Title: Our Square and the People in It

Author: Samuel Hopkins Adams
Illustrator: J. Scott Williams

Release date: December 1, 2013 [EBook #44328]
Most recently updated: February 21, 2021

Language: English

Credits: Produced by David Widger

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WALLED in by slums stands Our Square, a valiant green space, far on the flank of the Great City. Ours is an inglorious little world Sociologists have-not yet remarked and classified us. The Washington Square romancers who bold sentimental revel at the foot of Fifth Avenue reck nothing of their sister park, many blocks to the east. But we are patient of our obscurity. Close-knit, keeping our own counsel, jealous of our own concerns, and not without our own pride of place, we live our quiet lives, a community sufficient unto itself. So far as may be for mortals under the sway of death and love and fate, we maintain ourselves with little change amid the kaleidoscopic shiftings of the surrounding metropolis. Few come into Our Square except of necessity. Few go out but under the same stem impulsion. Some of us are held by tradition, some by poverty, some by affection, and some through loyalty to what once was and is no more. Here we live, and here hope to die, "the kind hearts, the true hearts that loved the place of old." And of all, there is no truer heart or kinder than that of the gentle, shrewd, and neighborly old dominie through whose lips I tell these

tales, the real historian of the folk whom I, too, have known and loved in Our Square.

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OUR SQUARE

I

OUR Square lies broad and green and busy, in the forgotten depths of the great city. By day it is bright with the laughter of children and shrill with the bickering of neighbors. By night the voice of the spellbinder is strident on its corners, but from the remoter benches float murmurs where the young couples sit, and sighs where the old folk relax their weariness. New York knows little of Our Square, submerged as we are in a circle of slums. Yet for us, as for more Elysian fields, the crocus springs in the happy grass, the flash and song of the birds stir our trees, and Romance fans us with the wind of its imperishable wing.

The first robin was singing in our one lone lilac when the Bonnie Lassie came out of the Somewhere Else into Our Square and possessed herself of the ground floor of our smallest house, the nestly little dwelling with the quaint old door and the broad, friendly vestibule, next but one to the Greek church. Before she had been there a month she had established eminent domain over all of us. Even MacLachan, the dour tailor on the corner, used to burst into song when she passed. It was he who dubbed her the Bonnie Lassie, and as it was the first decent word he'd spoken of living being within the memory of Our Square, the name stuck. Apart from that, it was eminently appropriate. She was a small girl who might have been perhaps twenty-three or twenty-four if she hadn't (more probably) been twenty, and looked a good deal like a thoughtful kitten when she wasn't twinkling at or with somebody. When she twinkled—and she did it with eyes, voice, heart, and soul all at once—the cart-peddlers stopped business to look and listen. You can't go further than that, not in Our Square at least.

How long Cyrus the Gaunt had been there before she discovered him is a matter of conjecture. He slipped in from the Outer Darkness quite unobtrusively and sat about looking thoughtful and lonely. He was exaggeratedly long and loose and mussed-up and melancholy-looking, and first attracted local attention on a bench which several other people wanted more than he did. So he got up and gave it to them. Later, when the huskiest of them met him and explained, by way of putting him in his proper place, what would have happened to him if he hadn't been so obliging, Cyrus absent-mindedly said, “Oh, yes,” threw the belligerent one into our fountain, held him under water quite as long as was safe, dragged him out, hauled him over to Schwartz's, and bought him a drink. Thereafter Cyrus was still considered an outlander, but nobody actively objected to his sitting around Our Square, looking as melancholy and queer as he chose. Nobody, that is, until the Bonnie Lassie took him in hand.

Nothing could have been more correct than their first meeting, sanctioned as it was by the majesty of the

law. Terry the Cop, who presides over the destinies of Our Square, led the Bonnie Lassie to Cyrus's bench and said; “Miss, this is the young feller you asked me about. Make you two acquainted.”

Thereupon the young man got up and said, “How-d'ye-do?” wonderingly, and the young woman nodded and said, “How-d'ye-do?” non-committally, and the young policeman strolled away, serene in the consciousness of a social duty well performed.

The Bonnie Lassie regarded her new acquaintance with soft, studious eyes. There was something discomfortingly dehumanizing in that intent appraisal. He wriggled.

“Yes, I think you'll do,” she ruminated slowly.

“Thanks,” murmured Cyrus, wondering for what.

“Suppose we sit down and talk it over,” said she.

Studying her unobtrusively from his characteristically drooping position, Cyrus wondered what this half-fairy, half-flower, with the decisive manner of a mistress of destiny, was doing in so grubby an environment.

On her part, she reflected that she had seldom encountered so homely a face, and speculated as to whether that was its sole claim to interest. Then he lifted his head; his eyes met hers, and she modified her estimate, substituting for “homely,” first “queer,” then “quaint,” and finally “unusual.” Also there was something impersonally but hauntingly reminiscent about him; something baffling and disconcerting, too. The face wasn't *right*.

“Do you mind answering some questions?” she asked.

“Depends,” he replied guardedly. “Well, I'll try. Do you live here?”

“Just around the corner.”

“What do you do?”

“Nothing much.”

“How long have you been doing it?”

“Too long.”

“Why don't you stop?”

For the second time Cyrus the Gaunt lifted his long, thin face and looked her in the eye. “Beautiful Incognita,” he drawled with mild impertinence, “did you *write* the Shorter Catechism or are you merely plagiarizing?”

“Oh!” she said. Surprise and the slightest touch of dismay were in the monosyllable. “I'm afraid I've made a mistake. I thought—the policeman said you were a down-and-outer.”

“I'm the First Honorary Vice-President of the Life Branch of the Organization.”

He slumped back into his former attitude. Again she studied him. “No, I don't understand,” she said slowly.

But the dehumanizing tone had gone from the soft voice. Cyrus began to rescue his personality from her impersonal ignoring of it. He also felt suddenly a livelier interest in life. Then, unexpectedly, she turned his flank.

“You lurk and stare at my house in the dark,” she accused.

“Which house?” he asked, startled.

“You know quite well. You shouldn't stare at strange houses. It embarrasses them.”

“Is that the miniature mansion with the little bronzes of dancing street-children in the windows?”

She nodded.

“Why shouldn't I stare? There's a secret in that house!”

“A secret? What secret?”

“The secret of happiness. Those dancing kiddies have got it. I want it. I want to know what makes'em so happy.”

“I do,” said the girl promptly.

“Yes. I shouldn't be surprised,” he assented, lifting his head to contemplate her with his direct and grave regard. “Do you live there with them?”

“They're mine. I model them. I'm a sculptor.”

“Good Lord! You! But you're a very good one, aren't you?—if you did those.”

“I've been a very bad one. Now I'm trying to be a very good one.”

A gleam of comprehension lit his eye. “Oh, then it's as a subject that you thought I'd do. You wanted to sculp me.”

“Yes, I do. For my collection. You see, I've adopted this Square.”

“And now you're sculping it. I see.” He raised himself to peer across at the windows where the blithe figures danced, tiny mænads of the gutter, Bacchæ of the asphalt. “But I don't see why on earth you want me. Do you think you could make *me* happy?”

“I shouldn't try.”

“Hopeless job, you think? As a sculptor you ought to be a better judge of character. You ought to pierce through the externals and perceive with your artistic eye that beneath this austere mask I'm as merry a little cricket as ever had his chirp smothered by the slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune.”

It was then that she twinkled at him, and the twinkle grew into a laugh, such golden laughter as brightened life to the limits of its farthest echo. Cyrus had the feeling that the gray April sky had momentarily opened up and sent down a sun-ray to illumine the proceedings.

“How wonderfully you mix them!” she cried. “Shall I sculp you in cap and bells?”

“Why should I let you sculp meat all?” She stopped laughing abruptly and looked up at him with wondering eyes and parted lips, drooping just the tiniest bit at the corners. “Everybody does,” she said.

At once he understood why everybody did that or anything else she wished. “All right,” he yielded. “What am I to sit for?”

“Fifty cents an hour.”

Then the Bonnie Lassie got her second surprise from him. His face changed abruptly. An almost animal eagerness shone in his eyes. “Fif-fif-fif—” he began, then recovered himself. “Pardon my performing like a deranged steam-whistle, but do I understand that you offer to pay me for sitting about doing nothing while you work? Did all those cheerful dancers in the window collect pay at that rate?”

“Some of them did. Others are my friends.”

“Ah, you draw social distinctions, I perceive.”

“I think we needn't fence,” said the girl spiritedly. “When I came to you I thought you were of Our Square. If you will tell me just what variety of masquerader you are, we shall get on faster.”

“Do you think I don't belong quite as much to Our Square as you do?”

“Oh, I! This is my workshop. This is my life. But you—I should have suspected you from the first word you spoke. What are you? Don't tell me that you are here Settlementing or Sociologizing or Improving the Condition of Somebody Else! Because I really do need your face,” she concluded with convincing earnestness. “It's yours at fifty cents an hour.”

“And you're not an Improver?”

“Absolutely not. Do I look as if I'd improved myself?”

“You wouldn't do at all for my present purpose, improved,” she observed. “Please don't forget that. When can you come to me?”

“Any time.”

“Haven't you anything else to do?”

“Nothing but look out for odd jobs. That's why I'm so grateful for regular employment.”

“But this isn't regular employment.” His face fell. “It's most irregular, and there's very little of it.”

“Oh, well, it's fifty cents an hour. And that's more than I've ever earned in my life, Miss Sculptor.”

“I am Miss Willard.”.

“Then, Miss Willard, you're employing Cyrus Murphy. Do you think I'll sculp up like a Murphy?”

“I don't think you'll sculp up like a Murphy at all, and I've too many friends who are Murphys to believe that you are one. In fact, I could do you much better if I knew what you are.”

“That's quite simple. I'm a suicide. I walked right spang over the edge of life and disappeared. Splash! Bubble-bubble! There goes nothing. The only difference between me and a real suicide is that I have to eat. At times it's difficult.”

“Haven't you any trade? Can't you do *anything?*” With a sweep of her little hand she indicated the bustling activities with which the outer streets whirred. “Isn't there any place for you in all this?”

He contemplated the world's work as exemplified around Our Square. His gaze came to rest upon a steam-roller, ponderously clanking over a railed-off portion of the street. “I suppose I could run that.”

“Could you? That's a man's job at least. Have you ever run one?”

“No, but I know I could. Any kind of machinery just eats out of my hand.”

“Well, that's something. It's better than being a model. Be at my house tomorrow at nine please.”

For an hour thereafter Cyrus the Gaunt sat on the bench musing upon a small, flower-like, almost absurdly efficient young person who had contracted, as he viewed it, to inject light and color into life at fifty cents an hour, and who had plainly intimated that, in her view, he was not a man. It was that precise opinion expressed by another and a very unlike person which was responsible for his being where he was. At that time it had made him furious. Now it made him thoughtful.

Presently he went through his pockets, reckoned his assets, rose up from the bench, and made a trip to MacLachan's “Home of Fashion,” where he left his clothes to be pressed overnight. In the morning he reappeared again, shaved to the closest limit of human endurance, and thus addressed the Scot:—

“Have you got my clothes pressed?”

“Aye,” said the tailor.

“Well, unpress 'em again.”

“Eh?” said the tailor.

“Unpress'em. Sit on'em. Roll'em on the floor. Muss'em up. Put all the wrinkles back, just as they were.”

“Mon, ye shud leave the whiskey be,” advised the tailor.

Thereupon Cyrus caught up his neatly creased suit and proceeded to play football with it, after which he put it on and viewed himself with satisfaction.

“And I almost forgot that she wouldn't have any use for me, improved,” he muttered as he wended his way to the little, old friendly house. “Lord, I might have lost my job!”

Any expectation of social diversion at fifty cents an hour which Cyrus the Gaunt may have cherished was promptly quashed on his arrival. It was a very businesslike little sculptor who took him in hand.

“Sit here, please—the right knee farther forward—let the chin drop a little—” and all that sort of thing.

He might not even watch the soft, strong little hands as they patted and kneaded, nor the vivid face as plastic as the material from which the hands worked their wonders, for when he attempted it:—

“I don't wish you to look at me. I wish you to look at nothing, as you do when you sit on the bench. Make your eyes tired again.”

The difficulty was that his eyes, tired so long with that weariness which lies at the very roots of being, didn't feel tired at all in the little studio. For one thing, there was an absurd, fluffed-up whirlwind of a kitten

who performed miracles of obstacle-racing all over the place. Then, in the most unexpected crannies and corners lurked tiny bronzes, instinct with life: a wistful dog submitting an injured paw to a boy hardly as large as himself; “Androcles” this one was labeled. Then there was “Mystery,” a young, ill-clad girl, looking down at a dead butterfly; “Remnants,” a withered and bent old woman, staggering under her load of builders' refuse; “The Knight,” a small boy astride across the body of his drunken father, brandishing a cudgel against a circle of unseen tormentors; and many others, all vivid with that feeling for the human struggle which alone can make metal live.

“Recess!” cried the worker presently. “You're doing quite well!”

Thus encouraged, Cyrus ventured a question:—

“Where are the dancers?”

“They're all in the window.”

“But this in here is quite as big work, isn't it? Why isn't some of it on display?”

“It's for outsiders. It isn't for my people.” She put a world of protectiveness in the two final words.

“I can't see why not.”

“Because the people of Our Square don't need to be told of the tragedy of life. Joy and play and laughter is what they need. So I give it to them.”

A light came into his tired, old-young eyes. “Do you know, I begin to think you're a very wonderful person.”

“Time to work again,” said she. Whereby, being an understanding young man, he perceived that there would be no safe divergence from the strict relations of employer and employed, for the present at least. Half a dozen times he sat for her, sometimes collecting a dollar, sometimes only fifty cents, the money being invariably handed over with a demure and determined air of business procedure, and duly entered in a tiny book, which was a never-failing source of suppressed amusement to him. Then one day the basis abruptly changed, for a reason he did not learn about until long after.

It had to do with a process which I must regretfully term eavesdropping, on the part of the little sculptor. The subjects were two-on-a-bench, in Our Square. One was Cyrus the Gaunt; the other an inconsiderable and hopeless lounger, grim and wan.

Silver passed between them, and something else, less tangible, something which lighted a sudden flame of hope in the hopeless face.

“A real job?” the lurking sculptor overheard him say, hoarsely.

Cyrus nodded. “Nine o'clock to-morrow morning, here,” said he.

Slipping quietly away, the girl almost ran into the grim and wan lounger, no longer so grim and several degrees less wan, as he rounded the opposite curve of the circle and passed out on the street in front of her. The next instant Cyrus shot by her at a long-legged gallop and caught the man by the shoulder.

“Here! Wait! Not nine o'clock,” he cried breathlessly. “I forgot. I've got an engagement, a—very important business engagement.”

The other's jaw dropped. “What the—” he began, when there appeared before them both a trim and twinkling vision of femininity.

“I'm glad I saw you,” said the vision to Cyrus, “because I shan't want you until ten-thirty to-morrow.” Then she passed on, so deep in thought that she hardly responded to the greetings which accosted her on all sides. “I don't understand it at *all*” she murmured.

Promptly upon the morrow's hour Cyrus appeared at the studio, rumpled and mussed as usual. “How do you do?” the artist greeted him. “Before we go to work I want you to meet Fluff.”

Cyrus glanced at the kitten, who was chasing a phantom mouse up the swaying curtain. “I already know Fluff,” said he.

“Oh, no, you don't,” she corrected gently. “That is, Fluff doesn't know you. She doesn't know that you are alive. Fluff is a person of fine distinctions. Come here, Mischief.” The kitten gave over the chase, after one last lightning swipe, and trotted across the room. “Fluff,” said her mistress, “this is our friend, Cyrus.” The kitten purred and nosed Cyrus's foot.

“Thank you,” said the young man gratefully. “I also am not wholly insensible to fine distinctions. Fluff, do you know how those ancient barbarian parties looked and acted when they were called 'friend of the state of Rome'? Well, regard me.”

His employer twinkled at him with her eyes. “I've sold you,” she remarked.

“At a good price?”

“Yes. You were really very good.”

“It would have been kind to let me see myself before you bartered me away into eternal captivity.”

“Kinder not.”

“You mean I shouldn't have liked your idea of me?”

“Didn't I say that it was *good?*” she returned with composed pride. “My idea of you wouldn't be good, as modeling. This is the real *you*, the man underneath.”

“That's worse. You think I oughtn't to like myself as I am.”

She looked up at him with intimate and sympathetic friendliness. “Well, *do* you?” was all she said.

“Whether I do or not, it's pretty evident what you think of me.”

“It ought to be. I've introduced you to Fluff. One can't be too careful as to whom one introduces to one's young and guileless daughter.”

“Thank you.” For the first time in their acquaintance he smiled. The smile changed his face luminously.

She tossed the tiny iron with which she was working into the far corner of the studio. “That settles it,” she said. “I'm through.”

“For the day?”

“Wrong! All wrong!” she cried vehemently, disregarding his question. “Why did you have to go and smile that way? I haven't done you at all. Do you know what I've been sculping you as?”

“You wouldn't tell me, you know. Nothing very flattering, I judged.”

“As a disenchanted and uncontrolled drifter.”

“And now you think perhaps I'm not?”

“I don't know what you are, but I think I might as well be clicking the shutter of a camera, for all I've done with you. The point is, that I've come to the end of you for the present.”

“You don't want me any more?” he cried, aghast.

“If I did, you wouldn't have time. I've got you a real man's job.”

“What kind of slavery have you sold me into this time?”

“The steam-roller. I've used my influence—you don't know what a pull I've got around here—and I can name my man for the late night-shift. Will you take it?” His face was elate. “Will I take it! Will a duck eat pie?”

“I'm sure I don't know. Will it?”

“It will if it can't get anything else to eat. How long is this job good for?”

“All summer and more. How long are you?”

“Till released.”

“You have made a promise. I'll enter it in my ledger.” Which she did, writing it down in her absurd little booklet with a delicious solemnity of importance.

“But can't I come and sit for you afternoons?” he pleaded.

“How many wages do you want to earn? No; not at present. But Miss Fluff and I are at home to honest working friends on Friday evenings. Come here, Miss Fluff, and tell the new engineer that we'll be glad to have him come and tell us about the job when he's learned it.” But the kitten paid no heed, being at that moment engaged in treacherously and scientifically stalking an imaginary butterfly along the window-sill.

“Before I'm banished,” said Cyrus, “may I ask a question?”

“You might try it.”

“Do you mind telling me your given name? Not for use,” he added, as she looked up at him with her grave, speculative gaze, “but just as a guaranty of good faith. I set great store by other people's names, having been cursed since birth with my own Persian abomination.”

“I don't think Cyrus is bad at all,” she said. “Mine is Carol.”

“Oh,” said he blankly.

“Don't you like it?”

“It's a very nice name, for some people,” he said guardedly.

“You don't like it. Why?”

There was no evading the directness of that demand. “I never knew but one girl named Carol,” he said. “She squinted.”

“What of it? I don't squint. Do I? Do I? DO I?”

With each repetition of her defiance she took one step nearer him, until at the last she was fairly standing on tiptoe under his nose. Cyrus the Gaunt looked down into those radiant eyes that grew wider and deeper and deeper and wider, until his heart, which had been slipping perilously of late, fell into them and was hopelessly lost. “Do I?” she demanded once more.

Cyrus responded with a loud yell. Inappropriate as the outcry was, it saved a situation becoming potentially dangerous, for not far below those luminous eyes was a dimple that flickered at the corner of a challenging mouth; unconsciously challenging, doubtless, yet—And then Fluff, opportunely descrying her imaginary butterfly on the side of Cyrus's trouser-leg, made a flying leap and drove ten keen claws through the fabric into the skin beneath. Her mistress dislodged the too ardent entomologist, and apologized demurely.

“You see,” said she, “you've become an intimate of the household. When you're too busy to come and see us, Fluff and I will peek out and admire you as you go plunging past on your irresistible course.”

“It's going to be a lonely job,” said Cyrus the Gaunt wistfully, “compared to this one.”

“Nonsense!” she retorted briskly as she handed him a dollar bill. “Here's your pay. You'll be too busy to be lonely. Good luck, Mr. Engineer.”

II

Thus Cyrus the Gaunt became a toiler in, and by slow degrees a citizen of, Our Square. We are a doubtful people where strangers are concerned. The ritual of initiation for Cyrus was, at first, chance words and offhand nods, then an occasional bidding to sit in at Schwartz's, and finally consultations and confidences on matters of import, political, social, or private. Thus was Cyrus the Gaunt adopted as one of us. Quite from the outset of his job he became a notable pictorial asset of the place, standing out, lank and black, in the intermittent gleam of his own engine, as he rolled on his appointed course amidst firmamental thunderings. Acting as chauffeur to ten tons of ill-balanced metal, he promptly discovered, is an occupation to

which the tyro must pay explicit heed if he would keep within the bounds of his precinct. About the time when he was beginning to feel at ease with his charger, he came to a stop, one misty night, directly opposite the window of a taxicab, and met a pair of eyes which straightway became fixed in a paralysis of amazed doubt.

"No; it isn't. It can't be," said the owner of the eyes presently.

"Yes, it is," contradicted Cyrus.

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"That's all that the pious young Presbyterian boss of a fashionable church has a right to be."

"*What* are you doing up there?"

"Piloting a submarine under Governor's Island."

"So I see." The taxi-door opened, and some six feet of well-tailored manhood mounted nimbly to Cyrus's side. "What's the fare? And why? Is it a bet?"

Cyrus the Gaunt grinned amiably in the face of the Reverend Morris Cartwright, whose appearance in that quarter did not greatly surprise him. "How did you know? It's leaked out at the club, has it?"

"Not that I know of. I guessed it."

"Thought nothing short of a bet would account for such a reversal of form, eh? Keep it to yourself, and I'll tell you the rest."

"You've hired an ear," observed the young cleric.

"Maybe you heard that I had a nervous breakdown last spring. Kind of a mixture of things."

"Yes; I know the mixture. Three of gin to one of Italian."

"You know too much for a minister," growled the other. "Besides, it was only part that. I just sort of got sick of doing nothing and being nothing, and the sickness struck in, I expect. Well, one morning, after a night of bridge, I came out into the breakfast-room nine hundred plus to the good, and about ready to invest the whole in any kind of painless dope that would save me from being bored with this life any more. There sat Doc Gerritt, pink and smooth like a cherry-stone clam. I stuck out my hand, and it was shaking. I dare say my voice was shaking, too, for Gerry looked up pretty sharp, when I said, 'Doc, can you do anything for me?' 'No,' says he. 'Is it as bad as that?' I asked. 'It's worse,' says he. 'I'm a busy man with no time to waste on sure losses. Flat down, Cyrus, you aren't worth it.' 'This is all I've got of me,' I said. 'I'm worth it to myself.' 'Then do it for yourself,' he snapped. 'You're the only one that can.' 'Will you tell me how?' 'I will,' says he. 'But you won't do it. You aren't man enough.' 'Gerry,' I said, 'you may be a good doctor, but you're a damn liar.' 'Am I?' says he. 'Prove it. Cut the booze and go to work.' 'Work won't do me any good,' I said. 'I've tried it, and it bored me worse than the other thing. When I'm bored, I naturally reach for a drink.' (There's a great truth in that, you know, Carty, if the temperance people would only grab it: boredom and booze —cause and effect.) 'That's a hot line of advice, Doc,' I said. 'Maybe you'll think better of it when you get my bill for fifty,' says he. (I got it, too. I've still got it.) 'I don't mean Wall Street, Cyrus,' says he. 'I mean work. You've never tried work. You've just played at it. I'll bet you a thousand,' he went on (he was playing me up to this all the time, Carty), 'that you'd starve in six months if you tried to make your living where nobody knows you.' Well, Carty, you know how I am with a bet. It comes just as natural to me to say 'You're on,' as 'Here's how,' or 'Have another.' I said it, and here I am. I'll bet Doc Gerritt's laughing yet," he concluded with a wry face.

"They say he's the best diagnostician going, in his own line." The young clergyman studied Cyrus out of the corner of his eye. "I wouldn't wonder if it were true. How do you like the prescription so far?"

"Interesting," said Cyrus the Gaunt. "I've been hungry, and I've been lonely, and I've been scared, and I've even been near-yellow, but I haven't been bored for a minute. You never get bored, Carty, when you have the probabilities of your next meal to speculate on, pro and con. Odd jobs have been my stay mostly, before I landed this. And when there wasn't anything in my own line, I kept up my nerve by catching 'em on the way down and shoving 'em into jobs on Jink Hereford's Canadian preserve."

"Good man!" approved the Reverend Morris Cartwright. "What'll you have?" he added.

"Frankfurters and a glass of milk, if it's an open order. But you'll have to fetch it to me from Schwartz's. I can't leave this here skittish little pet of mine."

Then and there some Sunday supplement missed a "throbbing human-interest story" in that no reporter was present to witness one of New York's fashionable young pastors emerging from an obscure saloon bearing food and drink to the grimy driver of an all-night thunder-wagon.

"And now," said Cyrus the Gaunt, handing down the empty glass, "if it isn't one of your disgraceful secrets, what are *you* doing in this galley? Heading off some poor unfortunate who wants to go to the devil peacefully, in his own way?"

"No, I leave that to the doctors," retorted the other mildly.

"Quite so," chuckled Cyrus. "Throw some water in my face and drag me to my corner, will you?"

"This is an errand of diplomacy," continued Cartwright. "I'm an envoy. Do you happen to know which house —" His ranging vision fell upon the row of figures joyously dancing in the window. "Never mind," he said, "I've found it." He disappeared between the portals of the old-fashioned, hospitable door.

Quite a considerable part of his week's wages would Cyrus the Gaunt have forfeited to interpret the visitor's expression when he came out, a long hour later. He looked at once harassed, regretful, and yet triumphant, as one might look who had achieved the object of a thankless errand.

The Bonnie Lassie came to the door with him and stood gazing out across the flaring lights and quivering shadows of Our Square. It seemed to Cyrus that the flower-face drooped a little.

And indeed the Bonnie Lassie was not feeling very happy. When one's adopted world goes well, the claims that draw one back become irksome ties. The messenger from the world which she had temporarily foregone was far from welcome. But at least she had claimed and won some months of respite and freedom for her work.

So engrossed did she become with that work that she saw little or nothing of Cyrus the Gaunt until Chance

brought them together in the climatic fashion so dear to that Protean arbiter of destinies. Returning one evening from a call upon a small invalid friend in a tenement quite remote from Our Square, the Bonnie Lassie essayed a cross-cut which skirted the mouth of a blind alley. From within there sounded a woman's scream of pain and fear.

The Bonnie Lassie hesitated. It was a forbidding alley, and the scream was not inspiriting. It was repeated. Not for nothing is one undisputed empress of Our Square. The Bonnie Lassie had the courage of one who rules. She swooped into that black byway like a swallow entering a cave. Now the screams were muffled, with a grisly, choked sound. They led her flying feet toward a narrow side passage. But before she reached the turn, a towering bulk sped by her, almost filling the thin slit between the walls.

When she came within view, the matter was apparently settled. A swarthy, vividly clad woman cringed against one wall. Against the other Cyrus had pinned a swarthier man. The man, helpless, seemed to be wheedling and promising. With a final shake and a growl—the girl likened it in her mind to that of a great, magnanimous dog—the gaunt one released the Sicilian and stopped to pick up his hat, which had fallen in the struggle. Then the girl's heart leaped and clogged her throat with terror, for, as Cyrus turned, the pretense fell from the face of his opponent and it changed to a mask of murder. His hand darted to his breast and came forth clutching the thin, terrible, homemade stiletto of the rag-picking tribe, a file ground to a rounded needle-point. The girl strove to cry out. It seemed to her only the whisper of a nightmare. But it was enough.

Cyrus spun around and leaped back. His arm went out stiff as a bar. At the end of it was a formidable something which flashed with an ugly glint of metal in the Sicilian's face. Whether or not she heard a report, the terror-stricken onlooker could not have said. But the would-be murderer screamed, tottered, withered. His weapon tinkled upon the coping. Then an arm of inordinate size and strength encircled the Bonnie Lassie, whirled her up out of a pit of blackness, and supported her through a reeling world. At her ear a quietly urgent voice kept insisting that she must walk—walk—walk, and not let herself lapse. A shock jolted her brain. It was the smell of ammonia. The darkness dissipated, became an almost intolerable light, and she found herself seated opposite Cyrus the Gaunt at a polished metal table in an ice cream parlor.

Whirled her up out of a pit of blackness, and supported her through a reeling world

“Don't let go of my hand,” she whispered faintly.

His big, reassuring clasp tightened. “We got away before the crowd came,” he said. “You have wonderful nerve. I thought you were gone.”

“Don't speak of it,” she shuddered. “I can't stand it.”

Not until, after a slow, silent walk, they were seated on a bench in Our Square could she gather her resolution for the dreadful question. “Did you kill him?”

“Good Lord, no!”

Whirled her up out of a pit of blackness, and supported her through a reeling world.

“But—but—you shot him!”

“Yes, with this.” He thrust his hand in his pocket, and again, as she closed her eyes against the sight, she caught faintly the pungent stimulus that had revived her.

“What is it?”

“Ammonia-pop. Model of my own.” Her eyes flew open, the color flooded into her cheeks, but receded again. “He might have killed you!” she exclaimed. “I thought when you turned away and I saw the dagger that— Oh, how could you take such a desperate chance?”

“Just fool-in-the-head, I guess. I supposed he was through. Don't know that breed, you see. But for you, he'd have got me.”

“But for *you*,” she retorted, “I don't know what might have happened to me. How came you to be down in that slum?”

“Oh,” said he carelessly, “I prowl.”

“As far away as that?” She looked at him, sidelong.

“All around. I know that neighborhood like a book.”

“What's the name of that alley?”

“Alley? Er—what alley?”

“Mr. Cyrus Murphy, how long have you been following me about?”

He turned an unpicturesque, dull red. “Well, that's no place for a girl alone,” he growled.

“You know, one evening I thought I saw you, down near Avenue C, but I couldn't be sure. Was it?”

“It might have been,” he grudged. “Avenue C is a public thoroughfare.”

“And you've been guarding me,” she murmured.

Her eyes brooded on him, and the color was rising in her face to match his. But, while Cyrus blushed like a brick, the Bonnie Lassie blushed like the hue of flying clouds after sunset.

“Why don't you take a policeman?” he blurted out. “If anything should happen to you—It isn't safe,” he concluded lamely.

“Not even when I'm chaperoned with an ammonia popgun?” she smiled. “Why do you carry that?”

“For dogs. Dogs don't always like me. It's my clothes, I suppose.”

“Any dog who wouldn't like and trust you on sight,” she pronounced with intense conviction, “is an imbecile.”

He smiled his acknowledgment. At that her face altered.

“There you go, smiling once more,” she said fretfully. “You do it very seldom, but—”

“I'm always smiling, deep inside me, at you,” he said quietly.

“But when you smile outside, it makes you so different. And I find I've done you all wrong.”

“Are you still sculping me?” he asked in surprise.

“I—I have been, but I stopped.” She paused, trying again to think of him as merely a model, and found, to her discomfiture, that it caused a queer, inexplicable little pang deep inside her heart. Nevertheless, the artist rose overpoweringly within her at his next question.

“Do you want me to sit for you again?”

“Oh, would you? Now?”

He glanced at the church clock. “I've forty-seven minutes,” he said.

Much may be accomplished in forty-seven minutes. In the studio she sprang to her work with a sort of contained fury. And as the eager, intent eyes regarded him with an ever-increasing impersonality, a pain was born in his heart and grew and burned, because to this woman who had clung to him in the abandonment of mortal weakness but an hour before, whose pulses had leaped and fluttered for his peril, he had become only a subject for exploitation, something to further her talent, wax to her deft hand.

Perhaps he had been that since the first. Well, what right had he to expect anything more?

Nothing of this reached the absorbed worker. She was intent upon her model's mouth and chin, whereon she had caught the sense of significant changes. Had she but once come forth from her absorption to see and interpret the man's eyes, she might have known. For only in the eyes does a brave man's suffering show; the rest of his face he may control beyond betrayal. Something happily restrained her from offering payment as usual, when she finally threw the cloth over the unfinished sketch.

“You spoke of dogs not liking your clothes,” she said lightly. “Do you always sleep in them?”

“Oh, no. They sleep on the floor at the foot of my bed and keep watch. May I have them pressed?”

“It would be an interesting change. But why ask my permission?”

“Because you told me once to come as is.'”

“So I did,” she laughed. “But that was before you were an honest workingman. Go and get pressed out.”

“No more use for me as a model?”

“Oh, I don't say that.”

“But I'm to see you sometimes?” he persisted.

“How could it be otherwise, with you doing patrol duty in front of my door?” she twinkled.

With unnecessary emphasis she shut the door upon the retiring form of Cyrus the Gaunt. But his double, already inalienable, returned to the studio with her and formed a severely accusative third party to her dual self-communion. Said the woman within her, woefully: “I mustn't see him again. I mustn't! I mustn't!” Said the sculptor within her, exultingly: “I've got him. I've got what I wanted. It's there and I've fixed it forever.” Which was a mistake of the sculptor's, however nearly right or wrong the woman may have been.

Thenceforward, it appeared to Cyrus the Gaunt, the Bonnie Lassie exhibited an increasing tendency toward invisibility. When he did see her, there were sure to be other people about, and she seemed subdued and distrait. Presently the suspicion dawned upon Cyrus that she was avoiding him. Being a simple, direct person, he laid his theory before her. She denied it with unnecessary heat; but that didn't go far toward rehabilitating the old cheerful and friendly status. Cyrus the Gaunt, despite a wage which assured three excellent meals per

day, began to grow gaunter. Our Square commented upon it with concern.

There came a time when, for ten consecutive days, Cyrus the Gaunt never set eyes upon the Bonnie Lassie, nor did his ear so much as catch a single lilt of her laughter. At the end of that period, strolling moodily past his now flavorless job full two hours early, he beheld mounting the steps of the funny little mansion a heavy male figure, clad from head to foot in what had a grisly suggestion of professional black. The sight sent a chill to Cyrus's heart. The chill froze solid when on a nearer approach to the house he heard the sound of voices within, joined in a slow chant. Half-blind and shaking, he made his way to the rail and clung there. Slowly the words took form and meaning, and this was their solemn message:—

The Good Man,
When-he-falleth-in-Love
And-getteth-Snubbed,
Breaketh Forth In-to Tears:
But-the-Ungawdly Careth Notta Damn!
For Woman,
She-is-but-Vanity
Ay, Verily, and False-Curls.
And-the-Wooing Thereof Is Bitterness.
For-he-Wasteth-his-Substance-Upon-Her,
Taking-her-Pic-nics and Balls.
And she Danceth with some
Other Feller.
Oh-hh SLUSH!!!

A window-shade floated sideways, revealing to the peerer's gaze a gnome with blue ears beating out the tempo with the fire-tongs for a quartette, consisting of an aeroplane, a Salvation Army captain, a white rabbit, and an Apache, while a motley crowd circulated around them. In the intensity of his relief, Cyrus the Gaunt took a great resolve: “Invited or not invited, I'm going to that party.”

MacLachan's “Home of Fashion” on the corner was long since dark, but Cyrus's pedal fantasia on the panels brought forth the indignant proprietor.

“What have you got for me to go to a fancy party in, Mac?” demanded his disturber.

“Turnverein or Pansy Social Circle?” inquired the practical tailor.

“Neither. A dead swell party.”

“Go as ye are-rr, ye fule!” said the Scot, and slammed the door.

“Perfectly simple,” said Cyrus the Gaunt. “I'll do it.”

He hastened around to Schwartz's to wash his hands and smut his face artistically.

III

Upon the reiterated testimony of the Oldest Inhabitant, Our Square had never before witnessed such scenes or heard such sounds of revelry by night as the Bonnie Lassie's surprise party, given for her by her friends of the far-away world. None of us was bidden in at first, as the Bonnie Lassie had not the inviting in her hands. But to her—little loyalist that she is!—a celebration without her own neighbors was unthinkable; so she sent her messengers forth and gathered us in from our beds, from Schwartz's, from Lavansky's Pinochle Parlors, from the late shift of the “Socialist Weekly Battlecry,” and even from the Semi-Annual Soirée and Ball of the Sons of Gentlemen of Goerck Street, far out on our boundaries of influence; and though we wore no fancier garb than our best, we made a respectable showing, indeed.

Along with the early comers, and while Cyrus the Gaunt was still putting the final touches to his preparation, there appeared at the hospitable door an unexpected guest, a woman of sixty with a strong, bent figure, and a square face lighted by gleaming eyes with fixed lines about them. The black-hued Undertaker who had constituted himself master of ceremonies met her at the door, and immediately hustled her within.

“While I have not the privilege of this lady's personal acquaintance,” he announced, “I have the honor of presenting, ladies and gentlemen, the eminent and professional chaperon, Mrs. Sparkles.”

The newcomer paused, blinking and irresolute. “But I did not know—” she began, in a faintly foreignized accent From a far corner the Bonnie Lassie spied her, and flew across the floor, flushed, radiant, and confused. “You!” she cried—and there was something in her voice that drew upon the pair curious looks from the other guests. “Oh, Madame! Why didn't you let me know?”

The newcomer set her finger to her lips. “I am incognita. What is it the somber person called me? Mrs. Sparkles? Yes.” The Bonnie Lassie nodded her comprehension. “If I had known that you were making fête this evening—I cannot see your work now.”

“Indeed, you can. I'll shut just us two into the studio. They won't miss me.” She gently pushed the new guest through a side door, which she closed after them. Confronted with the little sculptor's work, the visitor moved about with a swift certainty of judgment, praising this bit with a brief word, shrugging her shoulders over that, indicating by a single touch of the finger the salient defect of another, while her hostess followed her with anxious eyes.

“Not bad,” murmured the critic. “You have learned much. What is under that sheet?”

“Experiments,” answered the girl reluctantly.

The woman swept the covering aside. Beneath were huddled a number of studies, some finished, others in

the rough, ungrouped.

“All the same subject, *n'est-ce-pas?*”

“Yes.”

The visitor examined them carefully. “Very interesting. Any more of this?”

“Some notes in pencil.”

“Let me see them.”

The Bonnie Lassie drew out and submitted a sheaf of papers.

“You have done very badly with this,” was the verdict, after concentrated study. “Or else—you have worked hard and honestly upon it?”

“Harder than on anything I've done.”

“There are signs of that, too. What is it you are aiming at? What is the subject? Inside, I mean?” She tapped her forehead and regarded with her luminous stare the eager girl-face before her.

“Why, I hardly know. At first it was one thing, then it changed. I had thought of doing him as 'The Pioneer.' 'Something lost beyond the ranges,' you know.” The woman nodded. “Then later, I wanted to do 'The Last American,' and I modeled him for that.”

“Good!” The older woman's endorsement was emphatic. “How Lincoln-like the formation of the face is, here.” She touched one of the unfinished bits. “That's the American of it. Or *is* it? Albrecht Dürer did the same thing in his ideal Knight four centuries ago. You know it? It's like a portrait of Lincoln. Did you consciously mould that line in?”

“Ah!” The girl contemplated her own work with glowing eyes. “That's the haunting resemblance I felt but couldn't catch when I first saw my model.”

“It isn't in most of these.”

“My fault. It must have been there, underneath, all the time.”

“Hm! You consider those pretty faithful studies?”

“As faithful as I could make them. But I haven't been able to catch and fix the face. It's most provoking,” she added fretfully, “but I'm constantly having to remodel.” Before she had finished, the elderly woman's swift hands were busy with the figures, manipulating them here and there, until they were presently set out in a single row with the sketches interspersed. “Read from left to right,” she said curtly. “Is not that the order of time in which the work was done?”

"Read from left to right," she said curtly

"Pure magic!" breathed the girl. "How could you know?"

"How could I help but know? Child, child! Can't you see you have the biggest subject ready to your hand that any artist could pray for?" The girl looked her question mutely. "The man is making himself. How? God knows—the God that helps all real work. Look! See how the lines of grossness *there*"—she touched the first figure in her marshaled line —"have planed out *here*." The swift finger found a later study. "How could you miss it! The upbuilding of character, resolve, manhood, and with it all something gentler and finer softening it. You have half-done it, but only half, because you have not understood. *Why* have you not understood?"

"Because I'm not a genius."

"Who knows? To have half-done it is much. The master-genius, Life, has been carving that face out before your eyes. You need but follow."

"Tell me what to do."

“Leave it alone for six months. Come back and take the face as it will be then.”

“Then will be too late,” said the girl in a low voice.

“What!” cried the critic, startled. “Your model isn't dying, is he?”

“Oh, no. I—I had something else in mind.”

“Dismiss it. Have nothing else in mind but to finish this.” She paused. “I have seen all I need to. Let us return to your friends.”

Hardly had the hostess seated her guest in the most comfortable corner of the big divan when there was a stir at the door, and a rangy, big-boned figure, clad in the unmistakable garb of honest labor, appeared, blinking a little at the lights. Instantly the Undertaker, in his rôle of official announcer, dashed forward to greet him. “Gentlemen *and* ladies,” he proclaimed, “introducing Mr. Casey Jones, late of the Salt Lake Line.”

“Sing it, you Son of Toil!” shouted somebody, and Cyrus the Gaunt promptly obliged, in a clear and robust baritone, leading the chorus which came in jubilantly.

The elderly “Mrs. Sparkles” was not interested in the harmony; but she was interested in the face of her hostess, which had flushed a startled pink. She asked a question under cover of the music.

“That is your model, is it not?”

“Yes.”

“What is he in real life?”

“As you see him.”

“In—deed? What is he doing it for?”

“Two and a half a day, I believe.”

“Quite enough. But why?”

“I never asked him.” And the Bonnie Lassie tripped over to her newest guest, leaving her next-to-newest quite busy with thought.

Owing to the demands upon a hostess,

Cyrus the Gaunt saw very little of her in the brief hour remaining to him. One dance he succeeded in claiming.

“You see,” he remarked, “I came to your party anyway, although uninvited.”

“I didn't give it. It was a surprise,” she explained. “But the job?”

“They've put me on an hour later.”

“You still like it?”

“It limits one socially more than being a model,” he replied solemnly.

“But you are sticking to it?” she persisted.

“Oh, yes, I'm sticking to it, all right.”

“Even if—No matter what happens?”

“What is going to happen?” he asked gravely.

“Nothing,” she said hurriedly. “But it's the job for the job's sake with you now, isn't it?”

“I like the feel of it, if that's what you mean. The feel of being competent to hold it down.”

She nodded with content in her eyes. But he was troubled.

“You had something in mind—” he began, when another partner claimed her, while he was dragged off to assist in an improvised glee-club.

His time was up all too soon, and without chance of a further word from her, other than a formal farewell. In the little rear hallway whither he had made his way through his protesting fellow-revelers, he reached up for his coat, and felt something lightly brush the top of his head. He looked up. It was a sprig of mistletoe. At the same moment two firm hands closed over his eyes, and light, swift lips just grazed his cheek.

Cyrus the Gaunt fell a-trembling. He turned slowly, and found himself confronting a total stranger. The stranger had gray hair and a tired face lighted by crinkly eyes. “Oh!” said Cyrus the Gaunt with an irrepressible bitterness of disappointment.

“Frankness,” observed his salutant, “may or may not be a compliment to the object of it.” Cyrus remained mute. “Who did you *hope* it was?” Silence seemed still the best policy. “If you are offended”—the eyes twinkled with added keenness—“I will apologize honorably.”

“Let me do it for you,” said Cyrus the Gaunt politely, and kissed the unknown square upon the lips.

She drew back. “Well!” she began; then she laughed. “The *entente cordiale* having been established, *what* are you doing here, Cyrus Staten?”

He gasped and gaped. “Do I know you?”

“Having neither memory nor manners, you do not. But I spent weeks at your country place when you were a boy, painting your father. Permit me to introduce myself.” And she gave a name so great that even Cyrus's comprehensive carelessness of art was not ignorant of it.

“Great snakes!” he ejaculated. “I—I'm sorry I kissed you.”

“Oh, I'm human. I rather liked it,” she chuckled, “even though I am old and stately. But how have you contrived to preserve your incognito?”

“Easy enough. This is another world. Look out!” he added as the curtain behind them moved. “Somebody's coming.” The hanging swung aside and the Bonnie Lassie emerged. “Oh!” she said in surprise. “Do you know each other?”

“We were becoming acquainted when you interrupted,” replied the woman. She turned a disconcerting gaze upon her hostess. “Where did you get him?” she demanded, exactly as if Cyrus weren't there. “Oh, please!” cried the girl.

“Don't mind me,” said Cyrus politely, sensible that something was going on which he didn't grasp. “I'm used to it.” He turned to the mighty artist. “You see, in real life I'm a studio model.”

“Are you?” retorted the genius. “I thought you were an engineer. Now I begin to suspect you are a fraud. Well, I have something to say to Miss Prim, here. Run you away and play with your job.”

“So that's your young Lincoln,” she observed, as Cyrus moodily accepted his dismissal, and passed out.

“He doesn't know it.”

“You have missed even more than I thought, in him.”

“I've done my best,” said the girl dispiritedly. “He's too big for little me.”

“Hm! You haven't told me yet where you got him.”

“'The wild wind blew him to my close-barred door,'” quoted the girl.

“A good many wild winds have blown about Cyrus Staten from time to time.”

“Who?”

“Cyrus Staten; don't you *know* him?”

“No, I picked him up from the bench in Our Square.”

“Which the Statens used to own, by the way. Well, the *facilis descensus* of an idle waster from the world of white lights and black shadows to a park-bench is nothing new.”

“Does he look like an idle waster?”

“He does *not*. Therein lies a miracle. What is he doing now?”

“Running the steam-roller, outside.” The face of the girl melted into lovely and irrepressible mirth.

“Ah! That explains much. But not all. What is your part in this?”

“You have seen it.” She nodded backward toward the studio.

“Not that. As a woman? What have you been doing to that boy to make him what he is?”

The girl took her soft lip grievously between her teeth for a moment before answering. “I've been playing my child's tricks with a real man—and now I'm being sorry.”

“And paying for it?”

The Bonnie Lassie's head drooped.

“Is he paying for it, too?”

“No.”

“No? Well, when I played a little surprise on him and kissed him under the mistletoe, I thought that tall and massive youth was going to faint away like a school-miss in my supporting arms, until he saw who it was. What do you suppose his expectations—”

“You had no right to take such an advantage,” flashed the girl, turning crimson.

“So?” The great woman smiled. “But I think my own thoughts. When one pays, or the other pays, that is well. It is the chance of the play. But when both pay—oh, that is wrong, wrong, wrong as wrong can be!”

“I can't help it,” said the girl, very low. “There is a previous debt.” And she turned aside a face so woe-begone that her interrogator forbore further pressure.

“At least,” she said, “the artist must complete the work, at whatever cost to the woman. You will finish *that?*” She jerked her head toward the studio.

“I—I suppose so. If I can.”

On the way home the genius caught a glimpse of Cyrus the Gaunt upon his triumphal chariot, and halted her auto the better to laugh. As the lumbering, clamoring monster drew opposite, she signaled. Cyrus did something abstruse to the mechanism, which groaned and clanked itself into stillness.

“Young man,” she hailed, “I have a message for you.”

“From whom?” said Cyrus hopefully. “From myself. This is it: Be careful.”

“I am,” said Cyrus with conviction, “the carefulest captain that ever ploughed the stormy pave.”

“Be careful,” she repeated, disregarding his interpretation, “or she'll make a man of you yet. The process is sometimes painful—like most creative processes, Home, Joseph.”

Many of the Bonnie Lassie's outlander guests passed Cyrus the Gaunt that night, but none other identified or noticed him. The latest departures were two heavily swathed youths who paused to light cigarettes in the lee of Cyrus's iron steed.

“Some little farewell party, wasn't it?” the engineer overheard them say. “Why wasn't the happy Bascom there?”

“Not back from Europe yet. I understand Morris Cartwright fixed things up, and the engagement is to be formally announced on his return.”

“It's a shame,” growled the first speaker. “Bascom's all right, but he's old enough to be her father. Wasn't she a dream and a vision to-night!”

“It was one of those legacy engagements, I believe. Dead-father's-wish sort of thing. All right, I suppose, so long as there's no one else. Who was the engineer guy? He seemed to be a reg'lar feller.”

The twain passed on, leaving Cyrus the Gaunt stiff and stricken in his seat. How he got through the next hour he hardly knew. He remembered vaguely a protest from sundry citizens who resented being charged off the cross-walks by a zigzagging juggernaut, a query from Terry the Cop whether he was off his feed, and the startled face of old man Sittser, who paused to pass the time of night on his way home from the late shift on the linotype and was incontinently cursed for his pains. Full consciousness of the practical world was brought back to Cyrus by the purring of a sleek auto close at hand as he curved out at the corner for his straightaway course. He was just gathering momentum when he caught sight of the Bonnie Lassie's face, white and wistful, soft-eyed and miserable, confronting darkness and vacancy from within the luxurious limousine.

Well, nobody can catch a sixty-horsepower motor-car with a ten-ton steamroller.

Cyrus, to do him justice, tried his best. They stopped one dollar and forty cents out of his Saturday's envelope for what he and the roller did to the barriers and lanterns. By the time he had swung into the cross-street, trailing wreckage, the Bonnie Lassie was out of sight and out of his world.

IV

Winter comes, stern and sharp, like an unpaid landlord, to Our Square, with sleet and gale for its agents of eviction. No longer are the benches blithe with the voice of love or play or gossip. The wind has blown them all away. A few tenacious leaves still cling, withered, brown, and clattering, to the trees, “bare, ruin'd choirs where late' the sweet birds sang,” and a few hardy stragglers beat across the unprotected spaces, just to maintain, as it were, the human right of way against the gray rigor of the skies. But, for the most part, we of Our Square, going about our concerns, huddle as close as may be to the lee of walls, for—though we would not for the world have it known—many of us are none too warmly clad. Behind the blank opaqueness of the bordering windows one may surmise much want and penury and cold, which, also, we keep to ourselves. Our Square has its pride. We do not publish our trials.

Perhaps Cyrus the Gaunt knew as much of them as any. For, by imperceptible gradations, he had become the 'confidant, the judge, the arbiter of our difficulties, and the friend of the shyest, the hardest, and the proudest of us alike. His engine-seat was become a throne, from whence he dispensed every good thing but charity. That word and all that follows in its train he hated. Which shows that he had learned Our Square. After hours he would “drop in,” almost secretly, on some friend; and it was a curious coincidence that Cyrus's friends were chosen apparently on the basis of need and distress. He had that rare knack of helping out without involving the aided one in the coils of obligation. There is nothing Our Square wouldn't have done for Cyrus the Gaunt. I believe he could even have been elected alderman.

Winter drove Cyrus from his perch and put a brake on the thunder-wagon before the job was quite finished. There still remained some final repairs which must now wait for the spring, on the side where the Bonnie Lassie's little house stood, bleak and desolate. Not wholly deserted, however, for one brave and happy dancer still stuck to her post in the window, lifting a thrilled face to the sky. Other employment claimed Cyrus the Gaunt until his iron steed should come out of the stable; a day job on a stationary engine around in Pike Street. Our Square remarked with concern that the indoor employment didn't seem to suit Cyrus the Gaunt. He became gaunter and thinner and more melancholy-looking, and more than once he was seen on wild nights, when nobody was supposed to be out late, staring at the now quite unembarrassed house with the quaint little door and the broad vestibule. But though the light and cheer that Our Square had seen grow in Cyrus's face in the early days of his job, were graying over, there increased the new understanding and sympathy and determination, in lines that he had put there himself in the building of his new manhood. Thus, only, in this perplexing world, does a man lift himself by his own boot-straps.

Though Cyrus the Gaunt could boast a thousand friends, he had accepted but one intimate. That was MacLachan the tailor. Every day they lunched on frankfurters and kohlrabi at Schwartz's. Thither Cyrus was wont to have his scanty mail sent from the house where he lodged. One blustery December day the tailor arrived late, to find his friend fingering a pink slip of paper, of suggestive appearance.

“Ye'll have been aimin' a bit ootside!” commented MacLachan.

Cyrus flipped the paper over to him.

“Save us!” cried the awe-stricken Scot. “It's a thousan' dollars. All in the one piece!”

“Two months overdue. He didn't have my address, I suppose.”

“Ha'e ye been drawin' a lottery?”

“No. It's a bet. Also my release. I'd almost forgotten. My time's up.”

“Ye'll not be leavin' us?” said the tailor. Cyrus avoided his eyes. “I'm through, Mac,” he said dully. “It's no use. It's not worth while. Nothing's worth while.” There was a long pause. “Mon,” said MacLachan finally, “ha'e ye tho't what this'll mean to Our Square?”

Cyrus the Gaunt thought. Behind the curtain of his impenetrable face there passed a panorama of recent memories; events which had, for the first time in his career, made him one with the fabric of life. Faces appealed to him; hands were outstretched to him confidently for the friendly help that he could give so well; the voices of the children hailed him as a fellow; the baseball team which did most of its practice at noon on the asphalt claimed a corner of his memory; his ears rang with the everyday greetings of his own people, and another panorama, summoned up by the pink slip, faded away. Cyrus folded the check and put it carefully in the pocket of his overalls.

“Ye'll be stayin' here,” said MacLachan contentedly, having read his expression.

Cyrus nodded. Then the tailor's dour-ness fell from him for the moment. He laid a hand on his friend's shoulder. “Laddie,” he said, “the little bronze dancer is in the window yet.”

Cyrus turned a haggard face to him. “I know,” he said.

“Do ye make nothin' o' that?”

“Nothing. You know why—what she went away for.”

“I ha'e haird.”

“Well, I'm learning to forget.”

“The little bronze dancer is in the window yet,” repeated the obstinate Scot.

How Cyrus won through that long winter is his own affair. Our Square respects other people's troubles. It asked no questions. Finally winter broke and fled before a southeast wind full of fragrance, and the trees began to whisper important tidings to each other; and a pioneer butterfly of the deepest, most luminous purple-black, with buff edges to its wings, arrived and led the whole juvenile populace such a chase as surely never was since the Pied Piper fluted his seductions long ago; and the benches came out of their long retreat, fresh-painted, to stand sturdy and stiff in their old places; and so did Cyrus's thun-der-wagon, whereon he perched nightly once more, and was even more than before the taciturn, humorous, kindly, secret, friendly adviser to all and sundry.

Then, one crisp March evening he became aware of a strong, bent, feminine figure beckoning him from the curbstone. Clanging to a halt, he heard a voice, unforgettable through its tinge of foreign accent, say: —

“How do you do? I have been seeing your face all through my travels.” Cyrus took off his working-cap and shook hands. “So I have come back to look at it. It's thin. Would you like to be painted?”

“I don't think so, thank you. I've been sculped within an inch of my life.”

“So I have understood,” said the Very Great Woman with a smile not devoid of sympathy. “You are not done with it yet. She is coming.”

The face of Cyrus the Gaunt lighted marvelously.. “Coming back to Our Square?” he cried. Then the light faded. “But—”

“But me no buts. She is coming. I did it. I found that she had never finished you. So I told her that if she did not come back and finish, I would take you away from her and finish you myself. And, oh, I am as bad a sculptor as I am a good painter—-almost!” Her laughter rang in the chill air. “So she comes. And I have traveled all the way to this impossible spot to play traitor. The question is: Are you a man? You look it, at last!”

“The question is—Will you answer me one?”

“No! No! No! No! No! Put your questions where they belong. Farewell, my Phaëthon of the Slums.”

The world was mad with the wine of the wind the night the Bonnie Lassie came back to Our Square. All our trees waved their lean arms in welcome and sent down little buds as messengers of joy over her return. Of living welcomers there was none, for the gale had swept all humans before it, except Terry the Cop, and he didn't recognize her, from the distance, in her other-worldly raiment. That must have cost her a pang. Unnoticed she crept into the little, old, quaint, friendly house, and its doors closed behind her like the reassurance of a friendly arm. She set herself in the dark window where the blithe dancer still tripped it, faithful and lonely, and waited for Cyrus the Gaunt. But when she saw his face, the Bonnie Lassie didn't sculp. She cried.

Cyrus mounted to his seat and pulled the lever over. The engine was running badly that night, and the wind almost blew him from his perch. Aside from the improbability that the little sculptor would brave such weather, the charioteer was presently so immersed in his own immediate concerns that he all but forgot the prospective visit. When he had brought his charge to its senses and reduced it to some control, he was interrupted by the plight of a belated push-cart woman, who was dragging anchor and drifting fast to leeward under the furious impulsion of the nor'easter. Cyrus had just dragged her almost from under his ponderous wheels, when a beam flashed in his eyes, and he looked up to see a truck close upon them. His yell split the darkness. The truck-driver, with a mighty wrench, swung his vehicle sharp to the left, and up on the sidewalk.

The uptilted lights shone full into the lower window of the little, old, friendly house. Pressed against that window Cyrus saw the apparition of a tear-softened, desolate visage. Reason, prudence, and propriety deserted their posts in his brain simultaneously. A dozen long-legged leaps carried him as far as the vestibule of the little house. There his knees basely weakened. Perhaps her heart divined his step and sent her forth to meet him; or perhaps it was his old ally, Chance, that brought her into the vestibule as he stood there shaking.

“Oh!” she cried, and shrank back into a corner, with a deprecatory movement, which to him was infinitely pathetic.

“I'm sorry,” said Cyrus. “I saw your face and thought you were in trouble. If—if you wanted me to sit for you again,” he said composedly, “I should be very glad to, until you've finished your sketch.”

“Oh, no. I couldn't ask you. I couldn't think of—after—what—what—” Her voice waned into silence.

“Don't feel that way at all,” he encouraged her with resolved cheerfulness. “I can be a model and nothing more, again, I assure you.”

Her upturned eyes implored him. “Don't be cruel,” she said.

“Cruel?” he repeated wonderingly.

“Not at all. I'll be polite. It isn't too late to offer my best wishes. Though I'm not sure I know the name.”

“What name?”

“Your—your married name.”

“Then you don't know?” she gasped. The brain of Cyrus the Gaunt suddenly went numb. “I know you went away from us to get married.”

“I did,” she quavered. “But I couldn't. I—I—I tried to make myself go through with it. I couldn't. No woman could when—when—” Her voice trembled into silence.

A boisterous back-draft of the tempest thrust its way through the door and puffed out the little vestibule light. With a sense of irreparable loss impending he felt, rather than heard, her moving from him into the blackness of the outer world. Yet his mind seemed clogged and chained as he strove to grasp the meaning of what she had said—or was it what she had left unsaid?

And in a moment she would be gone forever.

Suddenly—miracle of miracles!—he felt those soft, strong hands on his arm, and heard her sobbing appeal: “Oh, Cyrus! Aren't you ever going to smile at me inside again?”

His arms went out. The Bonnie Lassie's hands slipped up to his shoulder. The flower-face pressed, close and cold and sweet, against his.

The Bonnie Lassie's hands slipped up to his shoulder

“Love of my heart!” he cried, “I'll never do anything else all my life long.”

Summer is tyrant in Our Square now. The leaves droop, flaccid and dusty, on the trees, and the sun gives a shrewish welcome to the faithful who still cling to the benches. Gone is Cyrus's chariot of flame and thunder. The work is done. Gone, too, is Cyrus, and with him the Bonnie Lassie, after a wedding duly set forth with much pomp and splendor in the public prints. Among those present was Our Square.

So now the little, quaint, old, friendly house stands vacant, with eager sunbeams darting about it in search of entry. Vacant but not cheerless, for behind the panes, against which the Bonnie Lassie once pressed her sorrowful face, troop the elfin company of her dream-children, the dancing figurines. Cyrus the Gaunt would have it so. He deeded her the house as a wedding-gift, that the happy dancers might remain with us lonely and unforgetting folk. They are the promise that one day Our Bonnie Lassie will come back to Our Square.

THE CHAIR THAT WHISPERED

An Idyl of Our Square

SPRING was in Our Square when I first saw the two of them. They sat on a bench under the early lilacs. It must have been the beginning of it all for them, I think, for there was still a dim terror in her face, and he gestured like one arguing stormily. At the last she smiled and drew a cluster of the lilac bloom down to her cheek. It was not deeper-hued than her eyes, nor fresher than her youth. They rose and passed me, alone on my bench, and I, who am wise in courtships, having watched so many bud and blossom on the public seats of Our Square, saw that this was no wooing, but some other persuasion, though what I could not guess.

So those two drifted out of sight; out of mind, too, for life in our remote, unconsidered, and slum-circled little park is a complex and swiftly changing actuality, and it crowds in with many pressures upon a half-idle old pedagogue like myself. It was the Little Red Doctor who, weeks later, recalled the episode, one blistering evening of the summer's end. He captured me as I emerged from the “penny-circulator” with my thumb in a book.

“What are we ruining our eyes with to-night?” he demanded.

I held up the treasure.

“'Victory,'” he read. “Good! He'll like Conrad.”

Perceiving what was expected, I fulfilled the requirements by asking: “Who will like Conrad?”

“The Gnome.”

I remembered that I had not seen Leon Coventry since the day he passed me with the girl who had youth and spring and terror in her face.

“Am I to loan it to him?”

“You're to read it to him.”

“When?”

“To-night. It's your turn to sit up.”

“Is the Gnome ill?”

“Worse.”

“Mad?”

“Haunted.”

“Since when has your practice branched out into the supernatural, doctor?”

“Oh, as for that, his trouble is physical too.”

“Is it anything that a simple lay mind could grasp?”

The Little Red Doctor grunted. “His legs have turned to lamp-wicking. I don't vouch for the diagnosis. It's his own.”

“Paralysis?” I hazarded.

“Grip,” was the Little Red Doctor's curt rejoinder.

“Don't tell me that grip turns a young Hercules's legs to lamp-wicks?” I objected.

“Grip does if the young Hercules's legs are fools enough to carry him out and around the city with a temperature of one-naught-four-point-two,” retorted the Little Red Doctor with bitter exactitude. “Under such conditions grip turns to pneumonia. And pneumonia is the favorite ally of my old friend, Death.”

“You don't mean that the Gnome is going to die?”

“Not of pneumonia: that fight was fought out some weeks ago. But what pneumonia doesn't do to a young Hercules worry may. Another aid of my old friend, Death, worry is. That's a bothersome Gnome, tossing about in the heat with his sick brain full of plots to get away and no legs to carry'em out. His next try will be his last.”

“Then he got away once?”

“On all fours. As far as the sidewalk. There Cyrus the Gaunt and the Bonnie Lassie found him and brought him back. Cyrus was on duty again last night.”

“I began to see. I'm to be watchdog. It's No. 7, isn't it? At what hour?”

“No. 7. Top floor. Nine o'clock.”

“I'll be there.”

Thanks for neighborly services, which are a taken-for-granted part of our close-pressed life, are not deemed good form in Our Square. The Little Red Doctor nodded and prepared to pass on to the rounds of his unending bout with his old friend and antagonist, Death. I detained him.

“Just a moment. What is the object of the Gnome's excursions? To get work?”

“No. To search.”

“For what?”

The Little Red Doctor moved toward an approaching horse car, almost the last of that perishing genus in

New York City. “Heaven knows!” he called back. “And Mac, the tailor, at least suspects. That's as far as I can get.”

He leaped upon the bobtailed vehicle, was immediately held up by a forehanded conductor, and too tardily bethought himself of a forgotten point. “The chair! The chair!” he bellowed. “Look out for the chair!”

“What chair?” I shouted back.

He made as if he would jump off and return. But he had already paid his nickel, so he only waved despairingly. Nickels count in Our Square.

No. 7 opened to me with a musty smell of stale heat. Built in the magnificent days of the neighborhood, by a senator of the United States, it had fallen to the base uses of machine workers on the lower and furnished lodgings on the upper floors. The very walls seemed to sweat as I made my way up to the dim light at the top, where the Gnome's door stood open, hopelessly inviting a draft. Upon my entrance a huge and fumbling creature from the lithographic plant where the Gnome was an assistant rose and made gloomy and bashful adieus.

Leon Coventry reached a great, thin hand across the littered bed to make me welcome. Even in his illness he preserved that suggestion of bowed and gnarled power, strangely alien to his youthfulness, which had given him his nickname in Our Square. Some would have called him ugly of face. But his mouth had the austere sweetness of a saint or a sufferer, and in his eyes glowed a living fire which might tame beasts or subdue hearts.

“How are you feeling to-night?” I asked perfunctorily.

“Wild,” he answered. “When are they going to let me out? When? When?” The little Red Doctor had given me no hint upon this point. So I said non-committally: “Soon, I think,” and moved around the bed to where an easy-chair invited. It was a wicker chair, broad-seated, wide-armed, and welcoming, a chair made conformable and gracious by long usage, a chair for lovers, for high hopes and for dreams, a chair to solace troubles and soothe weariness. Into it I would have dropped gratefully, when the sick man's fingers closed on my wrist like the jaws of an animal, and I was all but jerked from my feet.

“Not there!” he snarled insanely. “Not there!”

“I beg your pardon,” I said, much discomposed.

“I didn't mean to hurt you,” he returned with a return to that habitual gentleness of address which, by its contrast with his formidable physique, gave him the aspect of a kindly and companionable bear. “But if you don't mind sitting here on the bed? Or yonder on the sofa? Or anywhere except—”

“Not in the least,” I assured him. “The fact is, I detest wicker chairs anyway. I had to get rid of mine.”

“Did you? Why?”

“It was no companion for an old, lonely man.”

The Gnome clutched me again. His fingers quivered as they bit into my arm.

“I know! It whispered. Didn't it?”

I nodded.

“So does mine. Strange things. Echoes of what you can't forget.”

“Yes, yes. I know.”

“Do you, now? I wonder. Perhaps you do.” He studied my face with his luminous eyes, and then closed them and fell back, speaking slowly and dreamily. “In the darkness when I can see the chair just enough to know that it's empty as—as an empty heart—I hear it stirring, stirring softly, adjusting itself to—to what is not there. And I hold my breath and pray. But—nothing more.” He opened his eyes that seemed to gaze out across barriers of pain and incomprehension. “Dominie, does yours—did yours keep its secrets?”

That way, obviously, ran the boy's malady toward madness. Regretting that I had chanced upon so unfortunate a topic, I said nothing. But he took my assent for granted.

“So does mine,” he sighed. “It has not been moved nor touched since it was left vacant.”

“Shall I read to you?” I asked, to turn his mind aside.

“No. Talk to me. Tell me what they are doing in the Square.”

So I gave him the news of Tailor Mac-Lachan's latest drunk, and Pushcart Tonio's luck in the lottery, and Grandma Souchet's *faux pas* at the movies (her first experience) when she rose and yelled for the police to stop the pickpocket in the flagrant act of abstracting the heroine's aged father's watch, thereby disgracing her (grandma's) progeny and making them a derision and a byword even unto the third and fourth generation; and the Morrissey mumps, the whole kit and b'ilin' of juvenile Morrisseys having been sent to school looking like five little red balloons, whereby holiday for the rest of the scholars and great rejoicing, and the unavailing wrath of the authorities upon Mrs. Morrissey's head; and Terry the Cop's extra stripe; and the passing of the skat championship into the unworthy but preposterously lucky hands of the Avenue B Evening Dress Suit Club; and the battle over Orpheus the Piper (which was a jest of the Lords of High Derision, touching the boundaries of uttermost tragedy); and the exotic third stage of the affair, not yet ended, between Mary Moore and the Weeping Scion of Wealth; and the newspaper discovery of a barroom poet at Schmidt's free-lunch counter; and the joke which his fashionable uptown club put up on Cyrus the Gaunt; and politics and social doings, and the whisper of scandal; exactly as it might be in any other little world than Our Square; and, finally, for I was leading up to a delicate and difficult point, my own little smile of fortune, in the form of a small textbook finally accepted and advance royalty duly paid thereon. For the difficult and dangerous point was how to help the Gnome in case he needed it. Offer of charity, even when glossed over with the euphemism of a “loan,” is not accepted in ease of spirit by the people of Our Square. In fact, it isn't accepted at all, as a rule. The likelihood of ability to pay back is too dubious and remote. So it was in my most offhand manner that I inquired:—

“By the way, how are you off for ready cash?”

Leon fluttered his hand among the papers on the bed. They were opened envelopes.

“Look inside them,” he directed.

Within were checks. They were on various mercantile and commercial firms. Mostly the amounts were small; two dollars, two-and-a-half, three, and four, and the largest for ten dollars. Totaled up they amounted to affluence as Our Square understands the term.

“Something new?” I asked.

“Yes. Advertising sketches. They've caught on.”

“I didn't know that you could draw, Leon.”

“Neither did I, beyond scratchy, sketchy blobs, until the Bonnie Lassie told me.

“If the Bonnie Lassie has been giving you lessons, you're in a good school,” I said, for the local sculptress, nymph, and goddess of Our Square had already begun to make us and herself famous with her tiny bronzes.

“Not lessons exactly. But pointers.”

“You're in luck to be making money while you 're laid up.”

“The doc says I oughtn't to work at it. But I had to do something or go crazy. A man can't live by just waiting; can he? So when I can't sleep I sketch. And the checks come in. It's like a miracle. Only—it isn't the miracle that I want. When do you think I'll be strong enough to get out? Can't you tell me? Can't you find out from doc? I'd get better if I only had something to go on!”

Always that was the beginning and end of our talks; talks which often skirted the borders of the secret that was wearing his life down, but never revealed it. When I sought to shift the burden of the query upon the Little Red Doctor, he looked glum and shook his head.

“But go there when you can, dominie. He likes to have you. You rest him. Sometimes he sleeps after you've gone.” Though the Gnome never spoke of it again, I knew why he liked me with him. The bond of sympathy was that in my life, too, had been an empty chair that whispered. So the harsh summer elongated itself like the stretching of a white-hot metal bar, and through the swelter and hush of long nights I watched the rugged Gnome slowly dwindle.

My first weekly watch night in September came with one of the savagest onslaughts of belated heat in the memory of Our Square. For the sake of what little air there was I had drawn the couch out between the two windows. Discouraged by the handicap of a forearm which stuck clammily to his drawing board, the Gnome had turned off his overhead light, and now lay rigid. But I knew that he did not sleep. From some merciful cleft in the brazen sky came a waft of coolness. It fanned me into a doze.

I awoke with a start, to hear the Gnome's voice, in a hard-breathed whisper: “My heart! Oh, my heart!”

“This,” I thought, “is the end.” I tried to rise, but a paralysis of the will held me, though my senses seemed preternaturally acute.

From the bedside I heard the stir of the wicker chair. The withes moved softly upon themselves with delicate, smooth rustlings. The chair, whispering, sagged and yielded as if to the pressure of some light, sweet burden. Then the voice of the Gnome came, out of the darkness, again, and I knew that my fear was without cause, for he was leaning toward the chair and speaking to that which whispered.

“My Heart! Oh, my Heart! Will you never come back? Don't you know that I can't come to find you? I've tried. God of pity, how I've tried! Can't you hear me, can't you feel me calling for you? If I could see you once again! Only once. It isn't so much to ask. And the time is short. Come back to me, my Heart!”

I heard the chair whispering, whispering messages beyond the little reach of human understanding. Then the beggar of ghosts fell back, and the bed creaked and shook. I knew what made it creak and shake. Chairs that whisper have no balm for that misery.

Two of us lay still and wakeful through the rest of that night. In the morning we faced each other pallidly.

“Did you hear me in the night?” asked my host.

“Yes.”

“Then I'm going to tell you the rest, for I think I haven't much longer time to tell anything.”

“Oh, nonsense!” I protested; but it was lip speech only, and he smiled at the pretense.

“Of course, nonsense, if you like. But I'll go, shriven of *that* secret. The wicker chair is where She used to sit.”

“That much I gathered.”

“How can I describe Her to you? How can I make you understand as you would if you'd seen Her?”

“Perhaps I have.”

“When? Where?”

“Sitting with you on a bench in the Square the week the lilacs bloomed. She looked afraid.”

“She was. A brute of a foreman had insulted her. So she lost her job as a feather finisher—did you see her beautiful hands?—and she could find no other, and there was nobody in the world for her to turn to. Down below her last dollar, and twenty years old, and lovely. There's terror enough in that, isn't there?”

My mind went back to certain black-and-scarlet tragedies which Our Square makes brave pretense of having forgotten; tragedies of its unforgotten daughters. Terror enough, indeed!

“Was she some one you knew?”

No; she was not some one whom the Gnome knew. How to get to know her and help her (for help was his one, all-effacing, loyal purpose from the first moment he looked into her face); there was the heart of the problem. At any moment she might pass on, out of reach of his aid.

Yet to speak to her was too much risk. She sat poised as ready for startled flight as a bird. Into which deadlock of fateful chances intruded Susan Gluck's Orphan, aged six, and with a passion for scientific pursuits. The immediate object of his research was to discover what treasure so strongly interested a honeybee in a lilac bell, and if need be assist in the operation, his honorable purpose also being to help. Unfortunately the Busy One misunderstood and resented, whereupon Susan Gluck's Orphan lifted up his

voice and smote the far heavens with his lamentations. To him, running in agonized circles with his finger in his mouth, the girl extended arms and invitation to come and be comforted. The voice, with its clear, soft, mothering appeal, tugged at the Gnome's heart-strings; to Susan Gluck's Orphan it was, however, but the voice of a stranger, and therefore to be feared. There, however, sat Leon the Gnome, unnoted before, but now an appreciated refuge. For to the young of the species in Our Square the Gnome is a delight, because of his athletic habit of using a child—and sometimes two—in evening dumb-bell exercises, for the upkeep of his mighty muscles. To his knees fled the wailful orphan. Gently though clumsily the Gnome extracted the stinger, in astonished contemplation of which the sufferer temporarily forgot his woes; presently, however, as the poison took hold of the nerves, lapsing again into woe.

All this the girl had been watching from the corner of her eye, making, one may guess, a private estimate of the singular-looking youth who had been covertly spying upon her fear and despair. Wise in a lore of which the Gnome was as ignorant as the Orphan, she now offered wet mud. It was applied, and the adoptive pride of the Glucks raced off to vaunt his wounds to his fellows, leaving two people with quick-beating hearts gazing at each other. The Gnome took a quick resolve.

“I have been frightened, too, in my time.”

“He is well over it,” answered the girl, following the now boasting Orphan with her gaze.

“I don't mean that. I have been hungry too.”

Now she understood, and drew back, flushing. But she, too, was one to go straight to a point. Perhaps two more direct spirits than those twain seldom meet. “You mean me?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“I'm not hungry, and I'm not afraid,” she lied.

“Could you believe,” he said slowly, “that I mean as well to you as I did to that child—and the same?”

She did not answer at once, but the defensive look wavered in her eyes.

“Do you ever gamble?” was his next question.

“Gamble?” she repeated in amazement.

“Like matching pennies. I'll match you for the dinners.”

“I—I've only got a dollar,” she said.

“Plenty.”

“It isn't really a dollar,” she murmured. “I've only got—forty-three cents—in the world.”

It was her first confidence, and he thrilled to it. But he accepted it quite as a matter of course.

“Even on that it can be done. Come; where are you any worse off, even if you lose? And, at dinner, we might figure out some way for you to be better off.”

She got out a penny and looked at it a long time and then said: “Do I toss it up?” And of course the Gnome said no; because a tossed penny shows for itself. So they matched, and he looked at his coin (which showed the winning side up) and said:—

“I lose; I didn't match you.”

And then her lost misgiving surged over her and they sat and argued it. That is when I first noticed them. The Gnome won. Of course.

“So I took her to Marot's,” said the young giant, sitting up against his pillows and letting his gaze fare out into the humming heat of the day; “because I knew that, on a pinch, Mme. Marot would look after her. And I had an awful time keeping the bill of fare away from her and making her believe that she was getting only forty-three cents' worth. Courage came back to her with the food. She told me a little of her story; not much, then or afterward. I think she didn't want to claim anything of me, ever, not even sympathy. You see?”

I did see, if only vaguely. Leon the Gnome was building up a character to match the curious beauty of the face I had seen that once.

“That foreman brute wasn't her first experience. She had had to fight before; to leave good employment. To her the world was a jungle full of men who were only a horrible sort of pursuing ape. That came out later when I knew her better. My business there at that first dinner at Marot's was to get her to believe in me. Well,” he sighed, as over the memory of a formidable task accomplished, “I did it!”

He did it! Think of the gulf between those two; full, for her, of shameful memories and bristling fears; a gulf to be crossed with a shrinking heart before she could trust him; and across it he had led her by the mere power of words. Well, no; not words alone. Something shining and clear and trust-compelling back of the words; the nature of the man. Have I said that our Gnome was rather a wonderful person? He was.

“But how did you do it, miracle worker?” I demanded.

“No miracle at all. I don't understand you. I just told her about myself.”

“Quite so. What, for example?”

“Oh, everything,” he said, with a gesture of his big hands, indicating a broad generality. “Just a sort of outline of my life. I wanted her to know me as I was.” I wondered how many youths of my acquaintance in Our Square, or out, could afford to tell “everything” as a method of winning a young girl's confidence. But the Gnome, as I have indicated, was something of a phenomenon.

“So I lent her money and courage to go on with. And that evening, when we had walked and talked I said to her: 'Where will you go to-night?' and she said: 'Tell me.' So I brought her here to live.”

“Here?” I exclaimed.

“What are you thinking?” he growled. “Don't think it. Open that door.”

He pointed to the far corner of the room. I did as directed. “Look on the other side of it. What do you see?”

What I saw on the further side of the door was an oak bar set in iron clamps. Beyond was a tiny room and a tiny white bed and a flower in a pot on the window sill, dead and withered in the heat. Opposite the window an exit led to the hallway.

“There she lived and sang and was happy for fifty-five days. Each day was more glorious than the last for me. She stopped being afraid almost at once. It was just an even week after she came that she tapped on the door, when I had settled down to read my evening away.

“'May I come in?' she asked.

“'Yes,' I said.

“'For quite a time she made no move. Then: 'Are you sure?' she said.

“I understood. That was her way—to make you understand more than she said.” The sick man leaned out from his pillow toward the little door. “I can see her now, as she came into the room. She was all in fresh white, with a touch of some color at her waist. I had bought that dress for her. Do you know the delight of buying the realities of life for the woman you love? Oh, yes! I loved her then. I had loved her from the first sight, when I spoke to her on the bench because she seemed so desolate and scared.

“She came straight to me, and I stood up and put down my book. She looked me in the eyes, hard. Then she held out her hand. 'Shake hands,' she said. I shook. 'I'll keep the bargain,' I said. 'I know you will,' said she. She sat down in the wicker chair. No one has sat in it since; not even the Bonnie Lassie when she came. Yes; she sat down in the chair as if she were adopting it for her own. And we talked.”

“What did you talk about?” I asked. A foolish question, for what do youth and youth always talk about, when they encounter? But his reply surprised me.

“Money, mostly, that first evening. We went over accounts. She was keeping strict record of every cent I spent on her, to pay back when she got a job. Room rent, too. Oh, it was all very businesslike throughout. Afterward we talked about life and books and things. I lent her my books. I read a good deal, you know; all of us in the printing trades are great readers,” he added with a touch of guild pride. “She was better educated than I, though. Where did she get it? I never found out. Of course I didn't ask any questions. That was part of the bargain, as I understood it. She asked me a million. She turned me inside out and sometimes she laughed at me. But her laughter never hurt. It wasn't that kind.”

“Mightn't she have thought that your not asking questions of your own showed a lack of interest in her?” I suggested.

“How could she? I hadn't the right to ask questions. I hadn't the right to do anything but watch over her and guard her and keep to my bargain. Every evening she knocked and came in and sat in the wicker chair, and we talked. It was the sweetest thing in life to me, that absolute confidence. But the greater her confidence grew the more I was bound not to let her see what I felt for her. Isn't it so? You see, I know nothing about women.”

Having my grave doubts upon the point, I offered no advice.

“She got a job. I don't know where. Next week she began to pay me up.”

“Did you make any protests?” I asked, sounding him.

“Protests? Certainly not. I couldn't, could I? It was a question of her self-respect.”

“Of course. I beg your pardon for asking.”

“There was one night—we had been to a concert, Dutch treat, of course—and she came into my room to sit and talk it over for a few minutes. Passing me on her way back to her own room, she stopped behind my chair, and I felt something just brush my temple; and then the door shut behind her and the bar fell, and I heard her voice: 'Good-night, Gala-had.' For the next three days I never set eyes on her.”

“Did that tell you nothing?”

“What should it tell me?” retorted that pathetic young idiot. “It was just part of her mystery, of the mystery of woman, I suppose. The next Saturday night that drunken sot, MacLachan, came and ruined everything.”

“Soft words, Leon,” I protested, for the dour-faced, harsh-spoken, sore-hearted tailor of Our Square has his own reasons for drink and forgetfulness, and, drunk or sober, he is my friend.

“I wish he had broken his neck on the stairs,” said the Gnome savagely. “He sat over there, bleating to me some gibberish about Scotch philosophy, when Vera came into her room, and knocked as she always did. It was he that called 'Come in.' She came and stopped, looking at him with surprise. 'Oh,' she said, 'I didn't know.' 'No more did I,' said MacLachan, standing up with solemn, drunken politeness. 'I was not aweer there was a Mrs. Leon Coventry here.' She turned color, but looked him in the eye. 'There isn't,' said she. 'Then take shame to yerself,' he said. 'Ye should make at least the pretex'.'

“If she hadn't jumped between us, I would have pitched him out of the window. But she checked me long enough for him to get away and run down the stairs. It was the first time I had felt her arms and it turned me sick with longing. She backed away from me and said: 'I'm sorry, Leon. I didn't know there was any one here.' 'Wait,' I said. 'We've *got* to be married now.' If you could have seen her face, you'd have thought I'd struck her.” He stopped and swept the beads of sweat from his temples.

“Is that all you said?” I asked.

He stared at me. “That's almost what she asked me?” he replied. “She said: 'Is that all you have to say to me, Leon?' I didn't get her meaning. I was intent on the one thing—the bargain: that I mustn't make love to her; that I mustn't catch her in my arms and hold her against my heart that was bursting with love of her. The fever was on me, then, too, and I suppose that kept me to the one idea that was burning in my brain.

“'We can go to the Greek church, on the other side of the square,' I said. 'When can you be ready?'

“She walked back into her room, and I never saw her again.”

“God forgive you for a fool!” I said.

“Why didn't you tell her what every woman wants to hear, that you loved her?”

“Why, she must have known it; she must have realized it a thousand times, by a thousand signs. Yet she left me—that way.”

“You've had nothing from her since?”

“Yes. A money order for the balance of what she owed me.” An involuntary, jealous clutch at his pillow told me that the money order had not been and would not be cashed.

“No word with it?”

“Just gratitude.” The Gnome's sensitive lips quivered. “What do I want with gratitude? I want *her!* I want to find her. Suppose she were in trouble again. She's so young and helpless!”

“MacLachan never meant—”

“I went out to kill MacLachan next day. I was having pretty good luck at it too, when Terry the Cop came in. They brought me back here and called the doctor, and MacLachan cried out of one eye, for the other was closed.”

I recalled the tailor's black eye. Further I recalled that when some other-world business had taken me to Fifth Avenue I had there encountered Mac (of all persons) in (of all places) a millinery store. The fragments of his conversation which I caught related to ostriches. To my inquiry he replied that he was pursuing a will-o'-the-wisp, and that it was a lawful occupation. The suspicion now lodged in my mind that Mac had been searching for a lost trail. Of this I said nothing to Leon.

“Sometimes at night,” the sick man went on, “when I am not longing to smash up all the world because I can't get out and find her, she comes and sits in the wicker chair, and I hear the pressure of her dear body against the withes, and I feel her breath in the silence, but she never speaks. Is she dead, do you think?”

I most emphatically declined to entertain any such hypothesis. As for the Gnome, it seemed that he soon might be. The Little Red Doctor's visits grew more frequent, and his brow more corrugated, and his eyes more perplexed. Once he went so far as to observe in my hearing that nature could go just about so far without sleep and then it cracked.

“Through that crack,” he remarked, “enters sometimes my old friend, Death, sometimes madness. Let's pray that it won't be madness in the Gnome's case.”

Indications seemed to point in that direction, however. Leon's association with the spirit of the chair became closer and more constant. Night after night I heard him murmuring in the darkness, and the soft creak and rustle and whisper of the chair in reply, until the hairs of my neck quivered.

There came a night when the heat broke under a pressure of wild wind and rain from the northwest that swept Our Square like an aerial charge. It whirled me, breathless, into No. 7, and pursued me up the stairs, puffing out the light at the top. The Gnome was working. Beside him on a stand rustled a little pile of checks, weighted down.

“I'm going to leave a legacy,” he said gayly. “Will you be my executor? You'll have to find Her, you know.”

“Ask me ten years from now, if I'm alive,” I answered. “What's to-night? Reading?”

“Sleep, for you. You look done up. Take the couch and a blanket.”

I took them and, with them, what I had originally planned to be a brief nap, for there was medicine to be given now. When I woke up the room was dark. It seemed to me that a cold draft had passed over and roused me. Above the rush and whistle of the wind I could hear the chair whispering.

“My Heart! Oh, my Heart! Have you come back?” pleaded the Gnome's voice in the silence.

Then all the blood in my body made one great leap and stopped. The chair had sobbed.

“It has seemed so often that I could stretch out my hand and touch you,” went on the piteous, quiet voice from the bed. “But you were never there. And my soul is tired with waiting and longing.”

The chair rustled again with the sound of release from weight. There was a broken cry of love and fear and gladness that was of this and not the other world, and I knew without seeing that it was a woman of flesh and blood who lay on the Gnome's breast, covering his face with her kisses.

“Darling fool! Darling fool! Why didn't you tell me?” she sobbed. “Why didn't you tell me that you loved me?”

“I thought that I did,” said the Gnome, and I started at the changed voice, for it had suddenly taken on life and vigor. “I thought I told you in every word and look that you were all my world.” There was a pause, then: “Who *did* tell you?”

“Mr. MacLachan. He found me at last. He took me by the arm and said: 'Lassie, the love o' you is the life o' him. An' it's going if you don't come back an' save him!' Is it true, dearest one?” she cried passionately. “Tell me I'm not too late.”

Then I judged it best to tiptoe quite circumspectly out of the room. On the landing below I met the Little Red Doctor.

“Who went up the stairs just now?” he cried.

“Love,” said I. “Did you fear it was Death?”

MACLACHAN OF OUR SQUARE

MACLACHAN, the tailor, is as Scotch as his name and as dour as the Scotch. Our Square goes to his Home of Fashion to have its clothes made, repaired, and, on rare and special occasions, pressed, as a matter of local loyalty, which does not in the least imply that it either likes or approves MacLachan. It is, in fact, rather difficult to like him. He has a gray-granite face with a mouth like a

snapped spring, toppling brows, and a nose wrinkled into the expression of one suspicious of all mankind and convinced that his worst suspicions are well founded. He has also the Scotch habit of the oracle, and deals largely in second-hand aphorisms.

Once he had a daughter, a wild-rose girl, who lived over the Home of Fashion with him, and kept him and the place in speckless order. But she is gone, three years since, and in her place MacLachan has only a bitter memory and a devouring shame. What they quarreled about Our Square never knew. The hard-bitten tailor was easy to quarrel with at any time. No information was offered by him, and public opinion in the neighborhood does not favor vain and curious inquiries into another man's family troubles. The night that Meg left, with her gray eyes blazing like two clear flames and her little chin so fiercely set that the dimple disappeared from it totally, MacLachan went out blackly glowering, and came back drunk and singing “The Cork Leg.”

What affinity may exist, even in a Scotchman's mind, between that naive and chatty ballad and strong liquor is beyond my imagination. But our dour, sour tailor then and there chose it and has since retained it for the slogan of his spirituous outbreaks, and sings it only when he is, in his own phrase, “a bit drink-taken.” The Bonnie Lassie has one of her queer theories that he used to sing Meg to sleep with it when she was a baby. “And that's why, you see,” says she. I don't see at all; it seems to me a psychologically unsound theory. Still, some of the unsoundest theories I have ever heard from the Bonnie Lassie's lips have been inexplicably borne out by the facts afterward. When I marvel at this she laughs and says that an old pedagogue who has spent his life with books mustn't expect to understand people.

As for the wild-rose Meg, she passed wholly out of the little, close-knit, secluded world of Our Square. Even those few of us who knew MacLachan and counted ourselves his friends feared to mention her name, not so much because of his known temper as of the haunting pain that grew in his eyes. With the temerity of youth, Henry Groll, one of Meg's many local adorers, and the best second tenor in the Amalgamated Glee Clubs, did put it to the tailor, having come to the Home of Fashion on a matter of international complications, viz., to ascertain whether red Hungarian wine would come out of a French piqué waistcoat.

“By the way, what d'you hear from Meg?” inquired the young man.

“What!”.The tailor's heavy shears went off at such a bias across the cloth he was cutting that Lawyer Stedman's coat, when completed, never could be coaxed to set exactly right under the left arm.

“I—I only ast ye,” said the visitor, somewhat disconcerted. “What's Meg doin' now?”

Three inches lower—the Little Red Doctor assured Henry a few moments after his ill-advised query, binding up the spot where the flung scissors had struck—and he would never again have sung second tenor nor anything else calling for the employment of intact vocal cords. Henry sent a messenger after the waistcoat. That night MacLachan reeled home bellowing “The Cork Leg” in a voice that brought Terry the Cop bounding across Our Square like a dissuasive antelope.

My one first-hand experience with the ballad of MacLachan's lapse from sobriety was brought about long after through the Bonnie Lassie's procuring. She thrust a sunny head from her studio window and beckoned me from the sidewalk with her modeling tool.

“Dominie, have you seen MacLachan, the tailor, to-day?” she called when she secured my attention.

“No. Is he looking for me?”

“You should be looking for him.”

I examined my clothing for possible rents or stains. My sober black was respectable if shiny. The Bonnie Lassie made a gesture of annoyance with the modeling tool which nearly cost her latest creation its head.

“Do you know what day this is?”

“Tuesday, the sev—”

“Don't be a calendar, please! What day is it in MacLachan's life?”

I groped. “Is it his birthday?” (Not that we are much given to celebrating birthdays in Our Square.)

“Oh, you men! You men! I've just telephoned the Little Red Doctor and he didn't know either. It's the second anniversary of the day MacLachan's Meg left him. Do you remember what happened last year, dominie?”

Did I remember! When Lawyer Sted-man had lured me to perjure my immortal soul before a magistrate, who let Mac off only upon the strength of a character sketch (by me) that would have overpraised any one of the Twelve Apostles! I did remember.

“Very well, then. You and the doctor are to take him away this evening. Far away and bring him back sober.”

We did our best. And we almost succeeded. For it was close on midnight and Mac was sleepily homebound between us before what he had drunk—against a rising current of our protests—awoke the devil of music in his brain. We were cutting across Second Avenue when he began:

“I'll tell you a story without any sham.
In Holland there lived Mynheer van Flam,
Who every morning said: 'I am
The richest merchant in Rotterdam,
Ri-tu, di-nu, di-nu—da—na—day!
Ri-tu, di-nu, di-nay!”

From the shadow of a tree there moved one of those brazen and piteous she-ghosts that haunt the locality. She addressed the three of us with hopeful impartiality. MacLachan shook himself free of our arms and walked close to her, staring strangely into her face.

“I've got a daughter in your line of trade,” he said.

He spoke quietly, but the she-ghost read his eyes. She shrank back trembling, stammered something, and hurried away.

Not until we entered Our Square, after ten minutes of strained silence, did MacLachan look up from the pavement.

“Was there a lassie I spoke to?” he asked vaguely. “What did I say to her?” The Little Red Doctor told him circumstantially. “Personally, I think you're a liar,” he added.

“Do ye?” wistfully answered the tailor, slumping upon a bench. “I take it kind of ye that ye do. But I'm no liar. Once and for all I'll tell ye both. Then ye'll know, and we'll bury it. When my Meg left me I began to die—inside. The last thing in me to die was my pride. When that was dead too—or I thought it so—I set out to seek her. I found her. It was just off Sixth Avenue. In the broad o' the afternoon it was, and there she stood bedizened like yon poor hussy that spoke to us. Raddled with paint too; raddled to the eyes. But the eyes had not changed. They looked at me straight and brave and hard. I had meant well by her, however I might find her. God knows I did! But at the sight of her so, my gorge rose. 'What *are* ye,' says I, 'that ye should come into the light of day wearing shame on yer face?' Her look never wavered—you mind how fearless she always was, dominie—though she must have seen I was near to killing her with my naked hands. 'I'm as you see me. Take me or leave me,' she says. So I left her to go her ways, and I went mine.” There was a long silence. Then the Little Red Doctor deliberately measured off a short inch on MacLachan's forefinger.

“You're not *that* much of a man, Mac,” said he, and flipped the hand from him. “Do you take him home, dominie; I haven't the stomach for any more of him to-night.”

With any other than the Little Red Doctor it would have been a lasting quarrel. But the official physician and healer of bodies (and souls at times) to Our Square is too full of other and more important things to find room for resentment. So when, a fortnight later, MacLachan sallied forth to the tune of “The Cork Leg,” and came back raving with pneumonia, it was, of course, the Red One who pulled him through it. And in that period of delirium and truth the wise little physician saw deep into the true MacLachan and realized that a spirit as wistful and craving as a child's was beating itself to death against the bars of the dour Scotch tradition of silence and repression.

“He'll kill himself with the drink,” said the Little Red Doctor to me after the tailor was restored to the Home of Fashion. “Though I'll stop him if I can. That's my business. Even so, maybe I'll be wrong. For the man's heart is breaking slowly. I've a notion that my old friend, Death, Our Square might do better with the case than I can.”

At shorter and ever shortening intervals thereafter the booming baritone rendition of “The Cork Leg” apprised Our Square that the tailor was “on it again.” One late August day, as the doctor was passing the Home of Fashion, he heard from behind the closed door the sound of MacLachan's mirthless revelry. He stepped in and found the Scot, cross-legged and with a bottle at his elbow, rocking in time to his own melody while he stylishly braided mine host Schmidt's pants (“trousers” is an effete term not favored by Arbiter MacLachan) for the morrow's picnic and outing of the Pinochle Club:—

“One day when he'd stuffed him as full as an egg
A poor relation came to beg,
But he kicked him out without broaching a keg,
And in kicking him out he broke his own leg.
Ri-tu, di-nu, di—”

“Shut up, Mac! Stop it.”

“I've stopped. You've rooned my music. The noblest song, bar Bobbie Burns—What's yer wish, little mannie?”

“I've some work for you.”

“I've no time—”

“It's important. I must surely have it to-morrow.”

“'Must is a master word, but will not is no man's slave,'” pronounced MacLachan, the oracle.

“Listen, Mac,” pleaded the other. “I've a consultation to-morrow, and I must have my other coat fixed up for it.”

“What's wrong wi' the garrment?”

“It's—it's ripped: torn across the skirt,” floundered the Little Red Doctor, who is a weak, unreliable prevaricator at best.

The dour tailor leaned forward and shook his goose at the visitor. “Peril yer salvation with no more black lies about yer black coat,” said he firmly. “It's' the drink ye're strivin' to wean me from. But I'm proof against yer strategy, ye pill-an'-pellet Macchiavelli! Ye've no more rip nor tear in yer black coat than I've a ring in my nose.”

“Well, I'd have made one, then,” returned the shameless doctor.

“Ye'd have wasted time and money. Go yer own gait an' fight yer old friend, Death. But leave me with my friend, the Drink.”

“Listen to me, Mac. As sure as you keep it up, just so sure the dissecting-room will get your kidneys and the devil will get your soul.”

Carefully setting aside the bottle, MacLachan leaned forward to fasten a claw on the Little Red Doctor's shoulder.

“Do *you* listen now, and I'll tell ye a secret. While I'm still sober I'll tell it ye, so you'll believe it and fash me no more about the drink. Ye say the devil will get my soul. Ye're a backward prophet, mannie. He's got it. Yes, he's got it, an' another of the same blood to boot. An' all he ever gave me in trade is this,” he cried, pointing to the bottle. “So go an' save them as wants it, or stay an' listen:—

“'Mr. Doctor, says he, 'now you've done your work.
By your sharp knife I lose one fork,
But on two crutches I never will stalk,
For I'll have a beautiful leg of cork.'”

“Mac.”

“Don't delay my work. I've to finish these pants before John Nelson comes to fetch me.”

“Who's John Nelson?”

“Friend of my seafarin' days. Now Captain Nelson, if ye please, in the coastwise trade, new back from the deep seas and the roaring trades with a tropical thirst. 'T is he sent me yon messenger,” and he indicated the bottle of rum. “Be easy. I'll not come back to Our Square till I'm sober.”

“If you do, I'll swear you into Bellevue with my own right hand,” declared the Little Red Doctor disgustedly. He slammed the door as he went out.

The next person to open that door was Captain John Nelson. There was a brief ceremonial in which the captain's messenger played an important rôle, the newcomer joined his voice, for old friendship's sake, in the refrain of MacLachan's favorite ballad, and shortly thereafter the twain were seen arm in arm making a straight course across the open for unknown lands. All that we of Our Square had to judge MacLachan's sea comrade by was a stumping gait, a plump figure, a brown and good-humored face, and a most appalling interpretation of the second part in simple harmony.

We were to see him once again, briefly; to hear from his lips the events of that astonishing evening. Of the Odyssey of the sailor and the tailor there is little to be said. Crisscross and back, along Broadway, from Fourteenth Street upward, it ran, coming to a stop shortly before theater-closing time at a small restaurant which, I am told, has a free-and-easy rather than an unsavory repute. There they sat down to a bit of supper, having had, as the captain pathetically stated later, not a bite to eat since dinner at eight o'clock. I still possess the worthy mariner's “chart of the operations,” as he terms it, sketched in order that we landlubbers of Our Square might comprehend fully how it all developed. From this masterpiece of cartography I learn that the two friends occupied a side table some halfway down the room, Captain Nelson facing the rear. At the next table back, and therefore directly in his view, sat a couple, the lady spreading so much canvas that she covered all of ninety degrees, whereby the mariner means, I take it, that his neighbor's hat shut off his view of the prospect beyond. Food and drinks being ordered, MacLachan had just leaned back to a discussion of the relative merits of Burns and Garlyle when the orchestra struck into a tune not unlike “The Cork Leg.” To the scandal and distress of the captain, MacLachan straightway lifted up his voice:—

“A tinker in Rotterdam, 't would seem,
Had made cork legs his study and theme,
Each joint was as strong as an iron beam
And the springs were a compound of clockwork and steam.
Ri-tu—

The diplomatic dissuasions of the head waiter, added to the pained and profane protests of his companion, induced the singer to stop at that point. But the lady-under-full-sail arose with a proud, disgusted expression and stalked out, drawing her escort in her wake and uttering loud and refined reflections upon the vulgar environment. Thus was left to Captain Nelson, resuming his seat, a clear view to the far-rear table. This table, he was aesthetically pleased to note, was occupied by a distinctively pretty girl. The girl, as he was humanly affected in perceiving, was exhibiting what, all silly mock modesty apart, he could interpret only as a marked interest in his own romantic and attractive personality.

“What for are you swelling up like a bullpout, John?” inquired his companion, who, having his back turned, had seen nothing of the byplay.

The sailor waved a jaunty hand. “Nothing; nothing at all. It often happens to me. Just a pretty lass in the offing flying signals.”

Without turning, MacLachan made some references of a libelous character concerning a Babylonian lady whose antiquity is the only excuse for her even being mentioned by respectable lips.

“Babylon, Long Island?” queried the captain. “I've got an aunt lives there. You think this young lady comes from those parts?”

“How do I know?” growled the tailor, and explained in biting terms that his citation was symbolic, not geographic.

“Hum!” said the seafarer. “She's a little high-colored, I admit, but that don't make her what you say. Anyway, I'll just run down and speak a word of politeness to her. By the time you've finished that drink and the next I'll be back.”

The incognita received Captain Nelson with a direct and unsmiling handshake.

“You know me,” she instructed him under her breath as a waiter came up. “We're old acquaintances.” Then in full voice: “I hardly recognized you at first. How long is it since I've seen you?” Necessity for immediate invention was obviated by the opportune arrival of the waiter. Glancing at the tall, icy glass in front of his new acquaintance, the bold mariner said: “I'll take the same,” and was considerably disconcerted when the waiter passed along the word: “One lemonade.”

“Now,” said the girl sharply as soon as the waiter had left, “who is your friend that sings?”

“His name's MacLachan. He's all right, only—”

“Bring him here.”

“But first can't I—”

“Bring him here,” repeated the girl inexorably. “I like his voice.”

Sadly the shattered seafarer retraced his course. MacLachan listened, demurred, growled, acquiesced. As the pair walked along, the tailor reeling a bit, the girl was busy searching for something under the table. She did not lift her face until the men were beside her. Then she rose and looked up at MacLachan.

“Dad,” she said.

MacLachan went stark, staring sober in one pulse-beat. But all he said was “Oh!” That is all, I am told, that

men say when they are shot through the heart. Nelson slid a chair behind his friend's trembling knees. He sat down. Bending forward, he glared into the garishly splotched face of his daughter and put his hand to his throat, struggling for speech. A door behind closed, and a cheerful, boyish voice said:—

“Hello, little girl. Been waiting long?”

The wild-rose face dimpled and blossomed into sweetness under the layers of paint. “Hello, Jim-boy. Get yourself a chair.”

“Introduce me to your friends,” said the newcomer.

“That one used to be my old dad,” said the girl slowly.

The young man whistled as he drew in his chair. “Quite a family party,” he remarked.

“Who is this?” demanded MacLachan.

“My husband.”

“Your—your husb—” MacLachan took a deep gulp from the lemonade glass which the resourceful captain thoughtfully thrust into his hand. “Why, he—he's a mere laddie. Can he support ye?”

“He's making seventy-five a week every week in the year,” said the girl quietly. “And I'm good for about that average.”

“You? In what trade?” demanded the father slowly and fearfully.

“The movies. Both of us. He's a set designer. I'm an *ingénue*. Why else would I be all gommered up like this” (she touched her cheeks), “not having time to wash off my make-up?”

“How long have ye been in the business?” faltered MacLachan.

“Since I left. It was hard at first.”

“When I saw ye in the street that day—”

She nodded. “Yes; I was just out of rehearsal.”

Then the devil's pride of the Scot, recalling with fierce self-pity his long heartbreak and loneliness, rose in a flame of resentment and seared the flowering love in his heart.

“Ye gave me no word,” he snarled, rising. “Ye knew I was killing myself for lo—, for shame of ye, and ye let be. What do I owe ye but a curse!”

“Ye knew I was killing myself for lo—, for shame of ye”

“That's enough,” said the boy husband; but his voice had become that of a man.

“Dad!” cried the girl.

MacLachan, the dour, turned away. Nelson set a hand on his arm, but he struck it down.

“Oh, Jim-boy!” whispered the girl to her husband. “I can't let him go again.”

He was a youth of resource, that husband; I'm not prepared to say that he didn't have even a touch of genius. “Granddad!” he said.

“Eh?” MacLachan stopped, as if stricken in his tracks.

“What do you think of her?” Jim-boy had produced, quick as conjuring, a little leather-mounted photograph which he held up before MacLachan's eyes. “Did Meg look like her when she was a baby?”

“The varra spit an' image,” cried MacLachan, reverting to his broadest Scotch. Then, with a cry that shook him: “My bairnie!”

Meg went to his arms in a leap.

“And you may believe it or not—I would not, on the oath of a chaplain if I had not seen it with my own eyes,” ran Captain Nelson's subsequent narrative to Our Square, “but I saw the tears on those twin gray rocks that serve MacLachan for cheeks. So I drifted down to leeward and gathered my coat and gave three waiters a quarter each for not staring and came away to tell you. And you'll forgive me for waking the two of

you up, and it gone eight bells—I mean midnight—but that was Mac's last word as I left, that I was to tell you. He said you'd be glad."

Glad we were, and all Our Square joined in the gladness, for it was a changed and softened MacLachan that came back to us, sober and strangely, gently awkward, the next day after a night spent with "my family."

"Ye'll not see me drink-taken again," he promised the Little Red Doctor.

That good word went swiftly. Consequently it was the greater shock when, on the very next Thursday afternoon, several of us who had run into the Bonnie Lassie's studio for tea and the weekly inspection of ourselves as mirrored in her work, heard in the familiar rumbling baritone from the open park space:—

"Horror and fright were in his face,
The neighbors thought he was running a race,
He clung to a lamp-post to stay his pace,
But the leg broke away and kept up the chase,
Ri-tu, di-nu, di-nu—di—na—day!
Ri-tu, di-nu, di-nay!"

"My God!" cried the Little Red Doctor in consternation. "Mac's off again."

He jumped up, but the Bonnie Lassie was quicker. "Let me get him," she said, and ran from the room.

Almost at once she was back, her face quivering. "Come and look!" she bade us.

We crowded the front windows. On a bench in Our Square slouched a thin, hard, angular figure, terminating in a thin, hard, angular face, at the moment wide open and pouring forth unabashed melody for the apparent benefit of a much befrilled vehicle, which was being propelled back and forth by a thin, long leg. MacLachan was entertaining his granddaughter.

THE GREAT 'PEACEMAKER

A Story of Neutrality in Our Square ONE of the notable sporting events of Our Square is the nightly chess duel at Thomsen's Elite Restaurant. Many a beer, not a few dinners, and once even a bottle of real champagne won and lost, have marked the enthusiasm and partisanship of the backers. Personally I prefer David's cavalry dash as exemplified in long-range handling of doubled rooks, but there are plenty who swear and bet by the sapper-and-miner doggedness of Jonathan's pawn manipulations. The contestants have been known as David and Jonathan to Our Square for ten years, except for the late, melancholy months following the combat which broke off all relations and left the corner table at Thomsen's Square vacant. Since then the light-minded—such as Cyrus the Gaunt—have called them David and Goliath.

David is a little, old, hot-hearted Frenchman whose real name is Henri Dumain. Hermann Groll, *alias* Jonathan, *alias* (alas!) Goliath, is a ponderous and gentle old German. Their first meeting was at Thomsen's, back early in the century, when there were only ten tables in the place and the front window shyly invited the public through the medium of a guinea-chicken, a fish in season, and two chops with their paper-frilled shanks engaged like buttoned foils. In those days Henri, a newcomer, sat back against the side wall and unobtrusively watched a guerrilla campaign between Hermann and a nondescript casual patron with weak eyes and a deprecating manner, of whom none of us knew anything except that he came from somewhere on Avenue B and had an irritating trick of answering queen's gambit by pawn to king's rook 4. But one evening two thick-booted strangers interrupted the game and took away the eccentric pawn-pusher. He had, it appeared, flavored his aged aunt's soup with arsenic. Life has its thrills in Our Square!

Hermann was disconsolate. "A pity," he murmured. "I should have checkmated in four moves."

"Your pardon, but I think not," said a courteous but positive voice.

Hermann looked up and saw Henri. "You think not?" he said mildly. "Maybe so. We will try. Sit down."

They played it out. Owing to an unforeseen brilliant diversion on the part of the newcomer's knight, the struggle was prolonged for twenty moves before victory went to the Teuton. He rose.

"The sacrifice of the rook's pawn," he observed, "was able. Very able. Tomorrow evening?"

"With pleasure," answered his adversary. Thereafter they played nightly, with almost equal fortunes, and as they played their association ripened into friendship, and their friendship, through sympathies subtle and strange in two characters so apparently unlike, into the love that passeth the love of woman. They became David and Jonathan indeed, and one of the pleasantest sights that helped me to peaceful dreams was the frequent glimpse I got of the big German and the little Frenchman walking home after the battle arm in arm across Our Square.

Each had been a lone spirit, craving companionship. And nearest to the lonely heart of each was the struggle and achievement of an only son in the other half of the world; one carving out a business career in Algiers, the other introducing American ideas in horticulture to the staid garden scientists of Würtemberg. Presently they took to reading their boys' letters in common; and they would chuckle, or look serious, or debate, or prophesy with a single and equal interest whether it were a matter of Hermann, Jr., or of young Robert in Africa. Comradeship can go no deeper. The flash of a foreign postage stamp across the marble-topped table was the signal for Elsa, the polyglot cashier of the Elite, to set down one more drink than usual, for it invariably meant a prolonged and confidential confab after the game was over. Tradition held their chosen table always in reserve. And tradition has all the force and more than the respect of law in Our Square.

Judge, then, of our amazement at the unprecedented behavior of Inky Mike on a certain evening a little before the regular hour for the chess-players to appear. The world without was big with the presage of tremendous events just then, but this was forgotten for the moment in the shock of Mike's performance. He sauntered down the length of the aisle, an expression of self-confidence upon his smeary countenance, and coolly dropped into Jonathan's chair, nodding to Elsa, the pretty polyglot. Now Inky Mike plumes himself upon a “connection with the press” (through the rollers, it is understood in Our Square, though he is loftily vague about it) and the passion of his life is to pick news “off the wires” and announce it in advance of print, in some startling manner. This might be one of his coups. Elsa regarded him with puzzled suspicion. Then she descended upon him, polite but with firm purpose of eviction.

“*Bitte*,” she said, with the queenly gesture of one accustomed to command.

Mike lifted one eyebrow, and that with an effort. Otherwise he stirred not.

“*S'il vous plait!*” said the little cashier determinedly.

“Mine's a beer,” returned the smeary one.

“If you please!” she stamped her foot in the universal and unmistakable language.

“Oh, I got you the foist time,” drawled Mike. “You should worry. They won't be here.”

“No—o—o—oah?” queried Elsa in a soaring whoop of amazement.

“Not this evenin', nor any other evenin'! You can plant a 'To Let' sign on their table. They won't care.”

“*Warum? Pourquoi pas?* W'y not?”

The repository of terrible secrets delivered himself of his theme in complacent triumph. “War's just declared between France and Germany. That's w'y not.”

Thus the tremendous news came to Thomsen's. On the heels of it came the Teutonic Jonathan. Inky Mike rose astounded and hastily moved, for he is sufficiently one of us to respect the Square's traditions.

“Excuse *me*,” he apologized. “Is Mister—is your side pardner coming?”

The answer to the question was given in the person of the Gallic David. Inky Mike gaped at them.

“Will they mix it, d'ye think?” he inquired in an awed and hopeful tone of Cyrus the Gaunt, who was eating ice cream at an adjoining table with the Bonnie Lassie. Those were the days when the Bonnie Lassie was sculping Cyrus the Gaunt and Cyrus was acting as chauffeur to ten tons of steam roller on a bet, and each was discovering the other to be the most wonderful person in the world—in which they weren't so far wrong as a cynical mind might suppose.

Cyrus did not think; at least not for the inkful one's benefit. He acted. It was done unobtrusively, his shifting to the table next the chess rivals. They did not notice it. They did not notice anything but each other. David was breathing hard, as he took his seat, and a queer light flickered in his eyes.

“You take black to-night,” said Jonathan slowly.

His friend pushed the chessboard aside. “You have heard?” he said, and pulling a newspaper from his pocket slapped it on the table.

Now the doubly damned devil of mischance influenced him to reach into the wrong pocket, so he drew forth not the “Extry—Extry” which he had just bought of Cripple Chris on the corner, but an earlier copy of the “Courrier des Etats-Unis.” Jonathan stiffened in his chair.

“I do not read that language,” he said deliberately.

“You have then perhaps lost your mind since yesterday,” said the fiery little Frenchman.

“I have the mind I have always had. It is a German mind,” was the grim response.

“Then it is the mind of a savage!” cried the other.

The big man got to his feet. The little one was up as quickly. Cyrus the Gaunt laid a hand, every finger of which had the grip of a lobster's claw, on the shoulder of each.

“Sit down,” he said quietly. “Let's arbitrate.”

“But,” began the Frenchman, “I—he—”

“There's a lady waiting to speak to you,” interrupted Cyrus.

The Bonnie Lassie stood, smiling but anxious-eyed, behind his shoulder. David sprang to get her a chair. Then they invited me into consultation, and we sat in solemn conclave while Inky Mike hovered, with diminishing hopes, on the outskirts. At the close there was ratified what I believe to have been the first agreement of total neutrality in the present world conflict. By its provisions every topic having to do with the war or any of the parties to it was rigorously tabooed. Both the German and the French language, even for purposes of exclamation and emphasis, were to be eschewed. Literature, art, and music were, however, to remain open topics, irrespective of nationality. And chess, that studious mimicry of what is most terrible in the world, was to proceed as usual. That evening David and Jonathan walked homeward across Our Square arm in arm.

By what unremitting exercise of self-control and loyalty those two kept the pact through the tinder-and-powder events of succeeding months only they themselves know. It was pitiful and at the same time beautiful to see the subterfuges whereby they preserved their affection from the blight of the all-devouring war, even in its remote associations. There came a day when mails arrived by a Holland steamer. That evening David waited expectant. But his friend gave out no news. The natural impatience of the Frenchman broke bounds.

“And the young Hermann?” he demanded. “How goes it with our special assistant to Mother Nature?”

“It goes—it goes well,” answered Jonathan.

“He persuades the others to his ideas, always?”

“Hermann is no longer in the gardens. He—he has left.”

“Left!” cried David. “Given up—” He stopped short, looking into the face of his friend, a face whose eyes shifted uneasily away from his. Then comprehension came to him, and he did a fine and beautiful thing.

“To the brave,” said he, lifting his glass, “who face death for the country that they love.”

Was there, perhaps, a small savor of salt to the beer which Jonathan set down after his draught? If so, he need not have been ashamed. It seemed to me, when I saw them going home that night, that their arms were hooked a little closer than common.

Not long after it was David's turn to get a letter. He sat fingering it when Jonathan entered.

“From our young Robert?” asked the German.

David nodded.

“Am I to see it?”

“He says—he says some things about—about the war,” faltered the Frenchman. “Youth is perhaps harsh. And he is a high spirit—my boy.”

Something in the tone told the German. “He has enlisted?”

The other father nodded.

“I am glad,” said the German simply. “And may God bring him safely through!”

How that could have happened which did thereafter come to pass between two souls so fine, so brave, so forbearing, is one of the mysteries of the madness of the human heart. It was on the evening when Elsa, the polyglot, had just completed her *chef-d'ouvre* of embroidery which still hangs upon the wall. It is a legend subscribed in a double scroll, which is held in the beak of a dove of peace about half the size of the scroll, the whole being tastefully surrounded by a frieze of olive branches done in blue, Elsa's green yarn having given out prematurely. The legend reads:—

BE NEUTRAL
SPEAK ENGLISH
THINK AMERICAN

Out of compliment she had hung it over the chess-players' table. The game developed a swift and interesting attack, that evening, down an open center, David having castled on the queen's side, and brought both rooks into early action. All was going well for him, when a band outside halted and began to play “Die Wacht am Rhein.” That they played it atrociously out of tune is unimportant to the issue. Rendered by a celestial choir that particular song would probably have inspired David with frenzy. The first symptom was that he moved his queen upon a. diagonal with his king, open to an opposing bishop. Just what the course of events subsequently was I cannot say, as my table was in the far end. But I heard Elsa's lamentable voice, startled quite out of the practice of the language neutrality which she preached, and this is what I heard: —“Oh, *Messieurs!* Oh! *Meine Herren!! Gents!!!*”

Crash! The chessboard was swept to the floor, and the contestants rolled after it, tight clinched. They tipped over two neighboring tables, and a plate of salad, a soft-shell crab, and a fried chicken, violating *their* neutrality, descended to take a conspicuous part in the fight. Over and over rolled the combatants, now one on top, now the other, clawing, kicking, pummeling, and filling the air with bilingual fury. It was all very comic, for the onlookers who didn't understand, and the “Tribune” reporter made a good story of it next day. But he did not know—how could he?—the underlying tragedy; the tragedy of hate, where love had been and loneliness in the place of comradeship. With ordinary luck it might have been kept out of the newspapers and the police court, but, unfortunately, Terry the Cop, a wise young Daniel of Our Square, was followed in by a strange policeman. “And so,” Terry explained to me, regretfully,

“I had to make the pinch. Wouldn't it make you sick?” he added. “Two good old guys like them! War sure *is* hell!” Of the subsequent proceedings, Inky Mike brought us a fuller report than the newspapers. The Little Red Doctor, being appealed to to procure bail, had done so, and had further taken two stitches in, the big man's head and set a disjointed thumb for the little man. In the police court, thanks to Terry, who “put him wise,” the judge had bidden the two belligerents shake hands and go free. They shook hands, at arm's length, and went free, separately.

“No more David an' Jonathan stuff,” gloated Inky Mike. “David and Goliath is more in their line. This finishes their game.”

“Ah, Smart Aleck!” said Elsa resentfully. “You know nothing. *'S macht nichts aus! Ça ne signifie rien!* Fudge is what I try to say. They come back this evening, good as new.”

Come back they did not, however. In vain did Elsa keep her eyes on the clock and her hopes high. When nine o'clock struck and the table beneath her desk was still vacant she burst into tears, gave a Magyar from Second Avenue eight dollars and sixty cents change out of a five-dollar bill (the Magyar hasn't been seen since), and rushed forth from the place with her apron over her head, finding refuge on a bench of Our Square, where she sat openly wailing until Terry the Cop led her home.

“Will they never come back to their little table, do you think?” miserably inquired. Polyglot Elsa of the Little Red Doctor several evenings later, gazing with blurred eyes down upon the stolidly opposing armies of chessmen in their brave array.

The Little Red Doctor shook a dubious head. “That's a bad mess,” he said.

“But they have nothing else but themselves!” cried the girl. “So sad it is. Perhaps,” she added with timid hopefulness, “you could make a peace again between them.”

“I've tried. The only peacemaker strong enough to bring them together, I'm afraid, is my old friend Death.”

Jonathan almost wholly disappeared from Our Square after the rupture. Not so David. He was much in evidence. Usually he whistled as he walked with a lightsome and swaggering step to show that he hadn't a care in the world. But when you got near him you saw the hollows under his eyes. Pride carried him even into Thomsen's, and almost to the vacant table in the corner. Not quite. For thereon stood the little wood soldiers, sturdy and stanch, and above them leaned Elsa, smiling welcome to him—and hope. David, the irreconcilable, stopped short, dropped into the nearest chair, turned his back upon that haunted corner, and ordered his favorite refreshment in a voice so cheerful that it almost chirped. Halfway through his *carafon*, having caught Elsa's gaze, melancholy, accusing, and imploring, he swore, choked over his *vin ordinaire*, and retreated in

bad order to the shelter of the outer darkness without paying his check.

How long he wandered about Our Square I cannot say. He was there when I crossed to Thomsen's at nine o'clock. He was there when I peered out at ten. He was still there when I returned home at eleven-fifteen.

So was Jonathan. The reason why we of the Square had not seen him of late was that he had chosen for his promenade an hour when he would be unlikely to encounter any of us. This time he met David. They passed each other within a foot. Jonathan was profoundly absorbed in the condition of a tree trunk which he had passed without interest some thousands of times. David studied the constellation Orion with a concentrated attention quite creditable in one so new to a passion for astronomy. I sat down on a bench and gave vent to my feelings. Said Terry the Cop to me, approaching solicitously:—

"Are ye laughing, dominie, or choking to death?"

"I am laughing, Terry," I said.

"And why are ye laughing, dominie?"

"I am laughing, Terry," I informed him, "because it is better to laugh than to do a certain other thing." And I declined, with proper dignity, his well-meant but ill-informed offer to escort me home.

There came a black day for our fiery old French David when the Dutch liner arrived bearing assorted mails. That afternoon he paced, stony-eyed and silent, a square swept vacant by savage rain blasts, with a half-ounce of letter over his heart and a thousand tons of grief pressing down above it. Presently another bedraggled wayfarer entered the Square, wandered aimlessly, and sprawled his ponderous bulk upon the corner bench, where the umbrella tree affords a partial shelter. The Teuton Jonathan was also braving the storm.

Back and forth, back and forth, through the fierce, gray slant of the rain, marched the Frenchman, drawing at each turn a little nearer to the corner bench. The German did not move nor look up. He seemed lost in reverie. A square of white cardboard lay on his knee. His eyes stared out over it, brooding. At length the marcher in the rain came to the rightabout directly in front of the bench and stopped, rubbing his forehead like a man struggling out of a dream. David had recognized Jonathan.

He took an impetuous step forward. A gust of wind plucked the square of cardboard from the unheeding German's knee. It fell, displaying to the newcomer the double eagle of imperial Germany. David's face, which had softened, became a mask of fury. Another step forward and he saw something else above the *insigne*, a bar of black. He stooped and picked up the card. Jonathan neither saw nor moved.

Beneath the symbol on the card stood a line of German script. David lifted his eyes from it and looked about him. In the doorway of the Elite Restaurant, just across the asphalt, he saw Polyglot Elsa.

"*Behüte!*" cried Elsa when she saw his face. "*Sainte Vierge!* What has happened?"

"Mademoiselle, translate for me," cried the little old Frenchman: "'*Auf dem Felde der Ehre gefallen*'."

"'Dead on the field of honor.' What—" But he was already halfway back, fighting his way through the gusts. With grave misgivings Elsa saw him advance upon his former friend and bitter foe. She wished Terry would come. Terry was a mighty discourager of trouble and violence.

David advanced to the sheltered bench without speaking. Quietly he seated himself beside Jonathan. Jonathan might have been dead for all that he heeded. His mind was in another world. David touched him on the shoulder.

"*Hein?*" said the big German vaguely. "'*S ist du?*" using involuntarily the tender pronoun of affection. Comprehension and remembrance came back to him instantly, and he shrank away with an inarticulate snarl of hatred.

David drew from his pocket the letter that had crushed the heart beneath it. He spread it on his knee.

"I have seen, Hermann," he said brokenly. "Look you."

Hermann looked. He looked from the gallant tricolor to the words below, and one phrase stood forth and went to his heart. "*Mort dans la gloire pour la patrie: Robert Humain.*"

Jonathan's fingers crept to David's knee and clung there. David's hand went to Jonathan's shoulder. The two old heads sagged lower and lower and closer and closer.

And Terry the Cop, who had crossed the street in five leaps with the liveliest anticipation of trouble in the first degree, took one look, turned hastily away, and huskily commanded a storm-beaten sparrow in the path to move on.

ORPHEUS

Who Made Music in Our Square

A PLAYWRIGHT named Euripides was the means of bringing us together. He sat hunched upon a bench in Our Square—not Euripides, of course, but this strange disciple of his—over a little book. When the church clock struck twelve he arose and unfolded himself to preposterous lengths. He stepped casually over a four-foot wire, strode across forbidden grass plots, and leaned pensively against the northern boundary fence. Although it was a six-foot fence, he jutted considerably above it. I glanced from him back to the bench he had just quitted. There lay his book. I picked it up. It was "The Bacchae." In the original, if you please!

Now, to find a gigantic and unexplained stranger in the metropolitan hurry and stress of Our Square perusing the classic version of the very 'Greekest and most mystic of dramas, by the spluttering ray of Jove's own lightning pent up and set to work in a two-by-one frosted globe at so many cents per kilowatt, is a startling experience for a quiet, old semi-retired pedagogue like myself. I pocketed the volume (which was in a semiuncial text like running tendrils) and sat down to consider its owner. Another of the Thunderer's bottled bolts diffused its light where he now stood, and set forth his face. It was young and comely and gallant, with a wrapt, intent melancholy; the face of a seeker, baffled but still defiant of despair. It seemed to be turned toward a star that I could not see.

I sat and waited for Terry the Cop to arrive on his stated rounds. If that shrewd young guardian of the local peace did not already know about the classical stranger, he could be depended upon to find out. When his heavy tread paused before my bench I indicated the trespassing giant. “Terry,” said I, “what is that?”

“That,” replied Terry promptly, “is a Nut.”

“Where does it come from?”

“Search me, dominie. It just kinda drops in.”

“Often?”

“Every night.”

“Why haven't I seen it before?”

“You hit the hay too early. This bird is an owl, and it don't begin to hoot till late.”

“Hoot?” I repeated. Terry's symbolism sometimes tends to the obscure.

“Stick around a few minutes,” advised the wise young policeman, “and you'll hear something.”

“Is he an amateur astronomer?” I asked. “Or what is it he is staring at?”

Terry pointed. “Look between those two roofs. See a little light, way up there?” I did. “That's it. That's the window.”

“Ah,” said I. “Romeo, I suppose.”

“Long-distance to the balcony,” returned Terry the Cop, who does not lack literary background. “That's the upper wing of the Samaritan Hospital, two blocks away. Sh-h-h! He's going to begin.” The stranger had taken from his coat a short, slender object which he fitted together with precision. Now he threw up his head and set it to his lips. Faint and pure as the song of a bird, heard across the hushed reaches of a forest, the music came to us. It was a wild, soaring melody unknown to me, but as I listened I thought of all the songs with which reed and pipe have ever answered to the breath of man; Pan's minstrels, and the glorified penny whistle of Svengali and the horns of elfland faintly blowing, and the witchery of the Pied Piper of Hamelin; and it seemed to me that all these and more blended in the rise and fall of those magic measures.

Silence fell. A wakened sleeper in a tree twittered a sleepy request for more. The player had lowered his instrument and was leaning against the rail, gazing. At that distance there could have been no answer from the far hospital window; the tones of his pipe were so soft as hardly to be audible where we stood. Yet he presently nodded and threw up his hand, and his face was transfigured with a wistful passion as he lifted the slender pipe to his lips again. This time, indeed, I knew what he played. It was that music which, above all other, embodies the soul and spirit of immortal youth; youth that hopes and fears and despairs and hopes again; youth that hungers and loves and suffers; youth that ever, through all turmoil and grief and wreckage, is imperishably young and immortally lovely, the music of “Bohême.” Again the strains sank and died in the darkness.

“That's all,” Terry the Cop informed me. “It's their signal. And he always ends on that.”

“Signal? At that distance? Do you mean to tell me she—whoever she is —can hear?”

“Whether she hears or not, she seems to get somethin' over to this Romeo guy.”

“No, Terry,” I said. “Not Romeo. An older singer and a greater.” And, with my hand on the little volume in my pocket, I gave my policeman friend the benefit of Gilbert Murray's matchless translation:—

“In the elm woods and the oaken,
There where Orpheus harped of old,
And the trees awoke and knew him,
And the wild things gathered to him,
As he sang amid the broken
Glens his music manifold.”

“Some rag!” said Terry the Cop admiringly.

“That, Terry,” said I, indicating the stranger, who was once more lost in watchfulness, “is Orpheus.”

This was too much of a strain on Terry's classic lore. “You're in wrong there, dominie. He don't belong to any Orpheus nor Arion nor Liedertafel. He's a Greek and his name is Philip, two pops, and an oulos.”

“All very well; Terry,” said I, trying him out. “But does that give him the right to play a musical instrument in a public place at an unlawful hour?”

“Come off, dominie,” said Terry the Cop uneasily. “He ain't doing any harm.”

“Disturbing the peace,” I pursued severely, “and tramping down the park grass against the statute thereunto made and provided. What do you let him do it for, Terry?”

“Aw, I kinda like the guy,” admitted Terry shamefacedly. “He's a nut. But he's a good nut. I'm sorry for him. He's up against it with that girl. She ain't ever coming out of the hospital, I guess. Besides, he did me a good turn once.”

The good turn, it appeared, had consisted in the prompt and effective wielding of a cane, unceremoniously borrowed from a passer-by when a contingent of the Shadow Gang from Second Avenue had undertaken, in pure wantonness of spirit, to “jump” Terry. Subsequently, Orpheus had initiated Terry into some technical and abstruse mysteries of stick work, whereby, he explained, the Orthian shepherds defended themselves

against robbers and wolves alike.

“I told him to keep a stick with him,” said Terry. “He'll need it, for that bunch will get to him some time. They don't forget.”

No weapon was in the Greek's hand, however, as he turned away toward the nearest exit. Halfway there he paused, felt in his pocket, and hurried over to his bench with a look of dismay. I met him, holding out the precious book. He took it with a sigh of relief, thanking me with precise but curiously accented courtesy.

“It is a beautiful text,” I observed. “You can read it?” he said with kindling eyes. “You read the Greek?”

“Sure,” put in Terry the Cop. “The dominie knows all the languages from Chinese to Williamsburg. Domine, make you acquainted with Mr. Phil.”

Thus I met Orpheus. We sat on a bench until the stroke of three brought me to my senses, while he declaimed selected passages in a voice as of rolling waters. That was the first of many nights of Dionysian revelry on the slopes of Mount Olympus, with “The Bacchae” for guidebook and the strange piper for leader. Never would he pipe for me, however. If I wished to hear the soft marvel of his music I must wait until midnight and stand apart in the shadow to listen while he played to the far-away beam of light in the hospital wing. Though our acquaintance ripened swiftly into a species of intimacy, he made no reference to the devotion in which his life centered. He had the gift of an impenetrable reserve.

Concerning himself, he was only less reticent. From casual references, however, I gathered that he was the son of a merchant of Lamia, educated in England, and sent to this country on an errand of commerce, and that he would long since have returned but for the light in that window.

It is not good for man to live on hope alone. So I sought to involve my Greek in the close-woven interests of Our Square. I took him to dine at the Elite Restaurant, and introduced him to Polyglot Elsa, the cashier (who put a fearful strain on his courtesy with her barbarous modern Greek), and impressed him into the amateur police to escort MacLachan the Tailor home, drunk and singing “The Cork Leg,” and even got him to pipe gay tunes of an early evening for our little asphalt-dancers to practice by; but always back of his gentle courtesy and tolerant kindness there was an aloofness of the spirit, as if he had but stepped out, a godlike spectator, from the limbo of some remote world hidden behind the tendrils and leafage of that wonderful semiuncial text. Then one night, when he had sent his heart and hope and longing out upon the wings of music through the night, I asked him to help me soothe the wakefulness of Leon Coventry. Together we climbed the stifling stairs of the old mansion to the top floor where Leon the Gnome lay eating his heart out and staring from an empty chair that whispered to the door of an empty room, its oaken bar fallen, its little white bed smooth, its one flower withered and dead on the window sill. Little was said between the swarthy Gnome on the bed and the splendid young god sitting beside him, but there passed between them some subtle understanding of the spirit. Orpheus made his music for the sick man; almost such music as he had sent winging through the outer darkness. At the end he took the Gnome's gnarled hand in his own.

“She will come back,” he said. “Believe always that she will come back. It is only by faith that we hold the dreams that are truer than reality.”

Outside Orpheus turned to me. “You believe that, do you not?” he asked.

I muttered something.

“I must believe it,” he said vehemently. “I must—or there is nothing left.” Then, simply, as if he were relating some impersonal anecdote, he told me his story, one of those swift, inevitable, pregnant romances of two outlanders in this great wilderness which we call New York.

“I met her in a language class. We were both taking Spanish. It was to help her in the corporation office where she worked. We lunched at the same place. We used to talk, to help out over lessons. She was French. Her name was Toinette.”

He handed me his watch, open. The print was dim and vague, but in the very poise of the head was the incarnation of mirth and youth. “She is very lovely,” I said. I should have said it in any case. In this case it happened to be true.

“She is little and quick and brown and laughing. We Greeks love laughter. She laughed at me because she said I had solemn eyes like an owl. Then I kissed her and she did not laugh, but clung to me, and I felt her tears. That evening we heard 'La Bohême.' hand in hand, and I played it to her afterward. I have played it to her ever since. When I would speak to her of marriage she would set her fingers to my lips and the joy would die out of her face. Once she said I must go back and forget her. Then it was my turn to laugh. We do not love and forget, we Greeks.

“She had a brother serving in the Argonne. He died dragging a wounded comrade to safety. She was very proud of it. But the heart that had been working so poorly almost stopped working at all when they brought her the news. She sent for me to tell me that she must go to the hospital. That was why she would not let me speak of marriage. Her heart had always been weak, and she feared she might be an invalid and a burden on me. As if that mattered! 'So I could not let you speak,' she said, 'because I loved you so, and I might have been weaker than my heart.' They took her to the Samaritan. That is her room, just beyond where you see the speck of light. Every night I stand where I can see it and make my music for her. So it was arranged between us.”

“But,” I began, and bit my tongue into silence.

“True,” he said equably. “At such a distance she cannot hear. It does not matter. She knows I make my music for her. That is all that matters.”

“How long since you have seen her?”

“April the 24th.”

“And this is August! Four months! Good Heavens, man, how is that?”

“'*Anangke,* Fate.” he murmured. “It could not be otherwise.”

“Surely it could,” I protested. “Won't they let you see her?”

He shook his head.

“But that's barbarous! Think what she must be suffering.”

“Oh, no. She understands. It is I who suffer.”

“Needlessly,” I cried. “It can be arranged. You *must* see her. Four months! Will you let me arrange it?”

“It is useless.”

I believe I took him by the shoulder and shook him. “Don't be a fool,” I bade him savagely. “I tell you, you *shall* see her. At once. To-morrow.”

He turned upon me eyes like those of an animal that pleads dumbly against torture. “It cannot be,” he said.

“Why?”

“She is dead,” he whispered.

“Dead?” I loosed my grasp on him. “But you play—How can she—When did you—” All my thought and speech were jumbled within me. “Dead?” I finally contrived to get out. “When did she die?”

“On the last day of April. When they told me of it the little children were dancing in the park. She was like a little lovely child herself. They told me she was dead, but it is only at times that I am weak enough to believe them.”

I gazed at him, utterly bewildered. He returned my look with a gaze of infinite despair.

“To-morrow,” he said bravely, “I shall again know that she is alive and loving me.”

Later I learned how the blow had fallen; a grim and brutal experience for so gentle a spirit as his.

Three weeks after his Toinette was admitted to the Samaritan a forlorn-hope operation was determined upon. Happily, Orpheus knew nothing about it until it was all over, with unexpected promise of success and even complete cure. Once a week they let him see her. On the other six days he might call at the office for such information as a stolid and blank official chose to dole out. But no official could interpose his stolidity between Orpheus, piping at dead of night, and his Eurydice lying happily awake in the far upper wing of the hospital, knowing that he made his music for her and perhaps hearing it—who knows?—with the finer ear of the spirit. Vary his choice as he might, he told me, she always knew what he had played and could tell when they next saw each other. So all went well with those two young, brave hearts, and the meager reports grew increasingly hopeful, until one bright spring morning Orpheus paid his unfailing daily visit for information. A brusque young brute of an interne was at the desk, the regular official having stepped out.

“Twenty-one?” he repeated in reply to Orpheus's gentle-voiced question. “That's the heart case. Died yesterday afternoon.”

“But last night I played to her,” protested Orpheus in a piteous, stricken whisper, “and she heard and answered. It cannot be.”

“Nutty!” said the interne to the information official who returned at this point. “Takes'em that way sometimes. Better get him out before he busts loose.”

They got him out without trouble. He wandered into Our Square and watched the children dancing-in the May. They seemed to him like unreal creatures moving in a world of unrealities. More and more unreal grew everything about him until late that night he faced the grim reality of a barred door which kept him from his beloved dead, and that door he attacked with such fury and power that it took two policemen, in addition to the hospital corps, to subdue him. As he was a foreigner and vague and sorrow-stricken, the magistrate naturally gave him two months. He came out dazed but steadied. The one hold he had upon happiness was the delusion to which he so pathetically clung, the pretense, passionately cherished, that she was still alive. Poor Orpheus! He had indeed gone down into Hades for his Eurydice and stayed there. If he could find solace in his limbo of minor madness, perhaps that was best for him.

So thought the Little Red Doctor, wise in human suffering, to whom alone I told the story of Orpheus. Said the Little Red Doctor first: “There are times when I blame my old friend Death for doing a job by halves”; and second: “Cure him? Who wants to cure peace with pain! Let him play his music”; and third: “God help that interne if I ever meet up with him!”

If Death resented his friendly opponent's strictures, he never showed it, but kept on doing business as usual in Our Square. And Orpheus continued to make, among the broken glens of our brick-and-stucco sky line, his music manifold to ears that heard not. As for the interne, the Little Red Doctor did, in the fullness of time, meet up with him, and improved the occasion to lay down certain ethics and principles of conduct as pertaining to the profession of healing. Whereupon the interne, who should have known better, being not more than half again as big as the Little Red Doctor, treated the lesson in a light and flippant vein, and asserted that when he wished to learn his business he wouldn't apply to a half-boiled shrimp.

Thus it happened that he who had come forth from the hospital an interne intact and unafraid returned thereto a battered and terrified patient with a broken nose and two displaced ribs urgently requiring attention. The practice of medicine in Our Square, as exemplified by so thoroughgoing an exponent as the Little Red Doctor, is not wholly a lily-fingered science.

Minora cano! And why should I sing of such lesser matters as the correction of the interne, when there awaits my historical pen a conflict worthy of Euripides's own strophes! Cyrus the Gaunt and the Bonnie Lassie had been serving the midnight rarebit to three of their uptown friends who had dropped down through the slums to the friendly little old house with the dancing figurines in the window, and Cyrus had undertaken to pilot his friends to the corner, lest their evening raiment be locally misinterpreted and resented. Coming, later than my wont, from the Elite Restaurant, I crossed Our Square a few rods in advance of them. Orpheus stood in his corner, piping to his lost young love. From without there approached him swiftly a dark group, close gathered. It was the Shadow Gang, from Second Avenue, bent upon reprisals. There were eight or nine of them, under the leadership of “Mixer” Boyle, a local middle-weight of ill repute. They closed in upon the Greek, and as I ran, shouting for Terry the Cop, I saw him go down under the pack. More than music was in that soul, however. If he was Orpheus, he had something, too, in him of Thersites and Achilles and Agamemnon. Like a bear struggling from beneath an onset of dogs, he up-heaved his big shoulders. From behind me came an answering shout, not Terry the Cop, indeed, but the next best thing, Cyrus the Gaunt,

followed closely by the Rev. Morris Cartwright, Gerrit Bascom, and two other visions of white shirt fronts protruding and black coat tails streaming in the wind. They passed me as if I were a milestone, and the battle was joined.

Cyrus the Gaunt is a mighty man of his hands. But the hands are those of an amateur. Mixer Boyle's are those of a professional. They crossed, and Cyrus went down under a left swing. Before the Mixer could turn he was toppled with the blessing (full arm to the ear) of the Rev. Morris Cartwright. Two others fell upon the Rev. Morris and the Rev. Morris fell upon the Mixer, and then they all rose and went at it again.

I am old who once was young, but never do I look upon the stricken field without remembering that in my prime I was a man of deeds and juggled deftly with seventy-five-pound dumb-bells. Talents of this sort are never wholly wasted. Upon attaining the outskirts of the mêlée I selected the largest hostile bulk in reach, seized it around the hips, and lifted it clear. It struggled and developed a solid fist which, in contact with my jaw, utterly destroyed my equilibrium. I fell, but contrived so to twist myself that the hostile bulk fell beneath me. It lay quiet. But when I strove to rise, a paralysis across my shoulders strongly advised against it. So I sat upon my captive's chest and dizzily watched the combat.

Now do I fully understand why war correspondents are not permitted at the front. It destroys their special usefulness. The fighting spirit and historical accuracy are totally incompatible. Nobody could have had a better view of the stirring events which succeeded than I. The forces and topography of the combat were clear in my mind: nearly two to one in favor of the enemy, but with our party fighting on home soil and in momentary hope of reenforcements. Yet all that I can recall is the sound of thumps and stifled curses and a confused mess of strained faces, violently working arms, and broad white shirt fronts now splotched with a harsher color. Then it seemed to me that I saw a little circle cleared about the mighty Greek, and a heavy cane which he brandished by the middle in both hands gave me the clue. The odds were balancing better, though still with the invaders. As if the Fates themselves were concerned to assure a more even field, there sounded a far, furious whoop, and the Little Red Doctor descended joyously upon the riot. At this critical juncture my captive came to and bit me in the leg. I lost all interest, temporarily, in the art and practice of war correspondence.

Having secured a hold (not prescribed by the formal rules of wrestling, I am informed) with my knee upon my opponent's neck, I turned to view the battle again. The defenders were against the fence now; but alas! the Rev. Morris Cartwright was on his hands and knees, and one of the other uptown knights was reeling. The gangsters pressed in hard, striving to edge around the Greek and get him in the rear. Cyrus, with his heavy fists, guarded one side of him; the Little Red Doctor was fighting like a fury on the other. I prayed (kneeling upon my captive's neck) for Heaven's success to the just, and Terry the Cop.

A shrill shout marked the next swift development.

"*Look out! He's got a knife!*"

A bright gleam of steel slanted toward Cyrus's shoulder. But the deft Greek had seen it. He chopped with his stick. The knife whirled free and descended. Like a football team plunging for a loose ball, the contestants dived for it. For a moment they groveled, struggling. Then out of the mass rose a shriek of the uttermost agony. It seemed to me that the group was stricken into sudden silence and immobility. Slowly it disintegrated, drawing apart in two sections. A half-doubled figure ran, staggering and dodging, into the shadows. A policeman's whistle shrilled. The gangsters turned and ran. Mine ran too. He tried, I regret to say, to give me a parting kick as I let him up. On the ground lay the knife. There was just a little trickle of red on it.

Cyrus picked it up and looked around. Every man of our party was battered, but none was stabbed.

"Must have got his own man in the mix-up," quoth the Little Red Doctor. "Come to my place and get fixed up." After much minor repairing with plaster and patch we separated upon our respective ways, disheveled, disreputable, but exultant. Orpheus, with his face one mass of cuts and bruises, went back, if you will believe it, to play the final "Bohême" to the little beam of light in the window.

"I hope," he whispered to me, "that she could not hear the noise. It would frighten her."

In consideration of my strained back the Little Red Doctor escorted me home. As we set foot to the steps we heard a soft groan from the black areaway. From between two barrels the physician dragged a cowering wretch. His hands were pressed to his abdomen. There was a pool of blood where he had crouched.

"The Samaritan Hospital for you," said the Little Red Doctor.

"Not me!" snarled the youth. "Guess again."

"Got any last message?" asked the doctor coolly.

The young fellow's eyelids fluttered. "Am I croaked?" he said.

"Unless you're on the table within the hour."

The gangster summoned his bravado. "Let'er go as she lies. No Samaritan for mine. I was there oncet. They don't allow you no cigs. 'No smoking.' I'll croak foist."

The Little Red Doctor scratched his head in perplexity. I looked at the wounded man. His face was sullen and brave, but his hands were quivering.

"Take him up to my room, doctor," I said.

That is how I came by my first lodger. His name was Pinney the Rat.

After the Little Red Doctor had saved his body, many and various visitors climbed my stair for the purpose of saving the Rat's soul. The Rev. Morris Cartwright came all the way downtown (with an ear tastefully framed in surgeon's plaster) to convert him to decency. Cyrus the Gaunt strove manfully to convert him to the gospel of work with offers of regenerating labor in Canadian wildernesses. MacLachan the Tailor undertook to curse him into sobriety. Our French David and our German Jonathan dropped in separately to forecast to him respectively the Entente and the Alliance arguments of the Great War and to hint at enlistment when he should be recovered. Herman Groll undertook to convert him to music. All of this he accepted with noncommittal and rather contemptuous tolerance. It served to pass the time of his halting recovery. As a

patient he was docile; as a guest he was not inconsiderate, though I could hardly say that he was grateful. To Orpheus alone of his visitors he exhibited a distinctive attitude. When the Greek dropped in upon us Pin-ney's face became a mask of cold watchfulness. He would freeze up into silence, following the big, gentle visitor's every movement with his unwinking eyes. The Little Red Doctor noted this with uneasiness.

"That's not a rat," he warned me. "It's a rattlesnake. And I don't like the way it looks at our Greek friend."

"What can he have against Orpheus?"

"Probably thinks it was he that knifed him."

"It wasn't. I can swear to that much."

"Save your breath. You'll never argue the resolve to get even out of the mind of a gangster."

"What shall I do? Tell Orpheus to keep away?"

"No. But see that our patient doesn't get his hands on any sort of weapon." Strangely enough, the wounded man seemed to exercise a strange fascination upon the Greek. Day after day he would come and sit, talking or reading, while the gangster lay silent, maturing murder in his soul. What a pair they made; the secretive, time-abiding, venomous Rat and the gentle madman!

In time the Rat's patience was rewarded. He got his weapon. He got it from the Bonnie Lassie. She had taken to dropping in upon us to see my lodger. She, at least, did not try to convert him. At first she just sat and twinkled at him, and the man does not live who can resist the Bonnie Lassie when she twinkles. On her second visit she brought him cigarettes in profusion and announced that she was going to sculp him in miniature, and proceeded forthwith to do it. Before the job was done they were sworn comrades. She would sit by his couch with her modeling tools and clay and work while he boasted in a hoarse, thin pipe of the evil things he had done. He was openly flattered that she should make him the chief figure of a group to be called "Ambush." One day while she was absorbed in a difficult line he quietly annexed her compasses. A pair of compasses is two excellent stilettos. Pinney the Rat secreted his booty in the bed. That evening I found him cautiously practicing, first with his right, then with his left hand, what I supposed to be that method pugilistically termed an uppercut. Had I been more expert, I might have noted that his thumb was turned sidewise and upward.

Concern and ignorance were choicely blended in the Rat's manner when, next day, the Bonnie Lassie came in to inquire for her lost tool, bringing as usual some "smokes."

"Do you like this kind better?" she asked.

"They're all right," said the Rat. "But, say, lady, not wishin' to ast too much—"

"Go on," she encouraged him as he—

"Woddya know," pursued the patient hesitantly, "about a big, fat cig with funny letters like this on?"

"Those look like Greek letters," said the Bonnie Lassie, studying the marks which he had scrawled. "I'll see if I can get some for you."

Search for that brand proved unavailing, however. It seemed to be a special importation.

"Where did you ever smoke them?" she asked the Rat.

"Over to th' S'maritan."

"Do they serve cigarettes in the hospital?"

"They do—I don't think! It was a little lady there give'em to me on the quiet. She seen what them big stiffs o' doctors never seen, that I was goin' batty for a smoke. She sneaked'em in to me. She was one real baby! Some guy outside useter send'em in to her to give me."

"Was she a nurse?"

"No; a case. Pretty near all in when she came. After she got well nobody wanted her to leave; and she didn't want to, I guess. So they made a job for her. I useter tell her she was hired out for sunshine. I ain't seen her since." He sighed.

"Would you like to see her?"

Pinney the Rat's eyes became human. "Oh, Gee!" he murmured.

"I'll bring her," said the Bonnie Lassie. "Whom shall I ask for?"

"Jus' leave word for Miss Tony that Pin—that No. 7, Men's Surgical—is hurted again, but O. K., and could she come and see him, maybe, some day." She came at once, Pinney the Rat's Miss Tony. She was little and quick and brown and lovely, but not laughing. There was a depth of woe and loss in her big eyes. Let that be my excuse that I did not at once identify her as Eurydice—that and the fact that, as far as I knew, Eurydice was dead and buried these four months and lived only in Orpheus's resolutely self-deluded mind.

For Pinney's sake, his visitor summoned up the phantom of past gayety. She shook, first her finger and then her little fist at him, upbraiding him in quaintly accented English, while he lay and visibly worshiped.

"You haf sayed that you will go straight. An' now voilà you, wit' your pro-mess broke an' a stick in your estomac."

"Yessum," said Pinney the Rat.

"That learn you something? That learn you to be'ayve?"

"Yessum," assented that murderous gangster like an abashed schoolboy.

"You give me your han' now that you be a good boy an' go no more wit' *les Apaches* an' get you a job?"

The Rat's face hardened. He squirmed away from those clear eyes. "I got one little account to square up," he muttered. "After that if I make my getaway, I'll join the Salvationists if you tell me to. An' say, Miss Tony, you know them cigs you useta gimme? Them with the dinky letters on?"

The girl's trembling hand went to her throat. She looked at him strangely.

"If I could get a handful o' them," he continued shyly, "they—I—it'd kinda remind me when—when you ain't here. How's me unknown friend on the outside that useta send'em in?"

Miss Tony leaned her head against the wall and burst into a passion of tears. I led her out, still sobbing, while the ex-Men's Surgical No. 7 sat up in his bed and cursed himself with wild, blasphemous, wondering oaths.

Whatever surmise our young gangster may have entertained he kept to himself. And, on the following morning, sterner matters claimed his attention, for, while I was out, Orpheus, the Greek, dropped in, and Pinney, once more the Rat, saw the hour of his revenge upon his supposed assailant at hand. For the Greek, forgetful of caution, had seated himself well within arm's length of the patient's couch. Beneath the sheet the Rat clutched the needle-pointed compasses and waited. Should he risk the jump and the stroke? No! He might miss. And he knew, from the memory of the Battle of Our Square, the Greek's swiftness of eye and hand. He must get him nearer. It was a time for strategy.

“Hey, sport. Got a smoke on you?”

Orpheus drew a box from his pocket, extracted a fattish cylinder, and leaned forward to the other—not quite far enough. “Gimme a light, will ye?” piped the Rat hoarsely, taking the cigarette in his left hand.

His right was working, wriggling slowly, slowly out from beneath the sheet. Orpheus struck a match and leaned toward the bed. His heart was almost over the lurking point. Slowly advancing the tip for the flame, Pinney the Rat—now the Rattlesnake with death in his stroke—raised his arm to blind his victim's vision against the blow. The movement brought the flimsy-papered cylinder directly before his own eyes. Familiar characters leaped out at him from the paper.

“Gawd!” croaked Pinney the Rat.

Though it had the sound of an oath, it was perhaps as near a prayer as the gangster had ever uttered. His frame, tense as a spring, slumped back among the covers. Orpheus dropped the match. “What is it?” he cried with quick concern. “You suffer?”

“Where didje get that cig?”

“The cigarette? From Greece. I always smoke this kind.”

“Have ye—didje ever send 'em to a little lady in the S'maritan Hospital fer a—a guy she was good to?”

“Yes.” The Greek's eyes widened. He began to shake through all his frame. “My God! You knew her?”

“Did I *know* her?” The Rat turned away and closed his eyes. His right hand moved furtively under the bed clothing, away from his body. Something fell, with a soft clink between the bed and the wall. The Rat shuddered and sighed like a man freed from a great peril, “Go on. Spiel,” he bade Orpheus.

“Spiel?” queried the trembling Greek. “Spill your talk. Tell me about her.” Orpheus opened his heart and spoke. To that silent listener (for Pinney the Rat uttered no word) he poured forth his love and longing and his delusion, speaking of the girl as if she still lived. One word from Pinney might have brought the climax, perhaps disastrously, for that mind, desperately clinging to its delusion, might have collapsed under too sudden a shock of reality. The Rat lay quiet, drinking it in and revolving tangled problems. There were strange echoes in the Greek's talk which he failed to understand.

As I came in I met, on the stairs, Orpheus going out. His face was alight with a strange radiance.

“That Mr. Pinney knows her,” he said. “He knows my Toinette. She was once good to him.” Then, in a confidential and triumphant whisper: “So she lives in another heart beside my own.” It was as if his delusion, his creed, his religion of love that was stronger than death, had been blessed with convincing proof.

Wondering greatly, I returned to my patient. He was lost in thought and greeted me only with an absent nod. Not until I started the tea for our luncheon did he speak. “Say, boss, about that big wop.”

“Well?”

“He's a good guy, ain't he?”

“He is.”

“But—say. A little bit on the slant here?” He knuckled his head. “Huh?”

“Perhaps. What have you been saying to him?”

“Nothin'. I been listenin'. A great line of talk about the little lady. But—say, boss. What's his kink?”

“Couldn't you tell?”

“Sometimes I thought I got him,” said the Rat reflectively. “And sometimes I don't get him at all. Seems like he speaks of *her* like she was a dead person.”

“Well, she is.”

The Rat's jaw dropped. “Who is?”

“Orpheus's—the wop, as you call him—the woman he loved.”

“Are *you* nutty, too? Wasn't she in here to see me only yesterday?”

Light broke in upon me in a great wave. “Merciful powers!” I shouted. “*Your* Miss Tony—his Toinette? It can't be. She died in a hospital the day before May Day.”

“Ferget it! She moved out *cured* a week before May Day. Don't I know? Didn't I go humping up to Room 21 to see her, and find an old hen with a face like a mustard plaster and a busted mainspring?” The number woke remembrance within me. “What became of the woman in 21?”

“Croaked a few days later.”

Then the whole tragic comedy of errors was made plain to me. In turn I made it clear to my lodger.

“Who's loony now?” he demanded triumphantly. “You chase out an' find the wop an' let's square this.”

All very simple, but there was the matter of Orpheus's mental condition to be considered. What would be the outcome of so violent a confirmation of his delusion? Or was it a delusion, since it was a fact? Neither the Rat nor I could lay any claim to be metaphysicians. Obviously this was a case for the Little Red Doctor, together with such consultants as he might care to call in.

At the summons of its official physician Our Square mustered its intellectual forces in the Bonnie Lassie's

Studio and sat in solemn conclave upon the problem. First of all we sent for the Rat's Miss Tony, and what the Bonnie Lassie said to her in the little back room and what she said to the Bonnie Lassie is a secret of womankind. Not even Cyrus the Gaunt was told. All that we heard of it was a cry and a sound of happy sobbing and another sound of broken laughter; and then the little, quick, brown, lovely face was turned to us from the steps outside, and MacLachan observed that two Bonnie Lassies in one house was a strain on human credulity as well as on human eyesight, and the Bonnie Lassie returned to us with *her* eyesight looking a trifle strained.

"Somebody at the Greek consulate," said she, "told her that Mister Phil-il-op—Mr. Orpheopoulos had gone back to Greece, and she's been breaking her poor dear little heart over it. Men are *all* imbeciles."

"Thanking you in behalf of one and all," returned Cyrus the Gaunt, "will the volcano of wisdom whom I have the felicity of calling wife tell us who is to break it to Orpheus?"

"Pinney the Rat."

Several protests were promptly entered. "That roughneck?" said MacLachan, whose urgency in the cause of abstinence had not been well received. "Take thought of the effect on the poor, stray-witted Greek lad."

"I'm not thinking of the effect upon him at all," said the Bonnie Lassie. "I'm thinking of the effect upon Pinney."

"Think aloud," invited the Little Red Doctor. "What beneficial effect will the reunion of two loving hearts have upon an incised stab wound in a third party's abdomen?"

"Isn't this wound healed?"

"Practically."

"Did you ever know any person to go crazy or get crazier from joy?"

"No."

"There are your two patients disposed of, on the medical side. What I am attempting is an experiment in psychology. You've all had your chance at saving the Rat's soul. I'll have mine."

She perched herself upon a modeling stool and expounded. The Rat, she explained, had never had an opportunity to do anything but harm in his life. Therefore he did harm with pride, because it was doing something. "He's like all of us; he wants to work to some effect. Give him a chance to make himself effective for good, and you may see a change."

Upon which theory of vice and virtue the Little Red Doctor commented:—

"Sometimes the Bonnie Lassie thinks around queer corners with her mind, but she's got the wisest heart in Our Square." So Pinney the Rat got his instructions and reluctant leave from his doctor to indulge in a brief midnight stroll that very night.

Our Square was haunted that midnight by uneasy figures slinking about in shadowy backgrounds. One by one Terry the Cop trailed them down only to be discomfited by successive discoveries of his own particular friends. The one logical object of suspicion, Pinney the Rat, sat openly on a bench and smoked and waited for Orpheus to finish his music. When it was over, the little guttersnipe went to meet the big Olympian. Carefully indeed had we rehearsed the Rat in a modulated method of breaking the news. But the gangster was an undisciplined soul and a direct. At the crisis he reverted to his own way, which perhaps was best. He put a hand on Orpheus's shoulder.

"Say, bo'," he said, "yer in wrong about the lady."

The Greek's face quivered, in anticipation of another blow at the fabric of his precious dream. "I know," he said.

"No, yeh don't know. She didn't croak. She's alive."

Orpheus's hands went to his temples.

"She's alive and waiting for you in the dominie's hallway. Come wit' me. Ready? Hep!"

Then Cyrus the Gaunt, Terry the Cop, and I had to fall on the Little Red Doctor and pin him to a bench to keep him from ruining it all, for the great bulk of the Greek loosened in every fibre and he collapsed into the clutch of the fragile Rat in a manner calculated (so the maddened physician informed us in technical and violent terms) to rip every condemned stitch out of the latter's foreordained peritoneum. Presumably, however, the Little Red Doctor had stitched better than he knew. For Pinney straightened the big man up and marched him across the way. As the strange pair mounted the steps the vestibule door opened. A little, quick figure sped to meet them. We heard across the leafage of Our Square the cry of a man who has come back to life and of a woman who has come back to love. When my eyes, which are growing old and play me strange tricks, had cleared, the doors were closed and Pinney the Rat was playing watchdog on the steps, jealously guarding that sacred vestibule.

Oh, the vestibules of Our Square! What Arcadia has fostered a thousandth part of their romance! Between those narrow walls, behind those ill-guarded doors, in that pathetic travesty of solitude which is all that our teeming hive affords, what heights and depths of love and anguish, what hope and despair, what triumphs, what abnegations, what partings, what "infinite passion and the pain of finite hearts that yearn," pass, and are forgotten! When the blight of ages shall lie heavy and dusty over a forgotten metropolis, when the last human habitation totters to its fall in some far future cataclysm, two lovers shall stand clasped in its vestibule forgetful of ruin, of death, of all but each other. Oh, for the pen of Euripides to celebrate fittingly those narrow and enchanted spaces! Or the pipe of my friend Orpheus to turn their echoes into golden music!

They came out, those two, arm enlaced in arm, with the glory on their faces, into a world that was theirs alone for the time. They vanished into the shadows, and the watcher on the step lifted his head and saw them go. But the face of Pinney was no longer the face of the Rat.

He rose and slouched down the steps. We went forward to meet him.

"I wanta drink," he muttered.

The Bonnie Lassie put her hand out to him. "No, you do not," said she.

“No, I do not,” said Pinney. He turned to Cyrus the Gaunt.

“When do I git that job?” he asked.

“Tazmun”

A TALE OF WHITE MAGIC IN OUR SQUARE

STRANGERS in Our Square stop and stare at No. 17. In itself the house is unremarkable; a dull, brown rectangle with a faintly mildewed air about the cornices. It is this sign on the front which attracts the startled notice of the wayfarer:—

THE ANGEL OF DEATH
One Flight Up and Ring Bell

To us of the Square the placard is a commonplace, and the Angel of Death just Boggs, a chunky, bristly little man with gold teeth and a weak, meek, peanut-whistle voice, who conducts not a private bomb factory or a suicide club.

Taxmun formed romantics hopefully surmise upon a first reading, but a worthy though humble enterprise of hygiene and cleanliness more specifically set forth in the legend running, crimson, across the top of his business card:—

BOGGS KILLS BUGS

Once in the long ago that explicit announcement had flamed upon the house front. It yielded to the more dignified form when Madam Tallafferr took Mr. Boggs's top floor. She said that it was objectionable and that she could not live over it, and the landlord, duly impressed, sacrificed his prized alliteration rather than lose a lodger so elegant and aristocratic. Mr. Boggs had a vast, albeit distant, reverence for aristocracy, and he recognized in Madam Tallafferr a true exponent. So the sign came down and she went up. With her went her furniture, scanty but magnificent, a silver-inlaid lock box locally credited with safeguarding the Pemberton family diamonds, Sempronius, who was fat and black and a cat, and Old Sally, who was fat and black and a thief. For five years Madam Tallafferr dwelt above the lethal Boggs, and at the end of that period Our Square knew hardly more of her than on the day of her arrival. She was polite, but resolutely aloof as befitted her station in life.

For Mr. Boggs's lodger was all that is most glorious in Southern lineage. Her full style and title was Madam Rachel Pinckney Pemberton Tallafferr, with two Is, two fs, and two rs, if you valued her favor. She was passionately devoted to the Lost Cause, and belonged to no less than seven “Daughters-of” organizations with sumptuous stationery. Mr. Boggs was very proud of her mail. He said she had the swellest correspondence in Our Square. When letters arrived bearing her name without the requisite double Is, fs, and rs, they were invariably returned to the postman indorsed in a firm, fine hand: “No such individual known here.” But if the letters appeared important, the kindly and admiring Angel of Death used to intercept them and supply the missing consonants from his own inkwell. In this way he accumulated considerable information, and was able to apprise Our Square that his lodger was superstitious, subscribed to a dream magazine, and belonged to a Spirit Guidance Group. He darkly suspected the spirits of giving her bad advice about investments.

In person Madam Tallafferr was spare, tall, and straight. Her age when she first came to us was, to borrow caution from the war-zone censorship, “somewhere in the sixties,” though to Old Sally she was still “my young mist'ess.” Age had sharpened her personality, like her features, to a fine point. She was, I think, the most serene, incisive, and authoritative person I have ever encountered. Her speech was precise and trenchant. She dressed always in elegant, rustling black. Mr. Boggs said that she walked like a duchess. Quite likely. Though where Mr. Boggs got his data, I don't know. Our Square is not extensively haunted by persons of ducal rank. However, she became known to the locality, behind her back, as the Duchess. She and Old Sally were supposed to live in sumptuous luxury above the sign of the Destroyer. They had come to Our Square for their sojourn because, generations before in the days of its glory, madam's maternal grandfather had visited a distant cousin in that same No. 17. From beneath the ominous signboard she made occasional excursions, going westward and uptown, sometimes actually in an automobile, and always escorted by Old Sally. It was understood (from the boastful Mr. Boggs) that on such occasions his lodger was going into Society.

Once, that Our Square knew of, she put her ante-bellum principles into practice. She undertook disciplinary measures upon Old Sally, who in a moment of exaltation had been bragging indiscreetly of past glories “back in Fuhginia.” With a light but serviceable cane she corrected that indiscretion. Yes, in this emancipated twentieth century, among the populous, crowded habitations of our little metropolitan community, within earshot of Terry the Cop, the conscientious and logical slave-owner committed the startling anachronism of beating her slave. Hearing the resultant groans, Mr. Boggs, the lethal, rushed up to his top floor in great perturbation of spirit and burst in upon the finale of the performance. From what he could observe the castigation was purely formal and innocuous and the outcries merely a concession to what was expected and proper in the circumstances. But when he made his presence known, the Duchess in few cold and measured terms explained to him his exact purport and significance in the cosmic scheme, which he promptly perceived to bean approximate zero. “She wizened me up,” said the Angel of Death, “like a last season's roach.”

One after another she wizened us all up sufficiently to convince Our Square that she desired no personal share in its loosely communal, kindly, and village-like life.

But though aloof she was not alien. As befitted her name and station, she could in time of need descend from her remote Olympus above the insecticidal Mr. Boggs and lend a hand. The first occasion was when a sudden and disastrous spring epidemic of that Herod of diseases, diphtheria, swept down upon Our Square, bringing panic in its train, an insane and bestial panic which barred doors against the authorities, against help, against medicine, against even our fiery and beloved Little Red Doctor, who stands like a bulwark between us and death and the fear of death. Then the Duchess appeared. She consulted briefly with the Little Red Doctor. She put on the black silk of splendor, the Pinckney laces and the Pemberton diamonds, and thus girded for the fray went forth, a spare, thin-lipped, female St. George, against our local dragon. Wherever that sane and confident presence appeared, panic gave way to reason and mutiny to obedience. There were no heroics. She nursed no dying children, saved no sudden emergency. She simply restored and enforced courage through the authority of a valiant and assured personality. Just before the Little Red Doctor collapsed, at the close of the crisis, he delivered his estimate of her.

“Cold nerve and tradition. Our Square ought to put up a statue to her—in steel.”

Against which may be set off the Duchess's complacent and bland summing up of the Little Red Doctor:—

“He seems a worthy young man.”

In retort, Mr. Boggs, for once forgetting his reverential attitude, indignantly piped: “God give you understanding!” The Duchess merely lifted her eyebrows fractionally. Being a Pemberton by birth and a Tallafferr by name, she perceived no necessity of understanding lesser forms of life.

Yet she possessed understanding, too, and of a subtle, fine, and profound kind. Otherwise she could never have done for Schepstein what she did when Schep-stein's twenty-year-old Metta killed herself through taking poison tablets (by mistake of course, as the Little Red Doctor perjuriously certified). In his hour of lonely grief and shame, Our Square turned its back upon the little cross-eyed, cross-grained, agnostic trafficker in old debts, old furniture, old books, old stamps, old silver, and anything else old which he could buy from the uninformed and sell to the covetous; not because he had at one time or another got the better of most of us in some deal and was the best-hated habitant within the four inclosing streets, but because we did not know what to do for him and feared his savage and cynical rebuffs. But when the furtive hearse and the one carriage for Schepstein, which was to have been the whole of little Metta's funeral, drew up at night before the Schepstein flat, Madam Rachel Pinckney Pemberton Tal-lafferr descended her steps, and crossed Our Square, rustling and in the high estate of black silk and lace. She must have been watching. Behind her waddled Old Sally with an armful of white roses. They met Schepstein at the foot of his steps, following his dead. As the casket passed her, Madame Tallafferr took the wealth of bloom from the servant and scattered its snowy purity above the girl. At that the face of Schepstein, which had been cold lead-gray, changed and flushed and softened, and he staggered suddenly where he stood and might have fallen had not that strong old woman thrust an arm under his to help him on his way. So two mourners went in the lone carriage to little Metta's funeral.

Only long afterward was this known to Our Square. What established the Duchess as a local heroine and an Olympian controller of destinies was her handling of MacLachan the Tailor. MacLachan, on his black, alcoholic days, was wont to sing “The Cork Leg” under circumstances which I have set forth elsewhere. On this occasion he sang it, sitting on the coping of the fountain with his legs in the water, and beating time with a revolver which might or might not have been loaded. Nobody knew at the time. Regarding MacLachan there was no such room for doubt. Between stanzas he would announce his purpose of presently ending all his troubles with a bullet, previous to which, candidates for coffins would be considered in the order of their applications. In the natural logic of events this was a case for Terry the Cop, but Polyglot Elsa of the Elite Restaurant had early observed MacLachan's ready weapon, and with more cunning than conscience had dispatched the intrepid Terry to the farther end of the beat upon a purely fictitious Italian riot. For reasons of her own she did not wish Terry punctured. Hence Our Square, deprived of the official protection to which we were entitled, lurked about in the night shadows, watching the balladist from a respectful distance and wondering what would come next.

The Duchess came next. She rustled stiffly up to the fountain and bade MacLachan hold his peace. Old Sally followed with a market basket. MacLachan elevated his voice a pitch.

“Horror and fright were in his face.
The neighbors thought he was running a race;
He clung to a lamp-post to stay his pace,
But the leg broke away and kept up the chase,”

bellowed MacLachan. “I am not aweer,” he added, still rhythmic, though with a change of meter, “that now and here, you possess any legal authority in this Squeer!”

The Duchess pointed a stiletto-like finger at MacLachan. “You are a rum-wastrel,” she pronounced severely.

MacLachan pointed his revolver at the Duchess, though rather waveringly. “I am,” said he, “and proud of it.”

“You will do some harm with that firearm.”

“I will,” said MacLachan, “and glad to do it.”

“Go home to your bed and pray,” ordered the stiff old lady contemptuously.

MacLachan regarded her gravely. “Fly, witch,” he said. “Awa' wi' ye on yer broomstick. I have a silver bullet for yer life.”

“Give me that pistol,” she directed and stretched out a hand for it.

Quietly but firmly MacLachan shot her. At the same moment Old Sally hit him expertly on the head with a bottle which she took from her market basket. MacLachan slumped forward and took his whirling thoughts carefully between his two hands. “I ha' done wrong,” he presently concluded. “I ha' murdered my aged an' respectable aunt in cold blood. Tak' my weepon an' hale me to the gallus.”

He passed his revolver over to a firm grasp. It was that of the Duchess. She was bleeding very slightly, the

merest trickle, from the ear which MacLachan's bullet had grazed.

“Do not strike him again,” she bade Old Sally, composedly, and that faithful amazon dropped her bottle and lost fifty cents' worth of catchup.

“Come home before you get into trouble,” was the lady's command to the now cowed and repentant tailor.

Whimpering and rubbing his head, he suffered himself to be marched back to his Home of Fashion. So promptly was the retirement executed that Terry the Cop never knew (officially) what had taken place. Unofficially all of Our Square knew. And the following day a deputation of us marched MacLachan around to No. 17 to apologize. As we stood on the stairway awaiting her pleasure, we could hear Madam Rachel Pinckney Pemberton Tallafferr directing Old Sally to inform the deputation that she had not, to the best of her recollection, evinced any intention of receiving on that particular day, and that she sent her compliments to us, and was not at home.

“That's the high-toned way of saying she don't want to see us,” chirped the admiring Mr. Boggs between gratification and apology. “Aristocrat to the finger tips! Haven't I always told you so?”

He had, to the uttermost wearying of the flesh. But there came a time when he boasted less assuredly of his top-floor grandeur. To the little circle at the Elite Restaurant it became evident that something was preying upon the blithe spirit of the Angel of Death, something having to do with his Duchess. One evening, in a burst of confidence, he unburdened himself to the Little Red Doctor and me. Madam was, he feared, losing interest in the lofty social sphere to which she had been called. Seldom, nowadays, did she go in her full regalia uptown. Automobiles came no more to his flattered door. Worst of all, her fascinating mail had dwindled. Where formerly there would be as many as eight or ten envelopes per week, decorated with splendid and significant insignia and inclosing proud and stiff cardboard, now there was but one regular communication of the sort, the letter bearing the mystic double circle of the Spirit of Guidance Group and, as that was postmarked Brooklyn, Mr. Boggs had a small notion of its social import. Most of her days the aristocratic lodger now spent at solitaire, with Sempronius, the black cat, for critic. Mr. Boggs surmised sadly that the goddess of his top-floor Olympus was growing old.

Very likely the phenomenon would have gone unexplained to this day had not both the Rosser twins fallen into the fountain simultaneously, contrary to their usual custom, which is for one of them to take the careless plunge while the other dances frantically on terra firma and yells till help comes. Madam Tallafferr once termed them “Death's playmates,” because of this ineradicable passion for gambling on the brink of the pool which is just deep enough to cover their two-year-old heads. On this occasion Old Sally was the nearest aid. So she waddled fatly over and hauled them out easily enough. Then, quite inexplicably, she fell in herself and lay gently oscillating at the bottom of three feet of water. Still more inexplicably, she refused to come to properly when Mr. Boggs and I fished her out after not more than thirty seconds' immersion. Also she looked queerly flattened and misshapen and unnatural. So we ran her into the Little Red Doctor's office and awaited the verdict.

It was a long wait. When at length the Little Red Doctor emerged there was a wild kind of glint in his eye.

“D' you know what's the matter with that old black idiot?” he demanded.

“Martyr to her own hee-roism,” suggested Mr. Boggs, the romantic. “Is she drowned?”

The Little Red Doctor snorted: “She's starved. That's what she is!”

“She's as fat as butter,” I protested.

“Fat like a sliver!” retorted the physician scornfully. “Padded!”

“What on earth should she pad for?” I cried.

“To fool her mistress. She's been going without food so as to buy more for madam.”

At this information the eyes of the Destroying Angel bade fair to pop from their sockets and injure the Little Red Doctor toward whom they were violently protruding. “D' ye meantersay they're poor?” he gasped.

The Little Red Doctor outlined the history of the aristocratic pair, as he had extracted it from Old Sally. In the extraction he had grossly violated his professional ethics, as he shamelessly admitted, by giving her a half glass of port, which, on her pinched stomach operated as a tongue-loosener and betrayed her secret into his hands.

“I'm not going to have two aged females dying of want in Our Square just for the sake of a paper ethic or two,” he declared rebelliously.

According to what he had learned, the Duchess had left Virginia to save money and appearances, dragging along like a fetter a debt of honor contracted by a worthless scamp of a brother. Of course it was not in any sense a legal debt, but she, with her old-world ideas, had considered it to be a blot upon the family 'scutcheon, and had been paying interest, and bit by bit the principal, from her rigidly conserved little income. Presently an investment which had been indicated through the Spirit of Guidance Group's interpretation of one of madam's dreams reduced its dividends and madam cut off a few of her filial memberships. Another recommended by the dream magazine went wholly wrong. More memberships were reluctantly resigned. Old Sally, as head of the commissary, with full powers and responsibilities, was compelled to operate on a radically reduced apportionment. Two items took precedence of all else—the rent and the debt.

“You meantertellme,” chirped Mr. Boggs, “that Madam Tallafferr hasn't had enough to eat?”

“I do not,” said the Little Red Doctor emphatically. “She has. Old Sally hasn't. But her mistress doesn't know that.”

Mr. Boggs raised pious eyes to the ceiling. “Wotche going to do about it?” he inquired. He was, I take it, reminding Providence of its responsibility in the matter.

The Little Red Doctor wasn't for leaving it to Providence. “We've got to find a way to help.”

“Charity? To madam?” twittered Mr. Boggs. “I'd hate to try it on.”

The Little Red Doctor scratched his large red head in perplexity. Then he called Old Sally in.

“Now, Sally,” said he, “we're all friends of yours here.”

“Yessuh,” said Old Sally gratefully. “And friends of your mistress's.”

Old Sally bristled. “My young mist'ess ain' needin' no *frien's* 'roun' yeah. She hol's her haid *high!*”

“Well, admirers, then,” the Little Red Doctor tactfully amended. “The point is, we want to help. Now, haven't you got some things there you could sell without missing them? Some of that old furniture must be valuable.”

“Sell the Tallaffeh homestead fuhni-ture!” cried Old Sally, scandalized.

“Well, perhaps madam has more of that old lace than she needs.”

“The Pinckney lace!” said Old Sally in a tone of flat finality, which settled that point.

“Possibly, then, the diamonds,” I suggested diffidently.

At this Old Sally's lips, which had been pressed firmly inward, inverted themselves. She began to blubber. The blubbering became a sobbing. The sobs waxed to subdued howls. From the midst of the howls one coherent and astounding statement emerged:—

“I stole'em.”

“Stole the Pemberton diamonds!” cried Mr. Boggs in consternation. His structure of social splendor was fast disintegrating. “What did you do with em?”

“Hocked,” wept that sorry and shrunken old negress. “Gossome cheap trash in deir place to fool my young mist'ess. Her sight ain' good no mo'.”

“And the money went for food,” I suggested.

“Some. Rest I put on a dream figgah.”

“Policy,” explained the Little Red Doctor, who is wise in the ways of the world. “She dreamed a number and put her money on it in a policy shop. And it didn't come out. They never do.”

“Ef it had,” said Old Sally eagerly, “I'd'a' had money to pay dat eighteen hund'ed an' fo'ty-five dollahs an' fifty cents debt, an' plenty mo' besides.” Obviously she had been wearing that hair-shirt debt next to her soul's skin. “But I must'a' disremembered my dream figgah.”

“Very likely,” agreed the Little Red Doctor gravely. “Come now, Sally; think. Isn't there anything you could sell out of the house?”

The old face began to work again. “My young mist'ess she'll like to skin me if I tell,” she whimpered.

“I'll cross your eyes like Schepstein's, if you don't,” threatened the Little Red Doctor savagely.

A deep breath signified the termination of her struggle between two fears.

“Tazmun,” she enunciated in a mystical voice.

We looked at each other, puzzled. “What?” queried Mr. Boggs.

“Tazmun. You know, tazmun.”

“What on earth is tazmun?”

“Tazmun,” she repeated determinedly. “Like whut you keep aroun' you to fotch luck.” Seeing us still at a loss, she sought and evolved an illustration.

“Rabbit foot's a tazmun.”

“Talisman,” I translated in a burst of inspiration.

“Dass it, tazmun.”

“But you can't sell a talisman,” objected the Little Red Doctor.

“Dis tazmun you can,” eagerly asserted Old Sally. “Wuth a heap o' money. My young mist'ess keep it locked up in her jool box. Lawzee! How I has tried to get my han's on'at ol' tazmun lettah.'Cause we sho' need de money fo' it.”

“A letter?”

“Dass it. Aut'graph tazmun letter. Fum Gen'al Stonewall Jackson, wrote to ol' Massah Pemberton, befo' de war.”

Mr. Boggs turned to me. “Dominie, you know everything.” (This is one of the perquisites of professing the classics in Our Square; it has also its drawbacks in the shape of disappointed expectations.) “Would that kind of letter be worth real money?”

“It's a fo'tellin' lettah,” put in Old Sally eagerly. “It fo'tells de wah mo' dan ten yeahs befo' de wah.”

In that case, I thought, it might be valuable historically. Anyway it would do no harm to get an offer from an expert. But could “young mist'ess” be induced to let it out of her hands? Young mist'ess's Old Sally thought it doubtful. Young mist'ess, with her passion for the things of the Lost Cause, held that document in sacred veneration. Once a week she took it from its neatly addressed envelope to read it. Her spirit guide had repeatedly advised her of its preciousness, and had declared that it would eventually bring fortune and happiness to her, if she would await the sign. What sign? Old Sally did not know. But she was certain that a marvelous “tazmun” such as General Stonewall Jackson's foretelling letter would furnish a sign beyond all misconception.

“Sign? She shall have a sign,” muttered the Little Red Doctor, who is wholly without conscience in any matter where he can pamper his insatiable appetite for help-ing others. Then to Sally: “But don't you say a word to her of what you have told us.”

“Cotch me!” said that aged crone. “I don' want to get *skint*.”

How to come to negotiations with the secluded and exclusive Madam Rachel Pinckney Pemberton Tallafferr was something of a problem. Strategy was useless against that keen old woman. The direct way was decided upon and Mr. Boggs was appointed emissary. He respectfully petitioned that the lady grant a conference to the Little Red Doctor, myself, and himself upon a matter of business. Prefacing her gracious consent with the comment that she could not conceive what it was about, she set an hour for receiving us. When we climbed to

the top floor above the Angel of Death sign, we found her a faded and splendid figure amid the faded splendor of her belongings. She was clad in her stiffest black, she sat in the biggest Tallafferr chair, her throat emerged from the delicate and precious Pinckney lace, and there glittered in her innocent ears a grotesque travesty upon the small but time-honored Pemberton diamonds. I knew on sight what she would say. She said it: “To what am I indebted, sirs, for this visit?”

The Little Red Doctor explained that we were interested, historically, in a document which she possessed. The Duchess's sharp glance passed over me to rest sardonically upon Mr. Boggs, seeming to inquire with what historical interest that insecticidal nemesis might be credited; then leaped upon and fixed the spokesman: “How, may I ask, did you learn of this document?”

“Through a dream,” replied that shameless one.

Her glance livened. “Strange,” she murmured. “You dreamed—what?”

“That there was preserved at the top of this house a prophetic letter of Stonewall Jackson's.”

The old lady's eyebrows twitched. He had touched the right chord of superstition. Her voice was quite animated as she asked: “And you actually expect this dream to be confirmed?”

“Pardon me; it is already confirmed. A few days after, I saw a newspaper clipping, stating that such a letter was said to be in existence, but that its whereabouts was unknown.”

I shuddered. Couldn't the reckless idiot foresee the next question? It came, straight and sharp:—

“Have you the clipping?”

“I have.”

I gasped with relief, wonder, and admiration.

He had. That wise young Ananias had quietly provided for it all by getting Inky Mike, who loftily terms himself a journalist (being a pressman's assistant in a socialist weekly office), to set up and strike off a brief and vague article which the Little Red Doctor himself had composed for the occasion. Madam Tallaffer read it with heightened color.

“This,” she said to Old Sally calmly, “is without doubt the Sign.”

From a beautifully inlaid box she reverently took an old buff envelope, stamped and postmarked, and put it in the Little Red Doctor's hands. “This, sirs,” said she, “is my talisman. It was given to me, as his most prized possession, by my father, to whom it was written.”

“What do you value this at, Madam Tallafferr?” asked the physician.

Her reply came without hesitation. “Eighteen hundred and forty-five dollars and fifty cents.”

The Little Red Doctor's jaw fell. “Eighteen—did I understand you to say eighteen *hundred?*”

“And forty-five dollars and fifty cents. That is the minimum. It is perhaps worth more.”

“Er—yes. Certainly. Very likely,” said the Little Red Doctor jerkily.

“I bid you good day, sirs,” said the Duchess. “You will, of course, exercise every care of General Jackson's letter.”

We bowed ourselves out. On the sidewalk we looked upon each other in dismay. “And Old Sally down to the last dollar,” said the Little Red Doctor, neglecting to mention that he had given her the dollar.

“Let's try the letter on the trade, anyway,” piped Boggs hopefully. “You can't tell but maybe it might be worth the money. *Is* there an autograph trade, dominie?”

In my capacity of omniscience, I chanced, happily for my reputation, to be informed upon this and to be able to make some definite suggestions. We went to Mr.

Barker's small and recherché curio shop, with the talisman. Mr. Barker did not bark. He purred. The substance of his purring was that while the letter was authentic beyond question and would be of interest to some Southern historical society, it could claim no special value. As for the prophetic feature, upon which so much stress had been laid, a mere opinion that, “Be it sooner or be it later, the moot question of State rights will demand a final settlement,” could hardly be regarded as an inspired forecast of the Civil War. However, should we say twenty-five dollars?

As the business brains of our delegation, Mr. Boggs, intrusted with the bargaining, would not say twenty-five dollars. Mr. Boggs would not say anything remotely suggesting twenty-five dollars. Mr. Boggs would say good day, which he forthwith did in great disgust of spirit. From Mr. Barker we went to Mr. Pompany. Mr. Pompany neither barked nor purred. He mumbled. The upshot of his submaxillary communication was a dim “Twenty dollars, take it or leave it.” We left it, and Mr. Pompany, the latter with a Parthian arrow sticking in his soul (if he had one) in the form of Mr. Boggs's firm opinion, delivered in a baleful squeak, that he might be only an ignoramus, but had rather the appearance and bearing of a swindler.

“Thieves!” piped Mr. Boggs on the sidewalk. “Thieves and fatheads, the whole trade. What now?”

“Schepstein,” said the Little Red Doctor. “He's a thief too. But he knows.” Schepstein received us in his grubby, grimy, desolated front room, which did duty as an office, with a malevolent cross-fire from his distorted eyes. “Bit of business?” he repeated after Mr. Boggs. “What business? State your business.”

“For sale,” piped Mr. Boggs, handing him the letter which he had taken from the envelope.

Hardly a glance did Schepstein give it. “Thomas Jonathan Jackson? Who'she? And who's this Major Pemberton?”

Mr. Boggs explained, in indignant piccolo tones, who Thomas Jonathan Jackson was. Not about Major Pemberton, however. No authority had been given to our deputation to disclose the ownership of the letter; So far as we were aware at that time, it would have meant nothing to Schepstein anyway. We had no reason, then, to suppose that he even knew Madam Tallafferr.

“Humph!” grunted Schepstein. “Stonewall Jackson, eh? Might be worth something. Lessee the envelope.”

He looked it over carefully, front and back, folded the letter which he had not even read, and slipped it back in. “Leave it with me overnight,” he suggested negligently. “I'll think it over and make you a price in the

morning.”

“Think as much as you like,” returned Mr. Boggs, retrieving the treasure. “We'll keep this. And we'll be back at eleven to-morrow.”

Observe, now, the advantages of living in a small self-centered community like Our Square, where everybody has an intimate (if not invariably friendly) interest in everybody else's affairs. Inky Mike had noted with curiosity our visit to Schepstein. As a press tender, the inky one naturally aspires to be a reporter, but his ideal reporter, being derived mainly from journalism as set forth in the movies, is a species of glorified compromise between Sherlock Holmes and Horace Greeley in a rich variety of disguises. He had no disguise handy, but he washed his face and followed Schepstein when that astute bargainer set forth immediately after our visit. Further, he listened outside the booth while the object of his sleuthing phoned a telegram. As he reported it in great excitement to our trio, it was addressed to a gentleman named Olds, in Cincinnati and read to this esoteric effect:—

“Alexandra local five forty-six perfect. What price? Answer quick.”

“Who's Olds?” asked the Little Red Doctor.

“Olds? Doncher know Olds?” cried Inky Mike. “The oil king? The multamillionaire?”

“What has this to do with us?” I asked. “It seems to be some oil quotation. What does Alexandra local' mean?”

“Search me!” offered the amateur sleuth. “But don'choo fool yourself! It's your business, awright. He snook out after you went, shakin' all over.”

Mr. Boggs, who from the first had been profoundly impressed by his Duchess's tradition-inspired estimate of the autograph, nodded a sagacious head. “Trust old Schep!” he fluted.

“When I've his money in hand; not before,” grunted the Little Red Doctor.

When we called at the dingy and lonely flat on the following morning, Schepstein's face was a mask of smiling craft.

“It's worth possibly—pos-sib-bly fifteen dollars as a spec,” he said.

“No,” cheeped Mr. Boggs.

“But the autograph market is looking up. I'll take a chanst and give you twenty-five. Cash,” he added impressively.

“No,” repeated Mr. Boggs.

“What's the matter with you?” demanded Schepstein with rising truculence. “D' you wan ta sell or don't cha? What's your price?”

“Eighteen hundred and forty-five dollars and fifty cents,” said Mr. Boggs in a clear, businesslike soprano.

Schepstein did not sneer, nor explode, nor curse, nor do any of the things which I confidently expected him to do. His convergent vision seemed to focus on the buff envelope in Mr. Boggs's lumpy hand. He looked thoughtful, and, it seemed to me, almost respectful. “As she stands?” he asks.

“As she stands,” assented Mr. Boggs. “Bought,” said Schepstein. And he wrote out a check to “Bearer.”

At this the Little Red Doctor lost his head and profoundly altered the situation. “By thunder!” he cried, “Madam Tal-lafferr knew what she was talking about all the time.”

Schepstein dropped his pen. “Who?” he asked in a rasping voice.

“Madam Tallafferr, across Our Square in Seventeen.”

“Was that her letter?”

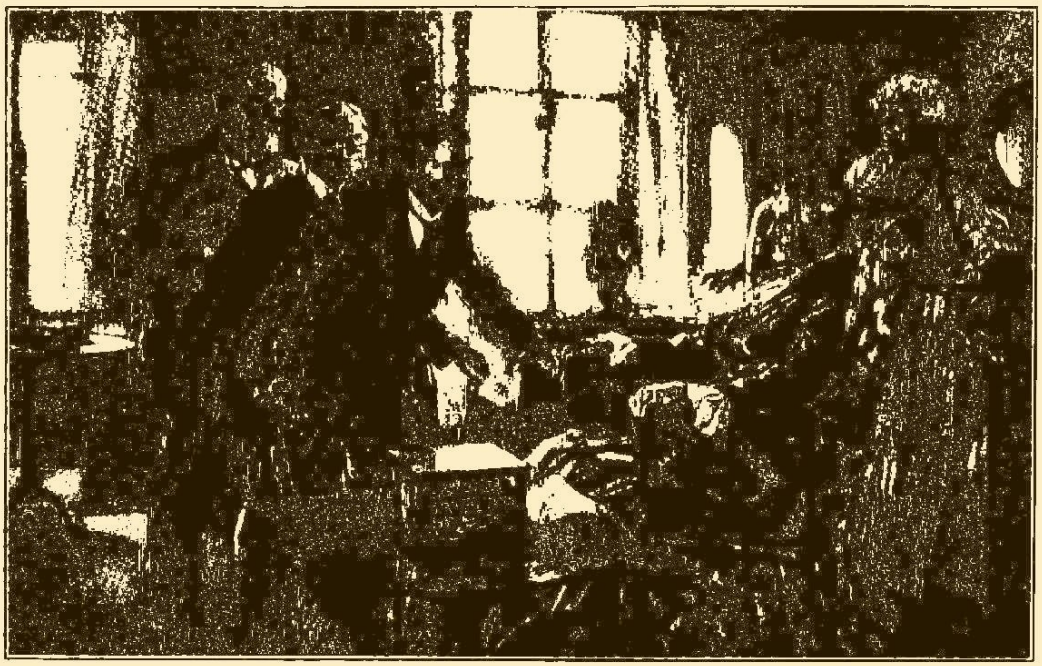
“Yes. We are acting as her agents.”

“Ah, hell!” said Schepstein softly. Then an astounding thing happened. Two small, pinched tears welled out from the ill-matched points of flint which serve Schepstein for eyes. They were followed by two more. The little, gnarly, cross-grained Jew drooped over the desk and his shoulders shook. A voice of falsetto anguish roused him.

“Don't cry on the check! You'll smudge it.”

Schepstein lifted his head and gloomed at Boggs. “Nevamind that; it's all off,” he gulped. “I got something to tell you people.”

Between queer, shamed breath-catch-ings, he told us about his Metta's funeral. At the end he read us a telegram from Quentin Olds. When I was able to assimilate its full meaning, I found myself shaking hands with Schepstein, while Mr. Boggs danced a jig with the Little Red Doctor. Then. Schepstein tore up the check for $1845.50 and invited us around to the Elite Restaurant to luncheon, thereby affording a sensational titbit of news for Polyglot Elsa's relating for a fortnight after. “Mr. Schepstein, he paid the whole compte. Was kennst du about that!” Three days were required to finish the deal. Then through Old Sally the deputation trio sought and obtained another audience from the Duchess. Mr. Boggs did the talking in terms worthy of his environment. “We have successfully terminated the negotiations, Madame Tallafferr,” he began.



"We have successfully terminated the negotiations, Madam Tallafferr"

The Duchess bowed in silent dignity.

"And I have now the honor of turning over to you eighteen hundred and forty-five dollars and fifty cents, as —"

"Hally-loo-yah, tazmun!" burst out Old Sally. "Hally—hally—hally—" She caught her mistress's austere glance. "I knowed it was cornin' so all along," she concluded, heroically compressing herself to a calm if belated assurance.

"—as the minimum price stipulated," pursued Mr. Boggs.

"I thank you," said the Duchess.

"Also," concluded the agent, "a balance, after deducting all expenses, of two thousand one hundred and fifty-three dollars and twenty cents."

The Duchess's face never so much as changed. "That is entirely satisfactory," she observed. "I have to thank you all for your successful efforts in securing a suitable price. My only regret," the quiet voice faltered a little, "is that circumstances should have forced me to part with an expression of esteem for my beloved father from one who was the greatest military hero of all history."

"You're in wrong, lady," caroled Mr. Boggs, his rhetoric suddenly melting in his excitement. "We sold the envelope alone for four thousand dollars pet. There's only three other of them 1846 Alexandria postmaster's stamps in the world today. So here's your Stonewall letter as good as new."

"My Gawsh!" said old Sally, and fell down upon the floor and rolled and gave praise after the manner of her race, unrebuked this time of her mistress.

That aged and grand dame took back the letter with a hand which, for all that it had been rock-firm when it received MacLachan's revolver, now trembled a little. But her sole comment was: "And yet there are those so obstinate and shortsighted as to deny that the spirits guide us for our own good."

Once more, finely embossed stationery came pouring in at No. 17, Our Square, proudly edifying the soul of Mr. Boggs. Once more Madam Tallafferr went forth on missions of social splendor, westward and uptown, sometimes in an automobile. Once more the restored Pemberton diamonds glistened in the fine, withered ears, Old Sally having confessed and been duly beaten and forgiven.

Old Sally herself, replete and pompous, trotted to and fro in Our Square, brimful of smiling hints of a great honor that was to come to us. Her young mist'ess, she let it be known, was graciously pleased to be recognizant of the part, useful though humble, which Our Square had played in her reestablished fortunes, and she was about to acknowledge it in a manner worthy of her family and her traditions. In Old Sally's own words, she was going to "mo' dan even it up wif you all." Curiosity, speculation, and surmise had become almost morbid in Our Square, when one morning there burst upon us, in an effulgence of glory, a mail as splendid as any which had ever brightened Mr. Boggs's worshiping eyes on its passage upward to his top floor. To Mr. Boggs himself it came, to Schepstein, to the Little Red Doctor, to me, to Polyglot Elsa, and to many others, even down the scale as far as Inky Mike, this big white envelope, sealed with a square of black sealing wax and inclosing a most gratifyingly proud and stiff pasteboard card. That card still stands carefully dusted on many a mantel of Our Square, a guerdon and manifesto of social glory. At the top of it is blazoned the crest of the Tallafferrs, standing between the flag of the Confederacy and the coat of arms of Old Virginia. Below runs this legend—in real engraving if you please:—

MADAM RACHEL PINCKNEY PEMBERTON TALLAFFERR
solicits the honor of your presence at
Number Seventeen, Our Square,
on Friday, November Eighteenth,
to view an autograph letter
indited to her honored father,
the late Major Bently Pemberton,

by

LIEUTENANT (AFTERWARD GENERAL) THOMAS JONATHAN JACKSON

Of the Army of the Confederate States of America.

Refreshments. R. S. V. P

Our Square had won social recognition.

THE MEANEST MAN IN OUR SQUARE

MILES MORSE was his name. He lived over on the north side of Our Square, two doors from the Varick Mansion, in a small, neat, solid, and very private house. His age was uncertain. His appearance was arid. His garb was plain and black. His expression was unfriendly. His business was making money and his pleasure keeping the money when made. He was a fixture of long standing in our little community, as much so as the paving stones in the park space facing his house, and as insensate to the human struggle around him as they. As to his neighbors, he asked nothing and gave nothing. Behind his back, and not always very far behind it, he was called the Meanest Man in Our Square.

Every morning at eight o'clock the Meanest Man went to his office somewhere far downtown where, it was understood, he did something sly and underhanded connected with notes and loans. Every afternoon at four o'clock he visited the local Y. M. C. A., where he was (mistakenly) supposed to put in his hour and a half in reading, on the theory that it was cheaper to patronize that library than to buy books or rent them from the penny circulator. The rest of his life was strictly and determinedly private. Passing to and fro upon his concerns, he faced the denizens of Our Square with the blank regard of huge, horn-rimmed, blue glasses which he always wore out of doors. Only for Terry the Cop, MacLachan, the Little Red Doctor, and Cyrus the Gaunt, did he have a curt, silent nod, and for the Bonnie Lassie an awkward bow. The rest of us might as well not have existed. Naturally there were few who had a good word for him. Of these Terry the Cop was one.

“Anyway, he has a grand pair of hands,” Terry has been heard to aver.

On the strength of this opinion, the Bonnie Lassie, who needed a really superior pair of hands for a sculpture which she was then employed upon, made a point of catching Miles Morse in the park and compelling him to shake hands with her, to his resentful embarrassment. Subsequently she took our guardian of the peace to task.

“I don't know what you could have been thinking of, Terry,” she declared. “His hands are knuckly outside and puffy inside.”

“You should see'em in the court,” said Terry cryptically.

Not clearly comprehending what standing in court Mr. Morse's hands would give him, the Bonnie Lassie dropped the subject. On her own account, however, she had a suspicion of redeeming qualities in the Meanest Man. For one thing, she knew of a battered and disreputable kitten, rescued by Miles Morse from a strong and hostile combination of small boys and big dogs, at no small peril to himself, and taken to the very private house, where it grew into battered and disreputable but competent cathood and now welcomed him home every evening with extravagant demonstrations of regard. Also a certain scene enacted in sight of her studio windows had stuck in her memory; a powerful and half-drunken brute of a teamster flaying an overdone horse; the interposition of the Meanest Man; the infuriated descent, whip in hand, of the driver; the rush at the spare, trim, uncombative-looking man who had removed his spectacles and pocketed them; then the inexplicable and dismayed check in mid onset of the assailant. The Bonnie Lassie couldn't understand it at all; she couldn't see why that avalanche of wrath, profanity, and bulk didn't simply overwhelm its object—until she ran to the door and opened it. Then she saw Miles Morse's face and understood. It had hardened into a contraction of rage so savage, so concentrated, so murderous, that the drink-inspired fury of the human brute paled before it.

“Back on your wagon!” ordered Morse. He spoke not as man speaks to man, but as man speaks to beast.

“Wot—wotcha goin't' do, boss?” faltered the other.

“Put you in jail.”

Sobered now, and cowed, the man jumped to his seat and whipped up his horses, in the hope of escaping. The Meanest Man broke into a long, effortless stride. There was no need to tell the witness that he would not be shaken off until the quarry was in the hands of the police.

Now it happened that the High Gods of Council who unofficially rule Our Square held conference not long thereafter upon a project, advanced by the Little Red Doctor, for a local legal-aid organization with an office and an attendant. Money was needed, and money is one of our rarest phenomena.

It was the Bonnie Lassie who suggested that the Meanest Man in Our Square be approached for a contribution. Polite jeers greeted the proposal. Thereupon the Bonnie Lassie narrated the instance of the beaten horse and backed it up with Emerson:—

“'T is a sin to Heaven above
One iota to abate
Of a just, impartial hate.”

“Where does that get in with the Meanest Man?” inquired Cyrus the Gaunt.

“He doesn't hate anything except giving up money,” added the Little Red Doctor.

“He hates cruelty,” retorted the Bonnie Lassie. “And he's brave. Two points to his credit. I believe you could do anything with the Meanest Man if you could get him mad enough.”

“Well, my dearest,” said Cyrus the Gaunt with that condescending surrender which is one of his few faults as a husband, “since you have so good an opinion of Mr. Morse, suppose you tackle him for a contribution.”

“I will,” said the Bonnie Lassie. “I'll go now.”

She went. Presently she returned. It was not the return of a victress.

“How much?” asked the Little Red Doctor.

The Bonnie Lassie threw out empty and eloquent hands.

“And what did he say?” inquired Cyrus the Gaunt.

“He indicated that he'd see me in Hades first.”

“Then I'll go over and knock his head off,” declared her husband, reddening. “I've always wanted to do it anyway.”

“Nothing of the sort—goose! I didn't say he *said* it. I said he indicated it. It was his manner. Verbally he was polite enough. Said he didn't believe in charity.” Cyrus the Gaunt snorted.

“Gave his reasons too. He said he doesn't believe in charity because it makes the recipient think too ill of himself, which is bad, and the giver think too well of himself, which is worse.”

“Something in that,” grudged the Little Red Doctor.

“Isn't there! I tried to explain the usefulness of the Legal Aid Society, but he said that people who got into court were fools and people who hired lawyers to lie for them were knaves. Then”—the Bonnie Lassie dimpled—“he caught me sniffing at his musty old house and asked me what was the matter, and I asked him if it had ever been dusted and aired, and he said that he was afraid he'd have to get a housekeeper and if I'd get him one—the right kind of a one—an old, respectable, honest woman who'd do all the work while he was away so that he'd never have to see her, he'd contribute to our fund”—the Bonnie Lassie paused for effect—“ten dollars.”

When the assembled council had finished expressing its various emotions the speaker continued:—“I've got a month to do it in. So I made him make out the check and hold it, unsigned.”

“What's the idea, Lassie?” asked MacLachan the Tailor.

“The leak-in-the-dike principle,” she explained profoundly. “The ten dollars is just the first trickle. If we ever get him started, Heaven help him before we let him stop. I'm going to get that ten dollars if I have to take the position myself.” But she was not driven to that length. It is a recognized fact in Our Square that when the Bonnie Lassie determines to get anything done, Providence, with rank favoritism, invariably steps in and does it for her. This powerful and unfailing ally it was that brought Molly Dunstan to Our Square, white-faced, hot-eyed, and with a gnawing fire of despair at her heart, plunging blindly against the onset of a furious March wind, until the lights of Schoenkind's drug store guided her to harbor. In the absence of Schoenkind, who was dining late at the Elite Restaurant, young Irvy Levinson was keeping shop, and as Young Irvy is of a cheerful, carefree, and undiscriminating disposition he made no bones of selling the wind-beaten customer a bottle of a certain potent drug which has various properties and virtues back of its skull-and-crossbones label, one of the latter being that it is prompt though painful. With her purchase, Molly plunged back into the storm, turned toward the dim park space, and bumped violently into the Little Red Doctor. Gently releasing her, he caught a glimpse of her face. Its aspect was not reassuring. Young women who come blundering out of drug stores with that expression and make for the nearest quiet spot not infrequently cause needless trouble to the busy authorities. Opening Schoenkind's door, the Little Red Doctor thrust into the aperture his earnest face and this no less earnest query: “What did that last customer buy?”

“Carbolic,” replied Young Irvy light-heartedly. “For a dog. Ast if it hurt much.”

The door slammed with much the effect of an oath, and the questioner sprinted for the park. Being wise in the way of human misery, he knew that mysterious instinct of suicides which guides them, no matter what their chosen method of self-destruction, toward water. Therefore he took the shortest route for Our Fountain.

Young Irvy's customer sat huddled on a bench at the water's edge. The bottle was in her hand, uncorked. She had just made a trial of the liquid on her hand, and was crying softly because it burned. As the Little Red Doctor's grip closed on her wrist, she gasped and sought to raise the drug to her lips.

“Drop it!” said her captor in the voice of authority.

She obeyed. But she misinterpreted the authority. “Is it to jail ye'll be taking me?” she asked despairingly.

The soft appeal of the voice, with its faint touch of the brogue, shook the Little Red Doctor. One glance at the piteously lined young face conquered him. He formulated his program on the spot.

“Jail?” he echoed in affected surprise. “What for?”

She glanced mutely at the shattered bottle.

“Oh, that's foolish stuff to use for warts,” he observed carelessly, lifting the hand, which was as soft and smooth and free from blemish as a moth's wing. “Now, you come with me to a friend of mine, and she'll fix that burnt finger.”

Many men there are in whom dogs confide instinctively; fewer who win offhand the confidence of children, and a rare few whom women trust at sight. Of this few is the Little Red Doctor. His captive followed him without protest to the nestling little house with the quaint old door and the broad, friendly vestibule which had been her husband's wedding gift to the Bonnie Lassie. There, without fuss or query, Molly Dunstan was accepted as a guest, and presently, too worn out even to wonder, she was deep in healing sleep, in the spare room over the studio.

In the morning she presented herself to her hostess's unobtrusive but keen observation: a wistful slip of a woman of perhaps twenty-five, with hollow cheeks, deep-brown, frightened eyes, a softly drooping mouth, and a satiny skin from which the color had ebbed; a woman whose dainty prettiness had been overlaid but not

impaired by privation and some stress of existence only to be guessed at. For all her simple and worn dress (all black) and the echo of brogue in her speech, she bore herself with a certain native dignity and confidence.

“It's good ye've been to me, and I'll not know how to thank you, now that I'll be going,” she said, and the silken-soft voice with its touch of accent won the Bonnie Lassie's soft and wise heart from the first.

“But you're not to go yet,” protested the latter. “You must stay until you're well. And then I want to sculp you, if you'll let me. I'm an artist, and I think you would make a wonderful model.”

“It's kind ye are,” returned the other. “But how can I be beholden?”

“You won't be. It's you that will be doing the favor. As soon as you're well enough—”

“I'm well enough now. There's nothing the matter with me.” But her voice was without life or hope.

So, in many slow sittings, the Bonnie Lassie sculped Molly Dunstan; and from those sittings grew the heart-moving bronze, “The Broken Wing,” a figure of a quaintly, pitifully birdlike woman in the foreground of a group in a hospital clinic, with the verdict of science written in her face, looking out upon life in the dread realization of helplessness. As the work progressed the heart of Molly Dunstan opened little by little, and her story came out.

While a young girl in a good Irish school she had met a traveling American, Henry Dunstan, and, half for love and half in the elfin Irish spirit of adventurousness, had run away with him. He was a good husband to her, and they were happy in a little country place which he had bought and which she turned to skillful account, raising ducks and chickens for the market to eke out his income—“until the drink took him.” It took him the full length of its well-beaten path, from debt to ruin; from ruin to broken will and health, and presently to death. When his debts were cleared up the place was gone, and the little widow had a scant two thousand dollars of his life insurance in the bank. Being sturdy, able, and courageous, she had come to New York, had found some fine sewing to do, and had maintained herself, always with the idea of getting back into the country and to her poultry raising, which she loved. Here the simple story came to a full stop with the words: “So I bought a bit of a place, and they took it away from me.”

“Who took it away from you?” asked the Bonnie Lassie.

“Mr. Wiggett,” replied Molly, and fell into such a fit of shuddering that the Bonnie Lassie forebore to question her further concerning the transaction.

Little by little, however, there came out bits of information which the Bonnie Lassie deftly wove together, with the eventual result that Cyrus the Gaunt looked up an advertisement in a certain newspaper famous for its traps and pitfalls, and paid a visit to the office, on St. Mark's Place, of “D. Wiggett & Co., City and Suburban Real Estate.” He returned much depressed, declaring that the laws against homicide ought to provide for exceptions in the case of such persons as D. Wiggett.

“There he sat and grinned, a great, plump, pink, powerful, smirking gorilla; and said that the transaction with Mrs. Dunstan was perfectly legal—perfectly—and there wasn't anything further to be said.”

“Did you say it?” inquired the Bonnie Lassie, who knew her Cyrus.

“I did. And he threatened to have me arrested for defamatory language. But he's right—legally. He's got your little widow's two thousand dollars, every cent of it, and she's got a piece of stamped paper.”

“Why isn't it a case for our Legal Aid?”

“I've just been to Merrivale. There isn't a thing to be done.” Following the “Legal Aid” line, Cyrus's mind took a sudden but logical jump. “I never expected to meet a meaner cuss than the Meanest Man in Our Square,” he observed. “But I have.”

“The very thing!” cried the Bonnie Lassie. “How clever of you, Cyrus! I mean, how clever of me! Molly wants a place. She's all over that foolish suicide notion. She shall be Mr. Miles Morse's housekeeper.”

“But he wanted an *old* woman,” objected Cyrus.

“How is he to tell if he never sees her? I'll manage that,” retorted his wife confidently. “The only thing is, will she take a place that is almost like domestic service?”

As to this Molly made not the slightest difficulty. She had regained her courage and her Irish fighting spirit, and she was now ready to face life and make it give her an honest return for honest work again; ready for anything, indeed, except an attempt to get her money back which might involve her seeing Mr. D. Wiggett. At the mere mention of his name she fell into a cold and shuddering silence.

With brief preliminaries, and on the Bonnie Lassie's guarantee of “old Mrs. Dunstan's” reliability, that semi-mythical person was installed as Miles Morse's housekeeper and general factotum, having taken the informal triple oath of her employment: industry, senility, and invisibility. Six dollars a week was the wage which the Goddess from the Machine had wrung from the Meanest Man's violent protests, with a warning that it would have to be increased later on. The instructions given to the new employee were that she was to keep out of her employer's sight; or if he should arrive at an untimely hour she was to huddle into a shawl or handkerchief and conceal her age behind a toothache.

For six weeks all went well and simply. Miles Morse was obliged to confess, grudgingly, that his house was more livable and comfortable. Dust disappeared. The furniture took to arranging itself with less stiffness and more amiability. When he gave a whist party of an evening, the cigars were in place, the ash trays ready, the rooms aired and fresh, and the ice box stocked, all by invisible hands. Orders were issued and requisitions made through the Bonnie Lassie. Meeting her neighbor in Our Square one day, the Bonnie Lassie hinted at the ten-dollar check for the Legal Aid Society. “When I'm sure I'm satisfied,” said the Meanest Man, bending frowning brows from above his owlish glasses upon her. “D' you know what that old hag has been up to?”

“What old hag?” inquired the Bonnie Lassie unguardedly.

“The Dunstan woman.”

“Oh, you've seen her, then?”

“Not to speak of. She was curled up like a worm, and had her face swathed up like a harem, and talked like

the croak of a frog. And she's been putting flowers on my breakfast table," he concluded with the accents of one detailing an intolerable outrage.

"What of it?" inquired the surprised agent.

"What of it! Flowers cost money, don't they?"

"Have you received any bill for flowers yet?"

"I've received bills for brooms, mops, pails, towels, cups, plates, nails, tacks, picture hangers, baking tins, soap, and God knows what all," replied Mr. Morse in a breathless and ferocious voice.

"Yes? And which of those do you find in the floral catalogues?" queried the Bonnie Lassie interestedly. "If you want to know," she added as the Meanest Man struggled for competent utterance, "those flowers came from your own back yard. Look at it some time. You'll be pleased."

The Meanest Man was pleased when he looked, so pleased that one fresh and glorious June day when he should by the known regimen of his life have been at the Y. M. C. A. (supposedly reading) he came home early to putter about among the pansies. At the moment of his arrival Molly Dunstan, her work finished and her shawl laid aside, was standing in her neat, close-fitting black dress, inside the area railing, brooding with deep eyes over the glad flush of summer which glorified Our Square, and thinking, if the unromantic truth must be told, of the little place up near White Plains where her ducks and chickens would have been so happy and productive if D. Wiggett (she shivered) hadn't kept the place and her money too. The owner of the house stood regarding her with surprise and disfavor. "What are you doing here?" he barked.

With a startled jump, Molly came out of her brown study and returned the natural but undiplomatic answer: "I'm the housekeeper."

"You! What has become of Mrs. Dun-stan?"

"I'm Mrs. Dunstan." Realization of her self-betrayal came to her. The soft tears welled up into her soft eyes. "Oh, dear; oh, dear!" she mourned.

"Don't make that noise," he ordered testily; "what's the matter with the woman!"

"Ye'll not—not be wanting me here any more."

"Oh, I don't say that," returned the cautious Mr. Morse. "You're not wholly unsatisfactory. But what does that mummery of an old woman mean?"

In vain Molly tried to penetrate the blue glasses which masked his expression. Anyway, his voice had mollified. "I'll tell ye it all, if ye'll listen," she said wistfully.

Miles Morse surprised himself by promptly saying: "I'll listen."

No one could have wished a more intent listener. Molly told it all, including the deal whereby D. Wiggett had secured her money. At the conclusion her employer suggested that Molly bring him the deed, or other documents in the case, on the morrow. She did so. He read the principal document with a queer tightening of the lips which Molly couldn't understand at all, but which the Bonnie Lassie, had she been present, would have interpreted readily enough since she had seen it on another occasion, when the spare and arid man had set out to trail the horse-flaying teamster to justice.

"This isn't a deed at all," said he.

"That's what Mr. Wiggett was telling me."

"What else did he tell you?"

"He told me if I'd pay him the two thousand dollars and would go out there he'd see I got enough embroidery work so that I could easily make the twenty-dollar-a-month payments till I owned it all."

"He didn't tell you that if you failed in a payment you'd lose it all?"

"Not till after."

"It's here in the agreement to sell. That's all this paper is";—he flecked the document with a contemptuous finger—"an agreement to sell; not a deed. You've bought nothing but empty print. Did you never read this?"

She shook her head. "I trusted Mr. Wiggett. He seemed so kind and helpful at first."

"Until the fly was in his web. You signed that paper without knowing what you were undertaking," he accused. "Did you know that you were promising to pay taxes, interest, and insurance on the buildings?"

"No," said Molly Dunstan meekly.

"And to keep the buildings in good repair and painted? What buildings were they?"

"A house and a barn. They leaked."

"Naturally. Also"—Miles Morse referred to the document in his hand—"'to plant a good, live California privet hedge and to entertain the same.' What's your notion of a California privet hedge and entertaining the same? Could you do that?"

Into Molly Dunstan's Irish-brown eyes there crept a little Irish devil of a twinkle. "Could I not!" said she. "Can ye not see me, of a moonlight night, taking me foot in me hand, and going out to entertain me dull and lonely hedge with a turn of Kilkenny jigging!" Her sole tapped the ground as she spoke.

"Don't do it here," he interposed hastily. "How you can joke about it is beyond me, with your two thousand dollars in the pocket of D. Wiggett. And what makes you look sick at the name of him?" he concluded sharply.

"That's a terrible man," she answered with a catch of the breath. "When I went to him to ask for a bit more time he swore at me. He threatened me with jail. He said he'd ruin my reputation. He said if I sent a lawyer there he'd hammer him to pulp. He could do it, for he's a terrible, big, strong, angry man. I came away sick to live in the same world with him. And that's why I got the carbolic," she finished in a low, shamed tone.

"Carbolic! You were going to kill yourself?"

"Didn't Mrs. Staten tell ye?"

"She told me nothing—but lies."

Miles Morse spoke harshly because he was experiencing within himself a stir of strange and wrathful and

protective emotion. Abruptly he changed the subject. “Would you,” he said hesitantly, “for a raise of wa—ahem —-salary, come a little earlier and get me my breakfast?”

“I'll not wait on table,” she returned with a flash of color.

“It was not my idea,” he said quite humbly. “But if you would have a coffee machine and a toaster and sit opposite at the table, and—and—it would save me money as against the restaurant,” he added lamely.

“I'll consult my manager,” returned his housekeeper with a twinkle.

The gist of her consultation with the Bonnie Lassie bore upon the point as to whether Our Square, which was already adopting her since she had rented a little room there, would regard the new basis as proper.

“That old thing!” said the arbitress of destinies scornfully. “He's a hundred years old, and he'll be two hundred, I'm afraid,” she added ruefully, “before I get that check out of him.”

Molly looked dubious. “I'm not sure he's so old,” she said. “And I'm sure he's not so mean as people think him. But I do need the money.”

Behold, then, Mrs. Molly Dunstan, housekeeper, seated opposite Miles Morse, the Meanest Man in Our Square, with a coffee apparatus, a toaster, and a little centerpiece bright with flowers, both of them breakfasting in a dim and painful silence. But food is a great solvent of embarrassment, and breakfast coffee has powers beyond the spirit of grape, corn, or rye, to break down the barriers between human and human. So that, by the end of a week, Molly was chattering like a cheery bird with just enough instigation from her employer to keep her going. One subject was tacitly tabooed as a kill-joy; to wit, the devil as embodied by Mr. D. Wiggett and all his works.

Not that Miles Morse had forgotten. Quite the contrary. But he was a calculating, careful, and meticulous person, prone to plan out every step before taking it. On a Monday morning some six weeks after Molly's installation as a breakfast fixture he spoke abruptly: “I've been up there.”

“Where?” she asked.

“To the place you thought you'd bought. It's a trap.”

“I'm out of it, at least with my life.”

“You are not the only one that's been caught. He's fleeced four others that I know of on that plant—all perfectly legal. I have a notion,” said Miles Morse with an effect of choosing his words, “that D. Wiggett & Co. was incorporated in hell, and the silent partner is his Satanic Majesty.”

“Why did ye go up there?”

“Curiosity.”

“Not kindness—just a little bit?”

“I wanted to see the work of a man meaner than the Meanest Man in Our Square,” he said with a sour grin.

Molly Dunstan flushed.

“I'd not be letting them call me that!” she declared. “And I'll not believe it true of ye.” This was, indeed, an advance upon the dim realm of personal relationship, but Molly's loyal Irish blood was up. “What ails ye at the world, at all!” she demanded.

“I'll tell you since you ask,” he replied defiantly. “I'm getting even with it for treating me like a dog.”

“So that's it.” There was a pause. “Would ye tell me about it!” she asked shyly.

Much to his astonishment, Miles Morse discovered that he wanted to tell her about it. Quite to his chagrin, he found that it didn't seem a very convincing indictment, when he tried to formulate it. However, he did his best.

“A man that I thought my friend cheated me out of the first ten thousand dollars that I made.”

“Whish! Ye made more, didn't ye?” she replied calmly. “I wouldn't be hating the world for that.”

“Then there was a woman,” he said with more difficulty. “I thought—she made me believe she cared for me. I was young. She got me into a fake stock proposition with some confederates, and they fleeced me.”

“Whoof!” Molly blew an imaginary thistledown from her dainty fingers. “She was a light thing.'T was your bank account she hurt, not your heart.”

Suddenly Miles Morse realized that this was so. It wasn't wholly pleasant, however, to have his cherished grudges thus lightly dismissed.

“There's nothing else worth speaking of,” he said, a bit sullenly, “except a bit of boy's silliness that you'd laugh at.”

“Tell it to me.”

“It was when I was seven years old and we lived in the country. My father was a hard sort of man; he saw no sense in play or such nonsense, and when Fourth of July came he'd give me no fireworks nor let me draw any of my little money out of the bank. All the other boys had firecrackers but me. So I got a spool and filled it with sand and put a bit of string in it and I lighted the end. When it didn't go off I ran away and hid and felt pretty bad. I've always laid that up against things. Foolish, isn't it!”

The little woman opposite lifted eyes which had grown suddenly bright and soft with a disturbing hint of tears. “Ye poor lamb!” she said.

“Tut-tut!” gruffly retorted the Meanest Man in Our Square, who had never before been called a poor lamb. He spoke without conviction.

“But that shouldn't make ye hate the world,” argued Molly earnestly. “It should only make ye hate what's mean and unfair in the world.”

“Well, there's D. Wiggett,” replied the other hopefully. “I think I could learn to hate him. In fact, I think I'll make a trial of it by calling on him to-day.”

“Oh, don't do that,” she implored tremulously. “He'll do ye harm. He's a terrible man, and twice the size of ye!”

“This will be a strictly peaceable errand,” he averred, meaning what he said.

By no means reassured, Molly Dunstan made her way, at the hour when she thought that her employer would call upon D. Wiggett & Co., to a spot in St. Mark's Square which gave her a good view of the real-estate office. After an hour's wait, devoted to the most dismal forebodings, she saw her employer stride around the corner and enter the door. Had she actually summoned the nerve to interpose, as she had vaguely designed to do, there was no time. Her brief and alarmed glimpse of Miles Morse had oppressed her with a quality hitherto unknown in him. He was clad in his accustomed neat and complete black, even to the black string tie. His big blue glasses were set as solemnly level as usual upon his ample nose. His spare figure was held stiffly erect, in its characteristic attitude. But there was something about the way he walked which suggested an arrow going to keep an important engagement with a bull's-eye.

Three minutes later Mr. Miles Morse emerged.

He emerged by force and arms; a great deal of the former and a large number of the latter. To the terrified watcher there seemed to be at least half a dozen tangled persons engaged in the eviction of Mr. Morse, of whom D. Wiggett was not one. Having propelled the unwelcome guest out upon the stoop, the persons withdrew in pell-mell haste, and the sound of a door being violently barred after them eloquently testified to their distaste for any more of Mr. Morse's society. That gentleman descended the steps as one who walks upon the clouds, albeit with a considerable limp.

Molly ran to meet him. Five yards away she stopped dead, lifting dismayed hands to heaven. Mr. Morse was a strange and moving sight. A small stream of blood was trickling from the corner of his mouth, which was expanded in an astounding and joyous smile. His sober black string necktie was festooned over his left ear. Half of his large, solemn blue spectacles was jammed down his neck inside a dislocated collar; the other half presented a scandalous and sightless appearance, having lost its lens. His coat was split in three places and torn in one. His hat simply was not; it could be identified as a hat solely from the circumstance that it was jammed inextricably down upon his head. From his right cheek bone there had already sprouted a “hickey” fit to hang a bucket on. But these were minor injuries compared to the condition of Mr. Morse's hands. Bruised and cut, scarified, scalped, and swelling, the “grand pair of hands” which Terry the Cop so admired, testified unmistakably to having come into violent and repeated contact with some heavy and hard object. Horror-stricken, Molly turned her eyes from them to the real-estate office of D. Wiggett & Co. A front window flew up. The countenance of D. Wiggett appeared therein, and Molly at once identified it as the heavy and hard object to which her employer's manual plight was due. The countenance opened, somewhat slantwise, and sent forth a gasping and melancholy bellow: “Police!”

Without a word, Molly seized one of the battered hands and ran. Perforce, her employer ran with her. A taxi was prowling up Second Avenue. Mollie hailed it.

On the trip Mr. Miles Morse exhibited silent but alarming symptoms. Arrived at home, he flatly refused to enter. “Air and space,” he said, were his special and immediate needs. He made his way to the most secluded bench in the park, followed by his dismayed housekeeper, sat down, and began to chuckle. The chuckle grew into a laugh, the laugh into a series of chokes, the chokes into a protracted convulsion of mirth. When at length it had passed, leaving him spent and gasping, Molly Dunstan spoke seriously to him.

“Are ye finished?”

“I am.”

“Have ye been drinking?”

“I have not.”

“What did ye do to him?”

“I did everything,” said Mr. Miles Morse with a long reminiscent sigh of utter satisfaction, “but bite him.”

“Ye told me,” accused Molly with heaving bosom, “that it would be a strictly peaceable errand.”

“So it would,” replied the other calmly, “if he hadn't said something about you.” Molly's brown eyes widened and brightened with amazement. Her lips parted. “About me!” she said. Then she committed what the lawyers call a non sequitur. “Mother of all the Saints!” cried Molly. “How old are ye?”

“Thirty-seven years and four months,” replied the Meanest Man in Our Square gravely.

“And me thinking—” He never found out what she was thinking, for she broke off abruptly, and said: “Clap a bit of raw beef to that cheek,” and vanished from his sight.

No Molly appeared for breakfast in the morning. In her stead arrived a court officer with a warrant in which the term “feloniously” played a conspicuous and dispiriting part. At court Miles Morse, prisoner, found a delegation from Our Square awaiting him, including Molly, Cyrus the Gaunt, the Bonnie Lassie, Terry the Cop, and Inky Mike, the tipster disguised in a clean collar and taking copious notes with an absorbed and ferocious expression, with a view to daunting wrongdoers by the prospective fierce white light of the Press. This was part of the Bonnie Lassie's strategy. So also was the presence of Merrivale, the young lawyer of the Legal Aid branch, for the Bonnie Lassie had correctly guessed that the accused would disdain to spend money on a lawyer. As he awaited his turn at the bar of judgment (before Wolf Tone Hanrahan, the Human Judge, his friends remarked with satisfaction) Terry the Cop caught sight of his damaged knuckles. “I always said he had a grand pair of hands,” murmured Terry to the Bonnie Lassie.

“And here they are in court, where you said they were at their best,” she commented.

An expression of bewilderment gave place to a grin on Terry's handsome face. “*The* court,” I said, “the hand-ball court at the Y. M. C. A. He packs a wallop in either hand'ud kill a bull.”

Then the plaintiff came in, and there was no further need of explanations.

D. Wiggett was a horrid sight. He would have been a horrider sight if he hadn't been almost totally obscured by bandages. The gist of his testimony was comprised in the frequently repeated word “murder.” The accused put in no defense. In the Human Judge's eye were doubt and indecision. Obviously there was something behind this case. As he hesitated, the Legal Aid lawyer came forward with the light-pink document of D. Wiggett & Co., and handed it to the judge with a few words. D. Wiggett's lawyer entered vehement

objections. Stilling his protests with a waving hand, Magistrate Hanrahan read the “Agreement to Sell.” Then he called for Mrs. Molly Dunstan. More objections. Overruled. At the conclusion of Molly's testimony he turned to the protesting lawyer. “Did ye drah up this dockyment?”

“I did, your honor.”

“It's as full of holes as the witch's cullender. Y'otta be disbarred fer it!”

The lawyer hastily receded. The remains of D. Wiggett were led forward to listen to a few brief but pointed dicta by the court, while Inky Mike (under promptings) edged up and took copious notes in a book such as no reporter ever carried except upon the stage. At the end of the ordeal, D. Wiggett, in broken and terrified accents, disclosed that his motives were of spotless purity, that his document was a harmless joke, and that Mrs. Dunstan could have the place and a deed thereto if she'd just make the payments.

“I'll guarantee that,” put in Cyrus the Gaunt.

“And I'll see that she gets work to keep going on,” added the Bonnie Lassie.

Whereupon both D. Wiggett, the party of the first part (in the document) and Mrs. M. Dunstan, the party of the second part, dissolved in tears, though for very different reasons. The court then proceeded to the sentence of the defendant. Judgment was delivered in two mediums; full-voiced for the proper judicial process, and sotto voice for the benefit of those most concerned.

“Prisoner at the Bar-r-r: Ye have brootally assaulted a peaceful citizen (*not more than half-agin as big as yerself*). Ye have bate him to a poolp (*an' him but a scant tin years younger, an with a repitation for bein' a roughneck—with women and childer*). Ye have haff murdered him (*an' take shame to yerself ye didn't do th' other haff*). Because of yer youth an' inexperience (*I mane yer age an the wallop ye carry*) I will let ye off light with a fine of fifty dollars (an if ye'll sind me word when yer goin' to operate again I'll remit the fine). Nixt Ca-ase!”

For a culprit who had got off easy, Mr. Miles Morse presented far from a cheerful appearance when Molly Dunstan presented herself on the following morning. Molly exhibited strange and inexplicable symptoms, flushing and paling, finding no place for her regard to rest, until she discovered that Miles Morse was much worse confused than herself. Thereupon, after the manner of women, she became quite composed and easy. Through breakfast he was very silent. After lingering over his coffee to an unwonted degree, he finally arose, with an air of great determination, said “Well” in what was meant to be a businesslike tone, walked briskly to the door, then turned and stood in the most awkward unease.

“The house won't be like a home without you,” said he desolately.

“Won't it?” said Molly.

“You'll be going out to your own place very soon now?”

“Suppose I don't want to.”

“It's all arranged. I've been talking to Mr. and Mrs. Staten.”

“Have ye now!” said Molly with a mutinous uptilt of the chin.

“She's arranged for you to get your own kind of work out there.”

“I like my own job here.”

“It's all arranged,” said Miles Morse with dismal iteration.

“Does that mean I'm discharged?”

“If you want to put it that way.”

“And I'm to go up there to the country—alone—and entertain my California privet hedge?”

Her little foot tapped the ground as it had on the unforgettable occasion of that first interview. The Meanest Man in Our Square winced. Molly saw it, and her eyes grew, tender, but her tone was still uncompromising. “What am I discharged for?”

Silence.

“For not being old enough to be your housekeeper?” She looked the merest wisp of a girl with her color coming and going as she spoke.

He muttered something undistinguish-able.

“For not being ugly enough?” And she contrived to look bewilderingly pretty.

“Why do you plague me, Molly?” he burst out.

She pointed a finger at his chin. “I dare ye, Miles Morse,” she said, her voice fluttering in her throat, for all her audacious words; “I dare ye to discharge me. For all ye're called the Meanest Man in Our Square, ye wouldn't be that mean as to send me away from ye!”

And, with the finger still leveled, she walked' straight to him and was caught and held close to the sober and respectable black coat.

“I'd never dared have asked you, Molly,” said Miles Morse in the voice of one who walks ecstatic amid the wonders of a dream.

“Don't I know that!” she retorted. And then, with a quiver: “Oh, Miles, it's I will make it up to you for that sand-and-spool firecracker!”

Opening her morning mail on the following day, the Bonnie Lassie (for whose schemes and stratagems the stars in their courses fight) gave a little cry and let a bit of paper slip through her fingers. Quickly retrieving it, she turned it over to Cyrus the Gaunt. It was the promised check of Mr. Miles Morse to the Legal Aid Society. Between the words “ten” and “dollars” was a caret, and, above, the added word “hundred” with an indorsement. The signature had also undergone an addendum. It now read: “Miles Morse, per Mrs. M. M. M.”

The Meanest Man in Our Square had abdicated.

PAULA OF THE HOUSETOP

WHAT first struck you about the house was that it frowned. Not angrily, but with a kind of dull scorn. Perhaps this was its way of emphasizing its superior aloofness from the other houses in Our Square which had gone down in the social scale while it maintained its aristocracy untainted. It was squat and broad and drab, like the first Varick who had built it, and the succeeding Varicks who had inherited and dwelt in it even to the sixth and seventh generations. Being numbered 13, it would naturally have a sinister repute; and this was not improved by the two suicides which had marked its occupancy; suicides not of despair or remorse or fury, but of cold, grim disgust. Then there was the episode of old Vernam Varick, who dabbled in diabolical mixtures in his secret room on the third floor front under the tutelage of no less an instructor than the Devil, and, having quarreled with Old Nick over a moot point in alchemy, chased him out of the window and followed, himself, to the accompaniment of a loud and sulphurous detonation. What became of His Satanic Majesty has never been properly determined, but old Ver-nam arrived upon the pavement in due time, crumpled up, and thereafter circulated in a wheeled chair, sniffing about after real-estate investments to pass the time. He it was whose purchases of uptown property (when anything above Forty-second Street was “uptown”) severely reprehended by the rest of the clan, subsequently reestablished the Varick fortunes, piling up riches beyond the imagination of Our Square. Except that he had more imagination, he was a pattern of all the Varicks, each broad and squat of architecture like the house they dwelt in; each, if possible, more crabbed and pigheaded and stupidly haughty than his predecessor. In time, his son, heritor of the qualities of the breed, grew up and married. And then the dull generations burst into flower in Paula Varick. So the Varicks put her in a cage.

Old Vernam built the cage out of gas pipe and thick-meshed wire and established it on the roof. From my front window, looking diagonally across Our Square, I command a view of it. How well I remember the day that little Paula was put into it! A black-and-white-banded nurse led her in by the hand, held up an admonitory finger for half a minute of directions, and disappeared down the scuttle door, leaving her alone in a remote world. One might have expected the little girl to cry. She didn't. She set about playing, like a happy little squirrel. Presently there floated across the tree-tops a strange and alien sound for that grim mansion to be making—a sweet, light, joyous, childish piping. The little Paula was singing.

Her song disturbed young Carlo and me at our lesson. Carlo was my one educational luxury. An assistant professor of a forgotten branch of learning, already in middle age, as I was then, who ekes out his income by tutoring, cannot well afford to take pupils for love. But Carlo's father had paid in the beginning, and, when he could no longer pay, the boy's vivid, leaping imagination and his passionate love for all that was fine and true in reading had captivated me. I could not let him go. So we kept up the lessons, and ranged the field of the classics, Greek and Latin, English, French, and German, together. He was to be a poet, I foresaw, or perhaps a dramatist, and I believe I bragged of him unconscionably to my associates. Well, they are kindly souls and have forborne to taunt the prophet! Carlo's father was a Northern Italian, the second son of a noble family, who quarreled with the head of the clan and came to this country and a top floor in Our Square to paint masterpieces, and subsequently died at three o'clock one winter morning, pressing another man's coat. MacLachan the Tailor, then just starting his Home of Fashion, had given him the work to save the pair from being evicted, after their money gave out. At the last the elder Trentano took to drink. Then Carlo got jobs as a model, for he was strong and beautiful like a young woods creature. But he let nothing interfere with our lessons.

Paula, the happy singer, did interfere, however. From time to time my pupil's eyes wandered from his book to fix themselves with a puzzled gaze on the roof beyond the tree-tops. Curiosity proved too much for him at length.

“Dominie!” he said.

“Well?”

“Why do they put the little girl in a cage?”

“To keep her from falling off the roof.”

“Why do they put her on the roof?”

“To play.”

“Why doesn't she play in Our Square?”

“She is not allowed to play with the children in Our Square.”

Carlo pondered this. A theory born of temporary local conditions occurred to him. “Has she got measles?”

This was an easy way out. To enlighten Carlo as to the reasons why the descendant of all the Varicks was not permitted to take part in the degenerated social activities of Our Square, would be to undermine my carefully instilled doctrine of the blessings of democracy where all are free and equal. Therefore with mendacious, though worthy, intent I answered:—

“Not measles, exactly.”

“Oh!” said Carlo. “She must get lonesome.”

“Doubtless.”

The cheery singing had ceased now, and the child was busy with some other concern. Carlo's sharper vision identified it.

“She's setting a tea-table.”

“Is she?”

“And nobody will come to tea at it, will they?”

“Perhaps her dolls.”

“I don't see any dolls.” His lustrous eyes brooded on the lonely little hostess. “Dominie, do you think she'd like it if I came?”

“Are you thinking of storming the house?” I asked, amused.

“That's our roof there.” He pointed to a shabby structure overtopping the squat Varick domicile by some ten feet, and separated from it by a well, four or five feet broad. “I could lean over and speak to her, couldn't I?”

“I hardly think her family would approve.”

“Her family are *mean*,” declared Carlo heatedly, “to shut her up in a cage.”

“Come back from the realms of romance,” I bade him sternly, “and attend to the lesson.”

Before it was over the black-and-white-banded nurse had retrieved her charge and taken her below.

Three days later I beheld two small figures on the Varick roof. One was inside the cage; one outside. They appeared to be engaged in amicable discourse. The caged figure was little Paula. As to the free one, I could scarcely believe my eyes which tried to assure me that it was Carlo Trentano. It had come about in this way: For two days rain had kept the little prisoner from the roof. She was swaying to and fro on a rocking-horse, crooning to herself, and this was the burden of her improvised chant:—

“I wi-ish I had some one to play-ay-ay wif!
Oh, I wi-ish I had some one to play-ay-ay wif!
Oh, I wi-ish I had somebuddy to play-ay wif!
I don't like to play all alone!”

Perhaps she had sung it over ten or twelve times when her wish materialized from behind the broad chimney at the rear. She heard his footfall first and then her sweet, wondering eyes beheld the visitor, a shabby, clean, and marvelous boy, some years her elder and about twice her size. Nevertheless, with the superiority of sex she immediately addressed him as “Little Boy.”

“Little Boy, where did you come from?”

“Up there,” replied her caller, pointing.

The caged one turned her solemn regard “up there” and saw a great, white, softly rolling mass floating in a sky of azure.

“From that?” she inquired.

Carlo considered the cloud and was pleased with it as a source. “Yes,” he said.

“It looks soft and sleepy,” she observed, after a more critical consideration.

They contemplated each other in a silence which threatened to become a deadlock, when he broke it.

“Do you like gum?” he asked.

“What's gum?”

“Chewing-gum, of course.”

“I don't know what that is.”

He stared at her in utter incredulity. “You honestly never chewed gum?” A shake of the tawny head answered him. “Nor ate an all-day sucker?” Another shake. “Nor played marbles?” Still another mute denial. “Nor flew kites, nor pegged the cat, nor rollered on the asphalt, nor spun tops?” The questions came too fast for detailed answer, but the child's face grew more and more dismal as she was thus led, step by step, to confront a wasted life. Her inquisitor drew a long breath. “What did they put you in for?” he asked. “In where?”

“In that cage.”

“To play.” Her inventiveness rose in arms to offset the recondite and mysterious joys which he had enumerated, and with it her spirits. “I play I'm a wild animal. Gr-rr-rr-rr! If I could get out I'd eat you up, Little Boy.”

He played up to her. “I know what you are. You're a tiger. A big stripy tiger.

'Tiger! Tiger! burning bright—
In the forests of the night!'”

“Say some more,” she demanded imperiously. “I like poetry.”

“That's all I remember. I'll tell you; I'll be a keeper, and I'll come to the cage to feed you.” He felt in his pocket and produced a fresh stick of gum which he thrust through the wire meshes. Being a realist, Paula promptly bit him on the finger.

“Ow!” he exclaimed and dropped the gum. She pounced upon it, growling ferociously. “You play awfully hard, don't you?” he observed, caressing the mark of a sharp little tooth.

“You have to when you don't have anybody but yourself to play with, or it isn't real,” replied the child with unconscious pathos. “Now I'm going to eat this all up!”

“Don't swallow it,” he warned. “You just chew it. It's gum.”

“Um-m-m!” mumbled the Tiger appreciatively. “I like it. I like you. When do you have to go back to your cloud?” She looked up apprehensively at that fleecy domicile which was moving rapidly away.

“Oh, any time. No, I'll tell you,” he added confidentially; “I didn't really come from the cloud. I came from that roof up there.”

“How?”

“Down a rope.”

“Did you? I like that almost as well. Where did you get the rope?”

“It was over the fire escape. I live on the top floor there.”

“S'posen you'd fall right down between the two houses,” surmised the little Tiger.

“Then I'd be killed.” This, as a matter of fact, was highly probable. But Carlo, like most of the highland Italians, was strong, supple, and daring; ingenious, too, for he had made loops in his rope to help him climb up again.

Paula the Tiger was now considering cognate matters with appropriate gravity. “I think I'd rather have you live in the cloud,” she decided. “Angels live in clouds. If you 're an angel, you won't fall and get killed,” she continued, finding a kindly refuge in theology. “I'd rather have you an angel.”

“All right. I'll be an angel,” he agreed. “Nurse doesn't let me play with little boys and girls. Maybe she wouldn't let me play with an angel either. I think you'd better come when nurse isn't here. When will you come again, Angel?”

“To-morrow.”

“Must I give back the nice gum?” she asked anxiously.

“No. But you'd better leave it in your cage. Grown-ups don't like gum around,” he instructed her with precocious worldly wisdom.

“Thank you, Angel. Good-bye, Angel”

“Good-bye, little girl.”

“Gr-rr-rr-rr!” The growl was a savage reminder of the dramatic proprieties.

Carlo was quick of apprehension. “Good-bye, Tiger,” he amended. And the Tiger purred.

Often thereafter I saw them, at the hour when the banded nurse took her outing, playing together on opposite sides of the barrier. Many, various, and ingenious were the diversions which Carlo the free found to amuse the captivity of Paula the caged. There were delightful things to be contrived out of knotted strings, in which Carlo was of incomparable skill. He invented a game of marbles which could be played by opponents on different sides of a twelve-foot steel mesh; an abstruse pastime, but apparently interesting, since it developed into an almost daily contest in which, to judge from the joyous prancings about the cage at the conclusion, she was invariably allowed to win. Also, there were gifts of candy shared, and the delights of the chase with a bean-shooter for weapon and the indignant sparrows for quarry, and instructions in the principles of kinetic stasis as exemplified by the rotary or spinning top. All of which was doubtless very wicked and deceitful and clandestine, and, being so, should have been stopped by a word from me before disaster could come. For, any day, Carlo might slip from that swaying rope and break his precious neck. Or the Varicks might learn of what was going on above their heads, and banish the little Tiger from her happy cage, or perhaps even wholly from the contaminated atmosphere of Our Square. This last would have been a blow to me, for she also was my pupil, and a profitable one, since her father, Putnam Varick, a dry, snuffy, stern, lethargic, ill-natured, liverish man, paid me liberally to come five times a week and give her a grounding in Latin and French. But I could not find it in my heart to deprive my little Paula of her one taste of real childhood.

Discovery was, of course, inevitable. One day Paula came into the dim and solemn Varick library where lessons were conducted with her big, wistful, gray eyes all wet and wincing, and her queer, sprightly little face like a mask of grief. Behind her came nurse with the expression of a hanging judge. The culprit, it appeared, had been found in the possession of contraband goods—to wit, a wad of much-chewed gum. Worse, it had been discovered in a most inappropriate place.

“I puh-hut it in my huh-huh-hair,” wept the sorrowful little Tiger, “and it stu-huh-huck.”

"I puh-hut it in my huh-huh-hair, and it stu-huh-huck"

"She won't tell me where she got it," said nurse.

"I did. I to-hold you an angel gave it to me," declared the Tiger, clinging with pathetic resolution to her drama of the roof.

Nurse sniffed. Her theological imagination did not extend to heavenly visitors who dispensed that kind of manna. It was *her* opinion for what it was worth (sniff) that somebody had been throwing things (sniff) on the roof. Next time it might be (sniff) poison. Nurse *did* have an imagination of a kind.

It wasn't poison next time. It was a kite. Carlo had flown it from his own roof and had brought the twine down in his teeth, and had passed the ball through the netting to the Tiger. Oh, the thrill of ecstasy running up her arm, to spread and glow on live wires through every nerve, as she felt for the first time the tug and tremor of the beautiful, soaring, captive thing swaying far, far above her, higher than the highest roof-top she could see, higher than the biggest mountain in her geography, as high as the vanished cloud whence the beneficent angel of her happy drama had descended to brighten a hitherto correct and humdrum existence. Alas for angels' visits! From a bench in Our Square, nurse saw the aerial messenger and traced the string to the Varick roof. She hurried home and upstairs to the roof-top a good twenty minutes before her scheduled return.

But the scuttle stuck, and Carlo's quick ear, catching the sound, warned him. With a quick word to his playfellow, he dodged behind the chimney and began to climb the looped rope. There was a little space in which the climber always emerged above the chimney into the view of the child in the cage before he surmounted the coping of the upper roof. Paula's eyes were fixed upon this point. The nurse's glance followed hers. Carlo appeared, climbing in hot haste. He missed one of the loops. There was a muffled cry. His body turned, swayed, and plunged down into the fifty-foot abyss between the two buildings. The nurse, scared out of her senses, rushed down the scuttle-way and hid in her room, accusing herself of being an involuntary murderess, while poor Paula tore and battered with her tender fingers at the cruel iron meshes in a passion of grief and despair, long after nurse had disappeared.

A low call from above stopped her. Her angel leaned over the roof.

"Has she gone?" he asked.

The child nodded in silent terror and wonder. He came down the rope swiftly and steadily. When he approached the cage, she saw that he was bleeding from a gash above his temple.

"I struck on a clothesline," he said. "It tipped me into a balcony. Just below your roof. Lucky!"

"I thought you were killed," she whispered. "Oh, Angel, I thought you were dead."

"Not hurt a bit," he averred valiantly. "Did she see me?"

"Yes."

"Then they won't let me come any more."

"They'll take me away," wailed the Tiger.

There was a pause. "I'll be sorry," said the boy.

"So'll I."

"I'll be aw'f'ly sorry," said the boy painfully.

"So'll I."

"I'll come and find you when I'm grown up."

"Will you?" she cried eagerly.

"Cross my heart."

"And I'll keep your gum forevern—evern—ever," she promised solemnly. "I've got a piece yet. Hidden.

Listen. Somebody's coming!”

“Good-bye, Tiger,” said the boy.

“Good-bye, Angel,” said the girl.

She put her trembling little lips against the cold mesh of the wires. For a moment he hesitated in boyish shamefacedness. Then he bent over to her.

“I'll never forget you—never,” said the free little boy.

“Nor I,” said the caged little girl.

He ran and climbed: climbed out of her sight and out of her life. For the scandalized Varicks took her from that desecrated roof to the country, and when they came back Carlo's father was dead, and Carlo left with very little visible means of support. So they passed on their sundered ways. He went about his business of the fight for existence and his place in the world. She went about her business in a life of developing sunshine and beauty, herself the developing embodiment of both. The cage stood on the roof, lifeless, grim, and sad.

Outwardly Our Square changes little. Inwardly it suffers from the depredations of the years and an encroaching populace. No more significant evidence of its failing fortunes could be adduced than the sale of the Varick mansion. It was purchased by a Swedish labor contractor, who sold it to a professional gambler, who in turn leased it to a boarding-house keeper, and that sinister third-floor front wherefrom Ver-nam Varick had so vehemently ousted his Satanic mentor came to be occupied (to what base uses!) by a piano-tuner. The cage of the wistful Tiger was found convenient for the week's wash.

As for the Varicks, Our Square knew them no more. The fussy, fubsy, mean-tempered father of Paula became financially venturous (for a Varick), dipped extensively into water-rights and power-plants in the Southwest, and, having thus further improved the fortune handed down to him by Vernam the Devil-Chaser, built himself a smugly splendid palace on the Park, wherein to house Paula.

This, indeed, was no cage. For the tiny captive of the housetop had grown beyond all human captivity; had become such a woman as the great dreamers and poets enshrine in the sunlit mist of verse. It is not for a simple, old pedagogue who had loved the child to describe the woman. Her face is the common property of the public, like a ruling monarch's, so often has it appeared in the Sunday papers, for at twenty-three she was one of the reigning beauties of a city of lovely women. What no camera could catch or painter fix was the joyous and joy-giving quality of her personality. It was as if arrears of happiness from her cramped and denied childhood had returned upon her tenfold to be scattered in largess wherever she went. A great painter who had painted a great portrait of her, which delighted every one but himself, had convicted himself of failure because, he said, while he had caught the flowerlike delicacy and the sunlike radiance and the touch of Varick imperiousness in the background of the face, he had failed to fix the charm that made her different and more lovely than a dozen other equally lovely women (he was a dealer in paradox, that great painter); the look of quiet, unconscious, waiting deep in the wide, gray eyes. And a great poet, who was also of her adorers, said that was why she had not married. And a great cynic whose cynicism had fallen before her said that was why she never would marry unless a star came down from the heavens to claim her.

About the time of the height of her triumphs, Cyrus the Gaunt came to Our Square to run the ten thousand-pound steam roller at night and sit for sculpture by day, and eventually marry the Bonnie Lassie and go to live in the little, quaint, old friendly house with the hospitable door, almost opposite the Varick mansion. Because Cyrus the Gaunt's forbears had owned Our Square when it was the Staten Farm and before the first Varick had arrived upon the scene, Mr. Putnam Varick was willing enough that his daughter should go to see Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Staten, albeit he had heard with misgivings that some of their dinners were laxly Bohemian, combining, as they did, millionaires, bishops, and diplomats with musicians, explorers, reformers, and other anarchists. That is how Paula Varick came back into Our Square after fifteen years of absence and change.

Another revenant came back about that time, along the dimly blazed trails of fate. As I was sunning myself on my favorite bench, one afternoon, I felt two sinewy hands on my shoulders, and turned to face a big, smiling stranger. There was something in him that told at first sight of the making of the man; told that the best life of the open had formed him and the best life of the cities had finished him. There was a certain gravity and stability about his face, but the lips were mobile as a boy's and a shining mirthfulness gleamed from the straight-looking black eyes.

“Dominie!” he said. Then, at my astonished look: “I haven't made a mistake, have I?”

“Not in the title at least,” I said.

He shook me in his iron grip. “Call on your memory. It's ungrateful to forget a man who—who owes you money,” he laughed.

“That doesn't help me,” I said, probing the vivid face.

“Have I changed so, where nothing else has changed?” he said, looking around—“except that they've put a fire escape outside the window where I used to sleep.” I followed his glance, and memory flashed its belated recognition: “Carlo Trentano!” He gave me another powerful, affectionate shake. It was like being petted by a lion. “No longer,” he said. “That's buried with—with *him*.” He looked again toward the high-roofed house where his father had died. “I'm all American now, Charles Trent, at your service.”

“Where have I heard that name?”

“Seen it in the papers probably. They've had their fun with me in the Senate Committee hearings.”

“Ah! So you're the Trent who's been making all the trouble for the water-power people in the Southwest! And I thought that wonderful boy's imagination of yours was going to make a poet of you, or at least a dramatist.”

“It made me see visions,” he explained with gravity—“visions that had to be expressed in facts. After I had worked my way through college, I went out to the desert country. And I saw visions of water brought from the mountains. What I saw I made other people see. Now there are growing cities and fertile farms where there used to be only dry sand and my imagination. Isn't that poetry, dominie,—and drama?”

It was all said quite simply, and without brag, as a man would explain the working of some power outside of himself.

“But where did you get the money?”

“People brought it to me. The people of the dry country first. Afterward it came in from all over, much of it from New York; and when I needed more for my biggest projects I went to Europe and raised it.”

“You know what they say of you now? That you're advocating government control because you've got all you can get, and wish to shut out the others.”

“I'm offering to put my companies on the same terms with the others,” he said impatiently. “All I demand is that eventually, when the development concerns have made their fair profit, the rights should revert to the people. So I'm an anarchist,” he laughed. “And I've come here to preach my anarchy in the face of Wall Street.”

“And fifteen years ago you were a boy of—”

“Sh-h-h-h,” he warned with mock seriousness. “I pass for thirty-five. It's a studied solemnity of demeanor that does the trick. You should see me at a board meeting! This is holiday.” He seized and hugged me until my old ribs cracked.

“Yet you say you're all American,” I protested, extricating myself. “You'll be a Latin till the day you die.”

“Not enough to impair my business sense. Which reminds me. You've got a small, accumulated interest in one of my early projects. It isn't much,—just the debt for my lessons,—but it pays a twenty-five per cent dividend. Now, dominie, I don't wish to hear any protests. What do you know about business matters?” He stretched himself like a big, lithe animal and took another comprehensive glance about Our Square. “Who's left?” he asked. “Any one I knew?”

“MacLachan the Tailor. And Thomsen of the Élite Restaurant. Calder the artist is dead. And do you remember—” I cut myself short, on second thought, of mentioning Paula Varick. A better idea had come to me. The Bonnie Lassie loves and loves forever the friend who will bring to her house any one genuinely new and interesting, provided only that he be presentable. Carlo, otherwise Charles Trent, was all three in an eminent degree. “Would you care to dine at the pleasantest house in Our Square?” I amended.

“If I have the time.”

“Make the time,” I advised. “And I'll see if I can make the place. It'll be Wednesday evening.” For the Bonnie Lassie was giving one of her little dinners then, and I knew that Paula Varick was to be there.

Carlo agreed, gave me his address at a golden caravansary, and left to call on MacLachan and Thomsen. I sought out the Bonnie Lassie.

“Madam,” said I, “I am not coming to your dinner.”

“You are,” she retorted. “Paula Varick will be there. You'd crawl to San Francisco to see Paula.”

“That's the very reason. I've got a substitute.” And I explained.

The Bonnie Lassie, who is an inveterate romanticist, was delighted. “I'll have him take her in,” she said. “No, I can't do that. The new Ambassador to Spain is to take her in. He shall sit on her left.”

“When you present him, introduce her as Miss Mumbleplum or something inarticulate and non-committal of that sort. She won't know his name, of course. Let's see if they'll discover.”

“And you accuse me of fixing up dramatic situations,” said the Bonnie Lassie scornfully, for she has never quite forgiven my comments upon her management of the affair between Ethel Bennington and the Little Red Doctor, which was so nearly ruined by the hard, prosaic fact of a toothache. “You're worse than an old maid. But you may come to the dinner just the same. I don't mind an extra man.”

So I went to the dinner, and a very wonderful dinner it was, as all the dinners in the Bonnie Lassie's house are. Mr. Charles Trent was very much present, looking typically American with his severely correct clothes, and big, graceful figure, until you noticed his eyes, which weren't American at all, or anything else but individual. Miss Paula Varick was also very much present, looking—well, looking as only Paula can look, to the utter wreck and ruin of the peace of mankind's mind. In presenting Carlo to Miss Mumbleplum (as pre-arranged) the hostess gave them a lead by saying:—

“Mr. Trent can tell you all about your water-rights. He's a sort of magic lord of the dry desert.”

“A baron of sand and cactus,” said Trent, smiling. But the new Ambassador to Spain arrived just then, and nothing more was said.

At the first opportunity afforded by the diplomat, Miss Varick turned to the guest on her left.

“I'm a landed proprietor in your country,” she said. “I own ten whole shares of stock in a company of some sort.”

“Then you're my fellow citizen,” he claimed. “Perhaps it's one of the companies I'm interested in.”

She named it, and he was amused to learn that her little ownership was in the corporation which was fighting him and his plans most savagely. She did not mention that her father was a principal stockholder and an officer in that same corporation. Nor did Trent deem it necessary to define his position. He didn't wish to talk politics to this wonderful flower-woman next him. But he did wish, most determinedly, to keep those luminous eyes turned in his direction. What Charles Trent determinedly wished he usually got, and he achieved this particular end by talking so well that the fresh-bloomed diplomat on the farther side began presently to get fretful. As for Mr. Trent's right side, it mattered not a whit whether it knew what his left side was doing, for it was on his right that I sat. Carlo fell to telling Paula of the romance of the hunt for the treasure of water in a dry land—more thrilling to a pioneer of imagination than any search for gold or silver or copper because it meant something more basic than wealth: it meant life in a country which was dead. There were searches for lost canons and unmapped rivers; explorations of wild gorges where the adventurers in improvised boats shot down along thou-sand-foot-deep cracks in the earth toward unknown rapids, listening for the thunder of possible cataracts; and, out of all this rude peril, the growth of vast projects and the gathering in from far cities of dollars, pounds, francs, marks, and even roubles, that a desert land might

flower and new cities arise.

“What about your own hairbreadth 'scapes in the imminent, deadly thingumbob—I never can remember the whole of a quotation?” she inquired. “You're very modest about your own share. Tell me the narrowest escape you ever had.”

He answered, thoughtfully: “Curiously enough, I fancy the narrowest escape I ever had was less than a block from here. I fell down between two houses.”

The girl's eyes widened suddenly. “On Our Square?”

“Yes. Except for the prosaic matter of the week's wash on a clothesline which shunted me off, I probably shouldn't be here to-day.”

“Mr. Trent,” said she slowly, “do you mind turning around this way? Farther. Thank you. Is that scar over your temple—”

“Yes. I got it there. How could you know?”

Then recognition flashed between them. They laughed excitedly, like two children. To the scandal of the bewildered Ambassador's ears, they then entered upon the following incredible conversation:—

“Little Boy, where did you come from?”

“Up there.”

“From that cloud?” (The diplomat looking at the ceiling with pained amazement.)

“Yes.”

“Let—me—see,” said the girl dreamily. “What comes next? We mustn't lose it.”

“Do you like gum?” he supplied quickly. (The ambassadorial eyes began to protrude.)

“What's gum?”

“Chewing-gum, of course. But alas! I haven't any with me,” lamented Carlo. “Then there was something about a tiger.

“Oh, yes! I'm a tiger in my cage. Gr-rr-rr-rr! If I could get out I'd eat you up, Little Boy.”

“Of course!

> *'Tiger! tiger! burning bright—*
> *In the forests of the night!'”*

“Say some more. You couldn't remember it, though, could you? Can you remember it now?”

He leaned over to her the merest trifle:—

> *“'What immortal hand and eye*
> *Framed thy wondrous symmetry?'”*

he quoted (slightly altering the text for his own purposes) with a look so direct and an intonation so profound that Paula, with all her armored experience, felt herself growing pink.

“Then you brought me wonderful things to play with and a kite to fly and gum to chew,” she said.

“And you put it in your hair.”

“So I did. And they found it. But I didn't tell. I said an angel brought it to me. You remember? You were Angel.”

“And you were Tiger.”

Now, I realize that diplomats of ambassadorial degree do not snort. But the eminent gentleman on Miss Varick's left delivered his emotions of what, in a lesser mortal, would have been dangerously near a snort, and thenceforward devoted his attention to his hostess exclusively, thereby seriously hampering her in her efforts to follow the progress of the reunion of old playmates.

Dinner being over, the Bonnie Lassie took the pair into her studio to see her new series of unfinished bronzes, and, having got them there, obeyed an imperative (and purely imaginary) summons from without, and left them. Quite unwisely—for she had forgotten one important incident herself—the Tiger reproached the Angel with his failure to remember her.

“You promised,” she accused. “You said you'd never forget—never.”

Now, a less ready wit than Carlo's might have retorted with the “ettu” argument, which would have been poor strategy. Carlo did better.

“I have forgotten nothing,” he said calmly.

“You forgot me. You didn't know me from—from any other tiger.”

“There never was any other tiger. There couldn't be. Also, I remember every episode of our last meeting when I promised never to forget. Do you?” Something significant in his tone caused the Tiger certain misgivings. She began to feel dimly that her accusation was unfortunate.

“Do you?” persisted the Angel.

“I remember the dreadful feeling of seeing you disappear, down into that hole. And your coming back with the blood trickling down your cheek. You were very brave.”

“And our parting. Do you remember? When you came close to the wire mesh, and lifted your face—Ah, I see you *do* remember,” he concluded quietly.

For suddenly the blood had flown into Paula Varick's face, and she stood there, amazed, confused, thrilling with an alarm new to her womanhood, and wholly glorious. In a moment she had recovered her poise.

“I remember that I had a true and loyal friend,” she said sweetly. “Have I still?” He bent and lifted her finger-tips to his lips. “For as long as you will command him,” he said.

So it was assumed, without definite arrangement, that on his return from Washington they were to see each

other, and so far had their thoughts wandered from the distant Southwestern desert that neither conceived the smallest misgivings as to the conflicting interests there of the Trent projects and the Varick interests. In the course of a day or two the Bonnie Lassie had the pair to tea, and afterward she and Cyrus the Gaunt and I stood at the front window, watching them as they crossed Our Square. They paused to look up at the cage on the housetop. The Bonnie Lassie spoke.

"You remember Tarrant, the portrait-painter, bewailing himself over Paula?" she asked.

"Because he couldn't catch the look of unconscious waiting in her eyes?"

"Yes. It's gone," said the Bonnie Lassie.

"Is there something else in its place?"

"Wonder," said the Bonnie Lassie.

As for Carlo, there was no mistaking what had happened to him. He came to see me later, and tried hard not to talk of Paula Varick, but all the time his eyes kept wandering to the cage on the roof. Once he asked me whether I thought the Varick mansion could be bought. As for his affairs in Washington, I think he must have commuted while the Senate hearings were in progress, for there were few days when he wasn't in New York. By what devices he succeeded in being around Our Square when his playmate of other days came down to see the Bonnie Lassie, I do not know. Probably the Bonnie Lassie was in the conspiracy. It would be like her. All of which may have been going on for a fortnight when I stopped in at the quaint, little, nestly, old-fashioned house which radiates the happiness of Cyrus the Gaunt and the Bonnie Lassie all through Our Square and beyond, and found the sculptress hard at work in her studio. My particular purpose was to consult her about Orpheus the Greek and his pipings to his lost Eurydice. Before I could begin the Bonnie Lassie removed her finger from the eye of old Granny Glynn (in wet clay) and pointed it at me.

"Plotter!" she said.

By that I knew that something had gone wrong. "Tell me the worst," I besought.

"You did it," she accused, still holding me up at the point of that pink and leveled digit.

"Guilty!" I pleaded. "What did I do, when, how, and to whom?"

"You brought those two ex-infants together. And now look at the poor things!"

"Are they engaged?" I cried, in high hope.

"Engaged! Have you seen the morning papers?"

She waved a modeling tool at a heap of print in the corner and relieved her feelings by giving Granny Glynn a vicious whack on the nose with the implement. I caught up the top paper and read:—

VARICK FLAYS TRENT AS A FAKER AND SELF-SEEKER AT SENATE HEARING

"Oh, that's only politics," I said, with an attempt at easiness.

"Putnam Varick himself turned Mr. Trent out of the house when he went to see Paula," said the Bonnie Lassie, a bright spot of color burning in each soft cheek. "Is *that* politics?"

"That," said I, "is war. What is Paula going to do about it?"

"What can she do?"

"Meet him outside, I suppose."

"Do you think Paula Varick is the kind of girl to practice hole-and-corner meetings at museums or restaurants?" said the sculptress scornfully.

"There are other places. Here, for instance. Though I suppose you wouldn't allow that."

This reasonable hypothesis nearly cost old Mrs. Glynn an ear. "Indeed I would! I'd do anything to get ahead of that father of Paula's. The mean old skinkum!" said the Bonnie Lassie, who under great provocation sometimes uses violent language. "But Paula wouldn't come. It's the Varick pride—all that there is of Varick in her, thank Heaven!"

"It has its disadvantages," I said. "But the point is, does she care for him?"

"Have you seen them together lately? But then, what's the use! You're only a man," said the Bonnie Lassie with sovereign contempt. For the moment she ceased to be an artist and became a philosopher. "Some people," she pronounced sagely, "just naturally fall in love by degrees. Some"—her face turned unconsciously toward the outer room where Cyrus the Gaunt was busy, and became dreamy and tender—"run away from love and are overtaken by it. And some go open-hearted and open-armed, to meet it when it comes. That is Paula. She's the type of woman to whom there is only one possible man in the world. He has found her."

"Does she know it?"

The Bonnie Lassie, smiling, poised her tool above a difficult problem of artistry pertaining to Granny Glynn's front hair (which was false). "You're less stupid than you might be. Her heart does. But her mind hasn't admitted it."

"Does *he* know it?"

"No. He hardly dares hope. He's so terribly afraid."

"It's the first time in his life, then."

"I believe you, dominie. Perhaps it's the first time he's been in love, too. It's good for his soul, but it's hard on the poor man. When he came this morning for a sitting he looked more like a pale martyr in a stained-glass window than a flesh-and-blood man. I had to send him away."

"Oh, well," I said comfortably, "if they really care for each other, time will straighten it out."

"It will," she retorted. "About three days' time. The Varicks start for the Far East on Saturday."

"Without Paula's seeing Carlo again?" I asked in dismay.

"Mr. Varick has written a note to Mr. Trent saying that it is by Paula's own wish, and that she does not want to see him again."

“That's a lie, isn't it?” I asked.

“Probably it is. But I don't think Paula will see him. If she has promised her father, she certainly won't. Now, what are you going to do about it?” she concluded calmly, laying down her implement and fixing me with an accusing eye.

“What am *I*—”

“Don't try to evade your responsibility, dominie. It's all your doing.”

“Just because it isn't turning out right,” I said hotly. “You know perfectly well, lassie, that if everything had gone smoothly you would have—”

“Claimed all the credit.” The Bonnie Lassie, dimpling, took the words out of my mouth. “And quite right too. When I manage things they're—they're *managed*. Once again I ask you, dominie: What are you going to do about it?”

I walked over to the window and looked out, leaning on my cane. Against a pale corner of the sky, the cage top loomed haggard and grim. A swift and soaring notion sprang into being in my mind.

“I'm going to borrow your telephone,” said I.

Getting Miss Paula Varick was no slight task. I had to run the gauntlet of half a dozen questioners—they were guarding her against the onslaught of the predatory Trent, I suppose—before she answered me, not in the softly ringing music of her familiar voice, but with a deadened tonelessness which both startled and reassured me. When I had delivered my message, I returned to the studio.

“Well?” queried the Bonnie Lassie.

“I have just talked with Paula.”

“What did she say?”

“She said, as nearly as I recall, 'Oh!' Also, 'Thank you, dominie!'”

“Don't be a horrid and exasperating old man. What did you say to her?”

“I gave her some interesting news about a local landmark.”

The Bonnie Lassie came over to me in three swift little bounds like a kitten, and pointed some sort of high-art tool at my chin. “Tell me at once,” she commanded.

“I've just informed Miss Varick that the cage on the roof of No. 13 has been ordered removed not later than tomorrow.”

“Has it?”

“Thinking,” I pursued serenely, “that she might wish to take a final look at the place where she first tasted the delights of chewing-gum,—these crucial experiences of childhood, you know—”

“Don't be a goose, dominie. Suppose she doesn't come?”

“Then you were wrong, and she doesn't really care for him.”

The Bonnie Lassie lowered her tool and bestowed a glance of approval upon me which encouraged me to continue.

“She might even want to go up to the housetop once more.”

“She might,” agreed the Bonnie Lassie thoughtfully. “That could be arranged—in case she does.”

“A little judicious stimulus to her mind,” I suggested, “if it doesn't occur to her.”

“Leave it to me.”

One of the many delightful things about the Bonnie Lassie is that it's never necessary to draw diagrams for her. So I left it to her and went to telephone Carlo. He said that he had a business engagement or two for the following morning, but it didn't matter (in a voice which indicated that nothing in the world mattered any more), and if I wished to see him of course he'd come.

So I bade the Bonnie Lassie good-day and went home to mature a reasonable excuse for summoning one of the busiest young men in America to my side. By the time he arrived the next day I had a plausible sort of lie fixed up about a stock concerning which I wished some advice. Schepstein, our local financier, had coached me on it. But when Carlo inquired at the start whether it was common or preferred I was talking about, I had to admit that I didn't know.

“What *did* you send for me for, then, dominie?” he asked patiently.

A motor-car which I recognized had arrived at and departed from the Bonnie Lassie's door. I played desperately for time, while Carlo's disconsolate regard wandered to the wire-mesh structure, seen only dimly now through the half-bare branches of trees which had been small when he was a boy and my pupil. From where he sat he could not see—I maneuvered his seat to manage that—what I saw; two girlish figures cross Our Square and separate at the entrance to No. 13. The Bonnie Lassie had done her part. Now for mine.

“Carlo,” I said, “are you looking at the Tiger's cage?”

“Yes.”

“They're tearing it down to-day or to-morrow.”

“Are they?” said he vaguely, and lost himself in a sad maze.

I reflected with bitterness that sentiment in the man and sentiment in the woman often assume different manifestations.

“I was in your garret last week,” I continued. “It isn't much changed.”

“What is it being used for?”

“A sort of loft. The wall panel your father sketched in crayon is still there.”

“I'd like to see that,” said Carlo.

“Nothing easier,” I replied with elation. “I know the people. Come along.” Five minutes later we were climbing the stairs to the top floor. Carlo sought out the blurred sketch and stood before it. “Poor old padre,”

he mused. “He believed that he was destined to become a great painter. I wonder.”

His glance roamed. “There's where I used to sleep when the nights were hot. And there's my study corner. You were good to me, dominie. What's the matter? Aren't you well?”

“It's close here,” I said with desperate strategy, and pushed open the dormer half-door leading to the roof.

Carlo's face, which had grown dreamy, suddenly became overspread with gloom as he looked out upon the roof. He hesitated. And the precious moments were passing. Paula must be on her former roof at that moment. Any minute she might leave. Would Carlo go out for a look, or—He went out. I followed. A high, inspiring wind was blowing. It hummed and cried through the meshes of the cage on the roof below with the voice of a thousand imperative and untranslatable messages. The girl in the cage held her face toward it, yearning to its dim and pregnant music, and I thought I had never seen a face so lovely, so lonely, so desolate. Then I turned to Carlo and was glad to the root-nerves of my heart that I had brought him.

That gladness lasted about one heartbeat and died a death of terror. For, without a word, Carlo stepped upon the coping, lowered himself over the grim well-space between the houses, then threw his body outward, with a swift, powerful impulsion. He hurtled down the ten feet, which might be fifty, and destruction, if his out-thrust were not forceful enough. But he landed, one hundred and ninety-odd pounds of hard, lithe manhood, on the edge of the roof, as light and firm as a cat. At the sound she turned and saw him coming to her from behind the chimney, as he had come in the days of her lonely childhood.

“Little Tiger,” he said very softly.

“Angel!” She tried bravely to laugh, but it was an uncertain, fluttering sound. “Have you dropped from your cloud again?”

He came straight to the cage door and stood, looking at her with his soul in his eyes, and she strove to meet his gaze, her own look fluttering away before the sweet terror of full realization.

Carlo set his hand to the latch. Some unknown imbecile, solicitous for the safety of the week's wash, had put some sort of an infernal patent spring lock upon the door. It resisted. His hand fell.

“Will you open it to me?” he said quietly.

“I—I can't,” said the girl.

“Is it to be the old barrier, then?” he said passionately—“the barrier that has always been set between us?”

She made no reply. But there came to her face a wonderful color, and to her lips a wonderful smile.

“Paula,” said Carlo, “nothing can stand between us except your will.” He raised both hands to the heavy meshes. “Shall I come?”

“Come!” she said.

Then that gate sprang from its hinges with a shriek of tortured metal, the voice, as it might be, of all the generations of Varicks, raised in frenzied, ineffectual protest. Oh, yes, I suppose the sockets *were* rusted out and ready to give way; nevertheless, it was a startling and thrilling thing to see. He tossed the door behind him, where it fell with a harsh rattle. And Paula, uncaged at last, came to his heart with a cry, and clung there.

Age warms itself in reflected fires. I was sitting on my favorite bench in Our Square some weeks later, meditating with a mild glow upon the outcome of the encounter between Carlo and his Tiger (for which, by the way, the Bonnie Lassie put in a wholly unjustified claim of half-credit), when two figures walking quite close together approached and stopped in front of me. They were very good to look at, those two, as youth and joy and the splendor of love are always good for old age to look at. I welcomed them to a corner of my bench, facing the Varick mansion, which was poor policy.

“So you haven't gone to the Far East?” I said to Miss Paula.

“No,” she said, “father decided not to take me. He has gone for his health.”

“Nothing serious, I trust,” I said politely.

“He is Suffering,” said Miss Paula primly, “from unrequited objections.” Her smiling and happy regard rested on Carlo and then passed dreamily to the squat and broad and drab old mansion facing us.

“Why!” she cried, “the cage is still there!”

“So it is,” I answered as nonchalantly as I could.

“Then they didn't tear it down.”

“Apparently they didn't.”

“You told me they were going to. And you told Ang—Carlo they were going to.”

“Did I? So I did. They must have changed their minds.”

“Who ordered it down?” inquired Carlo mildly.

“The fire department,” I said promptly. “On account of the inflammable nature of steel wire, I suppose.”

“I mean the sanitary inspectors,” I hastily corrected myself.

“For fear that somebody might sleep in it and catch cold! Of course!”

“Well, the fact is—”

“The fact is,” said Miss Paula Varick, “that you're a wicked old, scheming old, blessed old fibber.”

And she then and there pounced upon me and kissed me under the left ear, in the full and astounded sight of Our Square. Carlo's hand covered hers as it rested on my shoulder, and we three lifted our faces again to the cage, standing unchanged on the housetop, gaunt and grim and lifeless. As we looked, the sun, striking through the edges of a cloud,—such as angels descend from,—touched the harsh, dull metal to flaming crimson and glowing gold, and made of it a living glory, as love makes a living glory of life.

THE LITTLE RED 'DOCTOR OF OUR SQUARE

LET me tell the worst of the Little Red Doctor at once and get it over with. He has a hair-trigger temper and a jaw that does not forget or forgive readily. He insists on regarding gravely many things which most of us treat flippantly, such as love and death. He has a brutal disregard of the finesse of illness and never gives, even to an old man and an old patient like myself, medicine unless one needs it. For the rest, the nickname which Our Square gave him long since describes him. One thing more; though he is our friend and fellow and counselor, the safe repository of our secrets, our sturdy defender against the final enemy, yet Our Square does not call him “Doc.” There is something about him which forbids. You would have to see him to understand.

Seeing him, you would not see very much. Nature has done a slack job with the Little Red Doctor's outside. Even the Bonnie Lassie, stickler though she is for the eminence of nature as an artist, heretically admits this. She tried to better it in sculpture, and by force of the genius in her slim fingers she did succeed in getting at the dominant meaning of those queer quirks in his queer face—quirks of humor, of compassion, of sympathy—and thereby in expressing something of his fiery tenderness, his intrepid wisdom, his inclusive charity of heart toward good and bad alike, the half-boyish, half-knightly valor of self-sacrifice which arms him in the lists for the endless combat with his unconquerable antagonist, “my old friend, Death.” With her happy sense of character she called her miniature bronze “The Idealist,” and refused to sell it because, she said, some day Our Square would want to put up a monument to the Little Red Doctor and her attempt might help some bigger artist to be worthy of the task.

“Do you know,” she observed to Cyrus the Gaunt the day that she finished, “I've discovered something about that face? There's no happiness in it. And it so deserves happiness!”

“Some fool of a girl probably turned him down and he came here to bury himself,” surmised Cyrus the Gaunt. “We homely, good men are never properly appreciated. Look at me!”

The Bonnie Lassie looked at him and then kissed him on the ear. “Just the same I think you're wrong,” she said thoughtfully. “When I first saw the Little Red Doctor, I wondered whether any woman could possibly love him. Since I've known him I've wondered how any woman could possibly help it.”

“That's a pleasant thing for a man to hear from his wife,” observed Cyrus cheerfully. “Anyway, there's a photograph been scraped out of the inside of his watch. Mendel, the watchmaker, told Polyglot Elsa so.”

Barring this tenuous evidence, whatever may have passed in the Little Red Doctor's former existence was wholly unknown to Our Square, even after he became one of us. He trailed no clouds of glory and apparently no clues from his previous existence. All that we knew was that he landed from a long voyage in tropical lands and set up his shingle, “Dr. Smith,” at No. 11. Business did not rush to him. We are a conservative and cautious community in Our Square. We watched and weighed him. Presently he got a little foothold in the reeking slum tenements which surround our struggling and cherished respectability. It could not have been a profitable practice. But it afforded experience. Sometimes he came back with triumph in his face; sometimes with stern gloom; sometimes with a black eye, for the practice of medicine as carried on in our immediate environment involves sundry departments not taught in the schools, and branches out into strange and eclectic activities. In those early days I overheard Terry the Cop assert that the new physician could “lick his weight in wildcats.” But when I informed Terry that this would mean at least five of the species, Terry replied airily that he was no Zoo attendant, but he knew a scrapper when he saw one.

If one may credit the Murphy family, the Little Red Doctor gained his real foothold in Our Square through force, invasion, violence, and brutal assault. The Murphys occupy the ground floor of the corner house abutting on Our Alley, under the workroom of Dead-Men's-Shoes, who, through their unwitting instrumentality, became sponsor for the Little Red Doctor. Dead-Men's-Shoes comes by his name from his business, which is the purchase and resale of the apparel of the recently deceased, collected on wagon trips over a wide radius about New York. Thus it comes about that the feet of the mighty have been represented in Our Square, and more than one of us has worn the giant's robe as tailored on Fifth Avenue. The ol'-clo' man's real name is Dadmun Schütz, and he is a Yankee from Connecticut where there are many Dadmuns and more Schutzes, but how and why he came to Our Square is a story that I do not care to tell. The slight alteration in his name to fit his trade was so logical as to be inevitable. Dead-Men's-Shoes is tall and rugged and powerful and slow, and he always wears an extinct species of silk hat on his business rounds. In the day which introduced him to the Little Red Doctor, the Murphys had declared holiday and gone fishing and caught fish. Naturally they held alcoholic celebration in the evening. Passing the house, the Little Red Doctor heard the sounds of revelry; also another sound which checked his progress. He stuck his head in at the window, took a hasty survey, followed the head into the room and laid hands upon Timmy Murphy *aetat* ten. Astonished but in no way dismayed by the invasion, Paterfamilias Murphy immediately threw a whiskey bottle at the intruder and rushed to the rescue, followed by the partner of his bosom. It was no time for diplomacy or fine distinctions as to the rights of the non-combatant sex. The Little Red Doctor acted with promptitude and both hands, and the Murphys came to in the kitchen with the door barred against reëntry. Thereupon they raised such lamentable outcry that Dad-mun Schütz loped downstairs to the rescue. Seeing a stranger in the act of throttling the scion of the house of Murphy, the ol'-clo' man undertook to dissuade him by fixing a bony hand in his collar; but in so doing forgot the existence of what is technically termed, I understand, the pivot blow. Upon discovering its uses he lay down in the hallway to meditate upon it. The Little Red Doctor finished his job before Terry the Cop's substitute arrived to arrest him. He went peacefully. Dead-Men's-Shoes followed to the court, escorting Murphy senior, who was extensively bandaged. The bench was occupied and ornamented by Magistrate Wolfe Tone Hanrahan, the Irish Solon of Avenue B. Judge Hanrahan possesses a human stratum in his judicial temperament. His examination of the prisoner (suppressed from the stenographer's

official notes) proceeded as follows:—

The Judge—What were you doing in Murphys' flat?

The Accused—I was there professionally.

The Judge—Professionally, say ye? (With a look at the ill-repaired Murphys.) Are ye a prize-fighter?

The Accused—I am a physician and surgeon.

The Judge—Mostly surgeon, I'm thinkin'. Ye seem to have removed three teeth from the patient an' partly ampytated an ear. Besides, he swears ye tried to murder the boy. Is such yer usual practice?

The Accused—The boy had a fish bone in his throat. He was strangling. Here is the bone. The boy is in bed. I ought to be with him now.

The Judge—Officer, ye're a fool. Murphy, y' oughta get ten days. Mrs. Murphy, back to yer child! Defendant, cud ye come to my house, No. 36, to-morra mornin'? My cook has a bile on her neck. I like yer style. Yere discharged.

Dead-Men's-Shoes escorted the physician back apologizing at every step, and thenceforth touted for him (greatly to his embarrassment) until Our Square grew afraid to call in any other practitioner lest the partisan ol'-clo' man should accuse us of attempted suicide by negligence. Within a year of his arrival the little Red Doctor had become, as it were, official healer to the whole place. And where he began as physician he ended as friend and ally.

The Little Red Doctor was intensely personal in his permanent engagement with his old friend, Death.

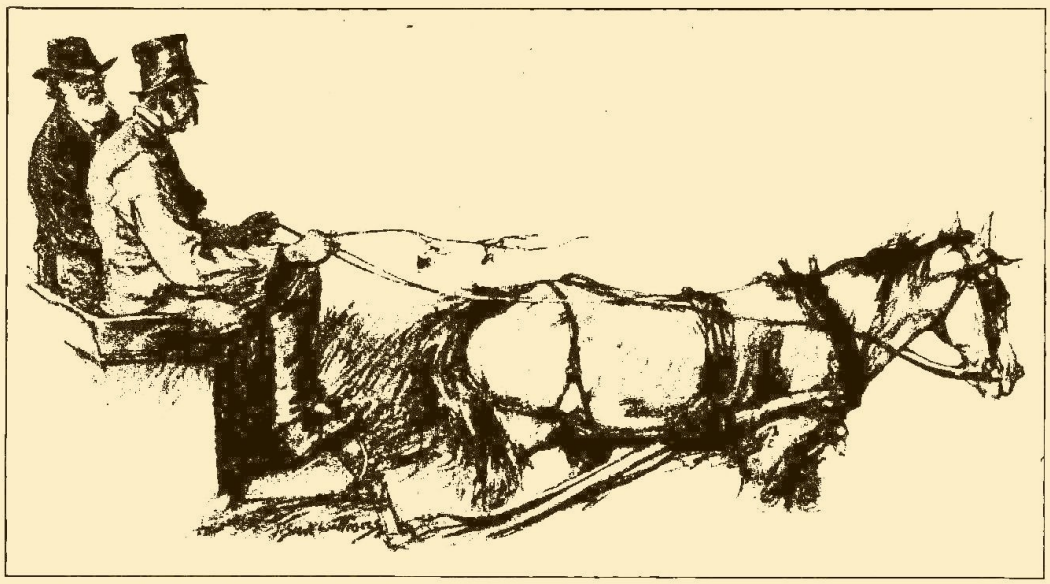
While I am, of course, a part of the Little Red Doctor's large practice, I do not add much to his meager income. In fact, he usually laughs me and my minor ailments out of court and declines to administer anything but free advice. On the particular June evening when I unwittingly became a partner of the fates, nothing really ailed me except that I had not been sleeping for some nights and was tired of it. The Little Red Doctor went over me briefly and prescribed.

“One full day in the open sunrise to sundown.”

“Where?”

He reflected. “Go crêpe-hunting with Dead-Men's-Shoes,” he said at length.

Thus it was that from nine o'clock on, of a balmy, sweet-scented morning, the sleek and raucous automobiles of West-Chester County hooted disdainfully at Dadmun Schütz and myself, jogging appreciatively along behind Schutz's mouse-hued mare, Dolly Gray, through a world so alien to Our Square as to suggest another scheme of creation; a world of birds and butterflies and bees and trees and flowers and song and color and blithe winds.



Jogging appreciatively along behind Schutz's mouse-hued mare

This world was, most appropriately, inhabited by a brown-and-gold fairy. Any one could tell that she was a fairy by the sunlight in her hair, and the starlight in her eyes, and the fact that, at the moment when we discovered her, two butterflies were engaged in aerial combat to decide winch one should settle on the pink rose above her ear. The flower flaunted there like a challenge against the somberness of her costume, for the fairy was dressed entirely in black. She was leaning on a gate in a tall hedge. Through the opening we could see, across broad flower gardens, a solid, spacious, kindly house, amid rustling shade, flying the insignium of death at its door.

At the sight Dead-Men's-Shoes pulled up and took off his extinct hat. It was one of the most extinct hats wherewith I have ever known him to grace his calling. Its brim was fractured in two places, its crown leaned like Pisa's Tower, and it bristled in universal offense against the outer world. Despite all this it was indisputably a Silk Hat, and, as such, official to the lawful occasions of the wearer. The brown-and-gold fairy looked at it with unfeigned surprise. From its interior Dead-Men's-Shoes extracted a slip of paper which he perused. He then addressed the fairy in a soft and respectful tone.

“You ain't on the list, mum.”

“What list?” inquired the fairy with interest. “And why should I be on it?”

“Not you, mum. The house.”

He re-covered his head and contemplated her speculatively. She returned his regard with sparkling eyes and a dimpling and twitching mouth.

“Why do you wear that extraordinary hat?” she broke out.

“Business,” murmured Dead-Men's-Shoes. “It's my business hat. If I could have a few words with you on business?”

“You've come at an unfortunate time,” said the brown-and-gold fairy. “There is a death in the family.”

“Yessum. I observed that the Grim Reaper had visited the premises,” said Dead-Men's-Shoes, who prides himself upon a stock of correct, elegant, and felicitous mortuary phrases. “May I proffer my humble condolences?” He removed the silk hat with an official and solemn flourish. “Are you the bereaved, mum?”

“The what?”

“The relic of the late lamented?”

“No; only a cousin, but my father and I are Mr. Bennington's nearest relatives. What is it you wish?”

“In that case,” said Dead-Men's-Shoes, with evident relief, “an' beggin' your pardon for intrudin' on your nach'ral grief an' distress, we might trade.” He coughed austerely. “About clothes now,” he suggested.

“Clothes? What clothes?” said the fairy.

“The deceased's. Or shoes, maybe? Or even hats.”

“What on earth do you mean, you extraordinary person?”

“I mean fair,” said Dead-Men's-Shoes firmly. “I'm here to buy the deceased's garments. You see, lady, I read all the death notices in the N'York papers, an' when I've got ten or a dozen good prospects in one locality I hitch up Dolly Gray an' make my rounds. An' though you ain't on my list, I won't count that against you when we come to dicker.”

“But we don't want to sell Cousin Ben's clothes,” said the fairy in bewilderment.

“Dont-cha!” Dead-Men's Shoes took on a persuasively argumentative air. “Listen, lady. Wotcha goin' to do with them garments?”

“I hadn't thought about it.”

“Was the late lamented a charitable gent? Good to the poor and that sort of thing?”

“Very.”

“There you are, then!” said he triumphantly. “Sell me the garments for a lot o' money. I'm soft on swell garments. Take the cash an' give it to charity. Le's begin with shoes. How many pair of shoes woild you say the untimely victim had?” Mirth quivered at the corners of the fairy's soft lips, “He wasn't an untimely victim. He was seventy-six years old and he had gout so dreadfully that he had to have one shoe made much longer than the other.”

My companion's face fell, but immediately brightened with hope. “Which foot?”

She considered. “The left.”

“If they was right in size an' price,” he mused, “they might do for the Little Red Doctor.”

The brown-and-gold fairy's eyes widened. “For whom?” she asked.

“The Little Red Doctor.”

“Why do you call him that?”

“Because he's little an' red-headed an' the smartest doctor in N'York. An' if your loved-an'-lost one had had him, he'd be alive to-day,” he added with profound conviction.

“Where does he live?”

“Down in Our Square—No. 11, on the East Side; office hours nine to one. If you was any ways ailin' you couldn't do better'n to call.”

“And there is something the matter with his left foot?” she pursued, ignoring this well-meant advice. “What?”

“It's dummed hard to fit,” replied Dead-Men's-Shoes disconsolately.

“I can tell you,” I interjected. “He injured it while swimming.”

“Oh!” said the brown-and-gold fairy. “And—and this gentleman's description of him is accurate?”

“But not adequate,” I said. “He is wise (a confirmatory nod from the brown-and-gold fairy) and brave (another nod) and unselfish (a third nod) and obstinate (two nods) and beautiful—”

“Oh!” said the brown-and-gold fairy, with obvious disappointment.

“—to us who know him, I mean.” She smiled up at me. “And his name is Smith.”

“It is,” I averred.

At this juncture Dead-Men's-Shoes, who had been fidgeting on his wagon seat, deemed it time to interfere in the interests of commerce. “Don't butt in, dominie,” he protested in an injured aside. “These mourners has to be handled with tac'. It takes a professional. You're spoilin' trade.”

Herein he did me injustice. The brown-and-gold fairy threw the gate open and invited Dead-Men's-Shoes in to bargain. Highly advantageous bargaining it was, I judged from the ill-suppressed jubilance of my associate's face when he emerged some minutes later, tottering under a burden of assorted clothing, while she brought up the rear, carrying one pair of shoes. The rose was gone from her hair.

“Remember,” she cautioned him, “the suits you may dispose of as you please, but the shoes are to go to the—the Little Red Doctor just as they are. Will you see that they do?” She appealed to me.

“I'll take them myself,” I promised.

“Will you? That's kind of you. But you mustn't tell him where they came from.” She looked up at me and I

seemed to discern something wistful in her eyes. “You are a friend of Dr. Smith's?”

“Yes. And you?”

“I used to be,” said she indifferently. Dead-Men's-Shoes climbed into the wagon and lifted the lines. “Accept the assurances of my respec'ful sympathy,” he recited, “an' remember the address if there's anything further in my line. Wake up, Dolly Gray.”

The brown-and-gold fairy floated out through the gate and came to my side.

“Does he still limp?” she asked in a half whisper.

“Imperceptibly,” I answered.

“I don't *want* him to limp,” she cried imperiously and was gone.

Dolly Gray took us and the shoes of the deceased cousin on our way. The day's journey ended in front of the Little Red Doctor's office. The Little Red Doctor looked up from some sort of complicated mechanism which he was making for crippled Molly Rankin (who could never by any possibility pay him for it) and appeared astonished at the sight of the very elegant footwear which Dead-Men's-Shoes extended to him.

“What for?” he asked. “I'm not buying second-hand shoes.”

“Ask the dominie,” said Dead-Men's Shoes.

“They're a present,” I explained.

The Little Red Doctor looked both puzzled and suspicious. “They won't fit my queer foot,” he objected.

“Try,” encouraged Dead-Men's-Shoes.

The Little Red Doctor tried on the left boot. “Pretty good,” he said. He stood up to stamp his foot down. Then he bounded into the air like a springbok, and on alighting, tore off the shoe, saying something harsh and profane about practical jokers. “There's a pin in it,” he growled.

“Gosh!” exclaimed Dead-Men's-Shoes, greatly perturbed at this evidence of woman's perfidy. “An' her in the sollim presence of death, too!”

“Her? Who?” demanded the Little Red Doctor, looking up from his explorations after the pin.

“Dadmun,” said I, “you are too loquacious. Go out and look after Dolly Gray.”

Duly impressed and oppressed by my well-chosen word, the ol'-clo' man trudged out and leaned against the railing. The Little Red Doctor extracted a small object from the shoe. It proved to be a pink rose, impaled upon a fine golden wire which might once have been a hairpin. The wire held in place a thin strip of paper. When he saw the handwriting on the paper the Little Red Doctor gave another leap. It was not as athletic and deerlike as his first, but was still a creditable performance. Then he flung the whole combination out through the open window.

“Ow!” ejaculated Dead-Men's-Shoes from his place against the railing.

We could hear him scuffling around after the missile, which had evidently hit him on a tender spot. His voice came clearly to us reading painfully in the dim light.

“'An'-no-bird-sings-in-Arcady!'”

“Dadmun,” said I, severely, “that letter is not addressed to you.”

“It ain't a letter,” retorted Dead-Men's-Shoes aggrievedly. “It ain't begun like a letter oughta be. It ain't signed, like a letter oughta be. It's just that one fool line. Where's Arcady an' what's to stop the birds singin' there if they want to? Here's yer valentine.”

He flipped it back through the window. We heard the creaking of the wagon springs, Dolly Gray's patient, responsive grunt and her retreating footsteps on the asphalt. I retrieved the carrier rose and turned to the Little Red Doctor.

“Well?” I said. “Where *is* Arcady, my friend?”

He shook his head.

“I know that song,” I continued. “How does the verse run?

> *“And no bird sings in Arcady;*
> *The little fauns have left the hill;*
> *Even the tired daffodil*
> *Has closed its gilded doors, and still—”*

“Don't!” said the Little Red Doctor hoarsely. “I used to know that song.” He lifted haggard eyes to me. “You've seen her?”

“Yes.”

“How did she look?”

I meditated. “Like a child that doesn't understand why it isn't happy,” I said at length.

I saw the Little Red Doctor's sensitive mouth quiver; but the jaw set hard and firm and ended that struggle.

“I won't ask you where,” he said.

“It would be no use. I couldn't tell you.”

“No.” He accepted that. “Then why, in the name of Heaven,” he cried, looking at the rose, “should she—Oh, well, never mind that.” He sat thoughtfully for a time. “Dominie,” he said, “I'm going to tell you. It will do me good, I think. And then I'll forget it again.”

It was not altogether a pretty story. Four years before, it began, when the brown-and-gold fairy must have been little more than a child. At a fashionable cottage place which is merely a glowing, newspaper-glorified name to Our Square, the Little Red Doctor, who had come down for a tennis tournament, had jumped off a pier after a small boy who had fallen in. He referred to it and to the brown-and-gold fairy's romantic view of it with tolerant contempt. “The *hee-ro* business,” he said with the medical man's disdain of the more obvious forms of physical peril. “I run more real risks every day of my life.” However, a well-meaning but

blundersome launch had broken his foot with its wheel, and the girl, who had seen the whole adventure, carried him off in her motor-car. Followed the usual discovery of friends in common, and by the time the crutches were discarded, the victim was hopelessly enslaved. Whether they were ever actually engaged or not did not clearly appear. The Little Red Doctor was carefully and gallantly defensive of her course. Nevertheless, knowing the Little Red Doctor as I do, I was resentfully sure that she had treated him shamefully. Finally there was an issue of principle between them. He alluded to it vaguely. “She didn't really care, of course,” he said. “Why should she? So I went away and knocked about the world for a bit. Then I came here because in Our Square there wouldn't be much chance of meeting her, you see. There's just one thing to do. Forget her. So I've forgotten her.” And the Little Red Doctor, taking the rose from the table where I had tossed it, held it cherishingly in his hands as if it were a human, beating heart.

“Forget her.” Quite so! It was just and simple and sensible. Yet, while I agreed heartily, I had my private misgivings that it might not be so easy to forget a face with that particular quality of witchery about it, a witchery wholly distinct from mere beauty. I've known quite homely women to have it. Not that the brown-and-gold fairy was homely. But I cannot quite think that she was beautiful, either, by the standards of calm and balanced judgment. Only, the calmest judgment would be put to it to preserve its balance with those eyes turned upon it. She had an unbalancing personality, that brown-and-gold fairy, even to an old and rusty-fusty pedagogue like myself.

In fact, she was quite unreasonably vivid to my thoughts for weeks after my one brief meeting with her. I believe that I was actually thinking about her and the Little Red Doctor, seated on my favorite bench in Our Square, on the August morning when a small, soft voice quite close behind me said:—

“Mr. Dominie.”

I got up and turned around. There stood the brown-and-gold fairy. I frowned upon her severely. Not as severely as she doubtless deserved, considering how the Little Red Doctor had winced at the mention of her, but as severely as was practicable in the face of the way she was smiling at me.

“What do you mean by coming up behind me and startling me with your 'Mr. Dominie'?” I demanded.

“I heard the man with the funny hat call you that. Isn't it your name?”

“It will serve. What are you doing in Our Square?”

“I came down to see the place.”

“You came down to see the Little Red Doctor,” I charged.

“Oh, no,” she protested softly. “Just to see the place where he lives. I went near there, but he came out and I ran away.”

“You needn't have,” I said. “He has forgotten you.”

“I don't think it nice of you to say that, Mr. Dominie.”

There was a little break in her voice. I looked away hastily. Though, if I had made her cry, it served her right. I looked back and found that she was not crying. She was laughing. At me!

“He has forgotten you,” I repeated positively, “as he ought.”

“Yes; I suppose he ought,” she assented dolorously. “But he hasn't,” she added with a sudden change to an adorable impertinence. “You know he hasn't. Nobody ever forgets me. You didn't forget me, did you? And you'd only seen me once.”

“Why am I seeing you now?”

“Because you're old and wise and you look kind.”

“I am very old and extremely wise,” I answered, “but my kindly expression is mere senile deterioration of the facial muscles. I am really brutal.”

“But you'll be kind to me,” she averred trustfully.

I surrendered. “What about?”

“I want to see the—the Little Red Doctor, and yet I—I don't want to see him. Do you know what I mean?”

“No. Do you?”

“N-n-no. I suppose I don't exactly. Do you think he'd like to see me?”

“I'm sure he wouldn't.”

Her lip quivered. “And you said you'd be kind to me,” she murmured plaintively.

“Not at all! *You* said I'd be kind to you. Are you in love with the Little Red Doctor?”

“Of course I'm not!” she asserted violently.

“Then why are you here in Our Square at all? Does the scenery entice you? Are you enthralled by our social advantages? Would you like to meet some of our leading local lights?”

“I would like to meet somebody who is really wise and kind, too wise and kind to make fun of poor little me.”

“That's the Bonnie Lassie,” said I with sudden, inspired conviction. “Come with me.

“Where?” asked the brown-and-gold fairy, hanging back doubtfully.

“To her studio where she sculps wonderful and beautiful things. If I'm any judge she'll sculp you as a butterfly that's lost its way in this wicked—”

“I'm not a butterfly,” interrupted my companion. “I'm a very serious person on a very serious errand.”

“—world,” I proceeded. “And she'll talk to you about the Little Red Doctor—”

“Will she?” murmured the brown-and-gold fairy, moving after me.

“—whom she loves devotedly—”

“Does she!” said the brown-and-gold fairy, stopping short.

“—as every one in Our Square does and ought to—”

“Oh!” remarked the fairy, catching up with me again.

“—for reasons which you should know as well as any one.”

“I don't,” retorted the fairy, mutinously. “Who is the Bonnie Lassie? You all have such queer names here, Mr. Dominie!”

“In private life she's Mrs. Cyrus Staten: otherwise Cecily Willard.”

The golden lights in the fairy's eyes deepened with astonishment. “Not the famous Miss Willard who does the figurines! Does she live way down here in this—this—”

“Slum,” I supplied. “Don't be afraid to say it. Our Square isn't sensitive to what outsiders think of us.”

“This nice, queer old park,” concluded the fairy with dignity. “And I suppose she is very old and wise and—is she kind?”

“She is very young and lovely to look at and as wise as she needs to be for her own happiness and—come along and see her.”

“But you mustn't tell her—'' was as far as she got when the Bonnie Lassie came out of the studio with a smudge of clay on the tip of her chin, and regarded my pink and captive fairy with undisguised amazement.

“This young discovery of mine,” I explained, “has come to Our Square for the purpose of *not* seeing the Little Red Doctor. Dead-Men's-Shoes struck up a professional acquaintance with her in the country and told her about the Doctor—whom she doesn't want to see—being in Our Square. As she hasn't seen him for several years and as he has been trying hard and conscientiously to forget her, she has come, *incognita*, where he is, in order to keep on not seeing him and to discover whether he has forgotten. It's all just as simple as it sounds.”

My fairy suddenly became a person, and a very decided person. “I beg your pardon,” she said. “I am *not incognita*. My name is Ethel Bennington, and I think you are a very unkind old man.”

The Bonnie Lassie set a slender, strong hand on the visitor's wrist and drew her within. “Never mind him, my dear,” she said softly. “He isn't really unkind. He's just a tease.” She paused and studied her caller a moment. Then, with her irresistible smile, she said: “I know it's dreadful of me—but, *would* you mind if I just sketched you hastily?”

Now, that may have been the artist of it breaking through, or it may have been just the way of her invincible tact and management; you never can tell, with the Bonnie Lassie. But it's a proven fact that nobody can sit to her without giving up his heart's secrets, and sometimes she puts them in the bronze. Most unfairly I was banished, for the brown-and-gold fairy with a flush of pleasure said she'd sit at once. And from that sitting grew another sitting and another and many to follow. Sometimes I was bidden in. It was a sheer delight to sit there and watch those two young creatures, the sculptress gay and sunny and splendid in the glad beauty of power and achievement; the model, wistful, sweet, and vivid by turns, a fairy from a brighter world bringing her fairy gold to our grim and dusty neighborhood. Out of a working silence the brown-and-gold fairy spoke one day.

“Is he poor?”

“Is who—” I began.

But the quicker apprehension of the artist cut in on me.

“It isn't exactly a fashionable practice, the Little Red Doctor's. Is it, dominie?”

“No. But poor—certainly not, by the standards of Our Square. He has a new black suit for professional service every year.”

“Um!” said the fairy doubtfully. Then, after a pause, “He could have been rich, you know.”

“Could he?” said the Bonnie Lassie, holding her iron poised over the shadow of a flying dimple.

“An invention. Something to do with his surgery,” explained the girl. “Father said there were big possibilities in it. He offered to finance it himself. But he—the Lit—Dr. Smith wouldn't even take out a patent on it.”

The Bonnie Lassie lowered her weapon. “Do you mean the pressure brace for atrophy?”

“Yes,” said the girl, surprised. “How do you know about it?”

“Cyrus's uncle—he's Dr. Hardaman, the great orthopedic surgeon—says that there are thousands of children walking to-day who owe their legs to that brace of the Little Red Doctor's.”

“You never told any of us about that!” I cried.

“No,” she answered composedly. “It seemed to make the Little Red Doctor uncomfortable when Cyrus spoke of it. So we kept it quiet.”

“You see, he might really have made a fortune by patenting it,” said the brown-and-gold fairy.

“That is what I asked Uncle Charles. He said that physicians, the best type, don't take out patents. You see, the patent would have made the brace cost more, and the more it cost the fewer people could buy it, and that would mean more children who ought to have walked and couldn't. And, oh, my dear! if you could see the poor, pitiful, wee things as we see them in Our Square, withered and hobbling like old, worn-out folk —”

“Don't! Don't!” cried the girl. “I—I never thought of it that way.”

“Why should you? But the Little Red Doctor would.”

“Yes, but he didn't explain it that way,” said the brown-and-gold fairy miserably. “He said something stupid about ethics, and I said something I didn't mean—and,”—her head drooped,—“and that was our last quarrel.”

“And you loved him all the time, and still do,” said the Bonnie Lassie gently.

“I didn't! I don't!” denied the brown-and-gold fairy vehemently.

“Then why have you come down here?” demanded the inexorable sculptress.

“Because,” said the fairy in a fairy's whisper, “I—I just wanted to see him again. All the other men are so *alike*.”

“Yes; yes, I know,” said the Bonnie Lassie and threw an arm over her shoulder, and gave me a swift and wordless command to go away and be quick about it.

For the subsequent developments of the affair I expressly disclaim all responsibility. True, I was made an agent. But that was coercion, such coercion as the Bonnie Lassie practices on all of us. The scheme was hers and hers alone. If there is a weakness in the Bonnie Lassie's character, it is overfondness for the romantic and the dramatic. She loves to set the stage and move the puppets, and be the goddess from the machine generally. Miss Ethel Bennington, cast for the leading part, accepted it all implicitly, for in the strange environment of Our Square she was uncertain and self-distrustful, and she readily fell in with the dramatist's principal theme; to wit, that she had treated the Little Red Doctor very ill, and said wounding things hard to be forgiven by a high-spirited, sensitive, and red-headed lover; that any basis of pardon and understanding would be difficult and painful to arrive at, but that if he found her in straits and needing him, then the truth would come out and she would know at once whether he still cared for her or not, a point upon which my brown-and-gold fairy had her dismal doubts, it seems. Therefore she would please buy herself a working outfit and take a job with—well—with Dead-Men's-Shoes. Just the thing! Dead-Men's-Shoes, knowing so much of the matter, would require little explanation. The labor, sorting over and classifying his residuary apparel, would be not too violent; and the Little Red Doctor passed by the door daily on his way to the top floor to visit little Fannie McKay who had the rickets. It was only a question of time when he would find the fairy there toiling in poverty. Such was the setting devised by the Bonnie Lassie to bring those two together. For the rest, let Fate take its course.

Fate did. For their own private reasons, or perhaps in sheer derision of the human dramatist's puny efforts, the High Gods of Drama took a hand in the affair. They smote the Little Red Doctor, if not exactly hip and thigh, at least, tooth and jaw; so that he was incapacitated for any sort of decent, peaceable human association. They gave him an abominable toothache. The Bonnie Lassie came across Our Square to apprise me of the fact, with dismay in her face.

“What's a toothache,” I said, “in such circumstances!”

The Bonnie Lassie looked at me scornfully. “Men have no sense,” she sighed. “Do you think I'm going to have their meeting spoiled by a wretched thing like that, after all these years? Besides, he's all swollen on one side.”

“I see. You don't wish his classic beauty impaired on this occasion.”

“Don't be disagreeable. And do be good. Go to the Little Red Doctor and tell him he must have it fixed.”

I went to the Little Red Doctor and told him that very thing. To this day I believe that my age alone saved me from a murderous assault. “Have it fixed?” howled the Little Red Doctor. “Don't you suppose I want to have it fixed? Don't be an imbecile, dominie.”

“Then come along now to Doc Selters and get it filled.”

“I don't want it filled. I want it pulled. I want to get it out and stamp on it!”

“Well, he will pull it.”

“He will *not*. He says it's got to be saved. He's killing the nerve—on the Spanish Inquisition principle. I'd go to the fifty cent yankers this minute if I didn't have a saw-off with Selters.”

“A what?”

“A saw-off. A professional exchange. He owes me two liver-attacks and a diffuse laryngitis; and the best he'll do,” cried the Little Red Doctor, dancing with rage and pain, “is to say that the worst of it is over. D——n his eyes!”

Plainly, the Bonnie Lassie was right. The Little Red Doctor was in no state to meet vital issues. I went over to Dead-Men's-Shoes' place, and there beheld the brown-and-gold fairy skillfully sewing trouser buttons on waistcoats. She looked tired and pathetic, and when she saw me she jumped up and ran to me.

“Oh, Mr. Dominie!” she cried. “Where is he?”

I shook my head. Somehow I hadn't the heart to obtrude as unpoetic a *motif* as a toothache upon that prospective romance.

“I've worked and worked and worked,” she said, with a drooping mouth, “and he doesn't come. And Miss Willard won't tell me why. I'm sure something has happened to him. Has there?”

“Why, no,” I said. “That is—er—certainly not!”

“There has!” She set her hands on my shoulders and explored my face with her sweet, anxious eyes. “Tell me. You *must* tell me! It was you who brought me here.” (Oh, the justice of womankind!) “Was it, indeed!”

“Well, it is your fault that—that I came. You encouraged me.” She let her hands drop and her eyes darkened with reproach. “Won't you tell me if he is ill?”

“He isn't ill. On honor.”

Despite her workaday garb, she was instantly metamorphosed into the brown-and-gold fairy again. “Then, when is he coming?”

“I don't know.”

“You do! But you won't tell. You're playing with me, you and Miss Willard.”

“Didn't you play with the Little Red Doctor? What about that clandestine message in the toe of the shoe?”

“Oh!” She had the grace to blush (and a brown-and-gold fairy's blush is something to cherish in memory). But at once curiosity overbore shame. “Did you give him the shoes yourself? What did he say when he put them on?” Recalling the impassioned monosyllable which signalized the Little Red Doctor's original discovery of the hairpin, I replied truthfully enough: “I don't think that would interest you.”

“Don't you? Then how did he look?”

“Severe.”

“I know! Oh, how well I know!” Her voice declined to a caressing murmur. “And all the time there's that

twinkle of fun and sympathy underneath the frown. Oh, ever so deep underneath! It took me a long time to find it."

"And longer to forget it?" I suggested with malice.

"I don't want to forget it," retorted the fairy loftily. "I could if I chose. You're sure there isn't anything the matter with him?"

"I never said there wasn't anything the matter with him. I said he wasn't ill."

"Oh, well, I think it's very mean of you. You may go and sit on that pile of coats—the unpressed ones—and watch me work my poor fingers to the bone sewing on buttons until your hard heart softens and you come to a properer frame of mind."

Accordingly I sat down and contemplated, not without a certain grim satisfaction, the spectacle of a brown-and-gold fairy sentenced to honest labor. Shadows deepened in the room until she was almost in darkness. If the necessity of labor weighed upon her blithe spirit, she gave no evidence of it, for presently she began to hum to herself in a soft, crooning undertone, "speech half-asleep or song half-awake." Clearer and clearer grew the melody, waxing to full awakeness, as the fresh and lovely young voice filled the room with the verse, one single line of which had dragged the Little Red Doctor's heart back across the unforgetting years:—

"The falling dew is cold and chill,
And no bird sings in Arcady;
The little fauns have left the hill;
Even the tired daffodil
Has closed its gilded doors, and still
My lover comes not back to me."

The girlish voice trembled and stopped. The singer's hands fell into her lap. Her eyes dreamed. I think she must have forgotten, in the spell of music that she wove, the presence of an old man in the darkening room. I heard a soft, weary little catch of the breath, and then a name pronounced low and beseechingly, "Chris." Now, this drama, as laid out by that romantic manageress the Bonnie Lassie, did not include music. The fairy song, I strongly suspect, was the interposition of the Higher Gods of Destiny. For the spell of it evolved and made real the past, and out of the past stepped the Little Red Doctor and stood trembling in the doorway of the ol'-clo' repository.

"Who sang?" he gasped.

I sat motionless. Neither the Bonnie Lassie nor the Higher Fates had assigned me a speaking part in the crisis.

"Whose voice was that?" said the Little Red Doctor fearfully. "Am I hearing sounds that don't exist?"

Out of the deepest of the shadows came the voice, broken, and thrilling.

"Chris! Oh, Chris, is it really you?"

"Ethel!" said the Little Red Doctor in a breathless cry.

He stumbled halfway across the dim room, encountered a chair, and stopped. "What are you doing here?" he demanded. His voice had hardened suddenly to that of a cross-examiner.

All the appealing and dramatic fiction which the Bonnie Lassie had carefully instilled into her subject for this crisis—the once rich and careless butterfly girl now brought low in the world and working for her precarious living—went by the board. "I—I-d-d-d-don't know," stammered the brown-and-gold fairy.

"You—don't—know," he repeated. Then, vehemently; "You must know." Silence from the dim corner.

"Have you come back here to make my life wretched with longing again?"

"No. Oh, no!"

"Well? Why, then?"

"Don't be cruel to me, Chris," pleaded the voice, a very wee, piteous voice now. Brown-and-gold fairies should not be bullied by little, red, fierce men with the toothache. They are not accustomed to it and they don't know how to defend themselves. Up to this moment my one purpose had been to tiptoe unobtrusively to the door and escape. Now I wondered whether I ought not to stay and offer aid to the abused fairy. At the next word from the Little Red Doctor, however, I gave up that notion, and resumed my cautious retreat.

"I? Cruel—to you?" he said desolately. Then, after a long pause: "I can't see you. I'm glad I can't see you. If you could know how many times I've seen you since—since I went away."

"Seen me? Where?"

"Nowhere. Everywhere. Night after weary night. For a year. Or perhaps it was two years. Only, then you weren't real. You didn't sing."

"Ah!" The exclamation hardly stirred the air. But I knew, as well as if I had seen it, that the woman's eyes of the brown-and-gold fairy were yearning to him and that her hands were pressed over her woman's heart, which yearned to him, too.

"No. You never sang to me. You spoke. You said the same thing over and over again. You said, 'I don't love you and I never did love you and I never could love you.'"

There was a stifled cry from the darkness, and a rustle and the sound of swift, light feet. Two dim figures met and merged in one. The fairy voice, with a desperate effort to be still a voice and not quite a sob of mingled pity and joy, murmured brokenly: "I—I d-d-don't love you. But I c-c-can't live away from you." And I passed out, on tiptoe, unnoted. The tiptoe feature was, I dare say, superfluous. I suppose I might have marched out to the blare of a brass band and with a salvo of artillery, and still have been as a formless, soundless wraith to the Little Red Doctor who stood holding all heaven and earth in his arms.

Quarter of an hour afterward I sat on the front steps of the house of Dead-Men's-Shoes musing. The Little Red Doctor and the brown-and-gold fairy came out together. They were conversing in demure tones and with a commonplace air about the prospects of rain. So wholly at ease and natural did they seem that I began to have misgivings. It didn't seem in human nature that they should be calmly discussing the weather. Could I

have fallen asleep on my heap of mortuary clothing and dreamed all that happiness of theirs? I rose and intercepted them.

"How is the toothache?" I asked the Little Red Doctor.

The Little Red Doctor turned on me a face transfigured. "What toothache?" he said vaguely.

Then I knew that my dream was reality.

THE END

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