid as you can be; and I'll never speak to you again as long as I live!

JAMIE [*significantly*]. Oh, I guess you will.

HILDA. Well, I won't.

JAMIE [*gleefully*]. There, didn't I tell you you would?

HILDA. Well, I won't again. [Pg 202]

JAMIE. Oh, you won't, eh?

HILDA. [*No answer.*]

JAMIE. So that's it, is it?

HILDA. [*Still no answer.*]

JAMIE [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Oh, very well; just as you like! [*How fortunate for the sympathetic man in the moon that he's not here to see. Now, the eastern sky shows a tinge of pale gray, shading into light violet. Here and there a bird lifts its voice; the notes are taken up and passed along as sentries pass the call for the corporal of the guard. From afar comes the jangle of metal, and the bell of an early milkman clangs. A sleepy girl issues from the back door of the two-story house across the street. A canvas-covered wagon drawn by two horses lumbers past.*]

HILDA [*rising and indicating the basket with dignity*]. Hug!

JAMIE [*passing it to her*]. Where you going?

HILDA [*after a moment's hesitation*]. I'm going to wake up the girl.

JAMIE [*attempting to restrain her*]. Oh, don't do that; I'm very sorry—

HILDA [*icily*]. There's no need of your being sorry, at all.

JAMIE. But I—

HILDA [*with arctic frigidity*]. It is quite unnecessary for us to say anything further about it, I think. [Pg 203]

JAMIE [*pleading*]. Won't you forgive me?

HILDA. [*For answer she tosses her head.*]

JAMIE [*in the same tone as before*]. Won't you—Hilda?

HILDA. [*Still no reply. She stands at his side holding the basket, not deigning even to look down at him.*]

JAMIE. What are you thinking, dear? Tell me!

HILDA. Oh, nothing of much consequence; only just how mean you have been and—

JAMIE [*interposing*]. But I've asked you to—

HILDA. If I'm not mistaken I've said there is no use of our talking further about it.

JAMIE [*rising as she turns*]. Then you won't say anything to me?

HILDA. I don't think there is anything to be said.

JAMIE [*with dogged resignation*]. Very well, then—Hush! [*From the other porch comes the sound of light footfalls.*]

HILDA [*without attending*]. It is probably the girl. [*She proceeds to the front; he follows. As they turn the corner, MINNIE and HERBERT turn the corner, opposite, and the couples confront each other.*]

MINNIE. Hilda!

HILDA. Minnie!

MINNIE. Hilda, where in the world have you been?

[Pg 204]

HILDA. And I should like to know where in the world you have been?

MINNIE [*severely and indicating the porch behind her*]. We've been sitting on that porch all night, waiting for you.

HILDA [*mocking her severity and indicating the porch behind her*]. And we've been sitting on that porch all night, waiting for you!

JAMIE [*to HILDA coldly*]. Now that you have other company, I'll go. Good-bye! [*He rushes down the steps.*]

HILDA [*running to the rail and calling after him softly*]. Jamie! Jamie! Oh, Jamie! [*He apparently does not hear her. HERBERT stands by fumbling his hat and looking first at one girl then at the other, wonderingly. HILDA turns from the rail and gazes at MINNIE who returns the gaze searchingly. HILDA bites her lower lip and looks down. MINNIE leans against the casing of the front door, her hand on the knob. She anticipates a scene.*]

MINNIE. Good-night—Herbert!

HERBERT. Good-night—Minnie! [*They exchange one loving look and he is off. He proceeds in a direction opposite to that taken by JAMIE.*]

MINNIE [*regarding HILDA whose eyes are upon her and filled with surprise*]. Hilda—tell me—what ———

[Pg 205]

HILDA [*hiding her face against the shoulder of her room-mate, who strokes her hair caressingly*]. Oh, Minnie—Minnie—he's gone—it's broken——

MINNIE [*convulsively, her grasp upon the doorknob, tightening. The knob turns. The door swings back*]. Oh! See!

HILDA [*lifting her face*]. Oh! [*Her eyes meet MINNIE'S. In the latter there is a smile which she shares weakly.*]

MINNIE. This is too absurd! Open all night!

HILDA [*trying hard not to cry*]. Oh, Minnie! I don't know what——

MINNIE [*her arm around HILDA*]. There dear. Don't cry. It will come out all right. And to think you should have broken with Jamie while Herbert and I were—— [*They pass into the hallway. MINNIE, by closing the door softly behind them, renders the rest unintelligible to any one who might be passing just at this instant.*]

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## **A MODERN MERCURY**

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[Pg 207]

### **A Modern Mercury**

[Pg 209]

#### I

On a cool morning in mid-June two little boys, very dusty and wearing very grimy waists, sat on the turfed mound of an ancient circus ring in the old fair ground enclosure, intently watching the gaunt, half-naked figure of a man in flapping white breeches who, high-stepping, sprinted back and forth along the stretch of the old race track. Their elbows on their knees, their chins in their grimy hands, they gazed fixedly at him whom they had trudged across the lots to see. For in his day he was the small boys' god, their best-loved hero, before whom it was their greatest joy to bend the knee.

"D' you think he kin do it?" Jimmy Thurston finally inquired, as the spare, ridiculous figure of the man brought up behind the tenantless judges' stand and for an instant was lost to sight.

Willie Trigger sneered. He was very superior, was Willie.

"Sure he kin!" he exclaimed. "Sure he kin!"

"I bet he can't," Jimmy replied curtly.

[Pg 210]

"He kin too—'sides——"

"Sides what?" the challenging Jimmy asked, contemptuously.

"My father says he kin."

"Aw——"

"He does too."

"Aw, my pa says he *can't*——"

"I d'care; he kin."

"How d'you know?"

"Well"—Willie Trigger hesitated. "Well, my father says he guesses he kin beat a *nengine!*"

At that Jimmy Thurston burst into jeering laughter.

"He! he! he!" he cackled—"a *nengine!* He! He! Why, a nengine goes—a nengine goes *a mile in a minnit!*"

Willie Trigger had become very red; moreover he was choking, half with rage, half with confusion. He recognized the need of personal support. So he blurted:—

"I know he kin, 'cause I seen him—onct!"

"Aw, yeh didn't neether," Jimmy Thurston flatly contradicted.

Willie wriggled and dug his heel into the soft earth.

"I *did*——"

"Didn't *neether!*"

[Pg 211]

Willie Trigger sprang to his feet, his fists clenched. Tears were rising now.

With his eye Jimmy Thurston measured the distance across the field to the white house at the gate where he knew his mother was. Leaping forward he dashed suddenly away, and as he dodged the gurgling Willie, cried:

"*Li-ar! Li-ar! Li-ar!*"

It took Willie Trigger three seconds to perceive the situation and to act. Like a hound, then, he was off in the other's wake.

The straining Jimmy, his heart bursting with regret, heard his pursuer panting at his heels.... Nearer! Nearer!

A scream suddenly rent the air, a scream that was carried on by a willing wind to the keen appreciative ears of motherhood. As Willie Trigger was about to close upon the plunging form of Jimmie, Mrs. Thurston flung back the screen door and appeared upon the narrow back porch, wiping her hands on her apron.

"Jim-*mee!* *Jim-mee!* Thurston!" she screamed.

"Maw!" yelled Jimmy dolorously.

At the maternal screech, Willie Trigger brought up standing. One instant he hesitated and then, showing his heels to the woman on the porch whose arms were outstretched to receive her own, he scurried off in the direction of the judges' stand, as fast as his little legs could carry him. He heard the warning cry from the back porch:—

[Pg 212]

"Willie Trigger, if you hurt Jimmy, I'll skin you alive!"

And at the corner of the judges' stand he ran full into the long, lank creature in the flapping "shorts"—and brought up, gaping.

"Well, well, who was after *you?*" asked the towering runner, gazing down at the little grimy boy whose head seemed to come somewhere about his high-set knees.

"Nobody," Willie Trigger mumbled.

"Who was that calling?"

"I dunno." Willie looked up and the runner smiled down at him.

"Where do you live?" he asked.

"On Thayer Street."

"Way down there, eh? What you doing up here, then?"

Willie Trigger again looked up into the gaunt creature's long, thin face, then down at the ground into which he proceeded to bore with the stubbed toe of one small shoe.

"Come to see you run," he mumbled, and grinned sheepishly.

Bunny laughed drily.

[Pg 213]

"Well, I'll"—he began and stopped. Then he said:—"You wait here, little chap; I'll just get into some clothes and we'll go home together; it's nearly noon. I live down your way——"

The gentleness of his voice gave Willie Trigger a new courage.

"I know it," he exclaimed proudly; "I live 'cross the street."

The runner plunged into the box-like compartment of the disused judges' stand from which he issued in an incredibly short space of time more properly and far more becomingly clad.

"How did you know I was going to practice out here?" he inquired with a show of interest. He made no effort to look down—for it would have meant an effort.

"I follered yeh," was the now prompt reply.

And into Bunny's man-heart that instant there welled a certain pride, but it was nowise to be compared to that which swelled the boy-heart of Willie Trigger, hero-worshipper.

And so, down Washtenaw Avenue they walked together, through College Street and on into the campus and across; Willie Trigger the while attempting vainly to keep step with his ill-matched companion.

At a corner they separated.

[Pg 214]

"You're going out to Field Day on Saturday, aren't you?" Bunny asked.

Willie Trigger grinned, and nodded.

"Don't buy a ticket," the giant said, "I'll give you one; you remind me; will you?"

The small but agile heart of Willie Trigger leaped into his throat. All he could say was "Whoop!" And saying that he ran, in the very excess, the richness and the wealth, of the joy that was his. A ticket! A ticket whereby he might enter through the gate with the crowd—a part of it—a proud part of it! And all this to be granted him by Bunny himself—Bunny who was to run in the hundred yards for the Western Intercollegiate championship; he, William Watts Trigger whose father was a mere night watchman, and who for a week had been examining the fair ground fence for vulnerable points! Willie Trigger found himself, of a sudden, voiceless, too full, by far, for utterance.

Surely, one day—some day—there would come an opportunity of repaying in kind the beneficence of Bunny, Willie Trigger considered. But the beneficence was very great. Little did he realize that soon, and by the very beneficence itself was he to be put in the way of paying back his benefactor by casting light upon an unforeseen occurrence of great import, that but for him, must forever remain obscure.

[Pg 215]

As it was, Bunny had made a friend, a champion, though he knew it not.

## II

In University Hall that Saturday night a man with steel-blue eyes, a white imperial and a single set of gestures, lectured on "The Reconstruction of the South." Having been an active and successful carpet-bagger twenty-five years before, he had played a part of some importance in the rehabilitation of the Southland and was qualified to speak with authority on the subject.

The immense hall was but partially filled. The lecture was very dry and very uninteresting, save when, now and again a rolling period crowded with platitudes and false metaphors, was delivered by the pompous person on the rostrum. Wilma found herself finally attempting to repeat backward the clause from the Ordinance of '37 which stared down at her from the arch of the stage.

"Religion, morality and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged——"

She tapped her knee with her fan and moved her lips.

[Pg 216]

"Encouraged be forever shall education of means the and——"

She floundered.

She tried again as so many others have tried and with no more success. She tapped her knee angrily, and nudged the sleepy Bunny at her side.

"Let's get out," she whispered.

He nodded.

They were sitting on the aisle at the back. It was but a step to the door. He followed her, noiselessly.

In the broad, silent corridor she looked up at him with a smile.

"I simply couldn't stand it another minute," she said.

As they issued into the moonlight she drew in a full, long breath and asked: "Why should any one want to sit indoors on such a night? It's—it's a *crime!*"

She was very tiny beside him; he was very awkward beside her. "The long and the short of it," they were called by those who knew them best. She was wont to defend their friendship by saying she detested little men, whilst he complained that great, tall, awkward women he abhorred.

"Well, if you're both satisfied," Nibs, her brother, said one day after half an hour of teasing; "I guess the public ought to be." [Pg 217]

Their friendship had grown from the chance meeting on the day of the State Street race when Nibsey defeated Billy Shaw and then was so ignominiously defeated by the lank creature who now was his, as well as his sister's, closest friend and constant companion. That day their eyes had met—Bunny's and the girl's—across a carriage seat. Only for an instant though it was, each remembered the instant; Wilma with a certain indefinite anger, Bunny with a very definite desire that one day he might meet the owner of the eyes.

They did not meet formally until a month after and then it was Nibsey who named them to each other with many flourishes and mock heroics. In a very short time that glance across the carriage seat had developed into a close, fine companionship; a companionship so close indeed that it was deemed sufficient by divers of their friends to warrant whispers that Bunny and Wilma were engaged. For in Ann Arbor He has but to play two games of tennis with Her, and take Her on the river once, to have it become known that They are "engaged"—whatever that sadly misused term may signify to the non-elect.

Perhaps, however, in this case there was some reason for the smiles of patronizing acceptance and whispered suggestions on the part of their friends, of an unestablished but imagined relationship. Bunny never was seen with any other girl and Wilma, being out of college and therefore having a wider acquaintance among undergraduates than if she were a college girl, was only now and again beheld in the company of another man. [Pg 218]

One winter they had attended the Choral Union concerts together, had driven together, and in the spring they had walked together, rowed together. It was doubly hard for their friends to believe they were not engaged, for did they not, as well, attend all the lectures on the course of the S. L. A.? Would a girl demean herself so far, suffer torture so exquisite, it was asked, as to attend sad lectures with one certain man if she were not very much in love with him? And if a man were not willing to make sacrifice of his happiness to be beside her would he take her to a lecture on a night in June, or even so much as suggest such a proceeding?

In commenting and in speculating upon the "affair" their friends asked these questions, and other equally pertinent; and, as there were no replies forthcoming, they were compelled by the very absence of contradictory evidence to nod and smile in that patronizing and agonizing way that the unengaged have ever smiled upon those whose hearts they believe Dan Cupid has been using for a target. [Pg 219]

As for Nibsey, her brother, he said nothing. Perhaps he did not care. Or if he did care his certain knowledge that Bunny was what he was wont to call "a ripper" and his sister "a good fellow," may have carried with it a satisfaction that made the relation between them just and proper.

However, that there may be no misunderstanding at the outset, it is quite safe to affirm so far at least as Bunny was concerned, that he was hard hit. It was realization of this, a realization keen, active, that dismayed him. Of course he believed, as was his right, that Wilma liked him. But he more than liked her. He hardly felt it his privilege yet to tell her just how much he liked her, and doubtless could not even though he deemed the time had arrived to-day. Thus he fretted, and procrastinated. Even now as he walked beside her under the stars of a night in June that was full of fragrance, he felt himself floundering in a sea of uncertainty where edged the shores of which he knew not. So he sighed, then pulled himself together before she could seek to know the reason, and said:

"You ought to have seen me this morning—ought to have seen me with a new acquaintance I made on the fair grounds." [Pg 220]

And he told her of Willie Trigger and his exploit. She heard him through in silence.

"Do you know Willie?" he asked.

"No," she said. After a moment she added, "Don't you rather hate to be followed about by the small boys as though you were—as though you were a circus parade?"

He laughed.

It was not the first time she had made fun, as he deemed her attitude to be, of his athletic attainments, and the admiration engendered by them among Ann Arbor youth.

"It's great!" he exclaimed. "Simply great! You have no idea how it seems to know the small boys are gaping at you in wonder as you pass. I've watched them lots of times from the tail of my eye and seen them nudge their companions. Oh, I tell you it's satisfying!"



Conscious as she was of the assumed vanity she affected a seriousness when she said:—

"But I should think you would rather grown-ups gaped at you."

"But what can I do to make 'em?" he asked wonderingly. "Just point the way and I'll take it——"

"Oh, there are lots of ways," she went on. "You're in the medical department, why don't you become a great doctor?" [Pg 221]

"I shall," he exclaimed, "but that takes time. Meanwhile I am steeling myself, practicing with the little boys, you know, so I shan't be overwhelmed when big people gape at me in wonder a little later——"

"Oh, you can't be serious!" she cried petulantly.

"What's the use?" he asked and laughed. "What's the use on such a night, with the stars overhead, the tree toads scraping, and—and—you here?"

"But I want you to be," she said; and then ran on: "It has always seemed so silly to me when you great men come out in ridiculous clothes and run around and jump and play ball—just like overgrown babies."

"That's what we are," he replied. "Ann Arbor is only a nursery. It's only different from other nurseries in that the nurses don't wear little caps and aprons." He chuckled.

"Well, anyway, I wish you wouldn't," she said plaintively. She lifted her face and looked up at him.

"Really?" He was in earnest now.

"Yes."

"Then I won't—that is not after Saturday."

[Pg 222]

"Oh, I suppose you'll have to then," she said disconsolately. "You're entered."

"But suppose I break the Western Intercollegiate?" he suggested. "Wouldn't you like that—now, frankly, wouldn't you?"

She did not reply, so he went on.

"I'll tell you what. That race will settle it. If I'm beaten I'll never run again—never. I'll—I'll—give you my running shoes as a souvenir of my Mercurial days!"

She laughed and said:

"But if you *win*—if you *break* the record?"

"It shall be just the same—I'll never run again. Under those circumstances I should be afraid to—afraid I couldn't do it a second time. I'll keep my record all to myself that way, don't you see?"

"Oh Bunny!" she cried suddenly as she gave his arm a little squeeze; "I've been more than half teasing you. Run if you want to. Run all the time. *But if you don't break the record I'll never speak to you again as long as I live!*"

He stopped and looked down at her, into her eyes, and saw the laughter lurking there. That instant he thought nothing in the world would be so much to the purpose—nothing at least that he could do—as to take her in his two big hands and shake her until her bronze hair fell about her shoulders. But he did no such thing. [Pg 223]

She said, "Well?"

"You'll see," he answered and they walked on.

They sat on her porch for an hour and talked of other things. They did not hear the bells in the library tower as they rang out quarters, halves, three-quarters of the hour.

In her room, after he had gone, her eyes chanced to fall upon his picture fixed with many others on a tennis-net ingeniously draped between two windows, and she said to the picture:

"You're a great, tall, awkward, foolish old dear! There...."

But Bunny, in the solitude of his own alcove, lay awake half the night floundering in that tossing sea of doubt.

With the morning however, came resolve.

"What's the use," he muttered as he lathered his chin before the little square mirror tilted against the window at the height of his eyes.

He would run once more—only once. And then——

Could she have meant it, he wondered, when she told him she would cut him from her list of friends if he failed to break the record. He smiled at the soaped reflection of his long, thin face in the little mirror. [Pg 224]

Ten seconds was a tiny lapse of time but it was the record. A hundred yards in ten seconds. That

was ten yards a second. That was.... Well, approximately, ten feet at a stride—no, eight. A rather wide stride, to be sure, but *his* legs.... Now if he could stride nine feet what would that bring it? Two and two—

Bunny found himself of a sudden involved in so deep a morass of mathematics that he gave up in disgust—and cut himself.

He would make an effort—a mighty effort. Of this he was determined. It was to be his last, he mused, so it must needs be mighty. In any event if he should fail it would not mean so much; that is, so very much. Other men had failed, trying to accomplish that which heaven was determined they should not. And yet—

"If you don't break the record I'll never speak to you again as long as I live!"

The words were insistent. It was as though Wilma were there beside him, as he stood before the little dusty mirror, and sounding them over and over in his ears.

"By George!" he exclaimed aloud, "I've *got* to smash it; that's all, I've *got* to!"

As he stepped out upon the broad porch of the low roofed house, the light of determination was in his eyes and the firmness of a set resolve had squared his chin. [Pg 225]

### III

Thursday evening, after he had had his supper, Willie Trigger's mother dispatched him to the post-office, with a strict injunction to be home by eight o'clock. Primarily as a result of this injunction and secondarily as the result of an inherent love of night, Willie Trigger dawdled on the way. A down-town lad of his acquaintance prevailed upon him to assist in an attack upon a certain cherry-tree, the location of which, on Spring Street, he very well knew. He was not loth to join forces with the down-town youth and forth they fared together, to the end that it was after eight even before Willie turned into Huron Street on his long way home. Full of ox-heart cherries and contentment, he did not hasten. A whipping perhaps, in any event a scolding and a summary dismissal to his bed might await him, but what availed it?

"I d' care," he grumbled, bravely, and scuffed his feet.

As he approached the Cook House loud talk attracted his attention away from a confectioner's window where were displayed all the goodies dearest to the hearts of little boys. He quickened his pace. [Pg 226]

Two men were quarreling with a hackman at the hotel door. The hackman proclaimed his right to a dollar fare; his patrons contested.

Willie Trigger, looking up from the walk, noted the appearance of the men. The one was short and squat and gross of features, with a great black mustache like a duster that he pulled persistently as he haggled with the angry hackman. His companion was taller, square of shoulder, with a long, thin face, and a straight, hard mouth above his square, clean-shaven chin. In expectation of a fight, Willie Trigger held his breath.

"There's a half-dollar," he heard the fat man say, "now take it or leave it." He flung the coin to the pavement, turned and entered the hotel behind his friend, while the hackman, grumbling still, stooped, recovered the coin and, clambering upon his ancient vehicle, drove away. Willie Trigger was disappointed; disappointed that there had been no open fight and disappointed that the hackman had found the half-dollar. His nimble eyes had followed it as it rolled half way beneath a trunk that stood on end beside the curb. When the hackman discovered the coin, Willie's heart sunk and he set out upon his way. Presently he commenced to whistle shrilly and it was apparent that the incident had made no more impression upon his plastic mind than it had upon the minds of the men with whom the hackman had exchanged compliments. [Pg 227]

As it was, they were shown to a room by a boy in buttons and the loafers in the office saw them together not again that night.

The short, squat creature with the huge mustache locked the door and flung off his coat.

"Well, we're here!" he exclaimed.

His friend made no reply.

"Jack," he went on, "if I don't make a killin' Saturday, my name's Mud—Mud with a big M! This town is jammed full of marks—soft, easy, mushy marks. A guy could come in here with three shells and a pea and clean it up in a day—"

"If the police would let him," his friend put in with a grin.

"Rats!" was the contemptuous retort. "I've been figgerin' it all out," he went on, sinking upon a chair and spreading his short legs to accommodate his capacious portliness. He savagely bit the tip from a black, fat cigar. "I've been figgerin' it all out and it's goin' to be easy. They're muckers; farm-hands; easiest sort o' pickin'!"

"Well, how you going to do it?"

Before the wavy mirror on the imitation mahogany dresser, his companion smoothed his hair with a pair of military brushes taken from his satchel. [Pg 228]

The fat man chewed his cigar.

"I'm goin' to get next to-night," he said. "There's always more or less geezers hangin' round the hotel in a college town, and I'll do a little pumpin'. I'll find out just what this phenom's been doin' since he went into trainin'."

"He's the only one I'm fearin'," his friend put in. "If he can do the sprint under ten seconds flat he's got Morrison beat!"

"And *you* the trainer!" exclaimed the fat man with a deep laugh. "Say, if your man don't lay all over him—say, I won't do a thing—"

"Well, be careful, that's all," the other warned. "Don't try to do anything to-night. Plenty of time to-morrow. You can go out to the track and have a look at him; he'll be tryin' out."

"Won't you go?" the pudgy creature asked.

His friend turned from the stand where he was washing his hands.

"Say Punky!" he exclaimed, "do you take me for a blamed fool? Big business me goin' out there; wouldn't it? Do you suppose some of those wise guys wouldn't know me? I guess not! I'll stay right here under cover till Morrison shows up to-morrow afternoon. You can go out; and when you get back you can tell me how this Bunny strikes you—but if I were you I wouldn't distribute any coin until Saturday. Talk 'Morrison' and wag your head a bit and get 'em going; then cover their cash all you want to—"

[Pg 229]

"Aw——" the other began.

"That's right!" his friend warned; "I've been up against this game a little oftener 'n what you have and I know 'em; I haven't been doin' the strong arm act for two years at Western College for nothin'—if it wasn't that I'm goin' t' quit I wouldn't go into the game with you; as it is, ain't I got as big an interest in th' killin' as you have, I'd like to know? Don't we break even? It's a fair chance and if they's any show of coppin' out any of the loose change of these mamma's boys, I'm the child to do it—with your valuable and sporty assistance, Punky. D' you see?"

Apparently Punky did, for he muttered, "Aw right," and flected the ash from his cigar. He puffed quickly twice and then said:

"Giddings, do you s'pose Morrison's next?"

"Naw," Giddings replied contemptuously. "I sent out a feeler—sorter touched him up on a 'sell-out' to see how he'd take it and he got red-headed. Said if it wasn't to be a fair race and the best man win, he'd pull out. I gave him the 'ha-ha' and passed him a con. about just seein' how he felt because *I* wanted it square and then worked the 'honor-talk' strong. He calmed right down and got interested. *He's* all right; you needn't worry about *him*. It's this *Bunny*; you've got to have a peek at him before Saturday, then let your judgment do the rest."

[Pg 230]

"Aw yes!" Punky exploded—"Aw yes— Judgment be blowed! If this Bunny's square, O. K.; if he's square and slow, O. K.; if he's square and too fast for your 'wonder,' why—" He hesitated.

"What?" his friend inquired calmly.

"Oh well; you leave it to me," was the significant reply.

Giddings laughed.

"You can work the game," he said, "only don't let 'em think we're playin' together; some wise guy might have an idea and put the whole push next. You know what would happen then, don't you?" he inquired wisely.

His companion did not reply. He went over to the one window of the room and gazed down into the lighted street. Suddenly he turned back and said: "You go to bed; I'm goin' down to the office and get next." And he vanished.

The public room of the old hotel was filled with students. The events of Saturday formed the one topic of conversation. In the process of "getting next" Punky Williams, sporting man, (with a record not altogether immaculate) by maintaining an open ear and a closed mouth, learned that one name was on the common lips almost as frequently as that of "Bunny." It was "Morrison." Punky Williams was satisfied. He asked simple but significant questions now and again of various youths who lounged near him. He affected a passive, a rather paternal interest in the "meet," the sprinting event in which was conceded by all to be the most important. He learned enough to satisfy him that, so far as he was concerned, but two men would run—Bunny of the U. of M. and Morrison of Western College, trainer Giddings' *protégé*; the other entries were unworthy of consideration. He sought his companion in the little room up-stairs with a heart as light as thistle down and a face that glowed with pleasure.

[Pg 231]

The next morning he walked out to the fair grounds, seeking direction from time to time from the people whom he passed.

There were perhaps a hundred students in the paddock watching the exercises. Punky Williams

wriggled his way among them; his little ears receptive, his mouth close shut. Presently the crowd yelled and he craned over the enclosure rail. At the top of the course Bunny paused. With an air of passive interest, Punky Williams took out a stop watch, then fixed his eyes upon the figure up the course. He saw an arm thrust above his head and the sunlight glinted on the metal of the starter's pistol. He caught the time as the report rang out. And as Bunny high-stepped across the tape he shut his watch with a click and wriggled back to the rim of the crowd, observed in the moment's clamor by no one save a single small boy in a very grimy shirt-waist.

[Pg 232]

As the bells in the tower of the court-house opposite the hotel rang out the hour of noon, he burst in upon the loafing Giddings, who, at his friend's most obvious excitement exclaimed:

"What th' devil's th' matter; you look as though you'd seen a ghost?"

"Well! I have!" the breathless Punky puffed. "Giddings," he cried, "I've seen *him!* I held the watch on him. It wasn't his real speed,—and he came over the tape grinning; but—*he did it in 10 1-5!*"

Giddings with an expression of complete disgust upon his smooth, thin face, sat down again.

"Punky, you give me a pain!" he exclaimed. "A pain! Great Scott, man; don't you think there's any difference between 10 1-5 seconds and 9 4-5? Well, you'd better wake up. *There's an hour, man; an hour!*"

[Pg 233]

He opened his newspaper, deliberately; found the sporting page and commenced to read.

As for Punky Williams, he lighted another cigar and flinging himself upon the bed, blew copious clouds of light blue smoke to the cracked and grimy ceiling at which, the while, he stared fixedly, thoughtfully.

#### IV

On Saturday Willie Trigger swallowed his dinner in an incredibly short space of time, and slipped from the house unobserved, while his mother was in the kitchen haggling with a huckster over the Sunday vegetables. When the good woman re-entered the dining-room she cast one glance at Willie's half depleted plate, then rushed through the dark, cool hall and out upon the porch.

"Will-ee! Will-ee!" she called, stridently.

A rustling of the leaves as the breath of June wafted among them, was her answer. She went to the gate and gazed up and down the street. Then with a sigh she returned to the house and closed the door.

Perhaps Willie had not heard the maternal call. At the instant of its issue he was balanced on the top of the back fence across the street, hidden from the maternal eye by the intervening house. At the second call he plumped down upon a soft ash heap on the other side. If he did hear he gave no sign, but, after dusting his pantaloons with little flips and pats of his small brown hands, he ran with all the speed that he could muster, across the wide, uneven lot. Presently he became lost to sight among the gnarled and broken trees of a once prolific apple orchard, beyond. Issuing from the orchard on the farther side, he crossed another lot—first wriggling wormlike beneath a low wire fence—and came out into the dusty road that led to the old fair ground enclosure. To-day that road, as a wide, smooth street disfigured only by the tracks over which the flat-wheeled trolleys bump, marks the northern boundary of Ann Arbor's ultra exclusiveness. Behind hedges or half hidden amid the trees, nestle snug little houses that seem to cry out against all vulgar intrusion and hug themselves in the very joy of their most obvious respectability.

[Pg 234]

Along this road, thick with dust; now obscured in a cloud of his own raising, now distinct against the background of the high board fence, Willie Trigger trudged. Arriving at the long ticket window he was dismayed to find that the hatch was shut. Bunny had told him there would be a ticket for him at the window—a ticket for him expressly, in an envelope bearing his name, else he would not have deserted his dinner to be the first on hand. Save for a solitary woman whom he saw among the trees in the wood across the way, the region about appeared deserted. It was not yet one o'clock, but Willie Trigger did not realize this. Stoically he sat down at the edge of the long low platform below the ticket-office window and resigned himself to waiting.

[Pg 235]

After ten minutes a dog bounded from the wood into the road. Motionless, he regarded the lad curiously. As long as he remained in sight Willie amused himself by throwing stones at him.

After half an hour a carriage drew up close to the fence and stopped. He slouched over to the narrow pedestrians' gate at one side of the office. Two young men, carrying a large, black tin box between them, alighted from the vehicle, paid the driver and entered the enclosure, fastening the gate behind them. When they had disappeared Willie pulled at the gate but suddenly desisted in his attempt to force an entrance as the heavy hatch of the ticket-office fell with a bang and the same two young men were revealed at the weather beaten counter. He watched them as they unlocked the box, on the shiny top of which the bright sun gleamed, and saw one of them take out several big bunches of blue tickets. Willie approached the window, then, hesitatingly. His chin barely touched the edge of the shelf so he stood on his toes.

[Pg 236]

"Say—my ticket here?" he asked, boldly.

The young man who was arranging the bundles on the shelf looked down.

"What do *you* want?" he inquired, tersely.

"I want my ticket."

"Got a quarter?"

Willie Trigger's toes gave way beneath him, but he bobbed up again almost instantly.

"He said there'd be one here—in an envelope."

"What?" snapped the young man, "*who* said there would—what you *talking* about anyway?"

Willie endeavored to explain. He was laughed at for his pains.

"Run along now," the officious young man commanded. "There ain't any ticket for you here. Run along—or—or—I'll call a policeman."

The mouth, then the nose, then the eyes, then the little gray cap of Willie Trigger descended below the window ledge and he commenced to snuffle. A large, jagged stone lay on the grass not ten feet away, and as his eyes fell upon it his sniffling ceased. He picked up the stone. He poised it in the air an instant, then with all the strength at his command he flung it diagonally across the fence. He heard the clatter as it struck the thin boards at the end of the ticket office. He did not linger to observe any further effect of his assault, for when the officious young man who had denied to him the existence of his ticket, crawled upon the ledge and gazed off down the road, there was no little boy in sight.

[Pg 237]

Chagrined though he was, Willie did not for an instant accuse his hero of any lack of faithfulness. Indeed, as is the wont of small boyhood, he accepted the rebuff unquestioningly. He made no effort at analysis. It was merely a whimsical cavort of that unreliable Fate that not infrequently plays tricks on those who walk in knickerbockers. So Willie, nothing loth, reasoned simply that as a ticket had never been necessary before, he was quite prepared to gain an entrance to the grounds without one, now. Indeed, even as the young man in the office climbed upon the ledge and gazed off down the road, Willie was examining the fence for loose boards, along the familiar stretch behind the ancient grand stand. Many times and oft, when ball games were in progress, had he, with the assistance of Jimmy Thurston, clambered over that tall board fence frequently to the complete demolishment of his shirt waist, which had a nasty habit of catching on the barbs of the wire that an ingenious care-taker had strung along the top, but, in any event, successfully, to the more important issue of an entrance to the field. To-day, however, he was alone, and getting over the fence was quite a different matter. Since Thursday he had not caught a glimpse of Jimmy, but now he was wishing that the fat, familiar figure of the lad would appear around the corner of the fence. There was not a loose board along the whole stretch, so far as he could discover. Not infrequently he had, with half a dozen sturdy jerks, succeeded in ripping off a plank sufficiently wide to permit of squeezing through; but two days before the same far seeing care-taker who, with so much ingenuity, profanity and trouble, had strung the barbed wire at the top, had gone over the entire stockade and nailed securely every board that seemed to him to be deficient in tightness. It is saddening to tell it; for it rather weakens the character of Willie Trigger, but at the end of his second futile patrol along the fence, he flung himself down at the roots of an ancient apple-tree and cried. Were all the Fates of boyhood set against him this day in June?

[Pg 238]

"Dum it—gosh dum it," he mumbled, gazing through his tears at the forbidding fence, the top of which looked so low yet was so high—too high even when he poised on tiptoe and jumped, clutching. As he stared, his eyes opened wide, the tears were magically whisked away, and he grinned.

[Pg 239]

"Gosh!" he exclaimed aloud, and got upon his feet.

A branch of the very tree beneath which he had so disconsolately flung himself, pointed out the way he sought. A single limb—not a thick, sturdy limb, but rather a weak, unstable sort of limb—hung directly above the fence at a most favorable point, immediately behind the grand stand.

Willie Trigger climbed the tree. Cautiously he crept out upon the branch, more than half hidden by the foliage. The branch bent beneath his weight, slight though it was, and once he nearly slipped. His heart leaped into his mouth, or if not his heart, at least something, but he swallowed it back and moved along another inch. He wriggled obliquely until he balanced on his stomach like a bag of meal over a pole. Little by little he slipped down, the branch giving more and more with every movement of his agile body. He clung by the crook of his elbows and wriggled his toes. They touched nothing. For a space he danced upon the air. Another slip of scarce an inch, and there ensued a ripping and tear, followed by a sharp crack.

[Pg 240]

Thug!

Willie Trigger struck the soft earth in a sitting posture. The sudden contact resulted in a private pyrotechnic display of momentary brilliance. Willie gasped twice like a fish. Blinking away the stars and whirling Catherine wheels that glittered before his eyes, he looked about him. "Gosh!" he muttered below his breath, and rolling over rubbed the point of contact vigorously. Beside him lay the branch, but—goody! He had struck inside the fence! Moreover, and what was quite as much to the purpose, he had not been observed.

Sidling along the rear wall of the grand stand, he reached the corner and thrust out his head. The

big gate was open—the gate through which he had hoped to pass big with pride, a man among his fellows. A steady current of humanity in summer garb was streaming through. There were carriages by the score, the horses driven by young men, many of whom Willie, from his peculiar point of vantage, recognized. On the seats beside them were girls—"their girls," he speculated mentally with an unvoiced sneer. But mostly the crowd was on foot, scrambling, pushing, jostling. Every individual in the throng seemed bent upon being the first to reach the grand stand and it was a fine sight to the small boy, peering around the corner, to see them run. Two men detached themselves from the crowd and seemed to him to be making directly for where he stood. Willie Trigger wasted no time in idle speculation as to their purpose. Turning heel he ran. He plunged around the upper end of the stand. The door there was open. He disappeared into the long room directly beneath the seats. He was familiar with the floor plan. He knew that the partition on his left was false and that the various little doors on the right opened into tiny dressing rooms. He knew that the one door on the left offered access, if unfastened, to the cramped and crowded space beneath the lower tiers of seats,—a dark hole used these many years as a catch-all for the *débris* of the grounds, old cans, broken bottles, worn out shoes, and ancient hoop-skirts. He tried the door; it opened and he pulled it shut after him, just as the door at the end was flung back and the two men entered.

[Pg 241]

"Where's his room?" he heard asked, in an undertone; then the heavy footfalls on the loose boards of the floor.

His eyes became adjusted to the darkness and through the many chinks of the partition he perceived the men. He recognized them as those who had haggled with the hackman at the Cook House two days before. He held his breath, and, as there really was nothing else for him to do, became an eavesdropper.

[Pg 242]

"Punky, we got t' separate," Giddings said. "They'll be next if you don't; it'll be all right for you to drop in here while they're dressin' but don't be wise. And for heaven's sake, don't get gay; it's a long chance you're takin' and you'll take it I know, with five hundred dollars in the balance."

"Don't you worry," Punky replied significantly. "I'm takin' no chances; that's why I got the dope. You couldn't buy this Bunny for a million; and you say Morrison's as bad. You just leave it to me. I'll be hangin' around, you bet. When you're dishin' up the soft stuff, you just call me and say, 'Here, take this in there.' I'll take it—in she goes—and if it don't mean Morrison'll win this here Intercollegiate, I'm a lobster, good and plenty. They'd never git next in the world."

"Well, for heaven's sake don't put in too much," Giddings muttered.

"Leave it to me,"—was the terse reply and then they went into one of the dressing-rooms and their voices came only in muffled tone to Willie in his hiding-place.

He was not quite certain of the meaning of what he had heard. He was only certain of the name—"Bunny." Who these men were he did not dream. Besides, it was none of his affairs. There was one thing however that he *did* know, and that definitely; he could not hope to see the sports from where he crouched. Noiselessly he opened the door. It did not creak. He tiptoed down the long room. As he neared the end, the door there was opened suddenly from without and a score of men pressed in. Willie Trigger whistled as loud as he could and walked on. The whistle, born of boyhood's genius, saved him. Ordinarily the presence of a small boy in the dressing-room would perhaps have occasioned surprise, but on this particular occasion the small boy whistled so shrilly and walked so independently with his hands deep in the pockets of his knickerbockers that no one spoke to him; no one seemed even to notice him. He strode out of the building bravely, crept under the fence at the side of the track and strolled into the paddock, scuffing the grass and still whistling.

[Pg 243]

## V

Wilma Morey, exquisitely dainty in a wealth of fluffy muslin flounces and little bows of ribbon as pink as her pretty cheeks, found a particularly excellent seat in the first tier, close to the rail. From where she sat she could sweep with her dancing eyes the entire course, the crowded paddock, and the stretch of open beyond. The wire was immediately below her and directly opposite was the judges' stand. Perceiving these manifold advantages of her position, she settled herself comfortably and patted, with most apparent content, her wealth of flounces. She was very glad that no acquaintance had slipped into the seat next hers, now occupied by a little fat man in checks. She wished to enjoy the events of the day in her own way and as privately as she might surrounded for the greater part by people with whom she had at least a nodding acquaintance.

[Pg 244]

She studied her program diligently, noted the order of events from the old fashioned "throwing of the baseball" to the "standing broad jump" in neither of which she was interested. She did not know a man among the broad jumpers and but one name in the list of baseball throwers was familiar—Schmidt, a little German, with a blonde head and blue eyes whom she had met at a sophomore dance in the beginning of the year. So, when the sleeveless-shirted contestants ran up the track and the clean white ball was taken from its red box and tossed among them she reverted to her program nor lifted her eyes again until the loud-voiced person in the judges' stand opposite bellowed through a bright tin megaphone that the event had been won by "Schmidt, distance ——" She did not catch the distance.

[Pg 245]

"Next event!" she heard roar from the mouth of the megaphone, "the first of three heats in the

hundred yards. Entries: Bunette, Michigan; Morrison, Western College; Lacy, Ohio Wesleyan; Cady, Northwestern"—and so on down the list that she followed on her program with her nimble eyes. The megaphone man was still bellowing when the atmosphere was rent by a series of yells from the paddock that would have put a horde of Comanche braves to the copper-tinted blush. The cheering was taken up by the grand stand, and canes were waved, and hats were flung into the air and lungs were split. All this because a dozen gaunt creatures in flapping "shorts" were prancing up the track in the wake of their jogging trainers. The crowd behind bore down upon the girl and she only saved herself from falling headlong over the rail by encircling a stout roof support with one arm and clinging tight.

Up the course the line formed.

"That's Morrison; he's got the post," she heard a full-lunged youngster cry.

"There's Bunny on the end!" another shouted.

"Bunny! Bunny! Bunny!" yelled the crowd and Wilma Morey's face flushed crimson. Her eyes lighted and her lips quivered with the excitement of the moment. Behind her the pressure of the crowd had given away somewhat and she leaned over the rail, eagerly, her fingers curled in the palms of her hands, every muscle tense. She saw an arm suddenly lifted above the runners' heads and caught the glint of the sunlight on the barrel of the pistol. [Pg 246]

The report sounded a long way off, or as though her ears were muffled. Down the course they came, all heads low save Bunny's; he had a way of tilting his back, and breathing hard through his nose. In an instant, as she watched, they passed the further end of the grand stand and in another the foremost had crossed the line. Pandemonium broke loose. The crowd in the paddock tore down the fence and rushed into the track surrounding these modern Mercuries. Wrapped in the robes their coaches had held out to them they were led away and the megaphone man in the judges' stand was compelled to clang the deep-throated bell quite three minutes before he was able to convince the throng that he had something very particular to say.

"First heat," he shouted. "Morrison, ten and one fifth; Bunette, ten and two-fifths; Cady, ten and a half." The stand, the crowd in the track, even the ancient circus rings in the distance swam before Wilma Morey's eyes. She lifted her handkerchief to her burning cheek. It was cruel. He had lost; lost after all his patience, all his hope, all his effort. Conscious as she was that the first heat did not mean *all*, she yet realized that it might mean much. If she might only catch his eye, she thought, and let him know that she among all the others believed in him. What was she thinking, she asked herself, suddenly. Then she smiled. In the buzz of conversation all about, and amid the cries from the track below she caught varying words that seemed to her, in her state of supreme suspense, to offer a modicum of hope. Still—still— She confessed to herself her disappointment. She wished that she had not come out at all. [Pg 247]

The next event was "throwing the hammer"; and then the hurdles would be run. Should she stay? she asked herself. Involuntarily she moved toward the end of the stand where the stairs were.

"What in thunder's the matter; you going?" she heard a voice ask, then felt a strong hand on her arm. She turned and looked up into the face of her brother.

She clutched his wrist. "Oh, Nibsey," she cried, "he was beaten; wasn't he?"

He stared at her quizzically. Then he laughed and led her over to the rail. He glanced back at the crowd that pressed upon them from behind. Bending toward her he whispered: "He's just playing 'em. Great Scott! you didn't think *that* was his speed, did you? Morrison was doing his best; Bunny was walking; that's all, just walking. You wait; you'll see the fastest hundred yards that was ever run on this old track. You hold your horses. Why, Morrison's trainer knows it's all off. The others—the 'also-rans'—are just waiting for the end. Morrison's trainer's running around down below like a chicken with its head off. You wait if you want to see a record smashed." And he pressed her arm reassuringly, and vanished. [Pg 248]

At the bottom of the stairs he collided with a small boy in a soiled and torn shirt waist.

"Cancha see where yer goin'?" the small boy piped after him, then mounted the stairs whistling. He pushed his way through the crowd to the rail, and wriggled to a post. Despite the yells of "Down in front," that were flung at him from the lower tiers, he clung to his position resolutely.

"There's Bunny!" he cried as the runners pranced up the track a second time. Wilma heard the lad's shrill pipe and glancing down caught his eye and smiled. He grinned. He sidled nearer to her and pressed close to the rail.

Willie Trigger decided then and there that he had never before seen such a pretty girl. She was ever so much prettier, he calculated, than the new hired girl in the house next door,—at home. He had fallen desperately in love with *her* at first sight. Then Wilma spoke to him and his boy heart bounded. [Pg 249]

"Do you know him, little man?" she asked, softly.

He wished she had not called him "little man" particularly with so many about, but her voice was so gentle and her eyes were so beautiful that he forgave her in his heart straightway and answered, looking down, "Uh huh; he lives 'cross th' street from our house."

Her eyes took on a greater brilliance then and a smile played about the corners of her pretty

mouth.

"So you are Willie Trigger, are you?" she asked so low that he alone might hear. "Oh, I know all about *you*; he told me."

Willie Trigger never knew what joy it was to live until that instant. To think that *He*, the great Bunny, had told *Her* all about *Him*! It rendered him for the moment speechless. Yet he gave no sign of the swelling of his heart unless a sudden kick at the post to which he clung, and a low, foolish laugh might be taken as a sign. He felt her hand upon his shoulder as the line of entries formed and was superlatively happy.

[Pg 250]

The pistol cracked. Again the runners came on, swift, straight as arrows. There had been an instant's hush at the start, but now it was forgotten in the uproar. Could it be possible, Wilma wondered, as she leaned far over the rail, hearing above all other sounds the shrill, piercing screech of Willie Trigger, that the great lank figure there at the fore of all the rest, his long legs high lifting, his head thrown back, was the same Bunny who not half an hour before had lagged the second in the race? And yet, as the creature crossed the wire below her and the air became filled with waving canes and hats and handkerchiefs, she knew that such it must have been. Her fingers tightened on the arm of the screaming lad and she drew him close beside her.

"Was that Bunny?" she asked eagerly. "They came so fast I couldn't see. Tell me, was it?"

He looked up at her, joyful that she had called upon him in her distress, but what he said was only: "Sure; who'd yeh *think* it was?"

She squeezed his arm and he grinned. Something of her great delight was his to know that instant, though he was only a little boy in a soiled and torn shirt waist and she a beautiful girl gay in ribbons and fluffy muslin flounces that made her look for all the world like the fairy in a certain Christmas pantomime, that was one of his fondest memories.

[Pg 251]

"And now let's see when the last will be," she said, glancing down at her program.

"They's two 'vents 'fore they run," he explained, for he had learned the order by heart long since. "They's th' pole vault and th' drop kick. Then they'll run th' last time."

She looked at him and smiled and he smiled back quite familiarly.

"I guess I'll go down now," he said suddenly, and before she could restrain him, for she had found much amusement in his straightforward boyish admiration for one whom she, as well, admired, he had wriggled away and out of sight.

She leaned over the rail and saw him on the grass below making swiftly along the front of the stand.

For a space he hovered about the edge of the crowd at the door of the dressing-rooms. His chance of entering at last was offered and gliding between divers pairs of legs he sneaked into the long, low room. All was confusion here. Half-clad men ran this way and that, calling for drinks, bath-ropes and towels, and among them bustled officiously the man with the big mustache whom he had seen and heard while hidden in the dark hole on the other side of the thin partition. He glimpsed, as well, the other man; his trousers turned up, his coat and waistcoat off, his sleeves rolled to his shoulders. He was busy squeezing lemons into a pail. Presently he poured the contents of another pail into the first, then dumped a bag of sugar into the mixture which he stirred vigorously.

[Pg 252]

"Here, Morrison; don't drink that rotten water; drink this," he shouted and filled a glass from the pail. Morrison, a curly-headed man with knots of muscle on his legs that looked like coils of rope, gulped greedily.

"Here, gimme some of that; this man in here's thirsty," the familiar black mustached man called out. He took up the glass and moved toward the half-open door of one of the little dressing-rooms. Willie Trigger was by some instinctive force, seemingly, moved to sudden action. He was about to slip past the black mustached man and enter the little room when he was perceived. A kick was aimed at him and he was adjured to "make himself scarce or git his block knocked off." Thoroughly frightened, he slouched away and ran into the open where people were too interested in other things to knock the blocks off little boys and where it didn't smell so stuffy and unpleasant.

He sped across the track where the uprights had been erected for the pole vaulting, and later he became one of the group that formed a crescent behind the football kickers. He watched, with admiration unconcealed, the unerring pedal movements of the heavily shod young men who sent the ball so beautifully skyward.

[Pg 253]

Meanwhile, Wilma awaited impatiently at the grand stand rail the last heat in the sprint event. She saw the drop-kickers leave the paddock and heard indistinctly the record that was called across from the tower-like judges' stand; but these things were not to her liking. Her eyes upon the track below, she saw a young man in sweater and knee breeches vault the fence beside the stretch and rush across. He shouted a word to the megaphone man who at once lifted the glistening instrument to his lips and shouted:

"Is there a doctor on the grand stand? He's wanted down below. A man has been taken suddenly sick."



The pink fled from her cheeks. Then she smiled. She realized the absurdity of the little spasm of fear that had seized her. She glanced down at her card again.

The runners were jogging up the stretch. She counted them. There was one missing. Another look of fright came into her eyes. She felt some one tugging at her dress. She turned impatiently and gazed down into the now pale face of Willie Trigger. [Pg 254]

"It's Bunny!" he muttered almost incoherently, "oh, it's Bunny! A man gave him something to make him sick."

She seized him by the shoulder and held her face close to his.

"What did you say—*gave* him something!" she exclaimed.

"Yes; come quick," and she felt that the child was drawing her through the thick of the crowd at the rail, to the stairs at the further end. Afterward she could not tell how it was managed or what she did. But she followed the lad around the stand, at the back, to the dressing-room door and then, of a sudden, as though due to the shock induced by the picture she there beheld, her senses returned to her with a rush. The crescent at the door parted and she saw Bunny, his face pale and drawn, stagger forward and lean heavily against the jamb. A man whom she did not recognize clung to one of his arms and beseeched him to lie down.

"No," he mumbled thickly. "Run—run, I tell you—lemme go!" He jerked his arm from the other's clutch.

He passed the back of one hand heavily across his staring eyes and broke away. At the fence he staggered again and fell against it. Wilma came up to him, there. [Pg 255]

"Bunny, they've drugged you, you're sick! The little boy told me!"

He turned to her his drawn face. For a tiny instant a look of intelligence came back into his eyes.

"You!" he muttered. "Drug!" And with a plaintive little cry he sank to his knees. Some one brushed by her and seized him. Things, for the second time that afternoon, swam before her eyes and she moved away unsteadily. When next she looked she saw him alone, running up the track and swerving from side to side like a drunken man.

The crowd seemed to understand that a tragedy was being acted there upon the course. There was no cheering. It was as though the throng held its breath—waiting. Wilma steadied herself at the fence. She saw the gaunt figure crouch in the line of the runners. She saw the pistol raised and heard the sharp report. The tension under which the crowd had momentarily lived, was relieved by that and a cry was raised that rang in her ears for hours. She saw the line coming; advancing toward her, swiftly, surely, but more clearly than she saw the others, she saw the tall figure of Bunny at the end. His face, uplifted, was like a demon's face. His lips were tight drawn and showed his teeth and—*his eyes were shut!* On he came in advance of all the rest, plunging, swerving. Five more strides! She closed her eyes, and when she opened them it was to see him throw up his arms and fall headlong across the line. [Pg 256]

He lay there motionless. The other runners passed him, and the crowd broke into the track and she saw no more.

In the judges' stand the megaphone man waited.

How she got there, whether she was carried, walked naturally, or flew, she could never tell, but of a sudden, as it seemed, Wilma discovered that she was in the grand stand again, clinging to a post at the top of the stairs, while beside her hovered Willie Trigger. She heard the bellow of the megaphone man:

"Last heat, one hundred yards! Winning time nine and four-fifths seconds, breaking the Intercollegiate record! Winner——" The crowd knew the winner and did not wait.

Her fingers relaxed in the palms of her hands. A tremor passed over her. She looked down, breathing hard.

"Oh, you darling!" she cried, and Willie Trigger, who had not really understood at all, hung his head in mute embarrassment.

[Pg 257]

## VI

That night, on a low stone horse-block in front of his mother's house sat Willie Trigger gazing at a lighted window in the second story of the house opposite, across the drawn shade of which figures passed and passed again. In that room he knew his hero lay sick. He wondered how sick; perhaps, he speculated, as sick as he once had been after eating many green apples. He would watch and wait. Some one surely would come out of the house before his bedtime. He had followed the hack from the grounds, had seen the long, slim body carried into the house. No one paid the least attention to him so he crossed the street and seated himself on the horse-block. It was not for him to witness the little drama that was being played behind the window shade....

Before he opened his eyes Bunny heard, like high running surf, a low and rhythmic rumble. It was very soothing.

"What's the matter?" he exclaimed, suddenly, staring at Nibsey Morey who stood, like a wooden Indian, at the foot of the bed.

Then he felt something very cool against his forehead and closed his eyes again. It was no matter, he thought.

Nibsey withdrew with a nod.

"He seems to be going to sleep," Wilma said.

[Pg 258]

He heard the voice and opened his eyes again with a start.

"You here!" he muttered.

And he knew it was she by the touch of her hand upon his cheek.

She told him then what had happened. He smiled feebly, patiently, as though he realized she was only trying to comfort him.

She slipped down upon her knees beside the bed.

"Don't you understand," she whispered, and her voice sounded far away to him, "you ran so fast the others were away behind, and you broke the record, and—oh—oh—Bunny."

She hid her face on the pillow beside his.

Then it all became clear to him, her love, and the depth and meaning of it. He forgave her for what he was pleased to call, in his mind, the white lie of her comfort.

"Dearest," he murmured, dreamily, "it's all right; it's all right." He stroked her hair, feebly. Then, after a moment, he muttered, quite to himself: "What happened, anyway; why was it they wouldn't let me run?"

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## **THE DAY OF THE GAME**

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[Pg 259]

### **The Day of the Game**

[Pg 261]

*Who he was and what, we knew not; he came among us as a stranger and we took him in.*

#### I

For an instant a hush that was more than that enveloped the grand stand, the crowded veranda of the Athletic Club, and the bleachers opposite. And then, as though by silent signal, the immense throng got upon its feet, and with ragged cheers, broke through or leaped the boundary ropes, and bore down the field, a tidal wave of shrieking youth that police could not control.

The girls on the veranda, inspired by the ecstasy of their companions, cried shrilly and wildly waved their handkerchiefs and the little flags they carried. Many were left standing there to cheer alone, while their escorts joined the surging mob that swept upon the dirty-gray, padded and masked Olympians at the further goal.

No one seemed to pay the least attention to the Cornell giants as laggingly they came up the field close to the ropes, and slipped silently into the dressing-room, disconsolate in their defeat, their chins upon their breasts, their eyes upon the ground.

[Pg 262]

And, as the girls left on the veranda to care for themselves, watched, they saw eleven stuffed figures lifted in the air to ready shoulders which bent beneath their weight and thus the strange procession of triumph and of noise came up the field.

Above the heads of the moving mass of young humanity canes were waved stiffly. Hats, torn and broken, were flung about the field. In the riot of joy each man sought to shout louder, wave higher and leap further than his brother, so great was the delight the triumph of the team occasioned among them all. The little boys clinging in the trees and clustered on the electric towers outside the fence, cheered with the mob in the field and were glad likewise. The men in blue, waiting beside their cars in the street, just beyond the gate, grinned at one another intelligently, as roar after roar ascended to the turquoise sky that domed the gridiron.

On came the throng, running, bending, stumbling, while the cheers of the flushed girls on the club house veranda rose shrilly above the deeper-throated masculine yells. The victors, dirty beyond measure, plastered with the brown, clinging mud in which they had so valiantly wallowed for a good two hours—a splendid contest for the honor of the colors on their stockings—rode their fellows' shoulders uncomfortably, as the cavalcade, shapeless, soulless, inchoate but voiceful, seethed and surged across the field. One of them, to save himself from falling, clutched

[Pg 263]

wildly at the long hair of the bareheaded youth beneath him; another planted a heavy heel unwittingly in a second bearer's mouth, and the youth wrenched free and ran up the field sopping his bloody lips, but turning each tenth step to wave his reddened handkerchief and yell.

It was such a scene as might have been witnessed by Grecian maidens in the Stadium of old, when other young giants—the distant ancestors of these borne now in triumph—were themselves carried, as loftily, as triumphantly, down the course.

The shouting continued so vigorously that it shook the windows of the narrow, low-ceiled, suffocating room where other youths—the vanquished—were peeling the garments of the battle, and silently rubbing their smooth, pink bodies with wide, coarse towels.

The eyes of every girl above were turned down the field and all were alight; each soft cheek glowed with ruddy color, every nerve was tense.

Among these now subdued spectators was one who had not cheered, but whose excitement had been none the less great, as testified to by the eagerness with which she leaned over the veranda rail, her cheeks white from the pressure of her slim fingers against them. [Pg 264]

Now, apparently oblivious to her immediate surroundings, her attitude unchanged, she watched every swerve of the throng as little by little, and unsteadily, it approached. As the human maelstrom swept on and the stuffed shapes outlined so ridiculously against the sky became distinguishable, one from another, the girl smiled and leaned further over the rail. Another instant and she saw but one figure among the many—Adams'. He sat higher than the others; was more conspicuous among them. Again and again, that afternoon, she had seen him seize the ball and, plunging, forge down the field, clasping it closely to his breast. Once she had seen him flung heavily to the ground by a low tackle and had held her breath when a little ring formed where he lay. She took in her faint breath quiveringly when the ring broke and she saw him get upon his feet unsteadily. Then the lines formed again—two slanting walls of fine young brawn. But none of these things that she had seen had set alight her eyes as they were lighted now.

With a yell of almost demoniacal joy, the mob surged beneath the veranda, the warriors crouching on their unsteady pedestals to avoid the timbers overhead. As he was borne beneath, and out of her delighted sight, Adams cast one glance up at the girl leaning eagerly across the rail. Her eyes had been awaiting his and the light that flared in both their eyes as they met told her that he had fought for her; told him that she had known he'd win. [Pg 265]

She rose, then, folded her little flag and thrust it into the pocket of her coat. With the others she descended to the club room below and waited for him there.

She withdrew to one side and watched with curious interest the great crowd in the street, fretting impatiently for a nearer glimpse of the victors.

The four horses had been taken from a high tally-ho and a score of youths were running ropes from the front axle of the vehicle away down the street. The girl perceived it was the intention of the crowd to drag the tally-ho to the city in the good old way of joyous, eager crowds. And as she watched she saw a man in the blue overalls of a laborer, his face and hands smoke-blackened, break through the throng on the walk and approach the club house. She saw a policeman step in front of him and bar the way. The laborer and the officer seemed to argue. The former, his face toward her, she saw gesticulate angrily and stamp his foot, and then she saw a look of dumb pain in his blackened face as the officer, without more ado, seized him by the shoulders, roughly, and turning him about, pushed him into the crowd which parted to make way for his broad, squat figure. [Pg 266]

The girl felt a hand upon her arm. She turned quickly and looked up into Adams' face.

The little light of fright fled from her eyes and a mist gathered in its place as she murmured eagerly: "Oh, John, John, how glorious it was!"

He smiled down at her gladly.

"And see," she said, "look—they are going to drag the team down town in the tally-ho."

Through the window he saw the throng. His face at the pane was recognized and a cheer rose that prompted the girl to draw back, blushing. From where she stood at one side she could see a broken line of the crowd.

"Oh, look, John!" she cried, "there's that dirty old man again. He's been drinking—the police drove him away before."

He turned in the direction of her gaze, then drew away instantly from the window.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

His face was pale and his mouth was set in a straight line. [Pg 267]

"Nothing," he replied quickly. "Come——" and started toward the door opening upon the now deserted field.

She followed him unquestioningly.

On the porch she said:

"Aren't you going on the tally-ho with the team?"

"No," he replied, "I don't like being made a fool of. There's a gate over there on Cass Avenue. We'll go out that way and they won't see us."

"But, John——"

"I don't want to ride down town in state," he complained, testily. "I'd rather be with you. I shall have to be with them until train time. Now, I'd rather be with *you*." And he looked down at her and smiled.

By a devious route they finally reached the Campus Martius and at the little door of a big Woodward Avenue hotel he left her, for she had told him there would be friends awaiting her there with whom she would take dinner later.

"At the train, dear?" she said, as he opened the door for her.

"Yes. Good-bye till then."

She followed his great figure with her eyes and saw it disappear in the crowd below. Then she turned and passed down the narrow corridor from the "ladies' entrance." [Pg 268]

## II

It had been a glorious day.

The first touch of winter was in the air, clear, crisp, and set the blood a-tingling.

"Ideal football weather," the sporting writer of the *Journal* had called it in the early afternoon edition where, with the wisdom of his species, he had sought to forecast the game's result.

In honor of the occasion a gracious citizenry had swathed Jefferson and Woodward Avenues in bandages of maize and blue, and all day long the small boy had been as active as though it were the fourth of July rather than the fifth of November.

And now in the evening, the older portion of the citizenry withdrew, and the theatres, the lobbies of the prominent hotels, the clubs, and all the places of public meeting, were turned over, unconditionally, to youth.

A kindly disposed commissioner of police had instructed his men to be lenient.

"Boys will be boys," he said to the captain on night duty at the Central Station, as he left the office.

"But what about the *girls*?" inquired the captain with a twinkle in his own eyes that was almost youthful. [Pg 269]

"Well—they will be, too—sometimes," the commissioner replied.

In the lobby of the Russell House, where the team was installed, the mayor of Detroit—who himself had been an undergraduate once and remembered it—addressed the throng below him, from the first broad landing of the wide marble stairway.

His rounded periods were cheered to the echo; and when he drily observed that all the policemen had been taken off duty the roof fairly lifted and guests came pouring into the corridors, their faces clearly indicating their alarm.

"You know," the mayor observed, his eyes twinkling,— "we've what they call a slow town here. Well, it rests with you boys, for this night at least, to make it fast. Moreover, it's an old town, a *very* old town, and wherever you find an absence of paint you have my permission and the permission of the commissioner of police to redecorate. I suppose red would be the proper tint. I have had a fondness for the color ever since I was one of you—an undergrad. at old Ann Arbor —"

In the pandemonium that ensued the mayor judiciously withdrew. The crowd "rushed" the lobby, and staid old men, in town over the day, sought places of greater security on landings, behind pillars, and in corners whence might be had a view of the proceedings without, necessarily, participation. [Pg 270]

One by one various members of the team appeared at the head of the stairway and at each appearance a welcome of ringing cheers was sounded. The director of athletics, a little man with a wiry mustache and a square chin addressed the crowd from the top step after prolonged cries of "Speech! Speech!"

The trainer, a huge man with a face like a fist, a Cockney accent, and the shoulders of an ox, shouted a few phrases above the din. Each time he uttered the word, "Michigan," which he insisted upon pronouncing "Mitch-ti-gan," he was cheered wildly.

When Adams appeared on the upper landing and hesitated there the commotion became deafening.

A section of the throng swept up to him, seized him and carried him further down where he was

made to blurt a few incoherent sentences in which one caught, above the noise, a constant repetition of the words—"fellows"—"great"—"wiped 'em up"—"knew it"—"right stuff"—and others from the campus jargon, generally as unintelligible as Ute gutturals.

Then he, too, descended and became an atom of the matter below as eager to cry "Speech!" to the others when they should appear, as the mob about him now had been to demand a word from him. [Pg 271]

It all combined to constitute a riot of triumph, a veritable debauch in the sensation of triumph—a triumph well won, and fairly; honestly accepted, and as honestly celebrated by nearly three thousand as irresponsible young spirits as ever took possession of a town.

Into the streets they poured. The police gritted their teeth and restrained themselves with an effort, the strength of which their tormentors did not dream.

Passers-by were good-naturedly jostled off the pavement by phalanxes of obstreperous lads, who swept all before them as arm in arm, eight and ten abreast, they advanced upon the city.

Money had been wagered and money had been won and there was money to spend and be spent; and they spent it. They took possession of the restaurants. In the theatres they shouted the choruses of all the songs they knew, and between acts they whistled, stamped and applauded, in that deadly unison and rhythm that has been known to bring buildings tumbling about the heads of less vehement folk.

And why all this stampede of ecstasy? [Pg 272]

Because two minutes before the umpire's call of time, John Adams, a tall, broad, blonde giant, whom few of his worshippers really knew, had found an elliptical pig-skin and, rushing like an engine of destruction down a well turfed field, had touched it to the ground behind a pair of slim, straight poles.

### III

The theatre was packed. The throng extended into the lobby where the ticket scalpers in the faces of the police hawked their coupons each of which called for "an orchestra chair on the aisle three rows back." The leader of one group leaned against a convex bulletin board bearing the lithograph of a gaily garbed soubrette in red, and waving his cane shouted the first line of a familiar college song. Each man of the group lent his voice to the clamor and there was at once precipitated a riot of discord in which the original air was lost in a brazen yell. There was much rushing; a congestion at the window of the box office at which hands were thrust between the fingers of which dangled government notes of various denominations. Beyond the window, his bust framed in the narrow rim of metal the treasurer of the theatre sat on his high stool dealing out the tickets with the *sang-froid* and ease of a judge upon the bench. Men left their change there on the ledge. The treasurer always shouted at them once—perhaps it was the voice of his conscience merely—then with a sweep of his curved palm magically transferred the money to the till. A solid V of eager youth with its apex at the narrow door of green, pushed and jostled and shouted. [Pg 273]

"Look out there behind, you're squeezing a lady!" some one cried.

"Don't she like it?" called an ungallant if witty youth away at the back of the crowd. There was a little feminine shriek, then a peal of laughter in which the throng joined. The police in the lobby were completely at a loss. No man was to be arrested, their commissioner had instructed them. But they gripped their clubs nervously; longing to leap into that seething maelstrom of manhood uncontrolled and wield them to the best purpose. A policeman is born with a hatred for loud-voiced youth—particularly if the youth wear good clothes of trim and fashionable cut. So the policemen there in the lobby, disarmed by the strict injunction of their chief, were as helpless as babes, and like babes they drew down their mouths and gripped tighter that which was within their clutch. Now and again, however, one, bolder than his fellows, and moved perhaps by a spirit of chivalry would shout gruffly:— [Pg 274]

"Remember there are ladies in this crowd, you fellows."

"Sure," some one in the throng would yell.

Finally the manager appeared and stationing a man at each of the two other doors flung them back and relieved the pressure at the one. This stroke of genius resulted in a quick emptying of the brilliant lobby and an equally sudden congestion at the tops of the aisles where the ushers in their dark green uniforms were conducting the audience to the seats below amid the confusion resulting from exchanged coupons, balcony tickets presented on the lower floor and the presence in the crowd of "general admissions" who demanded their rights to a seat anywhere in the house. The manager, a tall young man with a black mustache and black eyes darted here, there, through the crowd, thrusting aside the men whose money he had taken, and seeking by every means at his command to wrest order out of chaos.

It was after eight o'clock before the score of ushers were by circumstance permitted to emerge from under the burden of their responsibilities and creep away down-stairs to the smoking room where, flinging themselves on the long low lounges in sheer fatigue, they berated the patrons of [Pg 275]

the house roundly and condemned each and every one to the hottest depths of a boiling hot perdition.

Ten minutes later the manager himself conducted the men of the victorious eleven to their adjoining boxes, on the right. The great audience had had its collective eye upon those boxes and at the appearance of the men a great shout went up from pit and gallery that sent the cold shivers up and down the spines of the already nervous actors behind the gold and scarlet curtain.

"There's the Count," some one shouted.

"Where? Yes!"

And the short heavy person with the baby face who had been thus honored by selection from among his fellows arose in the box and bowed. The throng cheered again and after that each man in turn was called for and each man rose and bowed.

During the clamor attendant upon this official welcome of the victors, a dozen men, quite as tall, quite as broad and quite as serene of countenance, were ushered into the corresponding boxes across the house. Their appearance was not noticed, for the entire audience had turned in its seats to observe the men of Michigan, proud in the triumph that had come to them. But, finally, after each man had been given his salvo of applause some one noted the men on the other side.

[Pg 276]

"There's Cornell," was cried.

And the audience, to its everlasting credit, and after the fashion of youth's wild way, repeated for their good cheer the welcome they had given the fellows of the maize and blue. The vanquished had hardly expected the ovation they received. A football man is not a modest creature as a general rule, but in this instance it must in justice be recorded that several of the brawny giants in the left hand box withdrew behind the curtains.

Their names, however, were known to the throng below them and were called.

Finally, unable by modesty to end the uproar, they rose, one by one and bowed, and the feeling engendered that moment has never died, but lives in the hearts of Cornell men to-day, who are wont in reminiscent mood to refer to it as the "finest show of fellowship on record."

A youth with a high tenor voice, who could not be distinguished from the rear of the theatre started the chorus of "The Yellow and the Blue." The boys around him took it up and the citizenry of Detroit, in the balcony, were treated to such a song recital as they had never before heard. In the midst of it the discovery was suddenly made by some keen youth in the gallery that one man was missing from the right hand boxes. He nudged his companion. The word was passed along the rail. Then, with a suddenness that caused the women in the balcony to start with little screams, one name was shrieked above the clamor of the lower floor:—

[Pg 277]

"Adams! Adams! Adams!"

The singing ceased.

The cry was taken up, repeated, screeched.

A commotion was observed in the box and then a tall figure arose. It was the manager. A silence that was awesome descended upon the house.

He held up his hand.

"I'm sorry," he began.

"Adams!" some one shrieked. Part of the audience laughed. The rest hissed.

"I am sorry," the manager resumed, "but Mr. Adams is not here to-night."

He sat down.

It was well that at that instant the orchestra commenced a medley of college airs by way of overture.

Presently the shrill tinkle of a little bell was heard and with a swish the curtain lifted, disclosing the glittering, golden court of an Oriental monarch. There was a blare of trumpets and a score of lithe limbed dancers appeared upon the stage. The crowd cried its huge delight and the college yell was flung across the footlights to the end that several of the dancers made missteps, and, covered with a confusion that brought forth another cheer, rushed into the wings.

[Pg 278]

After that first catastrophe the audience lent itself to a full enjoyment of the piece. Occasionally when the chief comedian gave utterance to a joke of ancient manufacture, the throng gave voice to its displeasure, by way of criticism, but more often the clamor sprang from keen appreciation of a song or bit of funny "business."

In all the audience there was, perhaps, but a single spectator whose face showed him to have no interest either in the audience and its noise or the action on the stage. He sat at one end of the balcony, back from the rail, unnoticed by those about him, satisfied, seemingly, to look on without participation either in the pleasure or the anger of the crowd around him. When his gallery champion cried out his name he had shrunk in his seat and almost held his breath, but now he sat up, his arms folded across his deep, broad breast.

He had entered the theatre late. Indeed there had been no one in the lobby when he bought his ticket. He was glad when he learned the location of his seat. He had thus far avoided all contact with the crowd. He would continue to avoid it. Through the first long act he sat looking down, apparently seeing nothing, staring blankly as though dreaming, yet awake.

[Pg 279]

When the second act was well under way, he glanced at his watch. He drew out his hat from beneath the chair and inconveniencing no one, left his seat. He glided up the aisle close to the wall. In the lobby, less brilliant now, he squared his shoulders and pulled in a long, deep breath. He lighted a cigarette and for a space stood just outside the door, in the street, idly watching the passers-by.

At the soldier's monument a group of students—he recognized them as such in the lighted thoroughfare—had formed a ring around some one who appeared to be dancing on the asphalt as they shouted, rhythmically, and clapped their hands. As he watched, Adams saw the ring part on the side nearest him and he glimpsed the dancer. All the blood went out of his face. He threw away his cigarette and buttoned his coat nervously. With a cry, the ring resolved itself into two lines and paraded down the street with the dancer, who was obviously unsteady on his legs, supported by a twain of students at the front. Adams, at the edge of the curb, perceived the goal toward which the poor little procession was making its way—the portal of a huge German restaurant which he knew well. A picture of its interior as he remembered it flashed upon his mind—the long room, filled with tables, many white clad waiters, stolid of face, light of tread. The head of the procession reached the wide door, bright beneath the great electric sign above. He waited until the last man had entered, then crossed the street swiftly. In the outer hall he heard a medley of noises beyond the mahogany and glass partition. He heard the quick shuffle of feet. Some one was trying to dance on the sanded floor. In the midst of the jig he flung back the connecting door and entered the room of riot.

[Pg 280]

#### IV

He was immediately perceived and the crowd with a single voice shouted him a welcome. Through the shifting gossamer of smoke that filled the room he distinguished many familiar faces.

"Come over here, old man," he heard some one call, and turned. He stared without sign of recognition at a young man, who, with many gestures, indicated a vacant chair at a near-by table. He saw the smoke, the waiters gliding noiselessly through it, the littered floor, the wet, glistening table-tops. These misty details he saw mistily, as one sees things in a dream.

His face was pale; there were unfamiliar lines about his mouth, and an unnatural glitter was in his eyes.

[Pg 281]

He saw the dancer, a man of age who wore the clothes of a laborer, fling himself heavily upon a frail chair at the nearest table, across which he leaned unsteadily, wagging his head and muttering incoherently.

Adams strode over to him and laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Come," he said, quietly.

With an effort the man balanced his head and lifted his heavy eyes.

"Come," Adams repeated.

It was as though the youths at the other tables knew it to be a psychological moment. The noise subsided. Every eye in the room was intent upon Adams, strong in his splendid youth, and the man beside whom he stood and who was weak in his age.

Adams was seen to encircle the man's shoulders with one arm and fairly lift him from the chair. On his feet he was unsteady. Adams supported him to the door of the restaurant, which swung back noiselessly as the ill-mated couple disappeared.

Then were exchanged many glances among those who had watched the little play in silence.

"What's he going to do with the old guy?" some one asked.

[Pg 282]

A general, half-forced laugh of relief ensued, which broke the tension, and immediately the company relapsed into its previous state of conviviality. The songs were resumed. The noise developed swiftly and the strangely incongruous incident of Adams' disappearance with the drunken moulder was forgotten straightway.

No one even took the trouble to go to a window to see if developments had occurred outside. And if one had been thus sufficiently interested, he would merely have observed Adams hail a passing cab, into which, as it drew up at the curb, he thrust the man, hesitating an instant with his hand on the door to mutter a certain address to the cabman leaning from his box.

The driver touched his horse, and the vehicle swung into Woodward Avenue. Of a sudden, from the dark patch of pavement that the restaurant faced, Adams felt himself flung into a maelstrom of light.

The façades of two theatres were all a-glitter; an immense confectionery across the street was

ablaze, and, looking down at the pavement through the window in the cab door, Adams noted the weird, distorted reflections in the asphalt ooze that gives the city streets at night the uncertain quality of a looking-glass wantonly smeared with pitch.

[Pg 283]

He blinked in the yellow glare of the street illumination. It was as though he were passing through a tunnel of brilliance. A car whirred by, with clanging gong. He caught a fleeting, swift glimpse of the several passengers.

As the cab proceeded, his attention was attracted now and then to groups of young men loitering at various corners as though in contemplation of some deed, very secret, if not very terrible. The lilting chorus of a college song that he recognized was brought to him in the noiselessly rolling cab. Before the last store-lights in the business district were passed, he had obtained such an impression of the city as he had never had before.

Through the window in the door he saw the skeleton trees in Grand Circus Park as the cab cut the circle of its area, and he shivered at the prospect of the winter they suggested.

A sound very close to him caused him to start. He smiled, looked down, and the smile went out of his eyes and left them cold and hard.

The man beside him had succumbed to the comfort of the cab, and, asleep, was snoring gently. Passing beneath an electric lamp, the light fell an instant on his face—pale beneath the stubble beard and the splotches of grime. His knees were high and his hands, broad, work-hardened, lay limp upon them.

[Pg 284]

Adams turned again to the window.

The cab was passing through a residence district now. He noted with a shifting, vague interest, the houses—big, shapeless for the most part, and set far back in broad yards. The lights in the lower stories glared yellow like the earth-close eyes of crouching monsters.

Suddenly Adams pulled himself together. He began to experience a livelier interest in the dark picture of the street, with its broad curbs, its iron fences, dark hedges, and wide yards. He pressed his face against the window in the cab door, and now and again twisted his neck to gaze as far back down the street as the swift motion of the vehicle would permit.

He remembered definitely, vividly, certain landmarks of his young boyhood, as he was whirled on, noiselessly, save for the rhythmic *clackety-clack* of the horse's hoofs on the echoing asphalt. There was the house from the side yard of which he had once, as a tiny lad, stolen a great armful of roses. There, again, was the house with the smoke tree near the porch behind which Pauline, his little sister, and he had once hidden until the policeman passed, indolently swinging his night stick.

[Pg 285]

Adams smiled at the recollection.

The cab came opposite a tall apartment house at the junction of a cross-town car line. On the ground now occupied by the ungainly, rambling pile of stone, he remembered vividly, had stood, when he was a very small boy—hardly big enough to push his cart—a little shack occupied by an old cobbler, deserted in his age by a son who had robbed him. Very many were the hours he had spent in that little shop. He recalled certain of those hours with a momentary pang of sadness. The cobbler had been a soldier in Poland, in his time, and was wont to tell great stories of his own valor, to which the yellow-headed lad, all forgetful of his mission and his cart, had listened wide-eyed and open-mouthed. The memory came swift and certain and distinct in detail and in the richness of it Adams shrank from the ugly stone pile in passing, as though it were a horrid thing thus to thrust itself upon a young man's memory of his little boyhood.

As he dreamed thus the cab turned a corner, suddenly. The rich residential thoroughfare vanished like the palace in the pantomime, and Adams, his face still close to the glass, saw a row of little, squat, mean houses, set regularly behind low white picket fences. Only here and there a light shone from small, square windows. The street seemed totally deserted, save for a single dog that he saw crawl under one of the low latched gates and vanish behind a house that was like all the others in the little squalid street. And as he noted these things, the cab pulled up before such another house, and, mechanically, he passed his hand over his forehead, as a child does when awakened.

[Pg 286]

A brief parley ensued with the burly driver of the cab, comical in his bristling fur cape.

"Kin yeh git 'im out?" he asked.

"Yes."

One of the windows in the second story of the cottage before which the cab had stopped, was aglow, and across the drawn shade a shadow passed, and passed again.

Adams shook the sleeper in the cab. Finally after a series of muffled grunts and grumblings that were like remonstrances, the man was gotten out.

"All right?" inquired the driver, gathering up the reins.

"All right," Adams replied; whereat the driver spoke to his horse, turned, and drove back down the squalid street.



Adams supported the tottering figure of the man to the door of the house and fumbled for the knob, which, when his fingers found it, turned in his hand and the door swung open. On a table in the room at the end of the narrow, bare, unlighted hallway, stood a lamp, turned low. As he half carried, half led the man into the room, Adams heard footsteps overhead. And as he cast his burden down upon a carpet-covered lounge, pushed back against the wall at the further end of the room, he heard a voice from above call:

[Pg 287]

"Iss dat you?"

"Come down," he answered.

There was a little frightened, feminine "Oh!" followed by quick, heavy footfalls on the bare stairs. The next instant the short, thick figure of a woman was framed by the doorway. The light of the lamp struck her face which was broad and kindly.

"Chon!" she exclaimed.

His eyes met hers and he smiled faintly. Then his gaze wandered to the lithograph of the Christ tacked to the wall, and to the couch beneath, and he said:

"There's father; I brought him home."

The woman uttered a little cry and bent over the prostrate figure.

"Ah," she muttered. Then, glancing back over her rounded shoulder, she asked: "Where you git heem?"

[Pg 288]

"Down town," the boy replied, quietly.

"So." And the woman sat down again, and as long as her son was with her she kept her eyes upon him, oblivious, seemingly, of the unfeeling body on the couch.

"Ven you come in?" she asked.

"This morning," he replied. "I played football to-day."

"Och, yes," she murmured, nodding. "I heard dee noise. Yes."

There ensued a moment's silence that was complete, save for the heavy breathing of the sleeper on the couch.

"Chon," the woman said, calmly, "you don't do dat?" And she indicated with a gesture the prone shape on the lounge.

The boy laughed forcedly, and shook his head.

"No," he said.

"Och, yes, no," his mother muttered.

"How's Pauline?" he asked.

"She's vell; she's to a dance."

He shivered as with cold.

"Isn't it late?" he asked.

"No," his mother replied. "She be home maype a hour; maype two hour."

Each seemed conscious of the infinite labor of the conversation.

[Pg 289]

"Well," John said after half an hour, "I guess I'd better be going."

"So soon!" his mother exclaimed. "Vy not in de morning? We go to church, you ant me."

He shook his head, sadly.

"No," he said. "I must go back to-night. The train leaves before long."

"All right," she muttered.

At the gate in the low fence he turned. His mother's figure was silhouetted against the light of the room at the end of the hall.

"Good-bye," he said, "and tell Pauline to take care."

"Goot-pye," she called to him softly.

She turned back into the house at once and he heard the door shut.

Passing beneath an electric light he examined his watch. The train was due to leave in an hour. He decided to walk to the station. The cold felt good on his face.

He straightened his shoulders and walked with long, even strides, looking neither to right nor left.

He found Janet waiting in the shadow of the baggage-room doorway. The station was thronged

with a shouting, jostling crowd. Taking her arm, he guided her through the gate and assisted her to the platform of the last coach. [Pg 290]

"You hold the seat, will you?" he asked. "I want to smoke. We broke training to-night, you know."

She nodded, smiling.

And until the porter's call he paced up and down the long train shed. As the train pulled out he swung himself to the platform of the rear coach and entered.

## V

A throng of several hundred awaited the arrival of the train at midnight in the railway yards. At the first shriek of the whistle away beyond the bend of the river the cheering commenced. It gathered force sufficiently to smother completely the pounding of the great engine as it thundered past the trim little station and came to a grinding stop.

In the crowd that packed the platform the old men were as eager as the lads; and there were not a few such old men with white in their hair and lined faces, that the lights of the station made radiant. Professors were there, eagerly jostling, squirming, edging in the crowd, holding their own in the tight-squeezed mass with elbows every whit as pointed as the elbows of the youngsters that the youngsters thrust into *their* sides. [Pg 291]

The crowd discovered at once that the team was in the second coach and before a man of the eleven had reached the platform the car was surrounded.

Late as was the hour, speeches were demanded, nor was a path opened through the throng until the demand had been acceded to. A circle formed around the band and its brassy noise blared out upon the night until every townsman within range of the farthest-carrying horn flung up his window and poked a head wonderingly into the outer darkness.

As the crowd surged down the platform to the front of the train, Adams, taking advantage of the clear way at the rear, assisted Janet to the ground and unobserved they passed out into the street through the tall turnstile in the shadow of the baggage-room.

She breathed deeply of the cool night air and he felt the pressure of her hand upon his arm as her steps quickened to his.

In the crowded train she had refrained from all attempts to learn the reason for his silence. Only now and then, as in answer to some question that she asked him, had he spoken in the hour and a half required to cover the forty miles between Detroit and Ann Arbor.

But now in the silence of the darkened street she took courage. At the top of the steep hill, as they passed beneath a sputtering electric lamp, she looked up at him and asked: [Pg 292]

"What is it, John—tell me—what is it?"

She hung upon his reply eagerly, a little frightened, though she realized, in seeking to analyze her foreboding that she could not tell herself why she should.

"There's a great deal, Janet," he replied calmly. She perceived an unfamiliar note in his voice, a note that seemed to her to sound a sort of resignation.

"But *what*— Can't you tell me? Has anything happened?"

For a moment he did not answer, but then he said: "Yes, dear; several things have happened—several things—"

"What?" she asked, almost in a whisper, and he felt her hand's pressure upon his arm again.

He continued, ruminatively, quite as though she had not spoken: "Several things, that make other things clearer to me now—much clearer."

She had never heard him speak like this before. Perhaps it was a matter intimately personal with him, too intimately personal even for her to share his knowledge, his consideration of it. She almost regretted having asked him. Why had she not prattled on about the game, the splendid victory, his own skill? But when next he spoke she understood she had done no wrong. [Pg 293]

"I must tell you about those things, Janet; I must tell you now—to-night—I have meant to before."

Her hand upon his arm tightened its grasp.

"John, what *is* it? *What* has happened?" Now she made no effort to conceal the fright that sounded in her voice.

He patted her hand, white on his black sleeve, and laughed lightly—forcedly, she thought.

"There, don't be afraid," he said, "I haven't committed any crime."

She laughed then herself, and said, "You *did* frighten me, though."

They had come to the library. As they passed, the deep throated bell in the tower rang out twice upon the stillness—tang—tung.

Fifteen minutes past one, Janet calculated.

They took the diagonal walk to the crossing of South and East University Avenues. Her room was in the second house from the corner, on the former street.

He seemed of a sudden to perceive where they were, for, looking about him, he said: "Janet, it is something I must tell you for your own sake. And when I'm through, you can say to me what you think; it won't hurt." [Pg 294]

A step and they were at her home.

"Can't you sit here on the porch a few minutes?" he asked; "I shan't keep you long."

With sudden anger she replied:—

"John, if you don't speak out at once what you have to say, I shall go in immediately. You've said again and again that there is something you must tell me; why don't you? Couldn't you see; can't you see now that I haven't begged you to tell because it seems to pain you."

"It does," he exclaimed, "you can't know how it pains me." He looked down at her where she sat on the step and into her uplifted face.

"What is it?" she asked calmly, now.

He sat beside her.

"I hardly know where to begin," he commenced and hesitated. He seemed to be arranging the words in his mind, for, after a moment he resumed.

"I told you it wasn't any crime," he said. "Well, maybe it isn't, but Janet," he went on quickly, "while you were standing at the window of the club this afternoon, you saw a man—do you remember? He wore overalls. His face and hands were black. You said you saw a policeman push him back into the crowd, and you believed him to be drunk— He was drunk, Janet—"

"How do you know?" she asked, quite indifferently, "did you see him again?"

"Yes, I saw him again," he said. "I saw him in a big restaurant that was crowded with students, men whom I know, whom I have eaten with, whose cheers till now have been—been inspiring to me—"

"John—really—" the girl put in impatiently. "I can't see why that drunk man should have made such an impression—that common laborer—nor what he can have to do—"

"Wait a moment," he remonstrated. "You remember, when you called my attention to him, I took you out across the field, and down town another way? Yes? Well, I had a reason. I didn't want that drunken man to see me—to see you—"

"But, dear," she exclaimed with a little laugh.

"It was my father," he said, quietly.

"John!"

Passion, shock, anger, perhaps pity, were all in the tone of her exclamation. Unconsciously she drew away from him.

"Don't be afraid," he said, holding out a hand to her, "I shan't smirch you—"

She realized her movement then, and pity filled her heart, pity for this great creature beside her whose own heart, the heart she knew, was like a child's. [Pg 296]

"Dear," she murmured, "don't think that. Don't. I didn't mean to."

He seemed not to notice the plea in her voice.

"I don't blame you," he went on as calmly as before, "but it was because I *knew* you would do just that that I haven't told you before. But now—I can't wait any longer. Listen. My parents are Poles, Janet. My father and mother were born in the same tiny town in Poland a little way from Cracow. They came to this country when I was only five years old—before my sister—my little sister Pauline, was born. My father was a peddler at first; afterward for a time he was a street sweeper; and then, during a strike, a good many years ago, he went into the Stove Works and learned the moulder's trade. It's a good trade, Janet; the men sometimes earn four dollars a day, pouring the hot iron into the sand. My father earns that now—"

She had listened to him raptly, the pale light white upon her lifted face.

"But John," she exclaimed, "your name—your name isn't foreign?"

He laughed.

"My name isn't 'Adams,'" he replied.

"John!"

"No," he went on—"but maybe my name is, too, after all. I should have said 'perhaps.' My father's name is not. It is Adamowski—" He heard her little quick in-taking of breath and looked away. [Pg 297]

"You have never heard of such things before, have you?" he asked. "But it is a custom with Polish young men nowadays. Their names handicap them in their work, in their advancement, so they often change them."

"Yes, I understand," she murmured.

"Well," he went on, "until I was ten years old I attended the parochial school——"

"John, you're not a *Catholic!*" she exclaimed.

"No—you needn't be afraid of that either—I'm not—now," he answered. "And then," he continued as calmly as before, "I was sent to the public schools. It was the superintendent who wrote my name 'Adams.' He did it perhaps by accident; anyway it has been my name ever since. Plain 'John Adams.' I don't suppose I could make you understand the relation between parents and an only son among my people, so I shan't try, but it is to the son that the parents look for the fulfilment of all their happiest hopes. That I should have been sent here to college is not so surprising as you may consider it. I *was* sent here. I was sent here by my father who works in the sand of the moulding room; by my mother who, to help, has for three years taken in washing; and by my little sister, Pauline, who sits all day at a bench and tears the stems out of tobacco leaves in a great, gray factory. They are the ones who have sent me here to college—to study, to learn, to make something of myself——"

[Pg 298]

Thus far to the girl, save for little moments when from the narrative she had suffered twinges of pain, it was as though she were listening to a story of one whom she knew not. She had been moved and strangely thrilled at times and now leaning forward eagerly she exclaimed:

"And you have made something of yourself; you have, John! Oh, don't you see how brave you are—what you can *do* with the education they have given you; what you can accomplish for yourself, and so, for them?"

He did not interrupt her but when she had done he looked down at her pityingly and muttered, as though suffering an intense physical agony: "Oh Janet! to hear you talk like that—to hear you say such things; to feel you haven't understood."

She looked away from him piqued, chagrined that she had erred.

"I brave!" he went on, "*I* brave? Do you think *I* dare call myself brave when I think of that little girl tearing stems out of tobacco leaves until her fingers are stiff; when I think of my mother bent over a tub, her face wreathed in steam—I can hear the smooth rasp of the wet clothes now as she rubs them on the board? *I brave* when I see my father working in the awful heat of a moulding room—cooked alive—that I may dawdle here and kick a leather ball about a field." He looked away with a sneer. But the bitterness in his voice failed to move her.

[Pg 299]

"Your education!" she exclaimed, tersely,—"*you* have that!"

He laughed harshly. "Education! my education! What is it? There are my people—my father a moulder, a good workman who sometimes is drunk, and, so, a drunkard; my mother a wash-woman; my little sister a stripper in a cigar factory. They have given me my education and in giving me it what have they done? They have made me *hate* them!"

"John, John, you mustn't say that," she implored.

"I must say it," he replied,—"*for* it's the truth. They have lifted me above them. All the love I should have for them is gone, obliterated. My feeling toward them is the feeling a man has for a dog that has helped him, perhaps saved him from drowning. It is a feeling but it is not love. I've known this a long time, Janet, but not till now have I known what to do. There is my place, there beside them. Back in the little home I should be ashamed to take you into. I have been educated away from them; from my father, my mother, my little sister; yes," he added with a virulent bitterness, "I have even been educated away from my God."

[Pg 300]

She placed her hand on his arm but she did not speak.

"Educated even away from my God!" he repeated sadly. "They are Catholics. I should be. I am not. And what has been given me in return? Nothing; less than nothing; yes, something, for I have been given by this 'education' that has been paid for by my sister's blood, my mother's body, and my father's soul, the power to see my own false position. I thank heaven for that! O, don't remonstrate," he said, as she leaned toward him as though to speak. "I understand. From the high plane of your view the picture is not the same. I am closer to it. I see the fault of the method, the absurdity of the thing, the miserable falsity of the conception. You cannot understand, Janet. It is because I have known you could not, that I have not told you till now."

"But, John, dear," she murmured tenderly, pityingly, "*I do* understand."

[Pg 301]

"No," he contradicted, gently, "you don't; you can't; it is not *for* you to understand."

He stood up, and looking down at her where she sat, smiled sadly. The bell in the tower of the library rang out upon the stillness, six times—tang—ting—tang—ting—tang—ting!

"But perhaps you can feel a little as I feel and know something of how I have felt for weeks. I shall go back to-morrow." There was no drama in the declaration. It was uttered calmly.

The girl stood up now suddenly and leaned toward him.

"What do you mean?" she asked, "you're not really going—going back—there?"

"Yes," he said. "I'm going back. I am going to try to find what has been stolen from me. I am going to try to rid myself of my unrest; to undo for myself the wrong that all unconsciously has been done me, by hands that have hit me when they only meant to be gentle. I'm going back, Janet, to work in the moulding-room beside my father."

She stared into his face, in mute wonder.

"And give up your course, John? *Now!*" she cried, as the full force of his determination dawned upon her.

"I am going to give up the false that has been thrust upon me, for the good that I have flung away," he answered. "I shall work until I have paid back all my mother's money and my father's money, and my little sister's money. Would to God I could pay them for the aching backs, the stiff fingers, and the tortured souls. I shall try. And if when I have tried, I find that, after all, it has been of no avail, that these debts can never be paid, perhaps I shall come back. Good-bye."

[Pg 302]

He held out his hand. He felt hers cold in his palm.

"Will you forgive me?" he asked simply,—*"I should not have—I should not have cared for you. It was wrong. Forgive me—"*

"There is nothing to forgive," she said, quite firmly. He drew away his hand then and hers fell limp at her side.

She stood motionless and watched his figure as it swung up the street.

Her heart bade her lips call out to him. But the million voices of the night bade her heart be still. And then, even as she watched, where he was, there was he not, but only blackness.

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## **THE OLD PROFESSOR**

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[Pg 303]

### **The Old Professor**

[Pg 305]

*(A Portrait)*

#### I

Generally he was to be found in one of the galleries of the library, surrounded by tiers on tiers of books that formed for him a veritable barricade of erudition. Or it was as though he sat at the bottom of a well the bricks of which were the solid thoughts of men, themselves gone these many, many years. But there he would sit hour after hour and read, read, read, by the ragged light that filtered down upon him through the unscrubbed glass above. Always he was the first person the librarian met on the broad stone steps when he came over in the morning with his huge key to unlock the great, thick door and throw the building open for another day.

"Good-morning, sir," the old professor would say, in his dry, thin, little voice, and bow stiffly.

"Morning," the librarian would respond, not so gruffly as characteristically, and bustle away.

Then, on tiptoe, the old professor would pass the swinging doors of baize and silently mount the gray iron stairs to the narrow galleries of the book-room where the life of his waking hours was lived among his unresponsive loves.

[Pg 306]

For he did love them, his books, whose friendship did not suffer change be the day gay or gray, and with them all about him—he the centre of the chaos of wisdom—he was happy. Among them he lived his simple life in sweet companionship and was joyous for the privilege, for without the books darkness would be his, whilst in them was light for his dim eyes and solace for his gently beating heart. So, day in, day out, in sunshine and in rain, in cold and snow and warmth, the old professor mounted, silently, the gray iron stairs in the childhood of the day, to come down again, as silently, when the lights were extinguished one by one and the broad campus without was wrapped in melancholy black.

Once he had been young. But that was in the day of hard work, when youth toiled to live. Then no lad was more sprightly than he. His early home was a long, low, rambling farmhouse in a southern state, where the flowers came early in the spring and bloomed and bloomed again late into autumn. There, to him, imaginative, dreaming, for all his boyish activity, the life out-of-doors was little less than participation in a splendid pageant—the Pageant of Summer.

[Pg 307]

On the farm adjoining lived another boy and together they builded air-castles and procrastinated through the long, still evenings, when the work of the day was done. And of such sort were the castles that they lived in them, even as they worked afield, and sowed, and reaped, and sowed

again.

Of all their dreams one was fairer than the others. It was of a college in the north where boys might go, and, once there, might learn the finer things. One day they resolved to make their goal that college. They toiled longer each day, then, until the red sun slipped below the wood-line to the west, and when the summer died they fared forth together.

Side by side they sat at lectures and at recitations. They lived together in a little room across the river where rooms were more cheaply to be had and where landladies were more accommodating and framed no loud objections to simple cooking on a smoky oil stove. Halcyon days those were to the lads, and the very experience of poverty whetted their appetites for the luxuries they dreamed one day would be for them.

Together they had from the hands of the president their diplomas, squares of sheepskin all written over in stately Latin—the golden fleece of their heroic quest.

[Pg 308]

He who later was to be the old professor, became the young professor then; and the friend of the four years in the little room across the river, where simple cooking was permitted, went away, nor ever came back again.

So near had been their lives that for a time the young professor was sad. A portrait on tin was all he had to recall the face of him who was gone, and frequently, of a Sunday afternoon which was set apart for a walk afield, he would seat himself beside the river and with the little portrait on his knee indulge in retrospections of the by-gone days when they were lads together on adjoining farms. Such fragrant reveries constituted the leaven needed in the young professor's life, for in the University circle he was much sought. He was a brilliant man; his ideas were "advanced" then, original and new. His conversation at dinner was sprightly, vivacious. He had the gallantry of generations of Southern gentlemen and was beloved of all the ladies. He was wont on occasion to pass the compliment with an almost Italian grace and he rejoiced in the tap of the fan upon his wrist which was his feminine reward.

"You must not fail us," a hostess would say, "you know Professor — will be here; such a brilliant man; such charming manners."

[Pg 309]

And the bidden guest would promise straightway, whilst the hostess would turn back from the door with a sigh, betokening, perhaps, a discontent that her Henry had not the graces of Professor —. Then the children would cry to her from the nursery and she would forget—

Or—

"That is Professor —," a fellow academician would say to a stranger on the campus as the erect, lithe-limbed young man veered round a corner. "A pillar, sir, a pillar of the institution. The making of a great man, a great man, sir."

But all this was long before the advent of the old professor, long before the day when people ceased to seek him out, to fawn before his talent, and to cherish in memory the brilliant phrases that he was so apt in making. For when that day came he was no more noticed in his passage to and fro across the campus than one of the rats that were wont to scamper from building to building in the dead hours of the night.

The transition from the young professor to the old professor was not sudden, but stealthily gradual. He loved the past, its doctrines and its methods. What had been *his* youth should be, he thought, the youth for all time, and he never knew his error. Little by little, year by year, he became less often the honored guest at a faculty dinner. He clung to the manners of his youth and the younger wives called him an old fogey and smiled when his name was mentioned.

[Pg 310]

Thus it continued until he became a mere ghost of dead days, an occasional, living reminder of an ancient system of education or method of class-room work long since relegated to that dusty storehouse where are heaped "old things" that have served their usefulness, flung aside to make room for *papier maché* manikins and varnished maps of pasteboard with the mountains raised to scale and the winding streams indented.

And yet in the official circle of the institution there lingered a certain reverence for the old professor. His sweetness of character, his gentleness of spirit, his humility, made it a sad duty to point the way to him; and so, from month to month, the president's request for his resignation was delayed, and then there occurred a little incident that secured for him, unknowing, another period of service.

The trembling country awaited application of the torch of war. In the college town a meeting was called and the citizenry swarmed into a church where the president of the University was to deliver an address.

[Pg 311]

On a bench at the front sat the old professor, his face uplifted, drawn with the pain that tore his gentle heart, for the South he loved was proving its disloyalty to the Union that he worshipped.

Through the open windows came a breeze of gentle April that moved the old professor's hair, and he lifted a trembling hand to his high smooth forehead.

Even as the president spoke there was heard a cry in the street that caused the faces of strong men to pale and their eyes to start.

"*Sumpter has been fired upon!*"

And at the cry right triumphed over wrong in the old professor's throbbing heart. Getting unsteadily upon his feet he raised his hand.

"Silence!" he called, and then, in the hush, he added, his voice trembling,

"I move that this meeting adjourn at once to Court House Square!"

A cheer was raised, and in the wake of the procession that was formed upon the instant the old professor marched—his head bowed, his eyes wet—to the open place where the speeches, now ablaze, with patriotic fervor, were resumed.

There were those who knew and somewhat understood what it had meant to the old professor to move that adjournment and when they spoke of him among themselves for many days thereafter it was with a little tremor of the voice and a certain mistiness of the eyes. And for three years he lived among them uncomplaining though stricken to the soul.

[Pg 312]

## II

But the weeks became months and the months gathered into years, and after many years even the old professor himself forgot the incident save at such times as the appearance of a man in uniform recalled it to him. At such times he was wont to close his book—his long slim finger marking the place—and let it fall upon his knee, whilst his mind galloped back across the desert of the years to hover an instant about the past's neglected grave.

Perhaps some ray of humor would creep in and part the clouds and the old professor's smile would reflect the glint of sunshine deeper in his heart. Then he would shake his head and sigh and open the book again, following the lines as he read, with that long, slim forefinger.

"A dream—a dream," he would murmur and forget.

And for a long time the memories of the dead days would sleep in his quiet mind.

[Pg 313]

He dwelt in peace in the midst of an active warring world; the peace that is the man's who feels that he has done his part, his little share, in making his world better. He knew his work was ended, that his time for rest had come, and knowing this he was satisfied to creep noiselessly and unnoticed into a dingy, unfrequented corner and there, with a book or two, a ream of pure white paper and a pen, to spend the time allowed him in the sweet society of his books.

Unhappy, you ask, this frail old man into whose thick hair the years had sprinkled many snowflakes?

All about him there was none happier.

Had you asked *him*, he would have said, no doubt, with that pale little smile of his:

"I have my books. I live well. I have my room. I have my bed. I have my meals—and some of them I prepare myself. And I have a friend. Could a man ask more? As I grow older I find myself agreeing more and more with David Thoreau, who, you will remember, once said, as he passed a tool box standing beside a railway, that he could not understand why a man should want a better home than such a box would make."

And he would laugh with himself at the philosophic quip.

[Pg 314]

His friend in his later years was another old man; not a scholar, but a man who had worked hard and lived hard, and at sunset took his rest. He too, had many graces.

On Sunday afternoons whenever the weather would permit the old professor sought him out and they walked afield, or by the river where the old professor had loved to wander as a boy. If their path were barricaded by a turnstile it always meant a lengthy parley as to whom should cross it first.

"After you, my friend," the old professor would say, bowing low.

Lifting a protesting hand, "No," the other would respond, "after you."

"I insist," the old professor would contend.

The other would indicate the turnstile with a gesture. "You first," he would repeat.

And so they would stand there bowing, insisting, until, neither seeing fit to give way, they would retrace their steps and seek a path that had no turnstile.

But once, filled with zeal to explore the wood beyond a certain stile, an ingenious plan occurred to the old professor which was immediately carried to a successful issue. Both clambered over the fence at one side of the opening and proceeded on their way.

[Pg 315]

And for a long time after each held the incident as a joke against the other.

The conversation of the friends on such occasions was of the life that lay before them, serious; never of the past. And they agreed in their philosophy at all points. They never argued.

"Well, friend," the old professor said one day, "when the time comes for us to go I hope we may go together—may continue our walk."

"I hope we may," the other answered.

"I have always thought," the old professor added with a twinkle in his eyes, "that there must be many a pleasant walk in heaven—after one has left the pavement."

### III

Alike as they were, there was one joy that now and then came into the old professor's life that the other could not share.

It came to him when, at widely separated intervals, there crossed his path a man with hair almost as white as his own, who in the days long gone had sat before him on the benches of the classroom as a student, and absorbed his wider wisdom. When such an one he met, the old professor's voice always caught in his throat and he sought to cover the confusion that he suffered by a closer pressure of his hand. Then, the emotion passing, something of the old light would flame up in his eyes.

[Pg 316]

He would step back and exclaim: "Well! well! well!" Then the memories would surge back into his mind and he would gaze abstractedly without speaking.

"You remember me?" the other old fellow would ask, gaily.

"Remember you!" the old professor would exclaim and nudge him, playfully. "Remember *you*? Well, well, I guess I couldn't *forget* you if I tried! Why you were the scamp that tied the white mule to my desk-leg and left him there over night so I should be greeted by his bray when I entered the room in the morning! Remember *you*! Ha! ha! I've been waiting all these years to get at you!"

Then he would stride upon the white haired "grad" with hand raised, ominously, but with the merry twinkle still lighting up his eyes; whilst the victim would quail mockingly, with a brighter twinkle in his own.

The old professor was known often to have kissed gray haired boys when they met on alumni day.

"I have always called you the mule-pupil," he would continue as, arm in arm they strolled back and forth along the broad main corridor.

[Pg 317]

"And do you remember what you said to the class when you found that mule at your desk, in the morning?" the scamp would ask, with a chuckle, perhaps.

"No, what?"

"Ah, I remember it as though it were yesterday; how you came bustling into the room. You saw the mule. We were all boiling inside. You did not scowl. You did not rant. You did not call down upon our heads the venging hand of a just heaven. You just turned to us as calm as you are now...."

The old professor would gurgle here, with rare delight.

"... and said, 'young gentlemen, I perceive that you have already been provided with an instructor quite competent to teach you all you will ever be able to learn!' And then you walked out of the room with a polite 'good-morning.'"

Here the former student would roar with laughter.

"You don't tell me," the old professor would exclaim. "You don't tell me I said *that*! Well, well, well; that *was* rather hard on you boys, wasn't it? I'd forgotten all about it. I—I just remembered the *mule*!"

[Pg 318]

"And do you recall," the man who was a boy, again would ask, "how you found all the wood from the big wood-box in the south-wing corridor piled against your door?"

The old professor would wrinkle his forehead here and stare thoughtfully at the floor.

"No, I don't seem to recollect," he would say.

"Well you *did*; we boys had piled it there, of course. Must have been a cord at least. Then we hung around to see what you would do."

"And what *did* I do?"

"You began to remove the pile, stick by stick, and to pack them all away in the great wood-box."

Here the old professor was always wont to shake with silent laughter.

"Well, we stood it as long as we could, and then Billy Green—you remember Billy Green; poor Billy, he was killed at Gettysburg. Billy went up to you, as brave as you please, and said: 'Professor, I don't know who *piled* this wood against your door but *un-piling* it is no work for you.' And then he shouted to us, 'come on, boys,' and we fell to and got the wood away from that door



in about two jerks of a lamb's tail. But didn't we feel small! Professor, why didn't you have a few of us fired bodily?" [Pg 319]

"Oh, no, no, my friend," the old professor would perhaps exclaim, quickly. "Expel a boy for being a boy! It is not for you or me, dear sir, to seek to improve upon the handiwork of God!"

And there would ensue another laugh, and many more in the three days to follow, and then commencement would be over and the old student would go back to Kansas City and the old professor to his books.

But for more than three days a subtle effect of the meeting would remain with him. For many days he would carry his head a bit higher. A color flush would show upon his hollow cheeks; his step would take on an unaccustomed elasticity. For a discriminating Fate had touched to the old professor's lips the cup of life and he had sipped of the contents, and another year was his.

#### IV

I remember him best as I saw him first. It was in the late afternoon of a golden day in mid-October. A companion pointed him out to me as we approached the ivy-green library. He was coming slowly down the steps, one arm encircling a great bundle of books, one hand fumbling at his neck scarf. The clothes he wore were of another day. The coat was full-skirted, long, and bulging at the breast. About his thin throat was twisted a black silk stock, frayed and rusty, over which the loose and unstarched collar rolled. On his broad-toed shoes his baggy trousers fell in folds. There was a seeming rigidity to the creases that induced the thought they must have been so always; like the wrinkles in the wrappings of a mummy. And yet, infinitely pathetic as the picture was, I knew that such a coat, such a stock, even such a round crowned, broad brimmed soft hat as that he wore, once had made the old professor a man of fashion—a quarter of a century before. [Pg 320]

"That's the oldest professor on the campus," my companion said. "In college? No. He hasn't taught a class for twenty years. He was an old fogey and they removed him, I'm told, to make room for a younger man. He's only waiting for the end now. Every one says he'd give five years to get back on the faculty. You'll usually find him near the library, either just going in or just coming out. He hides himself all day among the books. The fellows call him 'The Ghost.' I've been told he saved a little from his salary every quarter and that now he lives in a little back room somewhere near the campus and cooks his own meals." [Pg 321]

And whenever after that I saw him it was this last phrase that recurred to me with almost painful insistency ... "lives in a little back room somewhere ... and cooks his own meals."

It was hard for youth to realize that such could be humanity's reward to a man who had given a life of patience, forbearance, toil, and sacrifice, to make his little world the better for his having lived within it.

We stood apart and watched him as he came slowly down the broad, stone steps. At the last he stopped and looked up at the sky. We saw his face more clearly then. It was thin, pale, drawn about the mouth, but the eyes were infinitely tender. His lips trembled and seemed to form words that were not uttered. Then he walked on. Twice, before he turned the corner of the ivy-covered wall, he raised a hand to his face and passed the dangling finger-tips of his black cloth glove across his eyes.

That slow walk home beneath the canopy the painted maples made marked the ending of another day in the old professor's fading life; a day such as days had been for twenty years, a space of time in which a smile had flitted to his lips, a tear had risen, and he had held the book a little closer to his eyes. [Pg 322]

It was not long thereafter that we learned the end had come. They found him in his chair, a book upon his knee, his slim forefinger marking the page where he had left off reading to close his eyes and dream. The pale ghost of a smile still lingered about his mouth.

Some one, gentler than the rest, placed a single rose in the cold hand, and a scant company followed the slow hearse to the cemetery.

No one wept. Perhaps no one even felt a sadness, standing there beside the open grave. Yet he would not have wished it otherwise. They covered him for the long, long sleep, and went away.

And now, on a day in June, when the air is heavy with the fragrance of the green and growing things and the grasses are alive with singing creatures, the breeze that stirs alike the tall tree-tops and the tender shoots of grain seems to whisper above the lonely grave, unmarked in that great City of the Dead: "Sleep on; thy work is done; done well. Thou shalt be rewarded."

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