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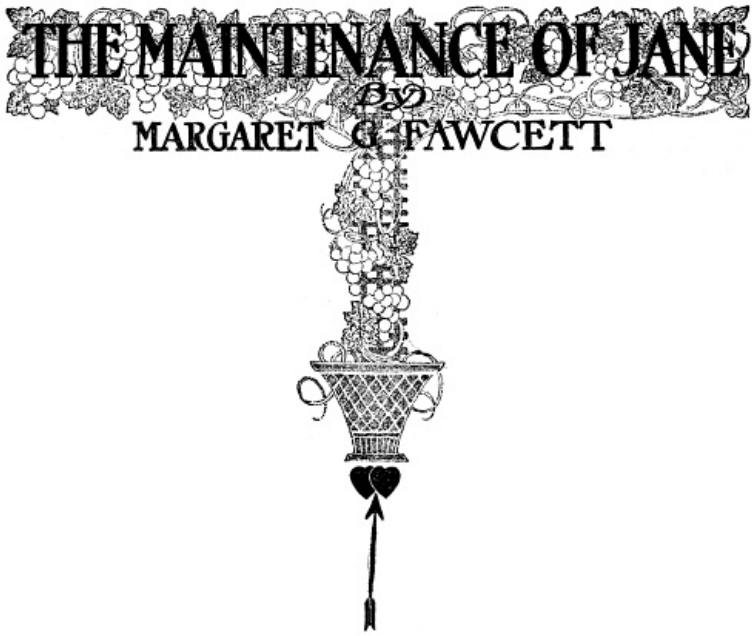
VOL. XVI. SEPTEMBER, 1905. No. 2.



CHAPTER I.

"THE total," began Jacob Willoughby, adjusting his *pince-nez* and regarding with near-sighted attention the scrap of paper he had selected from a little white heap on the table in front of him—"the total is just four thousand five hundred and seventy-six dollars and ninety-seven cents."

The figures froze the features of the Willoughby connection into immobility for a second, but only for a second.

"I agreed to buy her wraps," spoke up crisply Miss Willoughby, a maiden lady of vinegary aspect, who sat on the extreme edge of the horsehair and mahogany chair and glowered at the white heap on the table. "Read the bill, Jacob."

Obediently Jacob searched through the heap and extracted another scrap. "Total, one thousand five hundred and forty-three dollars and eighty-three cents," he announced, ponderously.

If she hadn't been a Willoughby, one would have said that the lady of vinegary aspect snorted. All the Willoughbys, however, prided themselves on never doing anything low. "*That* for wraps," muttered this one, acidulously. "And she wheedled a set of sables out of Jacob at Christmas time."

Mr. Willoughby coughed deprecatingly and avoided the eye of his wife, a woman with an appallingly firm chin who sat opposite him. She now spoke sharply. "It's Jacob's ridiculous lack of backbone that's to blame for all this foolish extravagance," she declared. "Why did he consent in the first place to Jane's furnishing that expensive flat? Why did he get us to agree to divide the expense of her clothes among us, and make us the victim of her spendthrift habits? For what she calls *lingerie*"—Mrs. Jacob Willoughby pronounced the French word with ineffable scorn, as though it suggested a multitude of moral lapses—"she has run up a bill of—— What's the amount, Jacob?"

Her husband, who was beginning to look crushed, searched with pathetic haste through the white drift of papers, selected another slip and readjusted his *pince-nez*. Suddenly a wave of red swept over his distressed features.

"Well?" queried his wife, sharply.

"She's—she's itemized it!" murmured the unresourceful Jacob, faintly.

Thomas Willoughby, bachelor, who was a trifle hard of hearing, but whose other faculties were very sharp, leaned forward and put his hand behind his ear. "What say?" he demanded, querulously. "Speak up louder, man, can't you?" Thomas, who was sixty, regretted his affliction chiefly because it so frequently prevented his hearing the recital of some fresh deviltry of Jane's.

Mrs. Jacob now interposed. "The total's on the other side," she said, eying her husband suspiciously, and, with a guilty air, he hastily reversed the paper. "The amount is eight hundred and seventeen dollars and sixteen cents," he informed his auditors, lifelessly.

"And just for one season," supplemented Mrs. Willoughby. "It's more than I spend—it's more, I'm sure, than

any of us spend”—she surveyed the Willoughby connection virtuously—“in five years.”

“Oh, well,” gurgled the youngest and most attractive of the Willoughbys that were present, a placid, fair-haired woman, to whom any account of Jane and her doings always read like a page out of a thrilling novel, “she’s only twenty-four, you know, and it costs more to live in New York than in the country.” The lady sighed. Her country home was luxurious, but in her soul she longed for the flesh pots represented by a New York season. Her husband, however, devoted to his Alderney cows, his Berkshire hogs and his fancy fowls, put his foot down firmly whenever the subject of a town house, or even a brief month at one of the quieter hotels, was mentioned.

“Of course it costs more to live in New York,” snapped Miss Willoughby, “and I’ve contended all along that Jane has no business keeping up that flat in town. In the first place, ’tisn’t proper. A young woman with her flighty ideas and without a chaperon or any female relation to give her countenance! Mark my words”—with acrid emphasis—“Jane will yet trail the Willoughby name in the dust.”

“Why doesn’t she marry again?” queried the Willoughby bachelor, impatiently. “Deuce take it, De Mille’s been dead a year and six months. Is the girl determined to wear widow’s weeds forever. Gad!” he chuckled, shrilly, “I’d marry her myself to-morrow if I wasn’t sixty and her uncle. Not,” he added, hastily, for he, like most of the Willoughbys, was notoriously close-fisted, “that I countenance her extravagance. But she needs a husband’s discipline.”

The depressed Jacob Willoughby here saw an opportunity to put in a word in vindication of himself.

“You all know perfectly well,” he began, with dignity, “that when De Mille up and died, just when his affairs were in the most critical condition, and when a little firmness on his part would have kept him alive long enough to save something out of the wreck for his widow, Jane declared that she wouldn’t be bored with another husband, and that if the connection couldn’t support her in the style to which she was accustomed, she would go on the stage. When I said she might spend her time with us, visiting each of us in turn, you know she flatly refused, and insisted upon an apartment. She said that, though He was a Willoughby Himself”—Jacob repeated this Janeism with peculiar relish—“God never intended relations to be lived with, that they were generally people you’d have nothing to do with if the accident of birth hadn’t made them cousins, uncles and aunts.” As a matter of fact, when Jane had uttered this impertinence, she had excepted Jacob, but the senior Willoughby was too wise to hint at the exception in the presence of his wife, who was also a Willoughby.

“You should have been firm,” she observed, witheringly. “That threat about her going on the stage was all nonsense.”

“It was not nonsense,” retorted her husband, with unexpected spirit, “and I had to think of the bishop.”

Jacob’s retort told as he meant that it should, and a painful pause ensued. It was the bachelor Willoughby who broke it. “Well,” he exclaimed, pettishly, drawing out his watch, “Jane will be here in five minutes, and dinner in half an hour. The question is, what are we going to do?”

“We are going to tell her,” snapped Miss Willoughby, “that the apartment must be given up, and that she must live with each of us in turn. Since she’s here—or will soon be here—she can remain a while with you, Susan, and then she can come to me. In the meantime, Jacob can see about subletting her apartment. Hark! There’s wheels! Now”—turning to her brother—“be firm, Jacob. Let us”—encouragingly, and glancing in turn at each of the Willoughbys, who, strange to relate, looked ill at ease, if not frightened—“let us all be firm.”

The door opened and everybody started. But it was only the butler.

“A telegram for you, sir,” he said to Mr. Jacob Willoughby, extending a yellow slip. The latter took it and hastily opened it. “It’s from Jane,” he announced, glancing up. Did the other Willoughbys imagine it or did his voice express relief?

“Read it,” commanded his wife, crisply.

> You dear, good people, I’m the biggest wretch on earth. Did so want to get to you before the house party broke up, but there’s the Reffolds’ dinner for to-night which I had entirely forgotten. Hope to get down for a week end later. Love to all.
>
> JANE.

For fully half a minute not a sound was heard in the stuffily furnished Willoughby library. Then Miss Willoughby, in a voice ominously calm, asked: “Will you kindly tell us the number of words in that telegram, Jacob?”

“Total, fifty,” murmured Jacob, reluctantly, dropping the yellow slip on the white heap and surveying it ruefully.

“Fifty!” echoed the Willoughby connection, feebly.

Susan Willoughby, Jacob’s wife, was the first to regain her mental equilibrium. “You will write this evening, Jacob?” she questioned, with stony composure.

“I will write this evening,” responded her husband, firmly.

The bachelor Willoughby suddenly chuckled. The outraged connection stared at him in astonishment. “I—I was just thinking,” he giggled, “that economy doesn’t seem to be Jane’s strong point.”

At its best, the Willoughby connection’s sense of humor was the reverse of keen, and the situation was not one, in their opinion, that invited levity. But whatever crushing blow threatened the frivolous member—and Mrs. Susan Willoughby and Miss Willoughby both looked primed—was happily averted by the opportune reappearance of the butler.

“Dinner is served,” he announced, solemnly, and Jacob Willoughby sprang with alacrity to offer his arm to

the most attractive of the female Willoughbys.

"I will summon the bishop to wrestle with Jane," announced Susan, magisterially, as she led the way to the dining room. And the connection realized that Jane had, indeed, become a problem.

CHAPTER II.

Jane balanced her spoon on the brim of the shell-like cup and smiled at Mr. Scott.

"Yesterday, Billie, I received another of those Willoughby epistles—about my extravagance, you know."

"The idea of anybody thinking you extravagant," murmured Mr. Scott, with an adoring glance.

"Oh, as to that," observed Jane, airily, "I admit I'm extravagant, but I'm purposely so. Listen, my child, and I'll tell you the story of my life. But first let me put a drop more rum in your tea." Mr. Scott held out his cup.

"It does taste of tea," he admitted. "And you know I've always cracked up the flavor of your—er—tea, Jane." She dropped the rum out of a silver filigree bottle with an amethyst in the stopper.

"You see," she continued, thoughtfully, "before my eyes were opened or my teeth cut, those Willoughby relations of mine married me to De Mille because he had money. He was—oh, well, Billie, he was the biggest bore I ever met. However, I saw as little of him as possible, but you can imagine that I did my best to make life miserable for those Willoughbys who blighted my youth. What *are* you laughing at, Billie? Well, De Mille got into financial difficulties, and selfishly took to his bed. I got the best nurse in town, and went to see him every day. Yes, I did. It was good for me, of course!"—Jane's conversation usually took the form of a monologue. "Finally, he had the good taste to die. When one of the Willoughbys, who came up to town to help me bear my grief, came in and told me that he had passed to a better land, I said: 'Well, God knows best.'" Mr. Scott tittered. "Aunt Susan—that was the Willoughby—assured the family that I was showing a beautiful spirit. As a matter of fact, I really could have danced up and down, I was so relieved. You see, Billie, if the man had ever pretended to love me, I should not have been such a wretch. But he just wanted a good-looking woman to preside over his house, and he wanted to marry into the Willoughby family, and the Willoughby family wanted to get me married to money and off their hands, so it was just a disgraceful bargain, about which your humble servant had no more to say than the dress goods on a bargain counter. When it was discovered that De Mille had left me nothing but debts, I refused to worry, and informed my beloved relations that my support was their business. Otherwise, the stage for Jane, and the Willoughbys' view of the stage is very similar to the devil's view of holy water." 4

"Well, they've got plenty of this world's goods," commented Mr. Scott, who was quite content to have Jane do most of the talking, an arrangement that suited her to perfection.

"They're rolling in wealth!" she exclaimed, filling her own cup. "But they're as close as bark on a tree, and how to bring them to time after De Mille's death kept me awake nights. I made up my mind to get even with them for marrying me off like a slave, and the first thing I did was to order the most expensive mourning New York affords. I still cling to it, for black is *so* becoming to me."

"I should think it was," said Mr. Scott, fervently. "You are simply ravishing in that cap."

"The cap was my own idea," observed Jane, sweetly. "The real lace ones are so stunning and so—er—expensive. But where was I? Oh, yes. The Willoughbys held a mass meeting, or convocation, or something, to talk me over. Finally it was decided that they would pay my bills among them—if I was not too extravagant—and that I should spend my time with each of them in turn, handed around from house to house like a poor relation. But it was at that point in their proceedings that Jane rose and gave them an ultimatum."

"I put my money on Jane," spoke up Mr. Scott, promptly.

"You won't lose," answered that young woman. "I rose, wiped my eyes with a handkerchief—black border, two inches; price, three dollars—and spoke my mind. I said that I had married to suit them, and that henceforth I would live to suit myself; that I was perfectly willing they should pay my bills, but that I intended to take an apartment in town and go on living as before. I said it was not my fault that my poor, dear husband—I shed a tear or two—had met with financial reverses and was not able to leave me anything. I said, further, that I would not be dictated to about the size of my bills, that everyone knew I was not extravagant—yes, Billie, I said that with a straight face—and that I was in deep grief, and could not bear any more discussion of my affairs, and so I would just take my leave and send in the bills."

"Bet they were paralyzed," observed Billie.

"That's not the word for it. I left them gasping for breath. But they hate gossip, and that's where I had them. They hate to be called mean, though being mean doesn't worry them. That's the way with some people, you know. So I rented this apartment, moved my things in, drew a few checks on uncle Jacob—the best of the lot, by the way—and here I have lived in my deep grief."

Jane smiled at Mr. Scott and leaned back in her chair. 5

"That's the first chapter," he said.

"Yes," she answered, "and yesterday's letter, which I'm coming to, is the beginning of the second. This letter informed me that my bills were becoming outrageously large, that I needed a chaperon—fancy a widow in her first grief needing a chaperon, Billie—and the long and short of it is that I must give up this apartment and go and live among them as originally proposed.

"Well?" queried Mr. Scott.

"Well, what?" demanded Jane. "You certainly didn't for a moment think I would do it?"

“No,” he responded. “There’s a very simple way out, you know. Marry me and let the Willoughbys go to——”

“Thunder,” finished Jane. “Oh, Billie, I do appreciate the fact that you love me and want me. And if I loved you, I’d live in a cottage with you—though I hate cottages—and work like a slave. But the awful fact must be faced that I do not love you. I am horribly fond of you, though, Billie, and I wish I could marry you, but I never could make you understand how I hate being married. I was knocked down to the highest bidder, and the experience was too disagreeable to permit me to marry again or to fall in love with anyone.”

“But you’re flirting awfully with Kingston and Maitland—and there’s Dick Thomas—oh, Jane, it’s pretty tough on me!” The boy—for Mr. Scott wasn’t much more—looked as though he were going to cry.

“Fiddlesticks!” exclaimed Jane, contemptuously. “Nothing in the world would induce me to marry one of those men—or any other. Freedom is the breath of life to me, Billie, but I must have my little recreations. You can’t understand—no man can—how flirting to a woman is a justifiable evening up of the sufferings that some women have to endure. Why, I’m leading Jack Maitland an awful existence because he flirted desperately with Betty Lockwood, who loves him to distraction. I’m doing it for Betty’s sake, and it’s good for him. Betty married Maurice just out of pique.” Jane put down her cup. “I’m really trying to do good, in my own way, Billie.”

“You should join the Humane Society,” observed Mr. Scott, sarcastically.

“The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children will rescue you from my clutches if you persist in coming here all the time,” she retorted, severely. “I’ll tell you what I am going to do”—changing the subject, swiftly. “I’ll answer the Willoughby epistle in person. I’ll go down to Rosemount to-morrow and tell them things that I hope will do them good. I do not intend to reduce my bills, or live with them. Whenever I get a letter from them like this last one, I go out and buy something.”

“What did you buy yesterday?” queried Mr. Scott, with lively interest.

“A pair of high-boys—genuine colonials! I’ve no place for them here, of course, but the Willoughbys needed them for a lesson.”

“Let me drive you down to Rosemount in my car,” said Mr. Scott, with sudden inspiration.

“Um—I’d like the car and the chauffeur, but you, Billie, cannot come. It might cause gossip.”

“Let ’em talk, who cares?” exclaimed Mr. Scott, defiantly.

“I do,” said Jane, decidedly. “No, you can’t come, Billie, but if you’ll have the car here to-morrow, at ten, I’ll drive down in it, stay all night, and come back the next day.”

“I’m afraid they’ll persuade you to live with them,” murmured Mr. Scott, miserably.

“To think that you would say that to me,” said Jane, reproachfully. “I intend to live alone from this time on. I hate living with anybody.”

“Wait until you’re in love!” warned Billie.

“Yes, I’ll wait,” responded his hostess, briskly. “A woman who has had my luck would be an ungrateful wretch if she permitted herself to become entangled again. Why, it isn’t one woman in ten who marries for money whose husband dies in two years. No wonder I’ve clung to deep mourning. It’s an expression of thankfulness—of the warmest gratitude on my part. No one can say of me, Billie, that I do not realize my blessings!”

Mr. Scott rose and tried to kiss Jane’s hand, but she put it determinedly behind her.

“Respect my mourning, my child,” she said, rebukingly.

After Mr. Scott had taken his departure, she ordered two suit cases packed, gave orders to her two servants about the care of the apartment during her absence, and telegraphed a lengthy message to the Willoughbys.

CHAPTER III.

It was a glorious May day. Jane, whose sound digestion and general superlatively good health enabled her always to front life genially, even when she was most convinced that it was nothing but a heartless farce, was in rollicking spirits. She let Johnson, Billie’s chauffeur, take full charge of the car, while she lay back luxuriously, humming snatches of gay song or planning fresh audacities that would humble the proud spirit of the Willoughbys. But silence for any length of time when there was somebody to talk to was always irksome to Jane.

“You have heard of Elijah, of course?” she observed, presently, to the smug-faced driver.

“Mrs. Carruth’s man, mum?” he asked, stolidly.

“Goodness, no, Johnson!” exclaimed Jane, in a horrified voice. “Though, really”—judiciously—“if Polly insists on his keeping up that awful pace with her car, I think he, too, will go to heaven in a chariot of fire. But”—this to the chauffeur—“I was not referring to Mrs. Carruth’s man, Elihu, but to Elijah, a Bible character. Don’t you”—severely—“read your Bible, Johnson?”

“Well, mum,” began Johnson, cautiously, “seeing as how I didn’t take much to books when I was a kid, and seeing as how big words always kind of floor me now, I don’t go in much for readin’, ’cept about the sports in the papers.”

“They should publish the Bible in words of one syllable,” reflected Jane. “I must speak to the bishop about it. Elijah, Johnson, was a prophet who went to heaven in a chariot of fire. I’ve always liked to think that it was a kind of superior motor car, and that it took Elijah several days to reach his destination, and that he had a perfectly delicious time whizzing up through the air, past the stars and the moon, and I wouldn’t be a bit surprised, Johnson, if he leaned out and jabbed at the moon as he passed, just to see what it was really made of.

Personally, I take no stock in what the scientists tell us, and I've often thought that if Elijah had come back and told about his ride, they wouldn't have a leg to stand on. Now, it's my private opinion, Johnson, that the world is flat, as flat as a—goodness gracious, what's that!"

"It's somethin' gone wrong, mum," said Johnson, resignedly. "There was a bolt I was suspectin' of this morning, but Mr. Scott said that on no account was you to be kept waitin', and that, bolt or no bolt, I was to be at your door at ten sharp. An' you'll remember, mum"—reproachfully—"that I waited in front of those steps one hour by th' watch Mr. Scott gave me Christmas, and if it wasn't for the fact that every minute I was expectin' to see you come runnin' down them, I could have put in a new bolt——"

"Of course it's all my fault, Johnson," interrupted Jane, "but I never was on time in my life, and I'm too old to begin now. Here's a nice secluded bit of road where you can overhaul the car, and I'll just walk about a bit for exercise. But don't let it take long, Johnson, for I'm simply famished, and we have to go ten miles yet before we get any luncheon."

By this time the driver was under the car, and only a pair of tremendous boots was visible. After giving them an amused look, Jane divested herself of her motor rig, shook out her skirts, and, with a parting warning to Johnson to blow the horn when he was ready, sauntered slowly down the country road, which reminded her of one of the picturesque lanes in English Surrey. 7

"It's a queer thing," she communed with herself, as she walked along, "that the first day I'm in the country I adore it, and resolve firmly never, never to leave it again; and the second day I begin to pick flaws in it, and take notice of all the hideous little creeping things, and the third I loathe it, and feel that I will die instantly if I can't get back to where there are lots of people and a great deal of noise and plenty of dirt. I suppose I——"

Jane's saunter and reflections both came to an abrupt end, for a turn in the lane had disclosed to her a man sitting on a log by the roadside, munching hungrily at an appetizing-looking sandwich, the most appetizing one, the hungry Mrs. De Mille instantly decided, that she had ever seen. Beside the man was a small hamper of straw, and leaning against the log was a bottle. He was reading out of a small book, and utterly oblivious, apparently, to his surroundings. He finished in a few bites the sandwich, and, without lifting his eyes, thrust his hand in the hamper, drew forth another, and proceeded deliberately to devour that, too. More and more envious grew Jane's eyes as she watched the rapid shrinking of the thing she most coveted just then. The second sandwich disappeared like its predecessor, and once more the long, brown hand sought the hamper. Another sandwich was drawn forth, it was raised to the man's mouth, but before he had a chance to take a bite Jane cried out, impulsively: "Oh, please don't eat them *all*!"

The man looked up, bewildered, and then, catching sight of Jane, sprang to his feet and pulled off his cap. "I—beg your pardon," he began, uncertainly; "did you speak?"

"Yes," calmly answered Mrs. De Mille, who was always prepared to back her own imprudent impulses. "I asked you to please not eat that other sandwich. I'm terribly hungry!"

A smile lighted up the man's serious face. "Oh, there are more in the hamper," he answered. "My appetite is big enough, but it is not as big as Mrs. Moore thinks it is. Please help yourself." He held out the hamper.

"Thanks," said Jane, taking a sandwich and beginning to devour it hungrily. "If Mrs. Moore made these," she observed, presently, "I think she has very good taste—in sandwiches."

"It's her specialty," he responded. "Everybody, you know, has a specialty. But won't you be seated?" With a gesture he indicated the log, and Jane, frankly delighted with her adventure, seated herself.

"Have they?" she queried, helping herself to another sandwich. "Now, I wonder what mine is?"

The man regarded her with interest. "If you have just fallen from the sky——" he began.

"No, it was a motor car," interrupted Jane. "That is, I didn't fall from it, but something happened to a bolt. The chauffeur is working at it down the road a bit. I didn't stay to examine it, for I always get a smudge on my nose when I look at the works of a motor car. Perhaps that's my specialty—getting smudges on my nose." She looked at the man and smiled. "It isn't a very useful one, is it?"

"There are practical specialties and ornamental specialties," he observed, "and it's——"

"Oh, well, you know getting a smudge on one's nose is neither ornamental nor practical," broke in Jane, with a laugh. Then, changing the subject quickly: "It's awfully good of you to feed the hungry."

"Pray let me give drink to the thirsty, too," he said. Picking up a small silver cup, he walked over to a brook that purled behind them, rinsed it out and, coming back, filled it from the bottle of wine that rested against the log.

Jane drank it gratefully. "I never in my life had a more delicious meal," she said, quite truthfully. Then she looked at him inquisitively. "Do you live some place around here, or did your car break down, too?" she asked.

"I'm not so lucky as to own a car. I'm stopping for a time at Rosemount—the village, you know." 8

"Oh, then, perhaps you know the Willoughbys," said Jane. "The Willoughbys, of Willoughby Hall."

"Do they live in an ugly mass of architecture on a hill, and does the lady look like a grenadier and the man like a drummer boy in his first engagement?"

Jane threw back her head and laughed. "That's Aunt Susan and Uncle Jacob to a T," she exclaimed. The man flushed with embarrassment.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Of course I had no idea they were relatives of yours."

"You haven't offended me," Jane hastened to assure him. "I know they're impossible, though Uncle Jacob really means well. I'm on my way down there now."

"For a visit?" queried the man, who was staring at her in an impersonal sort of way that rather piqued her.

“Not if I know myself, and I flatter myself I do,” she responded, decidedly. “No, I’m going down to give them —Aunt Susan particularly—a piece of my mind.”

“Lucky Aunt Susan!” commented the man, still regarding her with that air of detached interest.

“You say that because you’ve never had a piece of my mind,” observed Jane, darkly. “Because I’m desperately poor——”

“Poor!” exclaimed the man, disbelievingly, as his eye took in the details of her exceedingly smart get-up.

“As poor as a church mouse,” said Jane, impressively. “I’m supported by contributions made by the Willoughby connection, and because my bills for the past season have been a—a trifle large, they wrote me an abusive letter. Fancy!”

“Fancy!” echoed the man, absent-mindedly. “Why don’t you——”

But an explosive blast on a horn interrupted him. Jane rose hastily. “That’s Johnson,” she said. “I must go. But how are you going to get back to Rosemount?” she demanded.

“Oh, I’ll pick up one of the market gardeners along the road,” he answered, indifferently. “Besides, I came out on a quest, and I can’t return until it is successfully consummated.”

“A quest!” echoed Jane, and promptly sat down again. “It sounds interesting,” she said; “tell me about it.”

“I’m looking for a heroine,” he explained.

“A heroine!” repeated Mrs. De Mille, blankly, wondering for the first time if he was as sane as he looked.

“Yes, for a book, you know,” he said, in a matter-of-fact way. “I scribble for a living, and lately my publishers have complained that I never draw a real flesh-and-blood woman. I’ve determined to put one in the new book I’m writing.”

“So you’re strolling around the country in search of one,” mused Jane. “I should think you’d stand a better chance of finding one in town.” There was another blast on the horn, short and angry this time, but Mrs. De Mille waved it airily aside.

“I can’t work in town,” he answered. “I’ve just come back from Alaska, and it seems so shut-in there.” He nodded in the direction of the skyscrapers of New York.

“What would a heroine have to do?” queried Jane. “I mean a model heroine?”

“Oh, just give me a chance to study her, and let me pay her for it,” he answered, coolly. “I work in a small bungalow, and if she’d give me some sittings——” But once more the voice of the horn broke in—a long, reproachful, plaintive note this time. Mrs. De Mille rose, reluctantly. “I really must go, or Johnson will ruin his voice,” she said. Then she had a sudden inspiration. “You’re going to Rosemount,” she said to the man. “Why can’t we take you there? I’d like to do something to pay for that delicious meal.”

“You’ve paid me a thousandfold by accepting it,” he answered, quickly. “I couldn’t think of putting you to any trouble.”

“It isn’t any trouble,” she answered, positively. “There’s plenty of room in the car.” The man’s face showed signs of yielding.

“Come,” she commanded, imperiously; and he stooped and gathered up the hamper and his book and followed her down the road.

“Johnson,” Mrs. De Mille called to the chauffeur, who was sitting in the car like patience on a monument, but without the smile, “this gentleman has saved me from starvation, and he’s now going to save you; for in this hamper, Johnson, are three of the most delicious sandwiches you ever ate. Hustle them down as quickly as you can, and then we’ll repay his generosity by giving him a lift to Rosemount.”

When the car was well under way, Jane turned impressively to her new acquaintance. “And now I want to ask you,” she said, “if you think I’d do for the heroine?”

“It’s been my wish ever since I first set eyes on you,” he answered, calmly. “I’m in great luck.”

“And the Willoughbys,” said Jane, cheerfully, “will be in a rage, so it’s a delightful arrangement all around.”

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Willoughby and Miss Willoughby—the latter had driven over from her country home to discuss Jane—sat in the library listening to the shrieks of laughter that floated across the hall from the music room, laughter interspersed with the sharp yelping of a dog and bars of music.

“They’ve kept that up,” said Mrs. Willoughby, crisply, “since luncheon.”

“What did you say his name was?” asked Miss Willoughby, whose patent disgust made her look more vinegary than ever.

“She calls him Dick,” said aunt Susan, disdainfully. “His last name is Thomas. A flighty idiot, who talks with a lisp.”

“Where’s the bishop?” demanded the guest, suddenly.

“He’s packing,” answered her sister-in-law, with an air of repressed anger. “Jane took him out in a motor car, some man’s motor car that she came down in, and he came back looking much upset, and said he had to pack and return to town immediately. And he had promised to stay two days!”

“Must have been her doings,” commented Miss Willoughby.

“I don’t know,” said Aunt Susan, drearily. “He did say something about fleeing temptation.”

“The hussy!” Miss Willoughby’s voice expressed virtuous scorn. “Wait until she comes to me.” She closed her lips, grimly.

“I was going to tell you about that,” said her hostess. “Jane has what she calls *a job*.”

“A—a job!” echoed Miss Willoughby, faintly.

Susan Willoughby nodded her head, vigorously. “That’s what she calls it,” she said, indignation revealed in every monosyllable. “She’s hired out as a model!”

Miss Willoughby shrieked and fumbled feebly for her smelling salts.

“Oh, I don’t mean the—er—*Trilby* kind, you know,” said Mrs. Willoughby, hastily. “Some wretched creature whom she picked up with on her way down here is writing a book, and he’s offered to pay her if she’ll let him study her in order to get material for his heroine.”

“I never heard of such a thing!” gasped Miss Willoughby. “It isn’t respectable, and you don’t need to try to convince me that it is. What does Jacob say?”

“Jacob!” There was indescribable contempt expressed in Mrs. Willoughby’s voice as she uttered the name. “Jane simply twists him around her little finger.”

Miss Willoughby rose suddenly, with the air of one having made up her mind to perform an unpleasant task.

“Where are you going?” demanded her hostess.

“To tell Jane what I think of her conduct and to warn——”

But before the spinster had a chance to finish her sentence, the door across the hall was flung open suddenly, and Jane, laughter in her eyes and on her lips, her hair disheveled, emerged. Under her arm was 10
tucked a yelping skye terrier, and close behind her followed an immaculately attired and rather good-looking young man, who appeared to be thoroughly enjoying himself. As usual, Jane was talking.

“You’re not musical, Bijou, and it’s a waste of time trying to make you musical! Here Mr. Thomas and I have spent the greater part of an hour trying to impress upon you the difference between Wagner and ragtime, but it’s been a miserable failure. I want to think you have a soul, Bijou, though the bishop doesn’t believe you have, but after the painful lack of discrimination you have just shown—Aunt Mary! When in the world did you come, and *what* a delightful surprise!”

Jane, who had suddenly espied her two aunts, unceremoniously dropped the skye terrier and darted into the library, leaving the young man hovering uncertainly in the doorway. She seized the spinster’s two mitt-clad hands and kissed her heartily on each withered cheek. Then she stood back a pace or two and surveyed her with rapt admiration.

“I’m terribly jealous of you, Aunt Mary,” she exclaimed. “Look at your complexion! Peaches and cream!”—as a matter of fact, it more closely resembled sole leather, but Miss Willoughby brightened up, nevertheless. “And your figure! What in the world have you been doing to your figure? Such curves!”

The spinster, conscious of the strange young man in the doorway, blushed painfully.

“My dear——” she began, in a stage whisper, motioning stealthily in the direction of Mr. Thomas.

“Oh, pardon me,” said Jane, willfully misunderstanding her aunt’s meaning. “Aunt Mary, this is Mr. Thomas. I shall have to ask you to entertain him for a while, for I have a business engagement.” She pulled out a tiny, jeweled watch and gave an exclamation. “Half an hour late! Dick, what is it they do to working people when they are half an hour late? Though why, indeed, I should ask you I don’t know, for I’m sure you never did half an hour’s real work in your life! Oh, yes, dock them—that’s it, isn’t it? I thought of yacht, for I knew the term was nautical, and then I instantly thought of ‘docked’”—triumphantly; Jane was always intensely interested in her mental processes. “Did you know I had become a working person, Aunt Mary? Earning my living by the sweat of my brow, and that sort of thing?” Miss Willoughby smiled, weakly. “Well, ta, ta,” continued Jane. “Remember”—shaking a warning finger at the spinster—“Mr. Thomas is young and unsophisticated, and I’ll not have his young affections trifled with.”

“Oh, I thay——” began Mr. Thomas, protestingly, and making a motion as though he were bent on accompanying Mrs. De Mille.

“No, Dickie,” she said, firmly, “bosses don’t like to have young men a-followin’ of their gells.” This was said with an inimitable cockney accent that caused Mr. Thomas to grin appreciatively. Jane made a wicked *moue* at him, nodded to her aunts and hurried away, leaving the two ladies speechless, and the guest she had thrust upon them looking decidedly uncomfortable.

As she sauntered down the road that led past the bungalow which had been erected in the rear of the Moore cottage, and which her new acquaintance had pointed out as his workshop, Jane looked as though she hadn’t a care in the world. As a matter of fact, however, she was not without her misgivings in regard to the outcome of the engagement she had entered into. She had done it chiefly to torment the Willoughbys, but she was honest enough to admit to herself, as she walked leisurely on, that the man himself had aroused her curiosity, and that this had something to do with her obeying that reckless impulse to offer herself as a model.

“He’s doubtless a counterfeiter or a gentleman burglar who’s planning to steal the Willoughby spoons,” she communed with herself, cheerfully, “and it’s very likely that he’ll insist on my becoming his accomplice, and 11
then Aunt Mary will have a chance to say: ‘Didn’t I tell you Jane would come to a bad end.’ I really believe they’d——”

But the quaint-looking bungalow had suddenly loomed up in Mrs. De Mille’s path, and put an end to her reflections. Half hesitatingly she knocked on the door, and it was instantly thrown open by the man whom she chose to call her employer.

“Please don’t tell me I’m late,” she said, as she gave him her hand and stepped across the threshold. “Being late, you know, is a weakness one is born with, I think, like not being able to spell, or having a thirst for strong drink. In town they call me ‘the late Mrs. De Mille.’ The only occasion I was ever known to be on time was at poor De Mille’s funeral. Billie Scott said—— But how delightfully cozy it is here!”

Jane paused and surveyed the room with interest. It was simply furnished with some good rugs, several well-filled bookcases, two or three comfortable-looking chairs, and a long table that apparently served for a desk, for it was covered with papers; but there was a cheerful fire in the great fireplace—a comfort that Mrs. De Mille appreciated, for the day, though bright, was chilly—and in front of this was a tea table, on which a copper kettle was singing merrily over a blue, alcohol flame.

“I’m glad you like it,” said the man, gravely. “Can I take your hat and jacket?”

“Oh, I’ll just toss them over this chair,” said Jane, carelessly, suiting the action to her words. “I hope you’re not one of those people who must have everything just so. De Mille was like that. He found me a terrible trial. His idea of a well-ordered existence was a place for everything and everything in its place. I don’t mind having a place for everything, you know, but I think having everything in its place robs life of a great deal of uncertainty, and it’s the uncertainty that makes it fascinating, don’t you think?”

“When I was a little chap,” said the man, pulling forward a chair for Jane and taking one himself near the table, “I had to look out not only for myself, but also for my mother, who sewed when she could, to support herself and me, but who was crippled with rheumatism most of the time. Our next meal was always a matter of uncertainty. My idea of heaven then was a place where the future was absolutely certain. No”—reflectively, as he leaned over to poke the fire—“I don’t believe I want any more uncertainties in mine.”

Mrs. De Mille stared at him with lively curiosity in her eyes, and noted approvingly the strong, clean contour of his jaw, and his long, lean, brown hands. “He may have been born poor, but he was also born a gentleman,” she reflected, shrewdly. Aloud she said:

“Do you know that I haven’t the remotest idea what your name is?”

“How very remiss of me!” he exclaimed, looking up from the fire. “It’s John Ormsby.”

“Oh,” said Jane, “you’re the man who writes men’s books. Why,” she continued, severely, “have you ignored my sex?”

He smiled. “I have already told you,” he said, “that I don’t know enough about you to put you in a book.”

“You’ve chosen a bad specimen to study,” she retorted. “I give you fair warning.”

“As to that,” he answered, with an indifference that nettled Jane, “I’m not at all particular about the type. My publishers demand a real flesh-and-blood creation, but they didn’t specify the type.”

“He’s downright brutal,” said Jane, to herself, but rather enjoying the novelty of seeing an opportunity for a pretty speech to her ignored. “You’ll have to instruct me in my duties,” she said, smilingly. “Now, if there was only such a thing as a Handy Manual for authors’ models that I could get and read up in, my course would be plain sailing. As it is, I’m all at sea.”

“Oh, all you have to do is to talk,” said the man, encouragingly. “I’m going to make you a cup of tea.” He began to handle the tea things deftly.

“Talk and tea,” commented Jane, thoughtfully. “It sounds easy. I believe I’ve got what Billie Scott would call a ‘snap.’” 12

CHAPTER V.

My dear Deneen: The Labrador trip sounds good to me, and as soon as the book is off my hands, which will be about the time you fellows are ready to start, I reckon I’ll be wid ye. The old spring fever has again seized hold of me, and I’m fairly sweating for a whiff of the open. I wrote you a squib shortly after I arrived, and the ragged kid to whom I gave it to post swears by all that’s unholy—he knows nothing holy—that he posted it, but I suppose it represented too promising spitball material to be wasted on a village post office. This is the worst place to get anything done. Every villager regards himself as an American from “wayback,” and scorns to turn an honest penny by running or walking an errand. But it’s a jolly place to write in. I’m boarding with a queer old couple by the name of Moore, who take summer boarders during July and August, and who, for the convenience of the town folk, have built a bungalow a short distance from the house. It’s quite decently furnished with books and rugs and a fireplace, and my credentials were so good that the Moores have turned it over to me for a workroom. The book I’m at work on is a deliberate attempt to pander to the depraved taste of *hoi polloi*. Yet, I confess it without shame, I’m tremendously interested in it. I find myself reading over and over again parts I’ve written—not with a view to improving them, but because I think they’re so good. Sounds maudlin, doesn’t it? But it’s the gospel truth. And the book is all about a woman! Smoke that in your pipe, old man! I, who have heretofore scorned all feminine frumperies, find myself dissecting frills and analyzing chiffons. Whence cometh this superior knowledge? do I hear you ask with a suspicious leer? Whisper! I have a model, and I’m learning about women from her. Kipling’s idea, you see, but put into respectable and strictly business-like practice. For an hour or so every afternoon she gives me “sittings” in the bungalow. She’s no ordinary paid hireling, mind you, but a fine New York lady, who seems to have accepted the job partly because she desired a new experience, and partly to displease some rich but close-fisted relatives upon whom she’s dependent, but whom she appears to be leading a life. I was tramping about the country one day shortly after I came down here, and while I was having a bite by the roadside, a tailor-made vision with hungry eyes and a wistful air suddenly appeared out of the nowhere and demanded a sandwich. She accepted my invitation to sit down and share what I had, and then she insisted on giving me a lift, and on the way to Rosemount artlessly discussed her deceased husband and her relatives—in short, told me several chapters out of the story of her life. I suppose she’s about

the most frivolous specimen of the frivolous sex. Her male admirers are numerous, and some of them trail down from town every day. The morning after she arrived—she came down in a motor car, and it is to a lost bolt that I owe my introduction—I met her out in the car gazing soulfully into the eyes of an elderly party with a clerical collar and an Episcopal air. She told me afterward it was Bishop ——, and informed me quite calmly that he had fled to town to save his immortal soul, his wife being in Europe. Said her relatives were scandalized, a fact that seemed to please her very much. Last night I walked down to the village to get some medicine for my landlord, who had eaten something that disagreed with him and was in a rather bad way. It was as dark as pitch, and I had a lantern. I flashed it as I came around a turn in the road, and found myself face to face with my model and two young men. Each had hold of one of her hands, and each looked idiotically blissful. She seemed the least confused of the bunch, and said "good-evening" quite calmly. I don't suppose there's another bundle of such 13
contradictions in the universe. She has all the aplomb of a woman of the world, and all of the *naïveté* of an unspoiled child. No sort of companion for a man, you understand, but vastly amusing. She speaks of her deceased husband with the most brutal frankness, and makes no pretense of regarding his passing as anything but a happy release for her. For all her apparent spontaneity, I've an idea that at heart this model of mine is as hard as rocks. But as I've already told you, she's teaching me a lot, and the book is progressing, and if it's a success, half the royalties go to her. That is only fair.

Keep me posted about arrangements for your trip. I'm writing now at white heat, and should have the book ready for my publishers within a fortnight. And then, old pal, for Labrador and the open and real, real life.

Yours,
JOHN ORMSBY.

CHAPTER VI.

DEAR BETTY: I'm inclosing that cold-cream recipe you asked for. It's warranted to give you a perfect complexion, keep your hair in curls, your hat on straight and your temper amiable. I'm glad to hear that you and Maurice have had an understanding, and that everything is all serene. If you have to be in love with somebody, I honestly think it's much better to be in love with your husband. De Mille, of course, was out of the question, but fortunately I've never felt the necessity of being in love with anyone, and, now that I've reached the age of twenty-four, it's not probable that I ever will. Confidentially, Betty, I never could see what you saw in Maitland. His eyes are good, I grant you, but he's so terribly sentimental. I've flirted with him, so I know him. Next to living with a man, there's nothing like a good flirtation to put you on to all his good and bad qualities. Your husband is worth a hundred of him. I *know*.

My dear, I'm earning my own living, and, according to the Willoughbys, it's the most extravagant thing I've done in the whole course of my extravagant career. You see, every time I remember I'm a working woman, I feel independent, and order a lot of new things, and the bills have been rather stiff, I'll admit. But you know how miserly the Willoughbys are! Aunt Susan suggested that I figure up how much I'm going to get and try to live on it, but I declined most emphatically. I never was good at doing sums, and I don't propose to begin to subtract and add at this late day. Besides, I haven't the remotest idea how much I'm going to receive, for I refuse to let Mr. Ormsby mention the matter. Money matters are *so tiresome*. But I'm forgetting that you know nothing about my *job*. I'm a model—a literary man's model. You're in with that literary set, so I suppose you've read his books. I read one—Billie Scott raved so about it that I simply had to—but there wasn't a woman in it, just a lot of horrid men, that smoked and swore when they weren't fighting, and that fought when they weren't swearing and smoking. It seems that Mr. Ormsby's publishers have insisted upon his turning over a new leaf and writing something about women, and, knowing nothing about our sex, Betty, he conceived the strictly original idea of employing a model. I came down to Rosemount in Billie's motor car, and picked him—Mr. Ormsby—up and took him along with me. We had quite a romantic meeting. I found him eating his luncheon by the roadside, and insisted on his sharing it with me. I give him "sittings" every afternoon in an adorable bungalow that he's fitted up as a workshop. He explained to me, in the beginning, that he might have picked out some woman of his acquaintance and studied her, but that he considered it wouldn't be honorable—that with a hired model he felt absolutely independent. I really can't endure him, but I've resolved to stick this out to the bitter end. I feel like a little wiggly bug pinned to a piece of cardboard, with a pair of sharp, cold, gray eyes analyzing every wiggle. 14
This Ormsby is shockingly lacking in *savoir faire*, and so far as flirting is concerned, he doesn't know the a, b, c's of the game.

I began this letter yesterday afternoon, before dinner, with the hope of getting it out in the evening mail, but Billie and Ernie Francis came down from town and stopped to dinner. I'm sure the Willoughbys have never been so gay in their lives—we've had company every day since I've been down here—but I can't see that it has improved Aunt Susan's disposition much. Something occurred last night that I suppose has shoved me a peg further down in Mr. Ormsby's estimation. Not that I care! After dinner, Billie and Ernie and I went for a walk down to the village. It was very dark coming back, and, walking between them, naturally I didn't resent it when each took one of my hands. There's something so *comforting* about the grasp of a strong man's hand. Haven't you often thought so, Betty? If I ever marry again, I intend to pick out a man who will be able to hold my hand in a nice way when I'm dying.

Unfortunately, as we came around a bend in the road, a lantern was flashed at us. It was Ormsby, and you can't imagine the look of disgust on his face when he took in the situation. As though it were any business of his! I had a wretched evening, for Billie and Ernie were furious because I permitted each to hold my hand. They have *such queer ideas* of propriety! How little real pleasure one gets out of life, Betty! Louise has sent me down one of those *bébé* hats—a perfect dream. I intend to wear it to church to-morrow morning and give the villagers a treat.

By the way, dear, if you've any old clothes to dispose of, send them down here. I've discovered a poor family —father out of work, mother sick, baby three days old. They are absolutely destitute. I've ordered a beautiful

christening robe for the baby, and have had the bill sent to Uncle Jacob. I intend to be its godmother. But why will those people insist on having so many children, Betty? Six in this family! *Fancy!* I've a good mind to write to the President, and insist on his providing for them. This man, even when he works, doesn't make enough to support two—to say nothing of six. The baby is quite pretty, except that its nose is inclined to spread. I've explained to the mother how, by pinching it every day, she can get it into quite a respectable shape. You see, the baby's a girl, and much will depend upon its nose. If mine were Roman instead of *retroussé*, I would probably have been a bluestocking and respected by Mr. Ormsby. Not that I care, though!

Lovingly,
JANE.

P. S.—I wish you'd leave an order at a bookstand to have all his books sent down. Have them sent c. o. d. to Uncle Jacob.

CHAPTER VII.

There were three things in the culinary line that the sum of Jane's accomplishments included—nut salad, rarebit and tea. After her first visit to the bungalow she had taken upon herself the task of brewing the cup that cheers, an arrangement that suited Ormsby perfectly, for she looked very pretty fussing with the tea things, and he was not above taking what he called an "academic interest" in her attractiveness.

"If one can only do a few things, naturally, all one's vanity is centered in them," she was observing to him now, by way of explaining her fondness for tea making. "I fancy I regard my talent as a mother regards her only child. If she has a number of children, she's uncertain, of course, whether Ann's blue eyes are the most beautiful in the world or Jimmie's brown ones, and she can't decide whether to thrust Susie upon the attention of visitors, that they may admire her golden curls, or whether to give raven-locked Lucy the center of the stage. With one child or one accomplishment it's different; you simply *have* to concentrate your admiration on that. You won't take two lumps?"

Ormsby shook his head firmly, and Jane handed him his tea. "It's just tea with one lump; it's nectar with two," she observed, regretfully. "Speaking of children," she continued, as she poured herself out a cup, "have you seen the new Larson baby?"

"I'm sorry to say I have not," said Ormsby, gravely.

"It's a dear," observed Jane, enthusiastically. "I think it will be the beauty of the Larson family."

"If the Larson family occupy that cottage near the grove, and if all the children who play about there are Larson children, I fancy the baby wouldn't require much in the way of looks to be the beauty of the Larson family," he commented, dryly.

"What a nasty remark!" exclaimed Jane, indignantly. "They all have their good points when you come to study them. And you can't imagine how amusing they are. I've been helping them along a bit lately, and between their extravagant gratitude and the Willoughbys' indignation at the size of the bills, I've been having no end of a good time." Jane leaned back and smiled. Ormsby frowned. A good time! That apparently was the aim and end of her existence. Aloud he said:

"Are you never serious, Mrs. De Mille?"

"Not very often; what's the use?" responded Jane, promptly.

"I should imagine that a woman who has had the"—he hesitated for an instant—"the sad experience you have had would show the effect of it." Ormsby was really ashamed of this remark, but Jane's flippancy frequently goaded him on to say things he regretted. But she did not look offended.

"Sad experience?" she repeated, puzzled. "Oh, you mean the Willoughbys?"

Her employer smiled in spite of himself. He quickly regained his air of grave composure, however. "No, I don't mean the Willoughbys; I mean the death of your husband," he said, rebukingly.

"Oh, that!" exclaimed Jane, smiling sweetly. "Why, you see, that's really the reason why I'm so gay now. When De Mille was alive, I was always so solemn. He had no sense of humor—it really takes two to see a joke, you know—and consequently I was depressed most of the time. Since his passing away"—Jane thought this sounded well—"I laugh most of the time—the reaction, I suppose."

Ormsby handed his cup for some more tea. "No sugar this time," he said, coldly. Jane looked at him wistfully.

"I suppose I'm a disappointment to you—as a heroine, I mean," she remarked, almost humbly. "Perhaps"—regarding him tentatively—"if you had known I was not serious you would not have engaged me."

Ormsby shrugged his shoulders. "You answer my purpose very well," he answered, indifferently, blissfully unaware that Jane's fingers were itching just then to box his ears. "But you know," he went on, determinedly, "woman should take some things seriously."

"I do," responded Jane. "I take you seriously."

Ormsby ignored her and continued: "Life is not a huge joke, you know. It——"

"You remind me of my first husband," interrupted Jane, frowning. "He talked like that."

"First?" he queried. Jane blushed. Then she said, defiantly: "Is it so improbable that I shall marry again?"

"Oh, that reminds me," he said, with that air of impersonal interest which, in the beginning, had secretly infuriated Mrs. De Mille, and which now unaccountably depressed her. "Will you allow me to ask you a question?"

“Certainly,” she answered; “ask me anything you like.”

“I want to know,” he said, with great deliberation, “whether you have ever been in love?”

Jane stared at him with wide-open eyes. “Don’t think,” he continued, hastily, “that I have any desire to pry into your personal affairs, but for the sake of my book——”

“Oh, the book, by all means,” she answered, rather hardly. “No, I’ve never been in love. However”— 16
flippantly—“I trust I will fall in love some day. It will be a new experience, at least. You see, ever since I was a very little girl I have been jobbed out——”

“Jobbed out!” exclaimed the puzzled Ormsby.

“Passed around from one Willoughby to the other,” explained Jane, impatiently. “My father was the improvident one of the Willoughby connection, and he married an equally improvident but awfully pretty girl, my mother. They died within a short time of each other”—Jane caught her breath, but continued without a trace of feeling in her voice—“when I was just two years old. The Willoughbys married me to De Mille when I was nineteen. There you have the story of my career in a nutshell.” She rose abruptly. “I must be going,” she said, picking up her hat.

“Just a minute,” interposed Ormsby, almost pleadingly, motioning her to resume her seat. Jane sat down again and looked at him expectantly. His manner seemed to have changed suddenly. His cold gray eyes had taken on a softer, a more human, expression, and they fastened themselves on hers with such an intent gaze that, though she tried to meet it boldly, she found her own glance wavering, and the hot color surged up in her face.

“Supposing, Mrs. De Mille,” he began, apparently unmindful of her confusion, “that a chap different from the sort you’d been accustomed to, one with less polish and with his own way—perhaps a most uncertain one—to make, should come to you and tell you that he loved you—no, wait!” Jane’s lips had parted, as though she were about to speak. “And supposing you felt,” he continued, “that in spite of the man’s uncouthness he was capable of making you love him, if only you consented to give him a chance, do you think——” He paused and studied her for a second with even a more intent gaze, but her eyes were downcast, and her trembling fingers were rapidly tying and untying knots in her lace handkerchief.

“Look at me, please,” he said, authoritatively. Reluctantly, Mrs. De Mille raised her eyes. Her soul shone in them.

“Do you think that if that man told you that your life with him might be a hard one, that the *wanderlust* was in his bones, and that when it took possession of him he had to fare forth, come what might, you would have the courage to put your hand in his—*don’t stir*.”

She had turned down, but had not extinguished, the alcohol flame, and an impulsive gesture had brought the lace which hung from the sleeve of her gown in contact with it. Before she had the remotest inkling of what had happened, Ormsby was at her side, smothering the flame with his hands. It was all over in an instant. His quickness had saved her from even the slightest burn, and also from a realization of her danger until that danger was past. She leaned back in her chair feeling rather faint, while Ormsby walked over to a small cabinet, took from it a bottle and rubbed some of its contents on his hands, afterward knotting his handkerchief carelessly around the right one.

“You are burnt!” exclaimed Jane, jumping up as though to go to his assistance.

“A mere trifle,” he answered, indifferently. “It doesn’t even sting.”

She looked at him tremulously. “Your presence of mind saved my life,” she said, in a voice that was not quite steady.

“Oh, that’s nothing,” he replied, rather awkwardly.

“Perhaps not,” said Jane, smiling at him with a suggestion of her old flippancy, “but it’s a great deal to me, you know. It’s the only one I have. Cats can afford to be indifferent in the face of peril until they have exhausted eight of their lives, at any rate, but the rest of us, having only one poor little life, naturally treasure it.”

Ormsby frowned. Wouldn’t she be serious in the face of death, even? Then he remembered the interrupted conversation.

“The alcohol spoiled the pretty little situation I had arranged for my book,” he said, smiling. 17

“Your book!” echoed Jane, staring at him.

“Yes, you know the question I was about to ask you. Your answer was rather important to me, but you can give it some other time. I advise you now to go straight home and lie down. There must have been some nervous shock.”

“You’re mistaken,” said Jane, who was in truth looking very pale. “I never felt less nervous in my life, and we mustn’t let the book suffer. Now, if you’ll repeat the question—I’m afraid”—penitently—“I wasn’t paying much attention to what you were saying.”

“Oh, well, I fancy you caught the idea of the sort of man I sketched. Would you give up everything for his sake, if you loved him?”

Jane rose and deliberately pinned on her hat, leisurely consulting a tiny chatelaine mirror after she had done so. Then she looked at Ormsby maliciously.

“Give up! Thank you, no! You see, all my life I’ve been giving up things I couldn’t wrest from the Willoughbys or De Mille.

“Not any more in mine, if you please. I should say to that misguided and frightfully sentimental young man: ‘Mend your ways, become rich and famous, and then come back and Jane will consider you.’” She picked up her

gloves and walked toward the door of the bungalow.

"*Au revoir*," she said; "so good of you to have saved my life."

"At least," observed Ormsby, sarcastically, as he hastened to open it for her, "nobody can accuse you of being inconsistent."

"Billie Scott would shriek if he heard you say so," observed Jane, as she calmly nodded good-by.

CHAPTER VIII.

Billie Scott had come down for the week end, and he and Jane were motoring.

"What's up, Jane?" he remarked, suddenly, breaking a lengthy pause in the conversation. "You don't seem like your usual self."

"Whom do I seem like?" she inquired, flippantly. Then she went on, indignantly: "Whenever I keep still for a minute or two, or in some other way act like a rational being, everyone is sure there is something up."

"I merely thought," observed Mr. Scott, pacifically, "that there might be something worrying you."

"Nothing worries me except the careless manner in which you drive this car," answered Jane, sharply for her. "Please put me down at Mrs. Larson's, Billie."

"Shall I wait for you?" he asked, as he steered the machine in the direction of the cottage.

"No, indeed"—determinedly—"and, by the way, I think you had better go back to town——"

"But I came down to stay over Sunday," he cried, in an injured voice.

"I know," said Jane, "but the Willoughbys like a quiet Sunday, and so do I."

Mr. Scott whistled.

"Terribly considerate of the Willoughbys' feelings," he commented, sarcastically. "I suppose I may stop at the house for my bag?"

The car had pulled up in front of the Larson cottage, and Jane jumped lightly out. She was instantly surrounded by a troop of dirty, noisy children, but she turned from them and smiled sweetly up at the sulky Mr. Scott. "Dear old Billie," she said, sweetly; "don't mind me. It's true I'm not quite myself these days. I think the Willoughbys must be getting on my nerves. Go home and I'll write you."

"Oh, Jane, if you would only let me——"

But Mrs. De Mille ruthlessly interrupted him.

"Don't be sentimental, Billie," she said, quickly; "and please remember that I'll not be proposed to every time we meet. Ta! ta!" She gave him her hand, withdrew it quickly and hastened into the Larson cottage.

"Damn!" said Mr. Scott, under his breath. Then he got out, bribed with a shower of coin the Larson brood to keep out of his path, and drove drearily away.

Mrs. Larson was an angular, sallow-faced, stoop-shouldered woman, who had seen so much of the dark side of life that she had reached the stage where she couldn't be persuaded there was any other.

"He's laid off again, miss," she announced, darkly, to Jane, who found her scrubbing in the disordered kitchen. Mrs. Larson never used anything but the personal pronoun to designate her spouse, so Jane knew instantly whom she meant.

"Why, what's the matter now?" she asked, in dismay. "I thought he was going to like his new work. Was he discharged?"

"No, miss, he was not!" In spite of her dejection, Mrs. Larson's voice revealed a note of pride. "But it was inside work, and he ain't used to inside work, and he says as how he don't suppose at his age he ever will get used to it."

"But surely he could endure it for a little while, until something else turned up!" exclaimed Jane, who was finding the Larsons a heavy responsibility. "What in the world will you do now?" A discussion of the problem of existence, however, was beyond the ability of Mrs. Larson, so she scrubbed for a while in apathetic silence, while Jane thought hard and anxiously.

"He'd like to be a shover," finally volunteered her hostess.

"A shover!" exclaimed Mrs. De Mille, who was absolutely sure that the leisurely Larson's view of life was incompatible with any form of employment that called for shoving. His wife nodded her head. "He always was a master hand for going swift, and he thought if he could get a place like Mr. Johnson's——"

"Oh!" said Jane, suddenly comprehending, "I see. Does he know anything about machinery or about driving a car?"

Mrs. Larson shook her head despondently. "Nothin', miss. It's just his fondness for goin' swift that made him think of it."

"It's just like him to wish to 'go swift' at somebody else's expense," thought Jane, scornfully, but she felt a delicacy about expressing her opinion of Larson to his wife, so another sorrowful pause ensued. It was broken by a lusty yell from the new Larson baby in the next room.

"Let me go to her," said Jane, rising quickly, and Mrs. Larson indifferently acquiesced. Babies were no novelty to her and she could not understand her guest's enthusiasm. Mrs. De Mille returned to the kitchen with the baby in her arms and seated herself near the open window. The youngest scion of the house of Larson was

dressed in an expensive but dirty robe, and Jane looked at its mother reproachfully.

“You should not let her wear her christening robe every day, Mrs. Larson,” she protested.

“I know, miss,” answered Mrs. Larson, apologetically, “but she don’t appear to sleep comfortable in nothin’ else.” Jane sighed, but, she reasoned humbly, it was not for her to preach economy to the improvident Larsons. The fact of the matter is that Mrs. De Mille was feeling in an exceedingly chastened mood these days, and even Aunt Susan found little cause for complaint. To-day as she sat “clucking” softly to the Larson baby, which crowed happily in response, she felt that even her bedraggled and weary-looking hostess had obtained from life something more worth while than it had vouchsafed her, and a wave of self-pity swept over her.

“Goo-goo!” shrieked the baby, in an ecstasy of delight, and, flinging up a dimpled fist, it clutched determinedly at the lace at Jane’s throat. The magnetic touch of the tiny fingers proved Mrs. De Mille’s undoing, and, to the astonishment and disgust of the youngest Larson, she burst into tears.

“Land sakes!” exclaimed Mrs. Larson, dropping her scrubbing brush and hastening to the side of her guest. “Did it jab you in the eye?” She made an effort to take her offspring from Jane, but the latter resisted. 19

“It—it isn’t the baby’s fault,” she sobbed, feeling that she was acting in a very ridiculous way, but unable to control herself. “I was just wishing I had a baby of my own.”

“Oh!” said Mrs. Larson, understandingly, and then her red and ugly arms, which her sleeveless waist revealed, were slipped about Jane, and the two women mingled their tears exactly as though no gulf of opportunity and education yawned between them.

Larson had been pointed out to John Ormsby as the only man in Rosemount who was not above doing an errand, provided he was well paid for it, and Ormsby had started out in search of him. He took a short cut to the Larson cabin, approaching that humble domicile by way of the rear, and while he was still within half a block of the premises he recognized the graceful curve of Mrs. De Mille’s back through the open window. With no consciousness of eavesdropping, he strained his ears to catch her words as he came nearer, for invariably he found her gay stream of nonsense stimulating. But the look of anticipation changed to one of profound surprise as the dwindling distance between him and the cottage made him spectator of the little scene enacted in the Larsons’ untidy kitchen.

“By Jove!” he murmured, in his bewilderment. The disgusted and temporarily neglected Larson infant, who was hanging over Jane’s shoulder while that lady and its mother wept, caught a glimpse of the man outside, and, perhaps, recognized in his look of astonishment a reflex of its own feelings.

“Ah, goo,” it called out, tearfully, waving one hand feebly but sympathetically.

“By Jove!” muttered Mr. Ormsby again, and then turned suddenly, and made his way with surprising but quiet dispatch down the path up which he had come. The Larson baby, choosing to regard his retreat in the light of a desertion, raised a lusty howl, which instantly brought Jane and his mother to their senses.

Ormsby meanwhile had repaired to the bungalow. From the drawer of the table which he used for a desk he took a bundle of closely written sheets and began to thumb them over, pausing here and there to read a passage. The more he read, the more dissatisfied he looked, and finally he rolled the papers up again and thrust them contemptuously on the table. Then he took out his pipe, filled it and lighted it, and puffed away in silence for a while. Presently he removed it and looked once more at the manuscript lying on the table.

“By Jove!” he ejaculated once more, and then replaced his pipe and went on smoking.

Half an hour later Mrs. Moore, the venerable dame with whom he boarded, found him still sitting before the table, staring thoughtfully at the manuscript, his pipe out. She gave him a telegram and watched him inquisitively while he read it. “I have to run up to New York to-morrow,” he said, without looking up. “Have an early breakfast, please.”

His landlady, who never spoke unless it was absolutely necessary, nodded solemnly and withdrew, and Ormsby took out some paper and began to write a note. When he had finished he read it over and then deliberately tore it up. Five other notes which he wrote shared the same fate. Finally he indited a brief one and addressed it to Mrs. De Mille. It informed her tersely that he had been called to town and would not return for three days. Sealing it, he went to the door of the bungalow, and, after whistling vigorously for five minutes, succeeded in attracting the attention of a tow-headed youngster, who was walking leisurely up the dust road.

“Take this up to Willoughby Hall at once,” ordered Ormsby, sternly, slipping a coin into the grimy paw.

“Yep,” answered the boy, cheerfully, and obediently trotted off in the direction of the architectural monstrosity on the hill, Ormsby relentlessly following him with his eyes until he was out of sight. Alas! A grove of firs intervened between the bungalow and the house on the hill, and it was in this grove that the tow-headed urchin dropped responsibility, thrust the note and coin in his pocket and “skinned” a tree for a nest. The coin 20 was spent that very night, but it was not until a week later that, looking for a grasshopper he had carefully stowed away in his pocket, the recreant one came across Ormsby’s note. The discovery was timely, for he was in need just then of a bit of paper to polish his agate bottle, a new treasure.

CHAPTER IX.

It was raining; not spasmodically, with a suggestion of lifting skies between frenzied outbursts, but steadily, drearily, insistently. Jane, sitting up in bed, drew the down coverlet cozily about her bare neck and half-clad arms, while she despondently looked out through the window at the dripping landscape.

“Rain is bad enough in the city,” she mused, “but it’s simply impossible in the country. There, at least, you can get away from it, but here it seems to be all over.” There was a tap on the door.

“Come,” she called, and a maid entered with an appetizing breakfast on a tray. “Good-morning, Blanche,” said Jane. “Tell me what you do on a rainy day. You and Johnson won’t be able to walk out this evening.”

“We sits in the kitchen, miss,” said the little maid, primly, blushing to the roots of her mouse-colored hair. “Cook goes to bed early.”

“Very obliging of cook,” commented Jane, as she sipped her coffee. “And that reminds me, Blanche, I want to ask you a question, and I want you to answer me truthfully. Are you trifling with Johnson?”

“Me, miss?” The maid’s face grew redder than ever, but she tossed her head. “I’m not triflin’. Mr. Johnson keeps a-sayin’ as how he’s very fond o’ me, but I tells ’im he’s a city chap and says the same to all th’ gurls.”

“You’re right, Blanche, all the Johnsons are a bad lot,” said Jane, pessimistically. “However”—for the little maid’s face looked suddenly downcast—“I believe Johnson is one of the best of them, and that his intentions are serious.” The maid beamed. “And I would feel sorry to have you trifle with him, because I feel responsible for him while he’s down here. Avoid the reputation of being a flirt, Blanche.” Jane looked pensive. “It’s the hardest in the world to live down.”

“Yes’m,” said the maid, politely. “Is there anythink I can do for you?” She adored Jane, and spent hours trying to do her hair the way Mrs. De Mille did hers.

“No, I think not. Have the Willoughbys had breakfast?”

“Hours ago, miss,” answered Blanche. Jane smiled. This breakfast in bed represented one of her most memorable victories over Aunt Susan, and imparted a particularly delicious flavor to her coffee and rolls.

“Well, take the tray; I’ll get up in an hour or so,” said Jane, deliberately composing herself for another nap.

She dreamed of the bungalow and of Ormsby, and, when she finally dressed, it was with the defeated feeling of one who has striven hard to put certain thoughts out of her head, but who finds that they have taken possession even of her dreams.

She saw Uncle Jacob and Aunt Susan for the first time at the luncheon table. The rain was still falling with what Jane called disgusting pertinacity.

“Of course you’re not going out a day like this,” said Mrs. Willoughby, in the disapproving voice she seemed to reserve for Jane and her husband. By “out” she meant the bungalow. Until Aunt Susan had spoken, Mrs. De Mille had made up her mind that a visit to the bungalow on such a day was out of the question, and that Ormsby would not expect her. Now, however, she found herself saying, perversely: “Out! Of course I’m going out. A woman who works for a living cannot afford to mind a little rain. I have an appointment at the bungalow with Mr. Ormsby, and I have to keep it.”

Aunt Susan sniffed. “The neighbors are commenting——”

Jane held up a reproachful finger. “No gossip, aunt!” she said, rebukingly. “Don’t you think that living in the country has a tendency—*just a slight tendency*—to make people too deeply interested in their neighbors’ affairs?” Jane looked excessively virtuous. “I’d hate, Aunt Susan, to have you degenerate. But one has to be *so* careful!”

Mrs. Willoughby deigned no response, and finished the meal in stony silence. Uncle Jacob, who found himself unable to carry on a peaceful conversation with Jane and his wife both present, stealthily perused the columns of a belated city paper he held on his knee.

Immediately after her luncheon, Jane went to her room and got together her rainy-day things. When she sallied forth presently, she wore a coquettish-looking cap, a short, mannish coat and a skirt that was short enough to reveal not only a pair of the thinnest and most absurdly small Louis Quinze shoes, but a good bit of thin silk stocking as well. Jane, as she tripped along, surveyed her feet ruefully. “I know he’ll say something sarcastic about my shoes,” she mused, “and they are ridiculous for a day like this, and I’ve no doubt they do show I haven’t a scrap of common sense—though I know women who never wear anything but common-sense shoes who haven’t any common sense to boast of. It’s simply a question of whether you’re athletic or not. Besides, I can explain to him that I really did try to wear a pair of Blanche’s, but they slipped off when they were buttoned up, and he’ll have to admit that it’s much better for me to arrive at the bungalow in my own shoes, even though they’re more ridiculous, than in my stocking feet—which would have been the case had I worn Blanche’s. I’ll tell——” Jane pulled herself up sharp with a sudden, angry flush. “I don’t know,” she said out loud, sharply, “why you’re always trying to placate him, Jane De Mille! Where’s your independence gone to?” Then she fixed her eyes firmly on the distant horizon and her thoughts on a new summer gown and marched independently on.

To find the bungalow locked was like a blow to her, and when she faced about to return home she felt suddenly very cold, very wet, very miserable and very forlorn. Then she recollected that he had told her once that there was always a key under the mat in case she should come to the bungalow when he wasn’t there, and, reluctant to return to the dreariness of the Willoughby house, she searched for this, and, finding it, thrust it in the keyhole and opened the door. There was no fire in the fireplace, but there was material for one beside it, and, kneeling down in front of the cavernous opening, Jane laboriously constructed one and held out her hands gratefully to the warmth when the flames darted forth. She surveyed the room over her shoulder and was chilled afresh by its deserted air. “Can he have gone away without a word?” she wondered, and paled at the thought.

“It’s no use denying you’re in a very bad way about this Ormsby, Jane De Mille,” she reflected, pensively surveying the dancing flames. “You’re rapidly losing all your independence, and, what’s worse, your self-respect. And you haven’t the remotest reason for believing that he cares a scrap for you.”

She rose presently, and, moving his chair over to the fireplace, sat down in it and held out first one and then the other little high-heeled boot to dry. “If he loved me,” she observed to herself, “I really wouldn’t mind wearing thick soles and low heels.”

Her shoes dry, she began to move restlessly about the room. Now, it is a curious fact that Jane had never expressed and never felt any curiosity about the book Ormsby was writing, though she knew that she was furnishing the material for the heroine. In spite of herself, almost unconsciously, indeed, at first, she had become so absorbed in the writer that the book became of secondary importance. Today, however, his absence made everything that was intimately associated with him of interest to her, since they served, in a way, as a substitute for him. She picked up his pipe and held it caressingly against her cheek, and then, with a guilty start, set it down again. She dropped her head on an open book he had evidently been reading, and her eyes were dewy when she raised it. She came upon, finally, the bundle of papers he had tossed contemptuously on the table the night before, and recognized it as the manuscript upon which he had been working. She regarded it thoughtfully for a while and then her face brightened. 22

"Why, how stupid of me!" she exclaimed, aloud, and, going back to his chair, she seated herself in it once more and smoothed out the sheets.

"He can't possibly object to my reading it," she reasoned, "since I'm in it, and it's soon to be public property." She stared at the title. "'A Woman,'" she read aloud—"that's me, I suppose. Why"—with an odd, breathless little laugh—"it will be exactly like seeing for the first time a portrait done of yourself by some great painter—one of those artists who pay more attention to the soul than to the hair or the mouth or the eyes. I'll see myself as somebody else sees me. It's—it's going to be terribly exciting."

Yet, in spite of the curiosity she professed, Jane did not begin at once to read. Instead, she dropped the manuscript in her lap and stared for a while into the fire, her chin propped on her hand. Her thoughts ran on something like this: "You've never had such an awfully good time, Jane De Mille, though you've put up what Billie would call a pretty stiff bluff. You've never had anybody to really and truly care for you, unless it be Uncle Jacob, though plenty of people have admired you for what good looks you have or because you didn't bore them. But if you should *discover* that somebody loved you for yourself alone, thought you a little better, perhaps, than you really are, you know—why, it's just possible——" A catch in her breath put a stop to her reflections, and she unrolled the manuscript and began to read.

The fire was dying down, but, tenacious of life as some very old man who has prolonged his years through will power alone, it shot forth unexpected flames at infrequent intervals. These lighted up Jane's face, and such changes did they reveal with each succeeding appearance that they might have been the withering years. The patter of the rain on the roof, the rustle of the sheets as they fell from her hand and fluttered to the floor, the occasional sputter of the fire—these for the next two hours were the only sounds heard in the bungalow. When the last page joined the others that lay scattered about in disorder on the floor, Mrs. De Mille stared for a few seconds straight ahead of her, and then, with a quivering sigh, buried her head on the arm of the chair and began to cry.

* * * * *

It lacked half an hour of dinner time, and Jacob Willoughby sat alone in the stuffy library. The owner of Willoughby Hall was not what could be called sentimental, but in the twilight hour, and especially when the weather necessitated an open fire, he was apt, if Susan Willoughby was in a remote part of the house, to let his thoughts stray back to a time when she was not, so far as Jacob Willoughby was concerned, and when a slim young creature, addicted to pink and blue muslins, but with neither family nor prospects, was the sun of his days, the moon and stars of his nights. He had been sensible and never regretted it—that is, hardly ever. To-night, however, the dancing flames that glorified the dull room reminded him of the grace of his boyhood's love, and the dreary splash, splash, of the rain outside, of the gray monotony of the years that lay behind him and of those other dull and purposeless years that stretched out before him.

And when presently a pale Jane broke in upon this reverie, Jacob was forced to brush his hands across his eyes twice to make sure it was Jane and not the slim young creature to whom he had brought the early crocuses in the springtime of his youth. Neither knew exactly how it happened, but Jane found herself sobbing out her story on Uncle Jacob's broad bosom, and feeling strangely comforted by the tender pressure of his pudgy hand upon her shoulder. When she cried out that she could not stand it to have that hateful book come out, and to listen to the comments upon it, it was Uncle Jacob who suggested that a trip abroad might accomplish wonders in the way of making her forget both the man and the book. Not that he believed it—he lied gallantly there—but he had his reward in seeing the face he loved brighten somewhat. 23

And when Jane stole away with a check in her hand, leaving him to explain to Aunt Susan her absence from dinner and her early departure in the morning, in spite of the ordeal that lay before him, there was a warm glow underneath the white vest, a glow which even the approaching grenadier-like tread of Aunt Susan could not dispel.

CHAPTER X.

It was the last Tuesday in November, and Mrs. Hardenburgh was giving the first of her usual series of at-homes. An inveterate lion hunter was this clever woman of sixty-odd summers, whose hair was as thick and golden as a débutante's, and whose complexion as pink and white. This afternoon she was in a particularly complacent mood, for she had arranged a piquant double attraction for her guests. When, however, by six o'clock, both attractions had failed to materialize, the faintest suggestion of a frown appeared on her remarkably smooth brow. Five minutes later the appearance of a newcomer had dispelled it, and the hostess was her humorous, smiling self.

The newcomer was Jane—Jane in a gown every line of which spoke Paris, in a dream of a hat that sat on her proud little head like a coronet; Jane, in short, in a perfect get-up and in radiant health and spirits. Personally, we'd prefer to set it down that she looked pale, distrait; that "concealment, like a worm i' the bud," etc.; but it

would not be true. Whatever the suffering within—and there was a rather deep, intent look about the eyes—Mrs. De Mille presented an unconquered, nay, a self-satisfied, front to this little New York world, and was looking her very best.

As she made her way slowly down the long room to where her hostess stood, it occurred to her that she was causing something of a sensation. At first she modestly ascribed it to the fact that she had been away for six months, and that this was her first public appearance since her return. It dawned upon her presently, however, that the rooms were filled with strangers, principally, and as the interest deepened rather than lessened with her slow advance, she was forced to acknowledge to herself that something beside her lengthened absence was responsible for the attention she was receiving. The more puzzled she grew, the more confidently she carried herself, and when a very young bud in a very high treble agitatedly remarked to a *blasé* youth: "She's not a bit disappointing, is she?" it expressed in words the verdict of the rooms.

After greeting Mrs. Hardenburgh, the first familiar face Jane encountered was Mr. Scott's.

"So you've gone and gotten yourself engaged, faithless one?" she observed, reproachfully, after they had shaken hands.

"Oh, I say, Jane——" he began, in exactly the same tone with which he was wont, in the past, to preface one of his numerous proposals.

Jane regarded him with mock horror. "Billie, Billie, don't tell me you are going to propose!" she exclaimed, disapprovingly. "One rather expects proposals from the married men nowadays, but from newly engaged ones, fie! fie!"

Mr. Scott colored high. "You can't think how the sight of you makes my heart beat," he said, agitatedly.

"Nonsense!" retorted Jane, snubbingly. "Point out your girl instantly."

Pulling himself together with a palpable effort, Mr. Scott indicated a sparkling brunette, one of a group of débutantes who were watching Jane with intense interest.

"Why, she's adorable!" exclaimed Mrs. De Mille. "Present me." And Mr. Scott, looking suddenly very proud, offered his arm.

"I've read the book," murmured the little brunette, ecstatically, after Jane had offered her felicitations. "It must be beautiful to be written about like that."

Mrs. De Mille stared and then grew pale. "The book!" she echoed. "I—I don't know what you mean!"

"Why, I thought——" began Mr. Scott's pretty fiancée, looking as though she regretted her own impulsiveness. But before she had a chance to explain, a tall and extremely well-dressed young matron bore down upon Jane and triumphantly carried her off.

"How well you're looking, Betty," observed Jane, surveying her friend rather wistfully, when they were seated in a quiet corner.

"That's because I'm so happy," answered that lady, promptly. "Maurice is such a dear! And now, Jane, tell me, when is the engagement to be announced?"

Mrs. De Mille opened her eyes very wide. "Engagement!" she cried. "I don't know what you're talking about. Whose engagement?"

"Why, yours and Mr. Ormsby's," retorted her friend. "Every line of the book shows he's desperately in love with you. Did you refuse him?"

Jane clutched Mrs. McClurg's hand. "Is that awful book out, and does everybody think it's me?" she demanded, in a voice that trembled in spite of her effort to control it.

Mrs. McClurg looked at her in astonishment. "Awful book!" she exclaimed. "I don't know what you're talking about. Mr. Ormsby's novel is the success of the year, and the heroine is an *extremely flattering* picture of you. All your friends have recognized it, and they all agree with me."

Jane rose. "If my friends think I'm the heartless and idiotic creature that book pictures, then I have no friends," she said, coldly. "Good-by, Betty." She turned to go, but Mrs. McClurg caught her hand.

"I don't believe you've read the book, Jane de Mille," she said. "The heroine is not heartless. She's a perfectly adorable creature, and everybody—all the women envy you."

"I haven't seen the book," admitted Jane, "but I read the manuscript, and my recollection is that the author placed me a good deal lower than the angels, to state it mildly. I never want to see it."

"I can't understand; there must be some mistake!" exclaimed Mrs. McClurg. "Just wait here a minute." She glided out from behind the screen of palms, and, after a brief absence, came back to the nook with a small, quietly bound little book in her hand. "Read that!" she commanded, triumphantly, opening it and pointing to the title-page.

Reluctantly Jane raised her eyes and took in the brief contents. "The Woman, by John Ormsby," she read, and then, underneath, a single line, "To her who inspired it," and underneath that again this fragment of verse:

Lean penury within that pen doth dwell
  That to his subject lends not some small glory;
But he that writes of you, if he can tell
  That you are you, so dignifies his story;
Let him but copy what in you is writ,
  Not making worse what nature made so clear,
And such a counterpart shall fame his wit,
  Making his style admired everywhere.

“Betty.” Jane lifted her head and looked at her friend with sudden inspiration.

“Well,” retorted Mrs. McClurg, not too enthusiastically, for it had just occurred to her that Mrs. De Mille had concealed a great deal.

“I want to sneak, and I want to take this book with me,” explained the latter, shamelessly. “I don’t believe I have read it. Can you—will you cover my retreat?”

Mrs. McClurg looked only half appeased and dubious. “Mr. Ormsby is coming here this afternoon,” she said, severely. “I happen to know that Mrs. Hardenburgh has been rejoicing at the thought that you were to meet here in her drawing room.”

“Neat little arrangement,” observed Jane, ironically. Then she became suddenly frightened. “I must go at once,” she said. “Oh, Betty, don’t you see that I can’t see him here? Help me, there’s a good girl, and come to me to-morrow—I have the same apartment, you know—and I’ll tell you *everything*.” 25

And Mrs. McClurg, who was by no means hard-hearted, relented. When the big doors finally closed upon Jane, she gave a sigh of relief, but it ended with a gasp, for she found herself face to face with John Ormsby, who, immaculately attired, was ascending the brownstone steps.

“How d’ye do?” said Mrs. De Mille, airily, extending her hand and hoping fervently at the same time that the book which she had tucked away underneath her arm was invisible.

He took her hand, but did not respond to her salutation, only gazed hungrily into her face.

“Where in the world have you been hiding yourself?” he demanded, finally, when Jane, with an effort, had removed her hand.

“Sounds as though I were a criminal,” commented Jane. “Did you miss any spoons at the bungalow?”

He did not answer, only continued to stare at her, and so she went on, nervously: “I’ve been in Paris chiefly. Some people don’t like Paris in the summer time, but I adore it. But you’re Mrs. Hardenburgh’s lion. I mustn’t detain you. *Au revoir!*” She started down the steps, but he followed her determinedly. “If you think I’m going to lose sight of you after my long search, you’re mistaken,” he said, quietly.

“Mrs. Hardenburgh will be furious, and you will be very impolite, if you don’t go in at once,” said Jane, tucking the little book further out of sight.

“I loathe those things,” he answered, disrespectfully. “I only consented to come because I was told you might be there. But if Paradise was just inside, and——”

“Hades,” interrupted Jane, demurely.

“And you were outside, nothing would induce me to go in.”

“The inference is so odious I refuse to be flattered,” she said, “but you never were good at making pretty speeches. If you’re coming with me”—briskly—“you’ll have to walk. I’m economizing. Uncle Jacob is giving me an allowance, and I’m living on it.”

“But you’re rich, or almost rich, in your own right,” said Mr. Ormsby, as they walked along. “The book promises to be preposterously successful, and half the royalties are yours, you know.”

Jane grew suddenly frigid. “I beg that you will not refer to that wretched affair,” she said, haughtily. “I have not read your book, and I am not interested in it.”

Mr. Ormsby’s face became very downcast. “I was in hopes that you had read it, and that it would explain ——”

“There is really nothing to explain,” interrupted Jane. “I acted on a reckless impulse, and was bored for my pains. I have no wish to read your book, though”—civilly—“I’m glad for your sake it promises to be a success.”

Mrs. De Mille’s fall followed fast on the heels of her little exhibition of pride. A boy hurrying by with a bundle jostled her arm, and the book she had been endeavoring to conceal fell to the pavement. In stooping to recover it, Mr. Ormsby recognized it, but he returned it to her without comment, and Jane perversely chose to feel affronted at his silence.

“I met a friend at Mrs. Hardenburgh’s who was quite enthusiastic about the book, and to please her I consented to take it home to read,” she exclaimed, coldly.

“I would not bother myself about it, if I were you; it’s a poor thing,” he returned, just as coldly. They walked for a square in silence, a silence that, strange to relate, was not broken first by Jane but by her companion.

“I have an explanation to make, and, in spite of the risk I run of further offending you, I must make it,” he said, distantly. “When I wrote that first absurd sketch I did not understand you. I thought that you were as frivolous and as heartless as you appeared on the surface.”

“Indeed!” commented Jane, tilting her chin scornfully.

“And then something happened——” he paused. 26

“What was it?” she asked, eagerly, and bit her lip in vexation at herself for displaying curiosity.

“I’m not going to tell you that,” he responded, coolly, “but it helped me to an understanding of you. And then I was called to New York, and I found when I got back that you had been at the bungalow—you left your handkerchief there, you know—and that you had read the sketch, for the papers were scattered about the floor, and I realized that——” he hesitated.

“You realized what?” said Jane, defiantly.

“That I loved you,” he concluded, quietly.

The acknowledgment was so unexpected that it disconcerted Mrs. De Mille, and she had nothing to say.

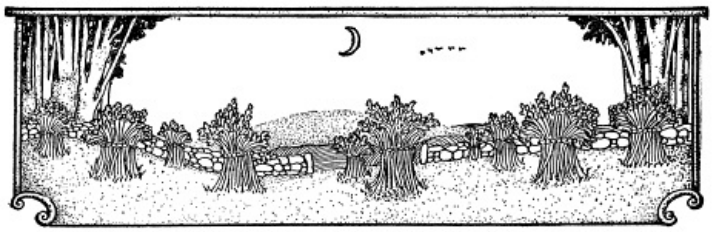
“I suppose *that* bores you, too?” he said, half ironically.

“This is where I live,” was her only response. They had reached the entrance to a smart uptown apartment house, and Jane paused. Her tone was not exactly a dismissal one, and, as she faced him, Ormsby stared at her anxiously.

“Is there—can there be any hope for me——” he began.

“While there’s life there’s hope, you know,” retorted Jane, frivolously. “But I was just about to suggest that if you’re quite certain you don’t want to go back to Mrs. Hardenburgh’s, I’ll give you a cup of tea.”

Her tone was noncommittal, but as she led the way to the elevator, she looked back at him over her shoulder and laughed softly, and a great joy transfigured John Ormsby’s face.



TO A ROADSIDE CEDAR

’TIS not for thee in ancient walks to throw
  Thy pointed shadows o’er the sculptured stone,
  Where marble fixes some immortal moan
Of art; nor, gathering gloom where waters flow
Past groves Lethean, crypts of human woe,
  To lift thy cheering spires. Thy lot is strown
  In newer, happier climes and lands unknown
To classic realms of storied pomps and show.

For thou, dear gnomon of the passing hour,
  Green sentinel of sunny lanes and fields,
    Whose sturdy watch defies harsh winter’s knell,
    Art guardian of the humblest homes, where dwell
  The simple folk, the yeomanry that wields
In peopled might all that men crave of power!

HARVEY MAITLAND WATTS.

XXIII.

NEXT day Langdon's stocks wavered, going up a little, going down a little, closing at practically the same figures at which they had opened. Then I sprang my sensation—that Langdon and his particular clique, though they controlled the Textile Trust, did not own so much as one-fiftieth of its voting stock. True "captains of industry" that they were, they made their profits not out of dividends, but out of side schemes which absorbed about two-thirds of the earnings of the Trust, and out of gambling in its bonds and stocks. I said in conclusion:

> The largest owner of the stock is Walter G. Edmunds, of Chicago—an honest man. Send your voting proxies to him, and he can take the Textile Company away from those now plundering it.

As the annual election of the Trust was only six weeks away, Langdon and his clique were in a panic. They rushed into the market and bought frantically, the public bidding against them. Langdon himself went to Chicago to reason with Edmunds—that is, to try to find out at what figure he could be bought. And so on, day after day, I faithfully reporting to the public the main occurrences behind the scenes. The Langdon attempt to regain control by purchases of stock failed. He and his allies made what must have been to them appalling sacrifices. But even at the high prices they offered, comparatively little of the stock appeared.

"I've caught them," said I to Joe—the first time, and the last, during that campaign that I indulged in a boast.

"If Edmunds sticks to you," replied Joe.

But Edmunds did not. I do not know at what price he sold himself. Probably it was pitifully small; cupidity usually snatches the instant the bait tickles its nose. But I do know that my faith in human nature got its severest shock. "You are down this morning," said Thornley, when I looked in on him at his bank. "I don't think I ever before saw you show that you were in low spirits."

"I've found out a man with whom I'd have trusted my life," said I. "Sometimes I think all men are dishonest. I've tried to be an optimist like you, and have told myself that most men must be honest or ninety-five per cent. of the business couldn't be done on credit as it is."

Thornley smiled, like an old man at the enthusiasm of a youngster. "That proves nothing as to honesty," said he. "It simply shows that men can be counted on to do what it is to their plain interest to do. The truth is—and a fine truth, too—most men wish and try to be honest. Give 'em a chance to resist their own weaknesses. Don't trust them. Trust—that's the making of false friends and the filling of jails."

"And palaces," I added.

"And palaces," assented he. "Every vast fortune is a monument to the credulity of men. Instead of getting after these heavy-laden rascals, Matthew, you'd better have turned your attention to the public that has made rascals of them by leaving its property unguarded."

Fortunately, Edmunds had held out, or, rather, Langdon had delayed approaching him, long enough for me to gain my main point. The uproar over the Textile Trust had become so great that the national Department of Commerce dared not refuse an investigation; and I straightway began to spread out in my daily letters the facts of the Trust's enormous earnings and of the shameful sources of those earnings. Thanks to Langdon's political pull, the President appointed as investigator one of those rascals who carefully build themselves good reputations to enable them to charge higher prices for dirty work. But with my facts before the people, whitewash was impossible.

I was expecting emissaries from Langdon, for I knew he must now be actually in straits. Even the Universal Life didn't dare lend him money, and was trying to call in the millions it had loaned him. But I was astounded when my private door opened and Mrs. Langdon ushered herself in.

"Don't blame your boy, Mr. Blacklock," cried she, gayly, exasperatingly confident that I was as delighted with her as she was with herself. "I told him you were expecting me and didn't give him a chance to stop me."

I assumed she had come to give me wholly undeserved thanks for revenging her upon her recreant husband. I tried to look civil and courteous, but I felt that my face was darkening—her very presence forced forward things I had been keeping in the far background of my mind. "How can I be of service to you, madam?" said I.

"I bring you good news," she replied—and I noted that she no longer looked haggard and wretched, that her beauty was once more smiling with a certain girlishness, like a young widow's when she finds her consolation. "Mowbray and I have made it up," she explained.

I simply listened, probably looking as grim as I felt.

"I knew you would be interested," she went on. "Indeed, it means almost as much to you as to me. It brings peace to *two* families."

Still I did not relax.

“And so,” she continued, a little uneasy, “I came to you immediately.”

I continued to listen as if I were waiting for her to finish and depart.

“If you want, I’ll go to Anita.” Natural feminine tact would have saved her from this rawness; but, convinced that she was a “great lady” by the flattery of servants and shopkeepers and sensational newspapers and social climbers, she had long since discarded tact as worthy only of the lowly and of the aspiring before they “arrive.”

“You are too kind,” said I. “Mrs. Blacklock and I feel competent to take care of our own affairs.”

“Please, Mr. Blacklock,” she said, realizing that she had blundered, “don’t take my directness the wrong way. Life is too short for pose and pretense about the few things that really matter. Why shouldn’t we be frank with each other?”

“I trust you will excuse me,” said I, moving toward the door—I had not seated myself when she did. “I think I have made it clear that we have nothing to discuss.”

“You have the reputation of being generous and too big for hatred. That is why I have come to you,” said she, her expression confirming my suspicion of the real and only reason for her visit. “Mowbray and I are completely reconciled—*completely*, you understand. And I want you to be generous, and not keep on with this attack. I am involved even more than he. He has used up his fortune in defending mine. Now you are simply trying to ruin me—not him, but *me*. The President is a friend of Mowbray’s, and he’ll call off this horrid investigation, and everything’ll be all right, if you’ll only stop.”

“Who sent you here?” I asked.

“I came of my own accord,” she protested. Then, realizing from the sound of her voice that she could not have convinced me with a tone so unconvincing, she hedged with: “It was my own suggestion, really it was.”

“And your husband permitted *you* to come to *me*?”

She flushed.

“And you have accepted his overtures when you knew he made them only because he needed your money?”

She hung her head. “I love him,” she said, simply. Then she looked straight at me, and I somehow liked her expression. “A woman has no false pride when love is at stake,” she said. “We leave that to you men.”

“Love!” I retorted, rather satirically, I imagine. “How much had your own imperiled fortune to do with your being so forgiving?”

“Something,” she admitted. “You must remember I have children. I must think of their future. I don’t want them to be poor. I want them to have the station they were born to.” She went to one of the windows overlooking the street. “Look here!” she said.

I stood beside her. The window was not far above the street level. Just below us was a handsome victoria, coachman, harness, horses, all most proper, a footman rigid at the step. A crowd had gathered round—in those stirring days when I was the chief subject of conversation wherever men were interested in money—and where are they not?—there was almost always a crowd before my offices. In the carriage sat two children, a boy and a girl, hardly more than babies. They were gorgeously overdressed, after the vulgar fashion of aristocrats and apers of aristocracy. They sat stiffly, like little scions of royalty, with that expression of complacent superiority which one so often sees on the faces of the little children of the very rich—and some not so little, too. The thronging loungers were gaping in true New York “lower class” awe; the children were literally swelling with delighted vanity. If they had been pampered pet dogs, one would have laughed. As they were human beings, it filled me with sadness and pity.

“For their sake, Mr. Blacklock,” she pleaded, her mother love wholly hiding from her the features of the spectacle that most impressed me.

“Your husband has deceived you about your fortune, Mrs. Langdon,” I said, gently. “You can tell him what I am about to say, or not, as you please. But my advice is that you keep it to yourself. Even if the present situation develops, as seems probable, develops as Mr. Langdon fears, you will not be left without a fortune—a very large fortune, most people would think. But Mr. Langdon will have little or nothing—indeed, I think he is practically dependent on you now.”

“What I have is his,” she said.

“That is generous,” replied I, “but is it prudent? You wish to keep him—securely. Don’t tempt him by a generosity he would only abuse.”

She thought it over. “The idea of holding a man in that way is repellent to me,” said she, obviously posing for my benefit.

“If the man happens to be one that can be held in no other way,” said I, moving significantly toward the door, “one must overcome one’s repugnance—or be despoiled and abandoned.”

“Thank you,” she said, giving me her hand. “Thank you—more than I can say.” She had forgotten entirely that she came to plead for her husband. “And I hope that you will soon be as happy as I am.”

I bowed, and when there was the closed door between us, I laughed, not at all pleasantly. “This New York!” I said aloud. “This New York that dabbles its slime of sordidness and snobbishness on every flower in the garden of human nature.” I took from my inside pocket the picture of Anita I always carried. “Are *you* like that?” I demanded of it. And it seemed to answer: “Yes, I am.” Did I tear the picture up? No. I kissed it as if it were the magnetic reality. “I don’t care what you are,” I cried. “I want you! I want you!”

“Fool!” you are saying. Precisely what I called myself. And you? Is it the one you *ought* to love that you give your heart to? Is it the one that understands you and sympathizes with you? Or is it the one whose presence gives you visions of paradise and whose absence blots out the light?

I loved her. Yet I would have torn out my life before I would have taken her on any terms that did not make her wholly mine. 30

XXIV.

Now that Updegraff is dead, I am free to tell of our relations.

My acquaintance with him was more casual than with any other of “The Seven.” From the outset of my career I made it a rule never to deal with understrappers, always to get in touch with the man who had the final say. Thus, as the years went by, I grew into intimacy with the great men of finance where many with better natural facilities for knowing them remained in an outer circle. But with Updegraff, interested only in enterprises west of the Mississippi and keeping Denver as his legal residence and exploiting himself as a Western man who hated Wall Street, I had a mere bowing acquaintance. This was not important, however, as each knew the other well by reputation. Our common intimacies made us intimates for all practical purposes.

Our connection was established soon after the development of my campaign against the Textile Trust had shown that I was after a big bag of the biggest game. We happened to have the same secret broker; and I suppose it was in his crafty brain that the idea of bringing us together was born. Be that as it may, he by gradual stages intimated to me that Updegraff would convey me secrets of “The Seven” in exchange for a guarantee that I would not attack his interests. I do not know what his motive in this treachery was—probably a desire to curb the power of his associates in industrial despotism. Each of “The Seven” hated and feared and suspected the other six with far more than the ordinary and proverbial rich man’s jealous dislike of other rich men. There was not one of them that did not bear the ever-smarting scars of vicious wounds, front and back, received from his fellows; there was not one that did not cherish the hope of overthrowing the rule of Seven and establishing the rule of One. At any rate, I accepted Updegraff’s proposition; thenceforth, though he stopped speaking to me when we happened to meet, as did all the other big bandits and most of their parasites and procurers, he kept me informed of every act “The Seven” resolved upon.

Thus I knew all about their “gentlemen’s agreement” to support the stock market, and that they had made Tavistock their agent for resisting any and all attempts to lower prices, and had given him practically unlimited funds to draw upon as he needed. I had Tavistock sounded on every side, but found no weak spot. There was no rascality he would not perpetrate for whoever employed him; but to his employer he was as loyal as a woman to a bad man. And for a time it looked as if “The Seven” had checkmated me. Those outsiders who had invested heavily in the great enterprises through which “The Seven” ruled were disposing of their holdings—cautiously, through fear of breaking the market. Money would pile up in the banks—money paid out by “The Seven” for their bonds and stocks, of which the people had become deeply suspicious. Then these deposits would be withdrawn—and I knew they were going into real estate investments, because news of a boom in real estate and in building was coming in from everywhere. But prices on the Stock Exchange continued to advance.

“They are too strong for you,” said Joe. “They will hold the market up until the public loses faith in you. Then they will sell out at boom prices, as the people rush in to buy.”

I might have wavered had I not been seeing Tavistock every day. He continued to wear his devil-may-care air; but I observed that he was aging swiftly—and I knew what that meant. Fighting all day to prevent breaks in the crucial stocks; planning most of the night how to prevent breaks the next day; watching the reserve resources of “The Seven” melt away. Those reserves were vast; also, “The Seven” controlled the United States Treasury, and were using its resources as their own; they were buying securities that would be almost worthless if they lost, but if they won, would be rebought by the public at the old swindling prices, when “confidence” was restored. But there was I, cannonading away from an impregnable position; as fast as they repaired breaches in their walls, my big guns of publicity tore new breaches. No wonder Tavistock had thinner hair and wrinkles and the drawn look about the eyes, nose and mouth. 31

With the battle thus raging doubtfully all along the line, on the one side “The Seven” and their armies of money and mercenaries and impressed slaves, on the other side the public, I in command, you will say that my yearning for distraction must have been gratified. If the road from his cell were long enough, the condemned man would be fretting less about the gallows than about the tight shoe that was making him limp and wince at every step. Besides, in human affairs it is the personal, always the personal. I soon got used to the crowds, to the big headlines in the newspapers, to the routine of cannonade and reply. But the old thorn, pressing persistently—I could not get used to that. In the midst of the adulation, of the blares upon the trumpets of fame that saluted my waking and were wafted to me as I fell asleep at night—in the midst of all the turmoil, I was often in a great and brooding silence, longing for her, now with the imperious energy of passion, and now with the sad ache of love. What was she doing? What was she thinking? Now that Langdon had again played her false for the old price, with what eyes was she looking into the future?

Alva, settled in a West Side apartment not far from the ancestral white elephant, telephoned, asking me to come. I went, because she could and would give me news of Anita. But as I entered her little drawing room, I said: “It was curiosity that brought me. I wished to see how you were installed.”

“Isn’t it nice and small?” cried she. “Billy and I haven’t the slightest difficulty in finding each other—as people so often have in the big houses.” And it was Billy this and Billy that, and what Billy said and thought and felt—and before they were married, she had called him William, and had declared “Billy” to be the most offensive combination of letters that ever fell from human lips.

“I needn’t ask if *you* are happy,” said I, presently, with a dismal failure at looking cheerful. “I can’t stay but a moment,” I added, and if I had obeyed my feelings, I’d have risen up and taken myself and my pain away from surroundings as hateful to me as a summer sunrise in a death chamber.

“Oh!” she exclaimed, in some confusion. “Then excuse me.” And she hastened from the room.

I thought she had gone to order, or perhaps to bring, the tea. The long minutes dragged away until ten had passed. Hearing a rustling in the hall, I rose, intending to take leave the instant she appeared. The rustling stopped just outside. I waited a few seconds, cried, “Well, I’m off. Next time I want to be alone, I’ll know where to come,” and advanced to the door. It was not Alva hesitating there; it was Anita.

“I beg your pardon,” said I, coldly.

If there had been room to pass I should have gone. What devil possessed me? Certainly in all our relations I had found her direct and frank; if anything, too frank. Doubtless it was the influence of my associations downtown, where for so many months I had been dealing with the “short-card” crowd of high finance, who would not play the game straight even where that was the easy way to win. My long, steady stretch in that stealthy and sinuous company had put me in the state of mind in which it is impossible to credit any human being with a motive that is decent or an action that is not a dead-fall. Thus the obvious change in her made no impression on me. Her haughtiness, her coldness, were gone, and with them had gone all that had been least like her natural self, most like the repellent conventional pattern to which her mother and her associates had molded her. But I was saying to myself: “A trap! Langdon has gone back to his wife. She turns to me.” And I 32
loved her and hated her. “Never,” thought I, “has she shown so poor an opinion of me as now.”

“My uncle told me day before yesterday that it was not he, but you,” she said, lifting her eyes to mine. It is inconceivable to me now that I could have misread their honest story; yet I did.

“I had no idea your uncle’s notion of honor was also eccentric,” said I, with a satirical smile that made the blood rush to her face.

“That is unjust to him,” she replied, earnestly. “He says he made you no promise of secrecy. And he confessed to me only because he wished to convince me that he had good reason for his high opinion of you.”

“Really!” said I, ironically. “And no doubt he found you open wide to conviction—*now*.” This a subtlety to let her know that I understood why she was seeking me.

“No,” she answered, lowering her eyes. “I knew—better than he.”

For an instant this, spoken in a voice I had long given up hope of ever hearing from her, staggered my cynical conviction. Then I said, mockingly: “Doubtless your opinion of me has been improving steadily ever since you heard that Mrs. Langdon has recovered her husband.”

She winced as if I had struck her. “Oh!” she murmured. If she had been the ordinary woman, who in every crisis with man instinctively resorts to weakness’ strongest weakness, tears, I might have a very different story to tell. But she fought back the tears in which her eyes were swimming and gathered herself together. “That is brutal,” she said, with not a touch of haughtiness, but not humbly, either. “But I deserve it.”

“There was a time,” I went on, swept in a swift current of cold rage—“there was a time when I would have taken you on almost any terms. A man never makes a complete fool of himself about a woman but once in his life, they say. I have done my time—and it is over.”

She sighed wearily. “Langdon came to see me soon after I left your house and went to my uncle,” she said. “I will tell you what happened.”

“I do not wish to hear,” replied I. “I have been waiting impatiently ever since you left for news of your plans.”

She grew white, and my heart smote me. She came into the room and seated herself. “Won’t you stop, please, for a moment longer?” she said. “I hope that, at least, we can part without bitterness. I understand now that everything is over between us. A woman’s vanity makes her belief that a man cares for her die hard. I am convinced now—I assure you I am. I shall trouble you no more about the past. But I have the right to ask you to hear me when I say that Langdon came, and that I myself sent him away; sent him back to his wife.”

“Touching self-sacrifice,” said I, ironically.

“No,” she replied. “I cannot claim any credit. I sent him away only because you and Alva had taught me how to judge him better. I do not despise him as do you; I know too well what has made him what he is. But I had to send him away.”

My comment was an incredulous look and shrug. “I must be going,” I said.

“You do not believe me?” she asked.

“In my place, would you believe?” replied I. “You say I have taught you. Well, you have taught me, too—for instance, that your years and years on your knees in the musty temple of conventionality before false gods have made you—fit only for the Langdon sort of thing. You have forgotten how to stand erect, and your eyes cannot bear the light.”

“I am sorry,” she said, slowly, hesitatingly, “that your faith in me has died just when I might, perhaps, have justified it. Ours has been a pitiful series of misunderstandings.”

“A trap! A trap!” I was warning myself. “You’ve been a fool long enough, Blacklock.” And aloud I said: “Well, Anita, the series is ended now. There’s no longer any occasion for our lying or posing to each other. Any arrangements your uncle’s lawyers suggest will be made.”

I was bowing, to leave without shaking hands with her. But she would not have it so. “Let us be friends, at 33
least,” she said, stretching out her long, slender arm and offering me her hand.

What a devil possessed me that day! With every atom of me longing for her, I yet was able to take her hand and say, with a smile that was, I doubt not, as mocking as my tone: “By all means, let us be friends. And I trust you will not think me discourteous if I say that I shall feel safer in our friendship when we are both on neutral ground.”

As I was turning away, her look, my own heart, made me turn again. I caught her by the shoulders. I gazed

into her eyes. “If I could only trust you, could only believe you!” I cried.

“You cared for me when I wasn’t worth it,” she said. “Now that I am more like what you once imagined me, you do not care.”

Up between us rose Langdon’s face—cynical, mocking, contemptuous. “Your heart is *his*! You told me so! Don’t *lie* to me!” I exclaimed. And before she could reply I was gone.

Out from under the spell of her presence, back among the tricksters and assassins, the traps and ambushes of Wall Street, I believed again; believed firmly the promptings of the devil that possessed me. “She would have given you a brief fool’s paradise,” said that devil. “Then what a hideous awakening!” And I cursed the day when New York’s insidious snobbishness had tempted my vanity into starting me on that degrading chase after “respectability.”

“If she does not move to free herself soon,” said I, to myself, “I will put my own lawyer to work. My right eye offends me. I will pluck it out.”

XXV.

“The Seven” made their fatal move on treacherous Updegraff’s treacherous advice, I suspect. But they would not have adopted his suggestion had it not been so exactly congenial to their own temper of arrogance and tyranny and contempt for the people who meekly, year after year, presented themselves for the shearing with fatuous bleats of enthusiasm.

“The Seven,” of course, controlled, directly or indirectly, all but a few of the newspapers with which I had advertising contracts. They also controlled the main sources through which the press was supplied with news—and often and well they had used this control, and surprisingly cautious had they been not so to abuse it that the editors and the public would become suspicious. When my war was at its height, when I was beginning to congratulate myself that the huge magazines of “The Seven” were empty almost to the point at which they must sue for peace on my own terms, all in four days forty-three of my sixty-seven newspapers—and they the most important—notified me that they would no longer carry out their contracts to publish my daily letter. They gave as their reason, not the real one, fear of “The Seven,” but fear that I would involve them in ruinous libel suits. I who had *legal* proof for every statement I made; I who was always careful to understate! Next, one press association after another ceased to send out my letter as news, though they had been doing so regularly for months. The public had grown tired of the “sensation,” they said.

I countered with a telegram to one or more newspapers in every city and large town in the United States:

> “The Seven” are trying to cut the wires between the truth and the public. If you wish my daily letter, telegraph me direct and I will send it at my expense.

The response should have warned “The Seven.” But it did not. Under their orders the telegraph companies refused to transmit the letter. I got an injunction. It was obeyed in typical, corrupt corporation fashion—they sent my matter, but so garbled that it was unintelligible. I appealed to the courts. In vain.

To me it was clear as sun in cloudless noonday sky that there could be but one result of this insolent and despotic denial of my rights and the rights of the people, this public confession of the truth of my charges. I waited for the cataclysm.

Thursday—Friday—Saturday. Apparently all was tranquil; apparently the people accepted the Wall Street theory that I was an “exploded sensation.” “The Seven” began to preen themselves; the strain upon them to maintain prices, if no less than for three months past, was not notably greater; the crisis would pass, I and my exposures would be forgotten, the routine of reaping the harvests and leaving only the gleanings for the sowers would soon be placidly resumed.

Sunday. Roebuck, taken ill as he was passing the basket in the church of which he was the shining light, died at midnight—a beautiful, peaceful death, they say, with his daughter reading the Bible aloud, and his lips moving in prayer. Some hold that, had he lived, the tranquillity would have continued; but this is the view of those who can not realize that the tide of affairs is no more controlled by the “great men” than is the river led down to the sea by its surface flotsam, by which we measure the speed and direction of its current. Under that terrific tension, which to the shallow seemed a calm, something had to give way. If the dam had not yielded where Roebuck stood guard, it must have yielded somewhere else, or might have gone all in one grand crash.

Monday. You know the story of the artist and his statue of Grief—how he molded the features a hundred times, always failing, always getting an anti-climax, until at last, in despair, he gave up the impossible and finished the statue with a veil over the face. I have tried again and again to assemble words that would give some not too inadequate impression of that tremendous week in which, with a succession of explosions, each like the crack of doom, the financial structure that housed eighty millions of people burst, collapsed, was engulfed. I cannot. I must leave it to your memory or your imagination.

For years the financial leaders, crazed by the excess of power which the people had in ignorance and over-confidence and slovenly good-nature permitted them to acquire, had been tearing out the honest foundations on which alone so vast a structure can hope to rest solid and secure. They had been substituting rotten beams painted to look like stone and iron. The crash had to come; the sooner the better—when a thing is wrong, each day’s delay compounds the cost of righting it. So, with all the horrors of Wild Week in mind, all its physical and mental suffering, all the ruin and rioting and bloodshed, I still can insist that I am justly proud of my share in bringing it about. The blame and the shame are wholly upon those who made Wild Week necessary and inevitable.

In catastrophes the cry is, “Each for himself!” But in a cataclysm the obvious wise selfishness is generosity,

and the cry is, “Stand together, for, singly, we perish.” This was a cataclysm. No one could save himself, except the few who, taking my often urged advice and following my example, had entered the ark of ready money. Farmer and artisan and professional man and laborer owed merchant; merchant owed banker; banker owed depositor. No one could pay because no one could get what was due him or could realize upon his property. The endless chain of credit that binds together the whole of modern society had snapped in a thousand places. It must be repaired, instantly and securely. But how—and by whom?

I issued a clear statement of the situation; I showed in minute detail how the people, standing together under the leadership of the honest men of property, could easily force the big bandits to consent to an honest, just, rock-founded, iron-built reconstruction. My statement appeared in all the morning papers throughout the land. Turn back to it; read it. You will say that I was right. Well——

Toward two o’clock Inspector Crawford came into my private office, escorted by Joe. I saw in Joe’s seamed, green-gray face that some new danger had arisen. “You’ve got to get out of this,” said he. “The mob in front of our place fills the three streets. It’s made up of crowds turned away from the suspended banks.”

I remembered the sullen faces and the hisses as I entered the office that morning earlier than usual. My 35
windows were closed to keep out the street noises; but now that my mind was up from the work in which I had been absorbed, I could hear the sounds of many voices, even through the thick plate glass.

“We’ve got two hundred policemen here,” said the inspector. “Five hundred more are on the way. But—really, Mr. Blacklock, unless we can get you away, there’ll be serious trouble. Those damn’ newspapers. Every one of them denounced you this morning, and the people are in a fury against you.”

I went toward the door.

“Hold on, Matt,” cried Joe, springing at me and seizing me. “Where are you going?”

“To tell them what I think of them,” replied I, sweeping him aside. For my blood was up, and I was enraged against the poor cowardly fools.

“For God’s sake, don’t show yourself,” he begged. “If you don’t care for your own life, think of the rest of us. We’ve fixed a route through buildings and under streets up to Broadway. Your electric is waiting for you there.”

“It won’t do,” I said. “I’ll face ’em—it’s the only way.”

I went to the window, and was about to throw up one of the sunblinds for a look at them; Crawford stopped me. “They’ll stone the building and then storm it,” said he. “You must go at once, by the route we’ve arranged.”

“Even if you tell them I’m gone, they won’t believe it,” replied I.

“We can look out for that,” said Joe, eager to save me and caring nothing about consequences to himself. But I had unsettled the inspector.

“Send for my electric to come down here,” said I. “I’ll go out alone and get in it and drive away.”

“That’ll never do!” cried Joe.

But the inspector said: “You’re right, Mr. Blacklock. It’s a bare chance. You may take ’em by surprise. Again, some fellow may yell and throw a stone, and——” He did not need to finish.

Joe looked wildly at me. “You mustn’t do it, Matt!” he exclaimed. “You’ll precipitate a riot, Crawford, if you permit this.”

But the inspector was telephoning for my electric. Then he went into the adjoining room, where he commanded a view of the entrance. Silence between Joe and me until he returned. “The electric is coming down the street,” said he.

I rose. “Good,” said I. “I’m ready.”

“Wait until the other police get here,” advised Crawford.

“If the mob is in the temper you describe,” said I, “the less that’s done to irritate it, the better. I must go out as if I hadn’t a suspicion of danger.”

The inspector eyed me with an expression that was highly flattering to my vanity.

“I’ll go with you,” said Joe, starting up from his stupor.

“No,” I replied. “You and the other fellows can take the underground route, if it’s necessary.”

“It won’t be necessary,” put in the inspector. “As soon as I’m rid of you and have my additional force, I’ll clear the streets.” He went to the door. “Wait, Mr. Blacklock, until I’ve had time to get out to my men.”

Perhaps ten seconds after he disappeared, I, without further words, put on my hat, lit a cigar, shook Joe’s wet, trembling hand, left in it my private keys and the memorandum of the combination of my private vault. Then I sallied forth.

I had always had a ravenous appetite for excitement, and I had been in many a tight place; but for the first time in my life I had a sense of equilibrium between my internal energy and the outside situation. As I stepped from my street door and glanced about me, I had no feeling of danger. The whole situation seemed so simple. There stood the electric, just across the narrow stretch of sidewalk; there were the two hundred police, under Crawford’s orders, scattered everywhere through the crowd, and good-naturedly jostling and pushing to create distraction. Without haste, I got into my machine. I calmly met the gaze of those thousands, quiet as so many 36
barrels of gunpowder before the explosion. The chauffeur turned the machine.

“Go slow,” I called to him. “You might hurt somebody.”

But he had his orders from the inspector. He suddenly darted ahead at full speed. The mob scattered in every direction, and we were in Broadway, bound up town full-tilt, before I or the mob realized what he was about.

I called to him to slow down. He paid not the slightest attention. I leaned from the window and looked up at him. It was not my chauffeur; it was a man who had the unmistakable but indescribable marks of the plainclothes policeman. “Where are you going?” I shouted.

“You’ll find out when we arrive,” he shouted back, grinning.

I settled myself and waited—what else was there to do? Soon I guessed we were headed for the pier off which my yacht was anchored. As we dashed on to it, I saw that it was filled with police, both in uniform and in plain clothes. I descended. A detective sergeant stepped up to me. “We are here to help you to your yacht,” he explained. “You wouldn’t be safe anywhere in New York—no more would the place that harbored you.”

He had both common sense and force on his side. I got into the launch. Four detective sergeants accompanied me, and went aboard with me. “Go ahead,” said one of them to my captain. He looked at me for orders. “We are in the hands of our guests,” said I. “Let them have their way.”

We steamed down the bay and out to sea.

* * * * *

From Maine to Texas the cry rose and swelled: “Blacklock is responsible! What does it matter whether he lied or told the truth? See the results of his crusade! He ought to be pilloried! He ought to be killed! He is the enemy of the human race. He has almost plunged the whole civilized world into bankruptcy and civil war.” And they turned eagerly to the very autocrats who had been oppressing and robbing them. “You have the genius for finance and industry. Save us!”

If you did not know, you could guess how those patriots with the “genius for finance and industry” responded. When they had done, when their program was in effect, Langdon, Melville and Updegraff were the three richest men in the country, and as powerful as Octavius, Anthony and Lepidus after Philippi. They had saddled upon the reorganized finance and industry of the nation heavier taxes than ever, and a vaster and more expensive and more luxurious army of their parasites. The people had risen for financial and industrial freedom; they had paid its fearful price; then, in senseless panic and terror, they flung it away. I have read that one of the inscriptions on Apollo’s temple at Delphi was, “Man, the fool of the farce.” Truly, the gods must have created us for their amusement; and when Olympus palls, they ring up the curtain on some such screaming comedy as was that. It

“Makes the fancy chuckle, while the heart doth ache.”

XXVI.

My enemies caused it to be widely believed that Wild Week was my deliberate contrivance for the sole purpose of enriching myself. Thus they got me a reputation for almost superhuman daring, for Satanic astuteness at cold-blooded calculation. I do not deserve the admiration and respect which my success-worshiping fellow-countrymen lay at my feet. True, I did greatly enrich myself; but *not until the Monday after Wild Week*.

Not until I had pondered on men and events with the assistance of the newspapers my detective protectors and jailers permitted to be brought aboard—not until the last hope of turning Wild Week to the immediate public advantage had sputtered out like a lost man’s last match, did I think of benefiting myself, of seizing the opportunity to strengthen myself for the future. On Monday morning I said to Sergeant Mulholland: “I want to go ashore and send some telegrams.” 37

The sergeant is one of the detective bureau’s “dress-suit men.” He is by nature phlegmatic and cynical. His experience has put over that a veneer of weary politeness. We had become great friends during our enforced inseparable companionship. For Joe, who looked on me somewhat as a mother looks on a brilliant but erratic son, had, as I soon discovered, elaborated a wonderful program for me. It included a watch on me day and night, lest, through rage or despondency, I should try to do violence to myself. A fine character, that Joe! But, to return, Mulholland answered my request for shore leave with a soothing smile. “Can’t do it, Mr. Blacklock,” he said. “Our orders are positive. But when we put in at New London and send ashore for further instructions, and for the papers, you can send your telegrams.”

“As you please,” said I. And I gave him a cipher telegram to Joe—an order to invest my store of cash, which meant practically my whole fortune, in the gilt-edged securities that were to be had for cash at a small fraction of their actual value.

This on the Monday after Wild Week, please note. I would have helped the people to deliver themselves from the bondage of the bandits. They would not have it. I would even have sacrificed my all in trying to save them in spite of themselves. But what is one sane man against a stampeded multitude of maniacs? For confirmation of my disinterestedness, I point to all those weeks and months during which I waged costly warfare on “The Seven,” who would gladly have given me more than I now have, could I have been bribed to desist. But when I was compelled to admit that I had overestimated my fellow-men, that the people wear the yoke because they have not yet become intelligent and competent enough to be free, then and not till then did I abandon the hopeless struggle.

And I did not go over to the bandits; I simply resumed my own neglected personal affairs and made Wild Week at least a personal triumph.

There is nothing of the spectacular in my make-up. I have no belief in the value of martyrs and martyrdom. Causes are not won—and in my humble opinion never have been won—in the graveyards. Alive and afoot and armed, and true to my cause, I am the dreaded menace to systematic and respectable robbery. What possible good could have come of mobs killing me and the bandits dividing my estate?

But why should I seek to justify myself? I care not a rap for the opinion of my fellow-men. They sought my life when they should have been hailing me as a deliverer; now they look up to me because they falsely believe me guilty of what I regard as an infamy.

My guards expected to be recalled on Tuesday. But Melville heard what Crawford had done about me, and straightway used his influence to have me detained until the new grip of the old gang was secure. Saturday afternoon we put in at Newport for the daily communication with the shore. When the launch returned, Mulholland brought the papers to me, lounging aft in a mass of cushions under the awning. “We are going ashore,” said he. “The order has come.”

I had a sudden sense of loneliness. “I’ll take you down to New York,” said I. “I must put my guests off where I took them up.”

As we steamed slowly westward I read the papers. The country was rapidly readjusting itself, was returning to the conditions before the upheaval. The “financiers”—the same old gang, except for a few of the weaker brethren ruined and a few strong outsiders who had slipped in during the confusion—were employing all the old, familiar devices for deceiving and robbing the people. The upset milking-stool was righted, and the milker was seated again and busy, the good old cow standing without so much as shake of horn or switch of tail. “Mulholland,” said I, “what do you think of this business of living?”

“I’ll tell you, Mr. Blacklock,” said he. “I used to fuss and fret a good deal about it. But I don’t any more. I’ve 38
got a house up in the Bronx, and a bit of land round it. And there’s Mrs. Mulholland and four little Mulhollands and me—that’s my country and my party and my religion. The rest is off my beat, and I don’t give a damn for it. I don’t care which fakir gets to be President, or which swindler gets to be rich. Everything works out somehow, and the best any man can do is to mind his own business.”

“Mulholland—Mrs. Mulholland—four little Mulhollands,” said I reflectively. “That’s about as much as one man could attend to properly. And—you are ‘on the level,’ aren’t you?”

“Some say honesty’s the best policy,” replied he. “Some say it isn’t. I don’t know, and I don’t care, whether it is or it isn’t. It’s *my* policy. And we six seem to have got along on it so far.”

I sent my “guests” ashore the next morning. “No, I’ll stay aboard,” said I to Mulholland, as he stood aside for me to precede him down the gangway to the launch. I went into the watch pocket of my trousers and drew out the folded two one-thousand-dollar bills I always carried—it was a habit formed in my youthful, gambling days. I handed him one of the bills. He hesitated.

“For the four little Mulhollands,” I urged.

He put it in his pocket. I watched him and his men depart with a heavy heart. I felt alone, horribly alone, without a tie or an interest. Some of the morning papers spoke respectfully of me as one of the strong men who had ridden the flood and had been landed by it on the heights of wealth and power. Admiration and envy lurked even in sneers at my “unscrupulous plotting.” Since I had wealth, plenty of wealth, I did not need character. Of what use was character in such a world except as a commodity to exchange for wealth?

“Any orders, sir?” interrupted my captain.

I looked round that vast and vivid scene of sea and land activities. I looked along the city’s titanic sky-line—the mighty fortresses of trade and commerce piercing the heavens and flinging to the wind their black banners of defiance. I felt that I was under the walls of hell itself.

“To get away from this,” replied I to the waiting captain. “Go back down the Sound—to Dawn Hill.”

Yes, I would go to the peaceful, soothing country, to my dogs and houses and those faithful servants bound to me by our common love for the same animals. “Men to cross swords with, to amuse oneself with,” I mused. “But dogs and horses to live with.” I pictured myself at the kennels—the joyful uproar the instant instinct warned the dogs of my coming; how they would leap and bark and tremble in a very ecstasy of delight as I stood among them; how jealous all the others would be as I selected one to caress.

“Send her ahead as fast as she’ll go,” I called to the captain.

As the *Albatross* steamed into the little harbor, I saw Mowbray Langdon’s *Indolence* at anchor. I glanced toward Steuben Point—where his cousins, the Vivians, live—and thought I recognized his launch at their pier. We saluted the *Indolence*; the *Indolence* saluted us. My launch was piped away and took me ashore. I strolled along the path that wound round the base of the hill toward the kennels. At the crossing of the path down from the house, I paused and lingered on the glimpse of one of the corner towers of the great showy palace. I was muttering something—I listened to myself. It was: “Mulholland, Mrs. Mulholland and the four little Mulhollands.” And I felt like laughing aloud, such a joke was it that I should be envying a policeman his potato patch and his fat wife and his four brats, and that he should be in a position to pity me.

You may be imagining that, through all, Anita had been dominating my mind. That is the way it is in the romances; but not in life. No doubt there are men who brood upon the impossible, and moon and maunder away their lives over the grave of a dead love; no doubt there are people who will say that, because I did not shoot 39
Langdon or her or myself, or fly to a desert, or pose in the crowded places of the world as the last scene of a tragedy, I therefore cared little about her. I offer them this suggestion: A man strong enough to give a love worth a woman’s while is strong enough to live on without her when he finds he may not live with her.

As I stood there that summer day, looking toward the crest of the hill, at the mocking mausoleum of my dead dream, I realized what the incessant battle of the Street had meant to me. “There is peace for me only in the storm,” said I. “But, thank God, there is peace for me somewhere.”

Through the foliage I had glimpses of some one coming slowly down the zigzag path. Presently, at one of the turnings half-way up the hill, appeared Mowbray Langdon. “What is he doing here?” thought I, scarcely able to believe my eyes. “Here of all places!” And then I forgot the strangeness of his being at Dawn Hill in the strangeness of his expression. For it was apparent, even at the distance which separated us, that he was

suffering from some great and recent blow. He looked old and haggard; he walked like a man who neither knows nor cares where he is going.

He had not seen me, and my impulse was to avoid him by continuing on toward the kennels. I had no especial feeling against him; I had not lost Anita because she cared for him or he for her, but because she did not care for me. Simply that to meet would be awkward, disagreeable for us both. At the slight noise of my movement to go on, he halted, glanced round eagerly, as if he hoped the sound had been made by some one he wished to see. His glance fell on me. He stopped short, was for an instant disconcerted; then his face lighted up with devilish joy. “You!” he cried. “Just the man!” And he descended more rapidly.

At first I could make nothing of this remark. But as he drew nearer and nearer, and his ugly mood became more and more apparent, I felt that he was looking forward to provoking me into giving him a distraction from whatever was tormenting him. I waited. A few minutes and we were face to face, I outwardly calm, but my anger slowly lighting up as he deliberately applied to it the torch of his insolent eyes. He was wearing his old familiar air of cynical assurance. Evidently, with his recovered fortune, he had recovered his conviction of his great superiority to the rest of the human race—the child had climbed back on the chair that made it tall and had forgotten its tumble. And I was wondering again that I, so short a time before, had been crude enough to be fascinated and fooled by those tawdry posings and pretenses. For the man, as I now saw him, was obviously shallow and vain, a slave to those poor “man-of-the-world” passions—ostentation, and cynicism, and skill at vices old as mankind and tedious as a treadmill, the commonplace routine of the idle and foolish and purposeless. A clever, handsome fellow, but the more pitiful that he was by nature above the uses to which he prostituted himself.

He fought hard to keep his eyes steadily on mine; but they would waver and shift. Not, however, before I had found deep down in them the beginnings of fear. “You see, you were mistaken,” said I. “You have nothing to say to me—or I to you.”

He knew I had looked straight to the bottom of his real self, had seen the coward that is in every man who has been bred to appearances only. Up rose his vanity, the coward’s substitute for courage. “You think I am afraid of you?” he sneered, bluffing and blustering like the school bully.

“I don’t in the least care whether you are or not,” replied I. “What are you doing here, anyhow?”

It was as if I had thrown off the cover of a furnace. “I came to get the woman I love,” he cried. “You stole her from me. You tricked me. But, by God, Blacklock, I’ll never pause until I get her back and punish you.” He was brave enough now, drunk with the fumes from his brave words. “All my life,” he raged arrogantly on, “I’ve had whatever I wanted. I’ve let nothing interfere—nothing and nobody. I’ve been too forbearing with you—first because I knew she could never care for you, and then because I rather admired your pluck and impudence. I like to see fellows kick their way up among us from the common people.”

I put my hand on his shoulder. No doubt the fiend that rose within me, as from the dead, looked at him from my eyes. He has great physical strength, but he winced under that weight and grip, and across his face flitted the terror which must come to any man at first sense of being in the angry clutch of one stronger than he. I slowly released him—I had tested and realized my physical superiority; to use it would be cheap and cowardly. “You can’t provoke me to descend to your level,” said I, with the easy philosophy of him who clearly has the better of the argument.

He was shaking from head to foot, not with terror, but with impotent rage. How much we owe to accident! The mere accident of my physical superiority had put him at hopeless disadvantage; had made him feel inferior to me as no victory of mental or moral superiority could possibly have done. And I myself felt a greater contempt for him than the discovery of his treachery and his shallowness had together inspired.

“I shan’t indulge in flapdoodle,” I went on. “I’ll be frank. A year ago, if any man had faced me with a claim upon a woman who was married to me, I’d probably have dealt with him as your vanity and what you call ‘honor’ would force you to try to deal with a similar situation. But I live to learn, and I’m, fortunately, not afraid to follow a new light. There is the vanity of so-called honor; there is also the demand of justice—of fair play. As I have told her, so I now tell you—she is free to go. But I shall say one thing to you that I did not say to her. If you do not deal fairly with her, I shall see to it that there are ten thorns to every rose in that bed of roses on which you lie. You are contemptible in many ways—perhaps that’s why women like you. But there must be some good in you, or possibilities of good, or you could not have won and kept *her* love.”

He was staring at me with a dazed expression. I rather expected him to show some of that amused contempt with which men of his sort always receive a new idea that is beyond the range of their narrow, conventional minds. For I did not expect him to understand why I was not only willing, but even eager, to relinquish a woman whom I could hold only by asserting a property right in her. And I do not think he did understand me, though his manner changed to a sort of grudging respect. He was, I believe, about to make some impulsive, generous speech, when we heard the quick strokes of iron-shod hoofs on the path from the kennels and the stables—is there any sound more arresting? Past us at a gallop swept a horse, on his back—Anita. She was not in riding-habit; the wind fluttered the sleeves of her blouse, blew her uncovered hair this way and that about her beautiful face. She sped on toward the landing, though I fancied she had seen us.

Anita at Dawn Hill; Langdon, in a furious temper, descending from the house toward the landing; Anita presently riding like mad—“to overtake him,” thought I. And I read confirmation in his triumphant eyes. In another mood, I suppose my fury would have been beyond my power to restrain it. Just then—the day grew dark for me, and I wanted to hide away somewhere. Heartsick, I was ashamed for her, hated myself for having blundered into surprising her.

She reappeared at the turn round which she had vanished. I now noted that she was riding without saddle or bridle, with only a halter round the horse’s neck—then she did see us, had stopped and come back as soon as she could. She dropped from the horse, looked swiftly at me, at him, at me again, with intense anxiety. “I saw your yacht in the harbor only a moment ago,” she said to me. She was almost panting. “I feared you might meet him. So I came.”

"As you see, he is quite—intact," said I. "I must ask that you and he leave the place at once." And I went rapidly along the path toward the kennels. 41

An exclamation from Langdon forced me to turn in spite of myself. He was half kneeling, was holding her in his arms. At that sight, the savage in me shook himself free. I dashed toward them with I knew not what curses bursting from me. Langdon, intent upon her, did not realize until I sent him reeling backward to the earth and snatched her up. Her white face, her closed eyes, her limp form made my fury instantly collapse. In my confusion I thought she was dead. I laid her gently on the grass and supported her head, so small, so gloriously crowned, the face so still and sweet and white, like the stainless entrance to a stainless shrine. How that horrible fear changed my whole way of looking at her, at him, at her and him, at everything!

Her eyelids were quivering—her eyes were opening—her bosom was rising and falling slowly as she drew long, uncertain breaths. She shuddered, sat up, started up. "Go! go!" she cried. "Bring him back! Bring him back! Bring him——"

There she recognized me. "Oh!" she said, and gave a great sigh of relief. She leaned against a tree and looked at Langdon. "You are still here? Then tell him."

Langdon gazed sullenly at the ground. "I can't," he answered. "I don't believe it. Besides—he has given you to me. Let us go. Let me take you to the Vivians'." He threw out his arms in a wild, passionate gesture; he was utterly unlike himself. His emotion burst through and shattered pose and cynicism and hard crust of selfishness like the exploding powder bursting the shell. "I can't give you up, Anita!" he exclaimed desperately. "I can't! I can't!"

But her gaze was all this time steadily on me, as if she feared I would go, should she look away. "I will tell you myself," she said rapidly, to me. "We—uncle Howard and I—read in the papers how they had all turned against you, and he brought me over here. He has been telegraphing for you. This morning he went to town to search for you. About an hour ago Langdon came. I refused to see him, as I have ever since the time I told you about at Alva's. He persisted, until at last I had the servant request him to leave the house."

"But *now* there's no longer any reason for your staying, Anita," he pleaded. "He has said you are free. Why stay when *you* would really no more be here than if you were to go, leaving one of your empty dresses?"

She had not for an instant taken her gaze from me; and so strange were her eyes, so compelling, that I seemed unable to move or speak. But now she released me to blaze upon him—and never shall I forget any detail of her face or voice as she said to him: "That is false, Mowbray Langdon. I told you the truth when I told you I loved him!"

So violent was her emotion that she had to pause for self-control. And I? I was overwhelmed, dazed, stunned. When she went on, she was looking at neither of us. "Yes, I loved him almost from the first—from the day he came to the box at the races. I was ashamed, poor creature that my parents had made me! I was ashamed of it. And I tried to hate him, and thought I did. And when he showed me that he no longer cared, my pride goaded me into the folly of trying to listen to you. But I loved him more than ever. And as you and he stand here, I am ashamed again—ashamed that I was ever so blind and ignorant and prejudiced as to compare him with"—she looked at Langdon—"with you. Do you believe me now—now that I humble myself before him in your presence?"

I should have had no heart at all if I had not felt pity for him. His face was gray, and on it were those signs of age that strong emotion brings to the surface after forty. "You could have convinced me in no other way," he replied, after a silence, and in a voice I should not have recognized.

Silence again. Presently he raised his head, and with something of his old cynicism bowed to her. "You have avenged much and many," said he. "I have often had a presentiment that my day of wrath would come." He lifted his hat, bowed to me without looking at me, and, drawing the tatters of his pose still further over his wounds, moved away toward the landing. 42

I, still in a stupor, watched him until he had disappeared. When I turned to her, she dropped her eyes. "Uncle Howard will be back this afternoon," said she. "If I may, I'll stay at the house until he comes to take me."

A weary, half-suppressed sigh escaped from her. I knew how she must be reading my silence, but I was still unable to speak. She went to the horse, browsing near by; she stroked his muzzle. Lingeringly she twined her fingers in his mane, as if about to spring to his back! That reminded me of a thousand and one changes in her—little changes, each a trifle in itself, yet, taken all together, making a complete transformation.

"Let me help you," I managed to say. And I bent, and made a step of my hand.

She touched her fingers to my shoulder, set her narrow, graceful foot upon my palm. But she did not rise. I glanced up; she was gazing wistfully down at me. "Women have to learn by experience just as do men," said she forlornly. "Yet men will not tolerate it."

I suppose I must suddenly have looked what I was unable to put into words—for her eyes grew very wide, and with a cry that was a sigh and a sob and a laugh and a caress all in one, she slid into my arms and her face was burning against mine.

"Do you remember the night at the theater," she murmured, "when your lips almost touched my neck?—I loved you then—Black Matt!—*Black Matt!*"

And I found voice; and the horse wandered away.

* * * * *

What more?

How Langdon eased his pain and soothed his vanity? Whenever an old Babylonian nobleman had a misfortune, he used to order all his slaves to be lashed, that their shrieks and moans might join his in appeasing the god who was punishing him. Langdon went back to Wall Street, and for months he made all within his

power suffer; in his fury he smashed fortunes, lowered wages, raised prices, reveled in the blasts of a storm of impotent curses. But you do not care to hear about that.

As for myself, what could I tell that you do not know or guess? Now that all men, even the rich, even the parasites of the bandits, groan under their tyranny and their taxes, is it strange that the resentment against me has disappeared, that my warnings are remembered, that I am popular? I might forecast what I purpose to do when the time is ripe. But I am not given to prophecy. I will only say that I think I shall, in due season, go into action again—profiting by my experience in the futility of trying to hasten evolution by revolution. Meanwhile——

As I write, I can look up from the paper, and out upon the lawn, at a woman—what a woman!—teaching a baby to walk. And, assisting her, there is a boy, himself not yet an expert at walking. I doubt if you'd have to glance twice at that boy to know he is my son. Well—I have borrowed a leaf from Mulholland's philosophy. I commend it to you.

THE END.

THE senator and Egeria sat in the rich man's tent—a marble palace by the sea—and the little nook in the supper room upon which they had fastened their desire was at last untenanted. Now they slipped into the recently vacated chairs with a smile of content into each other's eyes across the board.

"A moment ago," said the senator, unfolding his napkin, "we gazed at those who slowly sipped their coffee and wished that our belief still held its lost Paradise—Hell—that we might mentally consign them thither. A moment since we were the people, hungry, clamorous, watching them 'spill the bread and spoil the wine.' In the twinkling of an eye our attitude changed. We now look with indifferent scorn upon the waiting mob, and advise them if they have no bread to eat cake. What a range of experience it gives us! We are one with the labor agitator elevated to the presidency of a trust. We are the men in the saddle—after us, the deluge!"

"We are the conquerors, at any rate," observed Egeria. "Ours is this delicate *pâté*, this soft, smooth wine. *Vive le* rich man! May he entertain oftener! It is unsurpassed."

"Save by Nature," returned the senator. "You have failed to notice that she too entertains to-night. What a fête! The sea dashing the froth of its 'night and its might' against the wall, that arch of honeysuckle, sweeter than a bank of violets, and yonder pale siren, the moon! Fair to-night, I drink to you!"

"After all," mused Egeria, "the high gods bestowed on Nature a woman's privilege—the last word. Art may declaim, Science explain, Religion dogmatize; but Nature has the last word."

"And the last word, the one word, the eternal word, is 'beauty,'" he amended.

Egeria shrugged her shoulders. "A matter of surfaces. The mask nature wears to hide her hideous processes of decay. As the lovely heroine of a recent novel says, 'the beauty that rules the world is lodged in the epidermis.'"

"A superficial and essentially feminine point of view," commented the senator. "Beauty"—with a wave of the hand—"is a matter of the soul. The skin-deep variety is not worth considering."

"But most women would pay the price of a pound of radium for that infinitesimal depth," she returned, flippantly.

"Your sex is hardly a judge of what constitutes feminine beauty." There was condescension in the senator's tone. "Here, I can prove the point for you. Grant me your indulgence and I will tell you a little story." The senator rather fancied himself as a *raconteur*.

"There was once a woman who was regarded by all the men of her acquaintance as ugly, stupid and tiresome, and by all the women who knew her as beautiful, brilliant, fascinating and altogether delightful. Their different points of view led to so much discussion and bickering that they finally decided to submit the matter to a referee, a wise old fellow, who, after a very thorough acquaintance with the world and its works, had elected to spend the remainder of his days in seclusion.

"The philosopher kindly consented to decide the matter, and consequently gave the lady in question due study. Ultimately he announced his decision.

"'Both sides are right,' he said. 'She is the ugliest, stupidest, most aggressive creature on earth; but masculine indifference and dislike have thrown such a halo about her that all women see her as beautiful and charming.'"

During the recital of this tale, a flush had risen on Egeria's cheek, and she tapped her foot with growing impatience upon the floor. Barely had he finished when she cried, explosively:

"I hate men! Your fable proves nothing but the ineffable conceit of your sex!"

The senator pursued his advantage. "I saw a similar remark in a book I was reading the other day"—pleasantly. "'I hate men,' said one woman to another; 'I wish they were all at the bottom of the sea.'

"'Then,' replied the woman to whom she spoke, 'we would all be purchasing diving bells.'

"But"—hastily, as Egeria half rose—"you really don't consider women judges of what constitutes feminine beauty?"

"The only judges. We are not dazzled, hypnotized, by a mere matter of exquisite coloring, the fugitive glance of too expressive eyes. We are able to bring a calm, unbiased scrutiny to bear upon it, to fully analyze it. *We* do not confuse beauty with charm."

"Are the two, then, distinct?" he pondered.

"Are they distinct?" repeated Egeria, scornfully. "Are they distinct? Some one—a man, of course—has said that if Cleopatra had been without a front tooth the whole history of the world would have been changed; and Heine, you remember, when asked about Madame de Staël, remarked that, had Helen looked so, Troy would not have known a siege. Absurd! The sirens of this world who have swayed men's hearts and imaginations have never been dependent on their front teeth or their back hair. If Cleopatra had lost a whole row, Antony and every other man who knew her would have insisted that women in the full possession of their molars were repulsive."

“Ah!” cried the senator, triumphantly, “your words justify me. Beauty is some subtle essence of the soul, as I said.”

A faint, malicious sparkle brightened Egeria’s eyes. “Really, now, would you call the sirens of this world soulful creatures? They were and are psychologists, intuitive diviners of a man’s moods, capable of meeting him on every side of his nature; but——”

“Do you mean,” interrupted the senator, his eyes reflecting the sparkle of hers, “that their dominion over us is through an intellectual comprehension of our moods?”

“Good heavens, no!” disclaimed Egeria, in shocked tones. “Who said anything about the intellectual faculties of woman? I hear enough of them at my club. What I am trying to get at is that beauty without charm has always received a very frigid appreciation. Men prate of it, adore it, yawn, and—leave it. Of the two, they infinitely prefer charm without beauty. Now, senator, what is it you really admire in women?”

“I will tell you if you tell me first what women really admire in men?”

“Ah!” cried Egeria, with complacency, “there we have the advantage of you. We show twice the solid, substantial reasons for the faith that is in us that you do. Woman admires in man masculinity, virility; then brains, ability, distinction. She may loudly profess her devotion to ‘the carpet knight so trim.’ ‘Such a dear, thoughtful fellow, so sweet and sympathetic!’ But her secret preference is profoundly for the one who is ‘in stern fight a warrior grim, in camp a leader sage.’ She has not altered since the Stone Age, not in the least degree. When she was dragged by the hair from her accustomed cave to make a happy home in a new one, do you fancy she gave a thought to the recent companion of her joys and sorrows who was lying somewhere with his head stove in? Not she. Her pity was swallowed up in admiration for the victor, who, lightly ignoring the marks of her teeth and nails, haled her along to his den. It is to the strong men of this earth that the heart of woman goes out.

“Printed articles on the home,” she went on, with light derision, “are always urging husbands to show the same tender attention and loving courtesies to their wives after marriage as before. In reality, nothing would so bore a woman. Man is an idealist; woman is intensely practical. She would infinitely prefer to have him out winning the bread and butter and jam than sitting at her feet, penning sonnets to her eyebrow. After an experience of the before-wedded, tender courtesies, she would exclaim: ‘John, please don’t be such a fool. I am so sick of this lovey-dovey business, that I would really enjoy a good beating.’

“You see, she knows instinctively that ‘man’s love is of his life, a thing apart,’ and that, if he prefers showing her lover-like attentions to ranging the court, camp, church, the vessel and the mart, she has a freak on her hands. But how I run on; and you haven’t told me yet what it is that men admire in women?”

“Beauty,” still insisted the senator, enthusiastically. “Goodness, truth, constancy, amiability!”

Egeria looked at him with reproach. “Do you really mean it?”—earnestly.

“Of course I do”—surprised at her tone.

“I dare say any man to whom I put the question would answer in the same way.” Her eyebrows expressed resignation. “Stay, I will phrase it differently; why do you think you love a particular woman?”

The senator could not resist the opportunity. “Because she is you!”—gallantly.

“Stop trifling.” Egeria was becoming petulant. “This is a serious matter. Now, answer properly; why do you think you love a particular woman?”

“Because”—emphatically—“I imagine her, rightly or wrongly, to be the possessor of those qualities I have enumerated.”

Egeria sighed. “And you still stick to it?”

“Of course I do,” he responded, with assurance.

She shook her head. “Nonsense! Men are less exacting than you think—and more. They ask neither beauty nor grace nor unselfishness of woman; they demand but one thing—you must charm me. For me you must possess that indefinable quality we call magnetism. Emerson puts it all in a nutshell, voices the essentially masculine point of view:”

I hold it of little matter
Whether your jewel be of pure water—
A rose diamond, or a white—
But whether it dazzle me with light.

“But,” combated the senator, “you must admit that Solomon had ample opportunity to make a study of your sex, and he reserved all his praise for the good woman, averring that her price was above rubies.”

Egeria’s smile was faintly cynical. “That was in his capacity as philosopher. As mere man, he gave the rubies and an immortal song to a Shulamite girl who looked at him with youth in her smile and laughter in her eyes.”

“A tribute to beauty,” contested the senator.

“Not at all. Because she fascinated him.”

“And the secret of fascination is beauty,” he triumphed.

She refused to admit it. “The secret of fascination lies with the woman who can convince a man that under no circumstances could she possibly bore him.”

The senator was still argumentative. “I continue to maintain that beauty is some subtle essence of the soul.”

“But the last word, the one word, the eternal word,” quoted Egeria, rising, “is that beauty is——”

“What?” he questioned, eagerly.

“In the eye of the beholder.”

MIS-MATED AMERICANS

By Julien Gordon

(Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger)

MR. Henry James is inclined to pity American women, because their men—husbands and lovers—are not up to their level of fastidious refinement.

We are inclined to ask Mr. James to what American women he alludes.

Living in a center which makes history, among men of monumental achievement, of vast intellectual resource, and of comprehensive judgment, I confess that when I first encountered some of these men they seemed to me so lacking in the charms of the drawing room that I asked myself: “How can their women stand them?” When, however, I had made the acquaintance of some of these women, or ladies, the query in my soul became: “How can they stand their women?”

Mating and reproduction are largely animal processes, requiring little play of the imagination. If they did, race suicide would never have been heard of. The heroine of “The Garden of Allah” pins a pale Christ over her bed on her wedding night. It has been a late fashion for English and French writers—Verlaine, Mallock, Oscar Wilde, and even that rare genius Robert Hichens—to intermingle religion and spirituality with the sexual instinct. The fact remains that nothing can be more sane or simple, and it only touches fanatical frenzy in minds which border hysteria and decadence.

We believe that the average American, being absolutely sane, finds his mate. He is even persuaded, when she has invested in a diamond brooch and a brocaded front, that she has become a woman of rare elegance, belonging to that type which energetic newspaper reporters depict as a “leader.” The illusion is no doubt calming. Social ambition is salient among politicians and ambassadors, and a good American who expects Paradise desires his wife and daughters to be “all right.” He is quickly and conveniently persuaded that they are. The enormous egotism of the man of success is large enough to cover, with its gilded wing, family ramifications in its spasms of self-laudation.

It has become a habit to speak of American women as superior to all others, and in Europe the legend is beginning to hold. But in what does this superiority consist? Push, aplomb, finery, what? We cannot concede that it lies in exceptional accomplishments, or in any rare degree of scholarship. American women are not often accomplished, are not frequently even linguists; being usually satisfied with one foreign tongue, and that a very wretched French. We have few amateur musicians; and women artists of the force of Janet Scudder or Mrs. Leslie Cotton can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Our literary women are not ornamental, and are skillfully excluded from drawing rooms. Our feminine poets are usually dishevelled. If we throw out a dozen women in each of our large Eastern cities who have had the advantage of birth, breeding, position and wealth, the rank and file are like the rank and file of any other nation—a little brighter, perhaps; keener, more alert, better groomed, but harder—and often less fascinating. Our women lack the high vitality and repose of the English—weak nerves make for fidgetiness—the subtle seduction of the Austrian, the soft sweetness of the Italian. French women are deteriorating, their present social upheavals being responsible for this change.

Nevertheless, American girls have married well in Europe; principally for their ducats, sometimes for their beauty, only very occasionally for love.

The Latins love readily, particularly when they scent income. The English, more sincere, play their game openly. They demand “dots” at the altar, and—get them. However, as I have said, social ambition is a trait of our new life. It is a wholesome trait and has its use. Only by contact with a high civilization can a new people become civilized. Intermarriage is the easiest method.

We are told that American women who have married foreigners adore their exotic existence and could not be persuaded to return. Is it their husbands whom they adore? Are all their *ménages* exceptionally happy? What they do like is the graceful ease of an existence which appeals to fancy and a career which women over here do not attain. For, in fact, American women are overshadowed by their men. *La femme politique* is almost, if not quite, unknown in America, as is *la femme artiste* or *la femme littéraire*. There are no literary women in the United States who wield any social power whatsoever. In America talent is rather a social handicap to a girl or woman, and an escape into a wider field is tolerated only by our extremely conservative society when balanced by some peculiar prestige of early environment or personal allurement. We have no drawing rooms here like that of Madeleine Lemaire, in Paris, or like that of a certain cosmopolitan, Corinne of Venice, now, alas! closed forever. In the salons of the artist French woman one encounters English women of rank, the “little duchesses,” the big ambassadresses, men of note in every calling, diplomats, statesmen, scientists and writers.

Our great men have usually married, in their youth, their first love, and, be it said to their credit, have remained, if not always true to this village ideal, at least outwardly loyal. They are not ashamed of past virtue. Their wives, thrown suddenly into a world of which they know nothing, should surely be excused some solecisms. Occupied in the cares of rearing children, of providing for large families on small rations, they have hardly had the leisure to cultivate their minds and manners. We will not allude to grammar and intonation. It would be too much to ask!

These women do not demand that a man appeal to the imagination. They have none. The lover is at once sunk into the father. In fact, they address their husbands as “father” or “papa”—sometimes, indeed, as “pa” pronounced paw in moments of caressing emphasis. What would these women do with a handsome, dashing troubadour, who warbled ditties in feathered cap and doublet? They do not want a tenor about the house, they want their bills paid. “Pa” sees to that. She is eminently practical. Her husband talks little to her of his ambitions, schemes or success, but he signs the check. That check is the epitome of his brain’s travail. If in his

arid life he sometimes longs for a higher companionship, and is drawn into the net of some cleverer siren, his wife remains ignorant of the fact. She is entirely trusting—a convenient quality and one which men superlatively admire.

No, Mr. James, Americans on the whole are well matched. Look beyond the few dainty women of fashion who have personally petted you—women accustomed to the homage of men of the world, and who have danced at the courts of kings. To these we are willing to add a handful of brilliant young students who obtain degrees from Vassar, Wellesley, Smith and Bryn Mawr, are an ornament to the Normal and Barnard College, and distance male competitors at Cornell University.

May one of these be President some day! We quote the wish of a gallant member of the Cabinet. We hope that they have low voices, speak admirable English, and feel sure they never smoke cigarettes and never say “Damn!”

The camp, however, is very wide. The tents are spread, innumerable, over the hills and valleys of our fair country. Lift their flapping curtains, Mr. James. Peep in and you will find content—enough.

AFTERMATH

IF I should go to you in that old place.
(God knows, dear heart, we trod it smooth and straight!)
And lifting up to yours a tear-worn face,
Should whisper, “Darling, it is not too late,
For life and love can soon unbar the gate,”
You would say “No,” e’en though your lips were dumb—
Fear not: I shall not come.

If you should gather up the poor, pale shreds
Of what is left and bring them here to me,
Saying, “Fate tangled. Let us mend the threads
And weave a web more beautiful to see,”
All weeping, I would cry, “It may not be.”
And I would cast it by with hands all numb—
Nay, Sweet; you will not come.

We each have learned the lesson rapt apart,
The better task Fate set us ere the noon.
The storms of Life have beat across my heart
And scourged its madden’d throbbing into tune.
Who would have looked for moth and rust so soon?
Nay, Patience, Sweet! God will bend down some day
And lift your hand to wipe my tears away.

MARGARET HOUSTON.

THE GOLDEN APPLE

By AGNES and EGERTON CASTLE

THE orchard was on a hill, the farmhouse lay at the foot. There was a long field, in spring a palace of cowslips, between the orchard and the house.

This September dawn Pomona came through it and left a dark track of green along the dew-bepearled grass. Little swaths of mist hung over the cowslip field, but up in the orchard the air was already clear. It was sweet with the scent of the ripe fruit, and the tart, clean autumn pungency left by the light frost.

Pomona shifted the empty basket that she had borne on her head to the ground, and began to fill it with rosy-cheeked apples. Some she shook from the laden boughs, some she picked up from the sward where they had fallen from the tree; but she chose only the best and ripest.

A shaft of sunlight broke over the purple hills. It shone on her ruddy hair and on her smooth cheek. She straightened herself to look out across the valley at the eastern sky; all sights of nature were beautiful to her and gave her a joy that, yet, she had never learned to put into words, hardly into thoughts. Now, as she stood gazing, some one came along the road that skirted the orchard, and, catching sight of her, halted and became lost in contemplation of her, even as she of the sunrise pageant.

As evidently as Pomona, in her homespun skirt and bodice, belonged to the farmhouse, so did he to the great castle near by. The gentleman had made as careful a toilet for his early walk as if he had been bound for St. James. His riding coat was of delicate hue, and laces fluttered at his wrists and throat. His black lovelocks hung carefully combed on either shoulder from under his beplumed hat. A rapier swung at his side, and, as he stood, he flicked at it with the glove in his bare hand. He had a long, pale face and long eyes with drooping lids and haughty eyebrows; a small upturned mustache gave a tilt of mockery to the grave lips. He looked very young, and yet so sedate and self-possessed and scornful that he might have known the emptiness of the world a hundred years.

Pomona turned with a start, feeling herself watched. She gazed for a moment in surprise, and a deep blush rose in her cheeks; then, still staring, she made a slow country courtesy. Off went the befeathered hat; the gentleman returned her salutation by a profound bow. Then he leaped the little ditch into the orchard and threaded his way through the trees toward her. She watched him come; her great eyes were like the eyes of a deer, as shy, as innocent.

“Good-morrow, sir,” said she with another courtesy, and then corrected herself quickly—“good-morrow, my lord.” For, if he came from the castle, he was surely a lord.

“Good-morrow, madam,” returned he, pleasantly. His glance appraised her with open admiration.

What a glorious creature! What proportions; what amber and red on those smooth cheeks, what ruddy radiance in that sun-illumined hair! What a column of a throat, and how white the skin where the coarse kerchief parted above the laced bodice! What lines of bust and hip, of arm and wrist; generous but perfect! A goddess! He glanced at the strong, sunburned hands; they were ringless. Unowned, then, as yet, this superb nymph.

His long eyes moved at their pleasure; and she stood waiting in repose, though the color came and went richly on her cheek. Then he bowed again, the hat clasped to his bosom.

“Thank you,” said he, and replaced his beaver with a turn of the wrist that set all the gray and white plumes rippling round the crown.

“Sir?” she queried, startled, and on her second thought—“my lord?”

At this he broke into a smile. When he smiled, his haughty face gained a rare sweetness.

“Thank you for rising thus early, and coming into the orchard, and standing in the sun rays, and being, my maid, so beautiful. I little thought to find so fair a vision. ’Twill be a sweet one to carry forth with me—if it be the last on earth.”

Her wits were never quick to work. She went her country way, as a rule, as straight and sweetly and unthinkingly as the lilies grow.

To question why a noble visitor at the castle—and a visitor it must be, since his countenance was unfamiliar—should walk forth at the dawn and speak as if this morning saunter were to death, never entered her head.

She stammered: “Oh, sir!” to his compliment, and paused, her lip quivering over the inarticulate sense of her own awkwardness.

“Have you been gathering apples?” quoth he, still smiling on her.

“Ay, sir,” she said; “to make preserve withal;” and faltered yet again, “my lord.”

“Ay,” approved he. “It has a fair sound in your mouth. Would I were your lord! What is your name?”

She told him “Pomona.” Whereat he laughed, and repeated it as if he liked the sound. Then he looked at the east, and behold, the sun had risen, a full ball of crimson in a swimming sea of rose. The light glimmered upon his pale cheek, and on the fine laces of his shirt, redly, as if with stains of new blood.

“I must hence,” he said, and his voice had a stern, far-away sound. “Farewell, Pomona; wilt thou not wish me well?”

“My lord?”

“Wilt thou not?”

“Oh, indeed, my lord, I do.” And she was moved, on a sudden, she knew not why, and the tears gathered like a mist in her eyes. “With all my heart,” she said.

He made her a final bow, bending till his curls fell over his face.

“I thank you.”

She watched him walk away from her in and out the apple trees with his careless stride, and leap the little ditch again; and so on down the road.

And when he was lost to her sight, she still stood looking at the point where the way dipped and vanished and she had seen the last flutter of the gray feathers.

After a while she drew a long sigh and passed her hands over her eyes, as if she were awakening from a dream. Then she began mechanically to fill her basket once more. All the ruddiness faded from the sky. The sun swam up into the blue, and a white brilliance laid hold of the dewy valley. Delicate gossamer threads floated high above the apple trees, against the vault of ever-deeper blue. Somewhere from the hidden folds of the land a church bell began to chime. Then all at once Pomona dropped her basket, and while the apples rolled, yellow, green and red, in all directions, she set off running in the direction the gentleman had taken.

Why she ran, she knew not, but something drove her with a mighty urgency. Her heart beat thickly, and her breath came short, though, as a rule, there was no maid in the countryside that could run as she did. When she came to the foot of the hill she paused, and there, by the bramble brake, where the firwood began, she saw, lying on the lip of the baby stream, a gauntleted gray glove. She turned into the wood.

The pine needles were soft under her feet. The pine stems grew like the pillars of a church aisle, and the air was sweeter with their fragrance than any incense that was ever burned.

And after, but a little way, where the forest aisle widened into a glade, she came on the grand riding coat tossed in a heap; across it was flung an empty scabbard. And beyond, outstretched at the foot of a tree—— Pomona stopped short. Now she knew why she had had to run so fast!

He lay as if asleep, his head pillowed upon a branching root; but it was no slumber that held him. His features, whiter than ivory, were strangely sharpened and aged, blue shadows were about nostrils and mouth, the parted lips under the mocking mustache were set in a terrible gravity; they were purple, like dead red roses. Between the long, half-open lids the eyeballs shone silver. It was not now God’s lovely sunrise that stained the white cambric of his shirt. From where it had escaped from his relaxed hand a long, keen-bladed sword gleamed among the pine needles.

Pomona knelt down. She parted the ruffled shirt with a steady hand; his heart still beat, but below it was a wound that might well cause death. She sat back on her heels and thought. She could not leave him to call for help, for he might die alone; neither could she sit useless beside him and watch him go. She took her resolution quickly. She rose, then bending, she braced herself and gathered him into her arms as if he had been a child. He was no taller than she, and slight and lean of build. She was used to burdens. But she had not thought to find him so heavy. She staggered and shifted him for an easier grip; and then, as his pallid head lay loose and languid against her shoulder, the half-open eyelids fluttered, the upturned eyes rolled and fixed themselves. He looked at her; dark, dark as eternity was his gaze. She bent her head, his lips were moving.

“Pomona!”

It was the merest breath, but she knew it was her name. Nearer she bent to him; a flicker as of a smile came upon those purple-tinted lips.

“Kiss me, Pomona!”

She kissed him, and thought she drew from his cold mouth the last sigh. But now she was strong. She could have gone to the end of the earth with this burden in her arms.

His black hair, dank and all uncurled, fell over her bare arm. With the movement his wound opened afresh, and as she pressed him against her she felt his blood soak through her bodice to the skin. Then her soul yearned over him with an indescribable, inarticulate passion of desire; to help him, to heal him! If she could have given her blood to him she would have given it with the joy with which a mother gives life to the babe at her breast.

Pomona was mistress of herself and of her farm, and lived alone with her servants. Though she was a firm ruler, these latter considered her soft on certain points. They had known her, before this, carry home a calf that had staked itself, a mongrel cur half-drowned. But a murdered gentleman, that was beyond everything!

“Heavens ha’ mercy, mistress,” cried Sue, rising to the occasion, while the others gaped, and clapped their hands, and whispered together. “Shall I fetch old Mall to help you lay him out?”

“Fool,” panted Pomona, “bring me the Nantes brandy!”

* * * * *

Earl Blantyre woke from a succession of dreams, in which he had had most varied and curious experiences; known strange horrors and strange sweetnesses, flown to more aërial heights than any bird, and sunk to deeper depths than the sea could hold; fought unending combats and lain in peace in tender arms.

He woke. His eyelids were heavy. His hand had grown so weighty that it was as much as he could do to lift it. And yet, as he held it up, he hardly knew it for his own; ’twas a skeleton thing. There was a sound in his ears which, dimly he recognized, had woven into most of his dreams these days, a whirring, soothing sound, like the ceaseless beating of moth’s wings. As he breathed deeply and with delicious ease, there was fragrance of herbs

in his nostrils. A tag of poetry floated into his mind—

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows.

He turned his head and went to sleep again and dreamed not at all.

Pomona lighted the lamp, and, shading it with her hand, came, with soft tread, into the guest chamber. He was still asleep. She set down the light, mended the fire with another log, peeped into the pan of broth simmering on the hob, and then sat to her spinning wheel once more. Suddenly the wool snapped; she started, to find that he was holding back the curtain with a finger and thumb, and had turned his head on the pillow to watch her; his eyes gleamed in the firelight. She rose and came to him quickly. 52

“So you were spinning,” he said. His voice was very weak, but how different from those tones of dreadful clearness, of hoarse muttering, with which she had been so sadly familiar.

Pomona knelt beside him and put her hand on his forehead, on his wrist.

“Thank God!” she said.

“By all means,” he answered, peering at her amusedly. “Natheless, why?”

“Nay, you must not speak,” she bade him, and rose to pour the soup into a bowl.

He watched her while she stirred and tasted and added salt. He was smiling. When she lifted him, pillows and all, propped against her strong arm, and held the bowl to his lips at a compelling angle, he laughed outright. It was rather a feeble thing in the way of laughs, but to Pomona it was as wonderful and beautiful an achievement as a child’s first word in the mother’s ear.

“Drink,” she said, firmly, while her heart throbbed in joy.

“Now you must sleep,” she added, as she settled him with extraordinary art. But sleep was far away from those curious wandering eyes.

“Bring the light closer and come to the bed again.”

His voice had gained strength from Pomona’s fine broth, and it rang in command. Without another word she obeyed him. As she sat down on the little oaken stool, where he could see her, the light fell on her face, and from behind her the fire shot ruddily in her crown of hair.

“I remember you now,” said he, lifting himself on his elbow. “You stood in the sunrise gathering apples for preserve; you are the nymph of the orchard.”

He fell back, with a sigh of satisfaction. “And your name is Pomona,” said he.

The girl, her capable, work-marked hands lying folded on her knee, sat in absolute stillness; but her heart was beating stormily under the folds of her kerchief.

The sick man’s beard had grown close and fine round chin and cheeks during these long dreams of his. His hair lay in a mass on one shoulder; it had been carefully tied back with a riband, and in all that black setting the pallor of his countenance seemed deathlike. Yet she knew that he was saved. He lay a while, gazing at the beflowered ceiling of the great four-post bed, and by and by his voice came sighing.

“And after that, what hap befell me? Help me to remember.”

“I found you in the wood,” said she, slowly. “You were lying wounded.”

He interrupted her with a sharp cry.

“Enough! I mind me now. Was I alone?”

“Quite alone, my lord.”

“And my sword?”

There was a current of evil eagerness running through the feeble voice.

“Your sword, my lord?”

“Pshaw! was it clean, child? Bore it no sign upon the blade?”

“There was blood on it,” said Pomona, gravely, “to a third of the length.”

The duelist gave a sigh.

“That is well,” said he, and fell once more into silence, striving to knit present and past in his mind.

After a while he shifted himself on his pillows so that he again looked on her.

Then his eyes wandered round the dark paneling, on the polished surface of which the firelight gleamed like rosy flowers. He touched the coarse sheet, the patchwork quilt, then lifted the sleeve of the homespun shirt that covered his thin arm, and gazed inquiringly from it to the quiet woman.

“How do I come here? Where am I?” queried he, imperiously. 53

“I brought you; you are in my house,” she answered him.

“You brought me?”

“Ay, my lord.”

“You found me wounded,” he puzzled, drawing his haughty brows together, “and you brought me here to your house? How?”

“I carried you,” said Pomona.

“You carried me!”

The statement was so amazing and Lord Blantyre's wits were still so weakened that he turned giddy and was fain to close his eyes and allow the old vagueness to cradle him again for a few minutes.

Pomona prayed that he might be sleeping, but as she was stealthily rising from his bedside he opened his eyes and held her with them.

"You carried me, you brought me to your own house? Why?"

"I wanted to nurse you," said poor Pomona.

She knew no artifice whereby she could answer, yet conceal the truth. But it was as if her heart were being torn from her bit by bit.

His eyes, hard and curious, softened; so did the imperious voice.

"How did you keep them out?"

"Keep them out?"

She was beautiful, but she was dull.

"My kinsfolk, from the castle."

Pomona stood like a child caught in grave fault.

"They do not know," she answered, at last.

It was his turn to ejaculate in amazement. "Not know!"

"I did not want them," said she, then, doggedly. "I did not want any fine ladies about, nor physicians with their lancets. When my father was cut with the scythe, they sent a leech from the castle, who blooded him, and he died. I did not want you to die."

She spoke the last words almost in a whisper, then she waited breathlessly. There came a low sound from the pillows. His laugh that had been music to her a minute ago now stabbed her to the heart. She turned, the blood flashing into her cheeks; yet his face grew quickly grave; he spoke, his voice was kind.

"Stay. I want to understand. You carried me, all by yourself, from the wood; is it so?"

"Ay."

"And no one knows where I am, or that you found me?"

"No. I went down to the wood again and brought back your coat and your sword and scabbard and your gloves. I forbade my people to speak. None of the great folk know you are here."

"And you nursed me?"

"Ay."

"Was I long ill?"

"Fourteen days."

"I have been near death, have I not?"

"You have, indeed."

"And you nursed me!" he repeated again. "How did you learn such science?"

"My lord, I have loved and cared for the dumb things all my life. There was the calf that was staked——" She stopped; that laugh was torture.

"Go on, Pomona!"

"I bathed your wound in cold water over and over till the bleeding stopped, and then, when the fever came, I knew what brew of herbs would help you. One night I thought that you would die——"

"Go on, Pomona!"

"You could not breathe, no matter how high I laid you on the pillows——"

"Ay! Why dost thou halt again? What didst thou then?"

"I held you in my arms," she said. "You seemed to get your breath better that way, and then you slept at last."

"While you held me?" he proceeded. "How long did you hold me in your arms, Pomona?"

"My lord," she said, "the whole night."

Upon this he kept silence quite a long time, and she sat down on her stool again and waited. She had nursed him and saved him, and now he would soon be well; she ought surely to rejoice, but, she knew not why, her heart was like lead. Presently he called her; he would be lifted, shifted, his pillows were hot, his bedclothes pressed on him. As she bent over him, the fretful expression suddenly was smoothed from his features.

"I remember now," he said, with a singular gleam in his eyes. "I remember, Pomona; you kissed me."

* * * * *

My Lord Blantyre began now to have more consecutive recollections of that time of dreams; and when the night came he felt mightily injured, mightily affronted, to find that the shadow of the watcher in the rushlight against the wall belonged to a bent and aged figure, was a grotesque profile, instead of the mild gray angel that had soothed him hitherto. So deep seemed the injury, so cruel the neglect, that the ill-used patient could not find it in him to consent to sleep, but tossed till his bed grew unbearable, pettishly refused to drink from Mall's withered hand, was quite positive that the pain in his side was very bad again, and that his angry heart beats

were due to fever.

It drew toward midnight. Again Mall brought the cooling drink and offered it patiently. Like an old owl she stood and blinked. Her toothless jaws worked.

He made an angry gesture of refusal; the cup was dashed from her hand and fell clattering on the boards. She cried out in dismay, and he in fury.

“Out of my sight, you Hecate!”

Then suddenly Pomona stood beside them. So soft her tread that neither had heard her come.

“Lord, be good to us! The poor gentleman’s mad again,” whimpered Mall, as she went down on her knees to mop.

Pomona was in a white wrapper, well starched; the wide sleeves spread out like wings. Her hair hung in one loose plait to her knees.

“You look like a monstrous, beautiful great angel,” cried he. Her hand was on his pulse. He was as pleased and soothed as a naughty infant when it is lifted from its cradle and nursed.

She stood, and seemed encircled by the fragrance of the sacrificed cup, lavender and thyme and other sweet and wholesome herbs.

She thought he wandered, yet his pulse was steadying down under her finger into a very reasonable pace for a convalescent. She looked down at him with puzzled eyes.

“What is it, my lord?”

“Prithee,” said he, “though you live so quiet here, my maid, and keep your secrets so well, you would have known, would you not, had there been a death at the castle?”

“Surely, my lord,” she said, and bent closer to comfort him. “Nay, it must be that you have the fever again, I fear. Nay, all is well with your kinsfolk. Mall, haste thee with another cup of the drink. Is the wound painful, my good lord, and how goes it with the breathing?”

As he bent he caught her great plait in both his hands and held it so that she could not straighten herself.

“It would go vastly better,” cried he, “I should breathe with infinite more ease, my sweet nurse, and forget that I had ever had a gaping hole to burn the side of me, could you but tell me that there had been even a trifle of sickness at the house beyond. Come, my sword was red, you know! It was not red for nothing! Was not Master Leech sent for in haste to draw more blood? The excellent physician, thou mindest, who helped thy worthy father so pleasantly from this world.”

She would have drawn from him in soft sorrow and shame, for she understood now, but that his weak fingers plucked her back. Truly there seemed to be a devil in his eyes. Yet she was too tender of him not to humor him, as the mother her spoiled child.

“Hast heard, Mall, of aught amiss at the castle?” quoth she, turning her head to address the old woman at the fire.

“There was a gentleman out hunting with the Lady Julia o’ Thursday,” answered the crone, “as carried his arm in a sling, I heard tell; though he rode with the best of them.”

“Faugh!”

Lord Blantyre loosed Pomona’s tress and lay back sullenly. He drank the cup when she held it to his lips, in the same sullen silence; but when she shook his pillows and smoothed his sheet and cooed to him in the dear voice of his dream: “Now, sleep,” he murmured, complainingly: “Not if you leave me!”

Pomona’s heart gave a great leap, and a rose flush grew on her face, lovelier than ever sunrise or fireglow had called there.

“I will not leave you, my lord,” she replied. Her voice filled the whole room with deep harmony.

He woke in the gray dawn, and there sat Pomona, her eyes dreaming, her hands clasped, her face a little stern in its serene, patient weariness. He cried to her sharply, because of the sharpness with which his heart smote him:

“Hast sat thus the whole night long?”

“Surely!” said she.

“Well, to bed with you, then,” he bade her, impatiently. “Nay, I want nought. Send one of your wenches to my bell, some Sue or Pattie, so it be a young one. And you—to bed, to bed!”

But she would not leave him till she had tested how it stood with him, according to her simple skill. As her hand rested on his brow, “Why Pomona?” queried he.

“My lord?”

“Pomona. ’Tis a marvelous fine name, and marvelous fitting to a nymph of the orchard. Pomona!”

“Indeed,” she answered him, in her grave way, “Sue or Pattie would better become me. But my mother was book-learned, sir, and town-bred, and had her fancies. She sat much in the orchard the spring that I was born.”

“Ay,” he mused. “So thy mother was book-learned and fanciful!” Then briskly he asked her: “Wouldst thou not like to know my name, Pomona? Unless, indeed, you know it already?”

She shook her head.

“Why, what a woman are you! In spite of apples, no daughter of Eve at all?”

She still shook her head, and, smiling faintly, “To me it could make no difference,” she said.

“Well, now you shall know,” he said, “and take it to your maiden dreams. I am Rupert, Earl of Blantyre.”

“What,” she cried, quickly, “the——” she broke off and hesitated. “The great Earl of Blantyre,” she pursued, then, dropping her eyes: “The king’s friend!”

His laugh rang out somewhat harsh.

“What, so solitary a nymph, so country hidden, and yet so learned of the gossip of the great world?”

“People talk,” she murmured, crimsoning as in the deepest shame.

“And you know what they call me? No! Not the Great Earl, hypocrite, the Wicked Earl! You knew it?”

She bent her head.

He laughed again. “Why, now, what a nightmare for you! Here he lies, and, oh! Pomona, you have prolonged his infamous career!”

* * * * *

The Wicked Earl was an angelic patient for two days. On the third he was promoted to the oak settle, wrapped in a garment of the late farmer’s, of which he made much kindly mirth. It was a golden day of joy in the lonely farmhouse.

On the fourth morning, however, he wakened to a mood of seriousness, not to say ill-temper. His first words were to request writing paper and a quill, ink and the great seal that hung on his watch chain.

Pomona stood by while he wrote; helped him with paper and wax. She saw into how deep a frown his brows were contracted, and her heart seemed altogether to fail her. She expected the end; it was coming swiftly, and not as she expected it.

“May I trespass on your kindness so far as to send a horseman with this letter to the castle?” said he, very formally.

She took it from him with her country courtesy.

“You will be leaving us, my lord?”

He glanced at her through his drooping lids.

“Can I trespass forever on your hospitality?”

She went forth with the letter quickly, without another word.

It was but little after noon when there came a great clatter into the simple farmyard that was wont to echo to no louder sounds than the lumbering progress of the teamsters and their wagon, or the patient steps of Pomona’s dairy cows. A great coach with four horses and running footmen had drawn up before the farm porch. A man in dark livery, with a sleek, secret face, slipped down from the rumble, reached for a valise and disappeared round the house. The coach door opened, and the Lady Julia Majendie descended, followed by no less a person than my Lord Majendie himself, who was seldom known to leave his library, much less to accompany his daughter out driving. His presence marked a great occasion. And with them was a very fine lady, a stranger to any of the farm, a little lady with dark hair in ringlets and high plumes to a great hat, and a dress that shone with as many pale colors as a pigeon’s breast. She sniffed, and “Oh!” cried she in very high, loud tones, pressing a vinaigrette to her nose, “can my poor brother be in such a place, and yet alive?”

“Hush, madam,” said Lord Majendie, somewhat testily, for Pomona stood in the door. “I am sure we owe nought but gratitude to this young woman.”

He was a gaunt, snuffy, untidy old man, in a dilapidated wig, but his eyes were shrewd and kindly behind the large, gold-rimmed spectacles. He peered at Pomona, pale and beautiful.

Lady Julia had evidently inherited her father’s short sight, for she, too, was staring through an eyeglass. She carried it on a gold chain, and when she lifted it to one eye her small fair face took an air of indescribable impertinence.

She interrupted father and friend, coming to the front with a scarcely perceptible movement of pointed elbows:

“Bring us instantly to Lord Blantyre.”

“This way an it please you,” said Pomona.

She led them in, and there in the great kitchen, well within the glow from the deep hearth, propped on patchwork cushions, wrapped in blue homespun, lay the invalid.

The ladies were picking their steps across the flags with a great parade of lifting silken skirts; the worthy old scholar, Lord Majendie, was following, with an expression of benign, childlike interest, but all three seemed struck by the same amazement, almost amounting to consternation. Lord Blantyre lifted his pallid, black-bearded countenance and looked at them with a gaze of uncompromising ill-humor.

“Good Lord, brother!” exclaimed the little lady with the ringlets, at last. She made a faint lurch against Lady Julia.

“If your sisterly feelings are too much for you, and you are contemplating a swoon, pray be kind enough to accomplish it elsewhere, Alethea,” said Lord Blantyre.

“Oh, my excellent young friend! Oh, my dear lord! Tut! tut! tut! I should hardly have known you,” ejaculated the old man. “You must tell us how this has come about; we must get you home. Tush! you must not speak. I see you are yet but weakly. My good young woman, this has been a terrible business—nay, I have no doubt he does your nursing infinite credit, but why not have let us know? Tut! tut!”

Before Pomona could speak, and, indeed, as she had no excuse to offer, the words were slow in coming, her patient intervened, curtly.

“I would not permit her to tell you,” quoth he.

She glanced at him, startled; his eyes were averted.

“Oh, my lord, this is cruel hearing for us,” minced Julia.

She might have spoken to the wall for all the effect her smile and ogle produced on him. She turned her glass upon Pomona, and ran it up and down her till the poor girl felt herself so coarse, so common, so ugly, that she could have wished herself dead.

“Pray, Lord Majendie,” said Blantyre, “is Colonel Craven yet with you?”

Lady Alethea tossed her head, flushed and shot a look, half defiance, half fear, at her brother. 57

He propped himself up on his elbow, turned and surveyed her with a sneering smile.

“How pale and wasted art thou, my fair Alethea! Hast been nursing the wounded hero, and pining with his pangs? Or is’t, perchance, all fond fraternal anguish concerning my unworthy self? Oh, see you, I know what an uproar you made about me all over the countryside, what a hue and cry for the lost brother.”

“A plague on it, Julia,” said Lord Majendie, scratching his wig perplexedly and addressing his daughter in a loud whisper, “what ails the fellow? Does he wander, think you?”

But Lady Alethea seemed to find a meaning in the sick man’s words, for she tossed her head once more, and answered sharply:

“No, brother, I made no hue and cry for you, for ’tis not the first time it has been your pleasure to play truant and leave your loving friends all without news. How was I to know that you were more sorely hurt than Colonel Craven? He left you, he told us, standing by a tree, laughing at his pierced arm. You are not wont to come out of these affairs so ill.”

That they were of the same blood could not be doubted, for it was the very same sneer that sat on both their mouths.

“And pray, since we must bandy words,” she went on, gaining yet more boldness, “why did you thus keep me willfully in suspense?”

“Because,” said he, sweetly, “I was too ill for thy nursing, my Alethea.”

“I presume,” said she, “you had a nurse to your fancy?”

Her black eyes rolled flashing on Pomona. The earl made no reply.

“Let me assure your lordship,” put in his would-be host here, quickly, “that Colonel Craven is gone.”

“’Tis well, then,” replied Blantyre, ceremoniously, “and I will, with your permission, this very night avail myself of your offer of hospitality for a few days, but you will, I fear, have to send a litter for me. To sit in a coach is yet beyond me.”

And while the good-natured nobleman instantly promised compliance, Lord Blantyre, waving away further discourse with a gesture, went on wearily:

“Let me beg of you not to remain or keep these ladies in surroundings so little suited to their gentility. And the sooner, my good lord, you can dispatch that litter, the sooner shall you have the joy of my company. Farewell, Julia, for but a brief space. I trust that you and Colonel Craven enjoyed the chase the other day. We shall meet soon again, sister; pray you bear up against our present parting.”

Both the ladies swept him such very fine courtesies that the homely kitchen seemed full of the rustle of silk. Lady Julia Majendie had a little fixed smile on her lips.

The farm servants were all watching at the windows to see the great ladies get into their coach, to see it wheel about with the four horses clattering and curvetting. Pomona and Lord Blantyre were alone. She stood, her back against the wall, her head held high, not in pride, for Pomona knew no pride, but with the natural carriage of her perfect strength and balance. Her eyes looked forth, grieving yet untearful, her mouth was set into lines of patient endurance. He regarded her darkly.

“I go this evening, Pomona.”

“Ay, my lord.”

The tall wooden clock ticked off a heavy minute.

“Is my man here?” asked Lord Blantyre. “Bid him come to me, then, to help me to my room.”

His lordship’s toilet was a lengthy proceeding, for neither his strength nor his temper was equal to the strain. But it was at length accomplished, and, perfumed, shaven, clothed once again in fine linen and silk damask, wrapped in a great furred cloak, Lord Blantyre sat in the wooden armchair and drank the cordial that Pomona had prepared him.

He was panting with his exertions, his heart was fluttering, but Pomona’s recipes were cunning; in a little while he felt his pulses calm down and a glow of power return to him, and with the help of his cane and his servant he was able to advance toward the door. 58

“The young woman is outside, waiting to take leave of your lordship,” volunteered the sleek Craik.

His master halted, and fixed him with an arrogant eye.

“The young woman of the farm,” explained the valet, glibly, “and, knowing your lordship likes me to see to these details, I have brought a purse of gold—twenty pieces, my lord.”

He stretched out his hand and chinked the silken bag as he spoke.

“For whom is that?” asked Lord Blantyre.

The man stared.

“For the young woman, my lord.”

Lord Blantyre steadied himself with the hand that gripped the speaker’s arm; then, lifting the cane with the other, struck the fellow across the knuckles so sharply that with a howl he let the purse fall.

“Pick it up,” said the Wicked Earl. “Put it into your pocket, and remember, for the future, that the servant who presumes to know his master’s business least understands his own.”

The litter was brought to the door of his chamber, and they carried him out through the kitchen to the porch; and there, where Pomona stood waiting, he bade them halt and set it down. She leaned toward him to look on him, she told herself, for the last time. Her heart contracted to see him so wan and exhausted.

“Good-by, Pomona,” said he, gazing up into her sorrowful eyes, distended in the evening dimness. He had seen a deer look at him thus, in the dusk, out of a thicket.

“Good-by, my lord,” said she.

“Ah, Pomona,” said he, “I made a sweeter journey the day I came here!”

And without another word to her he signed to the men, and they buckled to their task again.

Her heart shuddered as she watched the slow procession pass into the shadows. They might have been bearing a coffin. With the instinct of her inarticulate grief, she went to seek the last memory of him in his room. By the light of a flaring tallow candle, she found Lord Blantyre’s man repacking his master’s valise. He looked offensively at her as she entered.

“Young woman,” said he, shaking his head, “you have taken a very great liberty.”

Then, picking up the coarse white shift and surveying it with an air of intense disgust, “’Tis a wonder,” quoth he, “his lordship didn’t die of this.”

* * * * *

“I fear, my fair Julia, that fondly as I should love it, I shall never call you sister.”

Julia turned at the fleer and flung a glance of acute anger at her friend.

“If you had not been yourself so determined to have the nursing of Colonel Craven’s wound, my dearest Alethea,” responded she, sweetly, “the friendly desire of your heart might be in a better way of accomplishment. And, oh!”—she fanned herself and tittered—“I pity you, my poor Alethea, I do, indeed, when I think of those wasted attentions.”

Lady Alethea had her feelings less under control than her cool-blooded friend. Her dark cheek empurpled, her full lips trembled.

“My woman tells me,” proceeded Julia, “that the creature Craik, your brother’s man, hath no doubt of my lord Blantyre’s infatuation. ‘Pomona!’ he will call in his sleep. Pomona! ’Tis the wench’s name. I wish you joy of your sister-in-law, indeed.”

Lady Alethea wheeled upon her with an eye of fire.

“Need my brother wed the woman because he calls upon her name?” she mocked.

“If I know my lord your brother, he might well wed her even because he need not,” smiled the other. “Now you are warned. ’Tis none of my concern, I thank my Providence! You will be saved a dairymaid at least.”

Alethea’s wavering color, her flurried breath, bore witness to discomposure.

“My Lord Blantyre,” pursued Lady Julia Majendie, relentlessly, “has ever taken pleasure in astonishing the world.”

Lady Alethea clinched her hands.

“Your father rules here; let him transport the slut!”

“Nay,” said Julia. She placed her hand upon the heaving shoulder, and looked at her friend with a singular light in her pale yet brilliant eyes. “Do you think to break a man of a fancy by such measures? ’Twould be as good as forging the ring. Nay, my sweet, I can better help thee; ay, and give thee an hour’s sport besides.”

And, as Alethea raised questioning eyes, Julia Majendie shook her silver-fair ringlets and laughed again.

“Leave it to me,” quoth she.

* * * * *

“Will Mistress Pomona favor the Lady Julia Majendie with her company at the castle?”

This was the message carried to the farmhouse by a mounted servant. He had a pillion behind him on the stout palfrey, and his orders were, he said, to bring Mistress Pomona back with him.

Pomona came running out, with the harvest sunshine on her copper hair; her cheek was drained of blood.

“Is my lord ill again?” she queried, breathlessly.

The man shook his head; either he was dull or well drilled.

Pomona mounted behind him without a second’s more delay, just as she was, bareheaded, her apron stained with apple juice, and her sleeves rolled up above her elbows. She had no thought for herself, and only spoke to

bid the servant hurry.

For a fortnight she had heard no word of her patient. In her simple heart she could conceive no other reason for being summoned now than because he needed her nursing.

But when she reached the castle and was passed with mocking ceremony from servant to servant, the anxious questions died on her lips; and when she was ushered, at length, into a vast bedchamber, hung with green silk, gold fringed, and was greeted by Lady Julia, all in green herself, like a mermaid, smiling sweetly at her from between her pale ringlets, she was so bewildered that she forgot even to courtesy. She never heeded how the tire-woman, who had last received her, tittered as she closed the door.

“A fair morning to you, mistress,” said Lady Julia. “I am sensible of your kindness in coming to my hasty invitation.”

“Madam,” faltered Pomona, and remembered her *révérence*; “I am ever at your service, honorable madam. I hope my lord is not sick again.”

“My father?” mocked the mermaid, running her white hand through her curls. But Pomona neither understood nor practiced the wiles of women.

“I meant my Lord Blantyre,” said she.

“Oh, the lord earl, your patient; nay, it goes better with him. Oh, he has been sadly, sadly. We have had a sore and anxious time; such a wound as his, neglected——” she shook her ringlets.

Pomona’s lip suddenly trembled, she caught it between her teeth to steady it.

“Ah,” said Julia, interrupting herself and turning on her chair, “here comes the Lady Alethea.”

Alethea entered, mincing on high-heeled shoes, her cherry lips pursed, her dark eyes dancing, as if a pair of mischievous sprites had taken lodging there. She gazed at Pomona, so large, so work-stained, so incongruous a figure in the bright, luxurious room. Her nostrils dilated. She looked as wicked as a kid.

“My brother,” said she, addressing her friend, though she kept staring at Pomona, “has heard of this wench’s arrival. He would speak with her.”

“I will go with you, even now,” said Pomona.

Both the ladies shrieked; so did the maid who had followed Lady Alethea into the room.

“My good creature! In that attire?”

“My brother, so fastidious, so suffering!”

“And she,” cried the tire-woman, taking up the note, “still with the stench of the saucepan about her! Positively, madam, the room reeks.” 60

If Pomona carried any savors beyond those of lavender and the herbs she loved, it was of good sweet apples and fragrant burnt sugar. But she stood in her humiliation, and felt herself more unfit for all the high company than the beasts of her farmyard.

“You must not take it unkindly, child,” said Lady Julia, with her cruel little laugh and her soft voice, “but my Lord Blantyre, you see, hath ever a great distaste of all that is homely and uncomely. He hath suffered extraordinarily in that respect of late. We must humor him.”

Truly Pomona was punished. She marveled now at herself, remembering what her presumption had been.

“I will go home, madam, if you permit me.”

Again the ladies cried out. To thwart the invalid—’twas impossible. Was the girl mad? Nay, she would do as they bid? ’Twas well, then. Lady Julia, so kind was she, would help to clothe her in some better apparel and make her fit to present herself. The while the Lady Alethea would return to her post of assiduous nurse, and inform his lordship of Pomona’s speedy attendance.

Pomona gave herself into their hands.

Lord Blantyre lay on a couch in the sunshine. A fountain played merrily to his right; to his left his sister sat demurely at embroidery. In spite of her ladyship’s melancholy account, the patient seemed to have gained marvelously in strength. But he was in no better humor with the world than on the last day of his stay at the farm.

He tossed and fretted among his rich cushions.

“She tarries,” he said, irritably, for the twentieth time. “You are all in league to plague me. Why did you tell me she was coming?”

“My good brother,” answered the fair embroideress, tilting her head to fling him the family sneer, “I pray you curb your impatience, for yonder comes your siren.”

Here was Julia, indeed, undulating toward them, and, after her, Pomona!

Lord Blantyre sat up suddenly and stared. Then he fell back on his cushions and shot a look at Alethea, before which she quailed.

Stumbling in high heels that tripped her at every step, she who had been wont to move free as a goddess; scarce able to breathe in the laced bodice that pressed her form out of all its natural shapeliness, and left so much of her throat bare that the white skin was all crimson in shame down to the borrowed kerchief; her artless, bewildered face raddled with white and red, her noble head scarcely recognizable through the bunching curls that sat so strangely each side of it—what Pomona was this?

“Here is your kind nurse,” fluted Lady Julia. “She had a fancy to bedizen herself for your eyes. I thought ’twould please you, my lord, if I humored the creature.”

“Everyone is to be humored here,” thought poor Pomona, vaguely.

“Come to his lordship, child,” bade Julia, her tones tripped up with laughter.

Pomona tottered yet a pace or two, and then halted. Taller even than the tall Lady Julia, the lines of her generous womanhood took up the silken skirt to absurd brevity, exposing the awkward-twisting feet. Nymph no longer was she, but a huge painted puppet. Only the eyes were unchanged, Pomona’s roe-deer eyes, grieving and wondering, shifting from side to side in dumb pleading. Truly this was an excellent jest of Lady Julia Majendie’s!

It was strange that Lady Alethea, bending closer and closer over her work, should have no laughter left after that single glance from her brother’s eyes; and that Lord Blantyre himself should show such lack of humorous appreciation. There was a heavy silence. Pomona tried to draw a breath to relieve her bursting anguish, but in vain—she was held as in a vise. Her heart fluttered; she felt as if she must die.

“Pomona,” said Lord Blantyre, suddenly, “come closer.”

He reached and caught up his sister’s scissors from her knee, and, leaning forward, snipped the laces that strained across the fine scarlet satin of Pomona’s cruel bodice.

“Now breathe,” ordered he.

And while the other two were staring, unable to credit their eyes, Pomona’s prison fell apart, and over her heaving bosom her thick white shift took its own noble folds.

Then the woman in her awoke and revolted. She flung from her feet the high-heeled shoes, and with frenzied hands tearing down her mockery of a headdress, she ran to the fountain and began to dash the paint off her face. The tears streamed down her cheeks as she laved them.

“Sweet and gentle ladies,” said the Wicked Earl—his tones cut the air like a fine blade—“I thank you for a most excellent demonstration of the superiority of high breeding. May I beg you both to retire upon your triumph, and leave me to deal with this poor, inferior wretch, since you have now most certainly convinced me she can never aspire to such gentility as yours?”

Alethea rose, and, scattering her silks on one side, her embroidery on the other, walked straight away down the terrace, without casting a look behind her. Julia ran after her with skipping step, caught her under the arm, and the laughter of her malice rang out long after she had herself disappeared.

“Pomona,” said Lord Blantyre.

Often he had called to her, in feverish complaint, or anger, or pettishly, like a child, but never in such a tone as this. She came to him, as she had always come; and then she stood in shame before him, her long hair streaming, the tears rolling down her cheeks, her hands folded at her throat, her shapely feet gripping the ground in Julia Majendie’s green silk stockings. Slowly his gaze enveloped her. All at once he smiled, and then, meeting her grieving eyes, he grew grave again, and suddenly his haughty face was broken up by tenderness. He caught one dripping twist of hair, and pulled her toward him, after his gentle-cruel fashion. She fell on her knees beside him and hid her face in his cushions.

“Kiss me, Pomona,” said he.

“Oh, my lord,” she sobbed, “spare me; I am only a poor girl.”

Many a time she had dreamed, since the morning in the orchard, that she was carrying that bleeding body, her lips on the dying roses of his lips, but never, in her humility, had she, even in her sleep, thought of herself as in his arms. This was no dream, and yet so he clasped her.

He bent his dark head over her radiant hair, his voice dropped words sweeter than honey, more healing than balm, into her heart, that was still so bruised that it could scarce beat to joy.

“When I first beheld you in the orchard, I was sorry that I might have to die, Pomona, because you were in life. You carried me in your arms and kept my soul from passing, by the touch of your lips. When the fever burned me you brought me coolness—you lifted me and gave me breath. All night you held me. Patient, strong Pomona! You bore with all my humors. You came to me in the night from your sleep, all in white, like an angel, your bare feet on the boards. Oh, my gentle nurse, my humble love, my mate, my wife!”

She raised her head to gaze at him. Yet she took the wonder like a child, not disclaiming, not questioning.

“Oh!” she said, with a deep, soft sigh.

He fondly pushed the tangled hair from her brow.

“And shall a man make shift with sham and hollow artifice when he can possess truth itself? They put paint on your cheeks, my Pomona, and tricked you out in gauds, and behold, I saw how great was the true woman beside the painted doll!”

He kissed her lips, and then he cried:

“Oh, golden apple, how is the taste of thee sweet and pure!”

And, after a silence, he said to her, faintly, for he was still weak for such rapture:

“Lift me, my love, and let me lie a while against your woman’s heart, for never have I drawn such sweet breath as in your arms.”

THE MASTER OF THE DIDO

BY ELIZABETH DUER

A CERTAIN great corporation was digging up New York and setting microbes loose in quarters too aristocratic to suffer inconvenience with patience, and so there were a general boarding up of front doors and windows, a rush to Europe or to watering places; and my elders, who were just recovering from the grip, decided that Southstrand in the month of May was preferable to pneumonia in town. Therefore I—Kate Russell—was sent on ahead to open my mother's cottage at that gay little resort, in spite of my uncle Barton Hay's warnings against such an unchaperoned proceeding, and mamma's distrust of my housekeeping powers. She was not strong enough to undertake it herself, but to intrust the sacred rites of cleaning and unpacking to the supervision of a girl of twenty seemed to her abnormal; while uncle Barton felt that no unmarried woman should be given such liberty.

My uncle had condescended to live with us since my father's death, and, while he was too set in his ways to do anything for anybody, we were much attached to him, and let him bully us, as most women do the one man in the house.

"Julia," he said, addressing my mother, "you are surely not going to send Kate off alone to that jumping-off place, Southstrand! If some young fellow elopes with her, you'll have yourself to thank."

"This is the twentieth century, Barton," said mamma, laughing; "young women do not elope nowadays. They may defy parents and divorce husbands, but they don't elope."

"Don't they?" snorted uncle Barton. "I say they do! When I was at Nassau this winter, a young Englishman, without two cents to jingle on a tombstone, eloped with old Stanbury Steel's daughter. They borrowed his friend Lord Battleford's steam yacht—you must remember about Battleford—started round the world a poor lieutenant on some English man-of-war, and came back to find half a dozen relations dead, and a title and fortune waiting for him. Well, as I was saying, they got him to lend them his yacht, touched at Miami to get married, and were off before old Steel could catch 'em. Mark my words, Julia, girls are not to be trusted."

This last remark switched them back to the starting point, and they finally agreed to let me go.

The swallow that does not make summer came to us disguised as one warm day, and mamma dispatched me on my mission, although before I could pack and get off the weather had turned chilly, with a wind from the east.

I was allowed a bodyguard of two servants—the most incompetent in the house, and therefore the most easily spared: old Murphy, a preserved supernumerary, who, having been my father's valet, was kept on through sentiment, and Bridget, the housemaid, also elderly and very irritable.

We reached our little, airy, seaside home at sundown—only there wasn't any sun—and found the fires, lighted by the women who had been cleaning, most agreeable after a chilly drive from the station. The wind was howling and rattling through the cracks of the window frames, and actually made its way between the boards of the floor. There was nothing to oppose its fury; it could sweep up uninterruptedly from the Antilles or across from Europe, and that night it seemed to come from both directions at once, and make whirling eddies on our south piazza.

Murphy served me a nice little repast on a tray, so that I did not have to leave the library fire, and I amused myself with my novel till half-past nine, and then rang the bell.

"I am going to bed, Murphy," I said. "You may lock up."

"Me and Bridget's going ourselves, ma'am," he answered.

"See that all the shutters are securely fastened," I added. "The cleaners left some of them open, but they should be closed such a night as this."

"Make yourself easy, Miss Kate," he said, patronizingly. "Me and Bridget knows the ways of them *weemen*."

And so, drowsy with the narcotic of sea air, my household went to bed.

As I undressed, I heard the first splash of rain. It didn't come pattering like a shower, but in a wild dash against the side of the house, as if the wind had caught the crests of all the waves and was hurling them landward.

A line of a hymn I used to repeat to mamma in my childish days came back to me as I laid my head on the pillow:

Guard the sailors tossing on the deep blue sea.

Truly they would need guarding that night, I reflected; but as sentiment rarely interferes with inclination, my sympathy for the tempest-tossed sailors did not prevent my going to sleep promptly and remaining in that state of oblivion for hours.

About three o'clock—possibly a little earlier—I waked up with a beating heart; some unusual noise had disturbed me, and I raised myself on my elbow to listen. It came again—my shutter, banging like a sledge hammer. If anyone thinks it is pleasant to get out of a warm bed to wrestle with a recalcitrant shutter in the

teeth of an Atlantic gale, they don't know the south shore of Long Island—that is all! I waited for a moment, selfishly hoping Bridget might hear and come to my aid, but Bridget was no such goose—and I got up to help myself.

As is often the case on the coast, the rain was fitful; sometimes it came in torrents, and then for half an hour it would cease. Just now the wind was the only aggressor, and as I stood shivering and looking out through my shutterless window toward the sea, up through the blackness ran a tiny trail of fire that burst into a star and fell.

Amazement was my first sensation, and then terror! A ship was drifting on the bar and signaling for help, and perhaps I was the only living soul who had seen it! I knew the life-saving crew were close at hand—their station stood across the road opposite to our cottage—but with the exception of the two men on duty, making their dreary patrol of the beach, they were probably asleep in their beds, and those two might be several miles to the east or the west, at the end of their beat, while the helpless creatures on the bar sent their flashing prayer for aid.

Hastily lighting my reading lamp, I set it in my window; that much of comfort should be theirs—they should know that one landlubber was up and stirring in their behalf. Next I ran to Bridget's room and shook her till she waked. Her irritation yielded to the excitement of the moment, and she undertook to get Murphy up and to join me as soon as possible.

I had come up to Southstrand well provided with warm, rough clothing, and I dressed as rapidly and suitably as I could to go out in the storm. Bridget, in spite of a sharp tongue, had the kind-heartedness of her nation, and needed no second bidding to make up the kitchen fire and unpack the blankets.

"Sure they'll need something to warm their drownded bodies if they come ashore," she declared. "So have the whisky handy, Miss Kate, for belike they'll want it." 64

I had pushed my curly mane into a tam, and buttoned a waterproof coat over my short skirts, and I now opened the back door and went out before Bridget realized what I meant to do. She came roaring after me, horrified at my venturing alone into the night, but I was beyond recall, halfway over to the life-saving station.

Trust our coast crews for good service. Except for one solitary Triton in his sou'wester, every man of the crew was already on the beach, and this one was only making the place snug before rushing after them. He started when I addressed him, for I came upon him softly.

"So you knew about the vessel!" I exclaimed, standing in the doorway of the great barn of a place where the apparatus for rescue is kept—the boat and the life car and mortar, the breeches buoy and the life belts—most of which was now on the beach.

The man looked at me with ill-disguised impatience.

"I want to shut that door, lady," he said.

Evidently I had to make my choice between being squeezed flat or getting out of the way.

In a moment he emerged through a smaller door, and began striding toward the beach, and I, nothing daunted by his surliness, ran beside him. We passed through a cleft between the sand dunes and over the heavy sands of the upper beach, and as we ran my indifference to the storm seemed to win me a reluctant esteem, for he condescended to answer some of my questions.

He said they judged the vessel to be a small one, that she would probably drift over the bar with the tide that had just turned to come in, and would go to pieces near shore; that they would try to launch the lifeboat, but he didn't believe they would succeed in such a surf, and he guessed they would have to shoot a line over her and use the breeches.

I could only hear about half his words, for they were carried away by the wind, which tore across the beach so laden with loose sand that it lashed our faces like a whip. I thanked him for his information, and asked his name, and then I told him mine, and tried to prove the sincerity of my wish to help.

"I am Miss Russell, and this is my house," I said, pointing to the lighted windows of the cottage a few hundred feet away. "You may call on me for blankets or bedding, or refreshment of any kind—good luck to you, Mr. Herrick. I shall stand here and watch."

"We'll do all we can," he said, shaking his head, "but the chances to save them folks out there looks pretty poor to me."

Here he left me, and directed his steps toward the swinging lanterns that marked the spot where his companions were busy. They had run their large surf boat to the edge of the waves, and were making strenuous efforts to launch it, but in the darkness and in such a sea it was little short of madness. Every time there was a momentary lull, the men, with their hands grasping the gunwales, rushed waist-deep into the water, but before they could scramble into the boat, a great roller would drive it and them back on the beach, and they were beginning to lose heart.

Half an hour had passed since the stranded vessel had signaled, and I began to fear that all was over, when close—quite close—a blue light burned, and we saw her plainly only a few hundred yards from the shore. I was standing as near the tide line as I dared, and in my excitement was frequently caught by the invading waves and wet to my knees—but what do such things matter in the presence of a tragedy?

While I looked I became conscious that the figures of the life-saving crew were dimly visible, and far across the sea a gray light crept into the sky; the day was breaking, and one element of terror was gone.

Our men abandoned the idea of using their boat, and they drew it out of reach of the waves, and dragged their mortar into position. By this time it was light enough for us to see the vessel, and a sorry sight she was. 65
She was pointing up the coast, her bowsprit gone and her forward mast broken about halfway down; she listed terribly to leeward, and every third or fourth wave washed entirely over her deck. Her crew were in the rigging

of the mainmast; we thought we could make out six. She was a little craft to have ventured upon a voyage, for no pleasure boat would be off Southstrand at that season of the spring unless returning from southern or European waters, and there was something in her appearance that pronounced her a yacht even to my inexperienced eyes.

Bang went the mortar! But in the uncertain light the aim must have missed, for I saw the men hauling back the line and coiling it with lightning speed. My heart beat to suffocation; I felt as if it were tied to the end of that slender cord, and was now being dragged through the fury of the sea.

Once more they sighted and fired, and as they stood grouped, watching the effect, I ventured to join them. My friend Herrick had a glass, and was reporting his observations. Out of the rigging a man swung down to the deck—the line had evidently crossed the ship! Now came a moment of intense excitement—would he get it before a monster wave washed it away, or would both he and the life line be swept off before the eyes of his comrades in the rigging? Whatever happened, he had written himself a hero in one woman's heart.

"He's got it!" I heard Herrick shout, and in confirmation we could see him climbing back on the mast, while another man seemed to be aiding him in making the line fast. We could distinguish even distant objects now; the day was coming on apace.

At that moment a mountainous wave struck the yacht, making her careen so violently that the mast seemed to touch the sea, and when she righted herself the lowest man was gone!

Without knowing it, I must have sobbed aloud, for Herrick laid a rough hand on my shoulder.

"This ain't no place for women," he said, though not unkindly. "You had better go home, Miss Russell."

"I'll not go home," I answered, angrily, and then I, in my turn, grasped his arm.

"What is that in that wave?" I almost screamed, and he answered, with an oath I dare not set down:

"It's a man!"

Most of the life-saving men were busy paying out the heavy line that was to support the breeches buoy to and from the sinking ship, but one young fellow heard Herrick's shout, and followed him to the edge of the waves. They were already in their cork belts, and Herrick now fastened a rope round his waist and gave the coil to his companion as he waited for the incoming surge. The two stood like a pair of leashed greyhounds prepared to spring.

On came the roller—not a wall of water, like many that had preceded it, but low, swift and sweeping, with a nasty side twist—and in its foam, sometimes tossed high, sometimes hidden in the spray, came its human burden.

Herrick ran forward to meet the wave, and plunged under as it broke, while we on shore watched with throbbing hearts his game with death. It seemed an even chance whether he would snatch his prey from the sea, or be trampled himself in its cruel pounding. The agony of the moment made it seem interminable, and I think I must have lost consciousness, for I found myself on the sands with my head against the lifeboat, and, a hundred feet away, Herrick and the man he had saved were stretched side by side.

I never saw anything as humanly perfect as that sailor. He was a young man—decidedly under thirty—with the regularity of feature we usually consider Greek, and a look of repose beautiful to behold. Dignity, tenderness and a soft languor all mingled in the expression of his face.

I could not believe that he was dead, such a little time had elapsed since he had been swept from the vessel, and I knelt beside him and began to rub his cold hands between my own.

The hands were good—too good for a seafaring man, and with feminine precipitance I jumped to the conclusion that this beautiful, fair-haired Viking was the owner of the yacht, and no sooner had this idea entered my mind than romance was busy weaving a web round my heart. The lower part of his face was bronzed by exposure, but the forehead was white as a child's, and above it the short hair grew low, and ruffled itself in little rings as the water dripped from it. I knew if ever the eyes met mine they would be blue, and I gazed as if the force of my will could compel them to disclose their secret to me. Perhaps it did—for suddenly the lids trembled, then opened, and a pair of blue-gray eyes looked sternly in my face. The expression was defiant, as if the spirit had been braced to meet danger, but in a second the hard look vanished, and the eyes seemed to smile before they slowly shut, as if the effort had cost all remaining vitality.

Herrick's companion was just starting to run for help when that redoubtable person sat up and then staggered to his feet. He had only had the wind knocked out of him, and was his own sturdy self in a few minutes, with a wealth of invectives that broke rudely upon my exalted mood. He called to his companion to get to work if he didn't want the man to die on their hands, and added, crossly:

"We can't do anything here with a woman lookin' on. Just carry him over to the station, and we'll cut these wet clothes off him and give him a show at the fire, and I guess he'll pull round all right."

They hoisted him over the shoulder of the younger man, and bore him off, leaving me humiliated by my disabilities for usefulness. I stood rooted to the spot where I had knelt beside the sailor, a flood of pity and admiration filling my heart, and a passionate wondering whether life or death were to be the portion of the man whose beauty and courage had so moved me. Herrick's rough kindness seemed to me sacrilege.

In the meantime the breeches buoy had made one trip and landed its first passenger, a monkey-like old sailor with gold earrings and black whiskers surrounding his flat face. He spat the salt water from his mouth, and with as little concern as if he were furling a sail he lent a hand to the coast crew in their work of rescue.

I approached the group to repeat the offer I had already made to Herrick of fire and refreshment at my cottage, and overheard the old fellow's replies to certain questions our men put to him concerning the yacht and the man who had been washed overboard.

"That was our captain," he said. "I've sailed with worse—durned sight worse! Got him, did you? Name is

Holford—yacht *Dido*—coming from Nassau by way of Bermuda—here she comes!”

This last was in reference to the breeches, which was freighted for the second time.

The wind was going down as the day advanced, and the waves seemed less vicious. To my shame, I found my interest in the rescue of my fellow creatures had dwindled since the Viking had been borne off, and I became keenly aware of my bodily discomfort. I was wet to the skin and exhausted to the last degree, and hardly had the strength to drag myself home. Before going to my room, however, I dispatched Murphy over to the station with blankets and hot coffee, together with a bottle of whisky, and I charged Bridget to let me know his report of Captain Holford.

It was a long time before she brought me any news, and then it was interspersed with characteristic scoldings.

“Why didn’t I come before? Glory be to goodness, this day and this night, child. How can I be everywhere at once? People running in for hot drinks, and half-drowned creatures sopping the kitchen with sea water; it’s half dead I am! The captain of the ship? Well, Murphy says he’s alive, but he guesses he’s hurt internal, and the doctor’s been and taken him over to that little house across the field, where he can be more quiet and have a room to himself. You drink this hot tea, Miss Kate, and get into your bed, if you don’t want to be sick after this night’s work.” 67

She set down the tea and walked off, disapprobation expressed in every line of her retreating figure. When she reached the stairs I heard her mutter:

“Young ladies running out with the men in the middle of the night. ’Tain’t my idea of manners, and I guess it won’t be Mrs. Russell’s either, when I tell her what Miss Kate’s been up to.”

If I had been a boy I should have said something forcible to Bridget.

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A severe cold kept me in my room for two days, and made me humble enough to swallow Bridget’s nostrums as well as her reproaches, for the dread that she might send for my mother and put an end to future free action on my part held me enslaved.

The gale blew itself out, and nature remembered that the month was May. May at Southstrand meant buttercups as large as daisies, and, in the woods, clustering masses of pink azaleas. The beach grass on the dunes waved silver in the south wind, the fields and meadows intensified their spring freshness by a cunning shading of velvet greens, and the blue of the sky melted into the sea.

During the hours of my imprisonment I had thought but one thought, seen but one vision—the face of my sailor captain as he lay on the beach, and I asked myself how I dared to thus idealize a stranger. Not for a second did I doubt his place in life. Class prejudice was mine to an overmastering extent, but I told myself that such beauty of body could only be the home of what I was pleased to call *the soul of a gentleman*. For narrowness of vision commend me to that which has only seen life through plate-glass windows and lace curtains. Thanks to a new influence, mine broadened and matured with the ripening summer.

The morning of the third day I ventured out, and naturally directed my steps to the life-saving station to ask news of the yacht’s crew. Herrick was just outside with his bicycle, prepared to skim off to the village to spend his leisure hours with his family, but he courteously waited to greet me and answer my questions.

The rescued men had been sent to New York. The captain had attended to that, for, while he was unable to be moved just yet owing to injuries he had received, he was able to give his orders and see that they were carried out.

“Doesn’t he mourn the wreck of his yacht?” I asked, and Herrick answered:

“Lor’, miss! ’Tain’t nothin’ to him; he’s only the sailing master. The *Dido’s* owned by a rich man, who is off on his wedding trip, and sent the yacht home from Nassau with this young fellow.”

Only the sailing master! My lips kept whispering it, and my brain would not take it in. It meant that I—Katherine Russell, the fastidious daughter of tradition, of all exclusiveness—had fallen in love with a sailing master, and, what was far worse, I had fallen in love unsolicited. What would my mother say—and uncle Barton? Uncle Barton, who was always rolling that magic word, “gentleman,” under his tongue, and despising others. Of course they need never know, but my secret hurt me.

Desperate diseases require desperate remedies, and as I walked along the lanes in a passion of rage at my own weakness, I determined to see this man and let him destroy his own image in my heart. I was in love with a creature of my own creation—I knew neither his mind nor his speech—perhaps his first words would dispel the illusion and set me free.

Across the field was the little house that harbored him, open doored and cheerful in the sunshine, and I boldly turned my face thither. As I approached, the farmer’s wife came out of her henhouse with her apron full of fresh eggs, and I affected to wish to buy some for my housekeeping, and strolled with her to the porch.

“I’ll put them in a basket for you, Miss Russell,” she said, pausing. “I am sorry I cannot ask you inside to wait, but my parlor is let to the captain of that wrecked vessel, and he’s still too sick to leave his bed.” 68

As she spoke a towering figure filled the doorway and a deep voice said:

“Oh, no, he isn’t, Mrs. Price, for here he is, and hungry enough to beg for one of those eggs for a second breakfast.”

He was dressed in a blue flannel shirt, such as the village shops furnished, a pair of dark trousers, also village made, and a coat which must have been lent to him by the farmer: and he wore them with an air that was regal.

Now that I was face to face with my folly, I recovered my senses, and, while I felt puzzled by the contradictions he presented, I was brave enough to take advantage of opportunity.

“You must allow me to congratulate you upon your rescue and that of your crew, Mr. Holford,” I said. “You had a narrow escape.”

“The congratulations are due to the gallantry of your coast guards,” he answered, with enthusiasm.

“I am sorry about the yacht,” I continued; “she is still holding together, for one mast thrusts itself out of the water at low tide and looks so pathetic.”

“A monument to bad seamanship,” he said, impatiently. “It is the last boat I shall ever attempt to sail.”

“But isn’t sailing your occupation?” I asked, aghast at his easy way of laying down his livelihood. “There must be plenty of gentlemen needing sailing masters, even if this one especial yacht has gone to the bottom.”

He stared at me blankly, and then a quizzical look came into his eyes, as he answered:

“Few gentlemen care to employ an unsuccessful sailing master; indeed, I am not sure but that my license will be revoked. No, no, the ocean has thrown me upon the land, and I mean to take the hint.”

“It seems hard to begin life all over again,” I said, sympathetically.

He impressed me as a man gently nurtured, who had adopted a profession for which he was not originally intended.

“You mustn’t waste too much compassion on me,” he replied. “I have no one dependent upon me, and, besides, I am not at the end of my resources. I possess a few acres of farm land. There is nothing to prevent my turning myself into a son of the soil.”

At this juncture Mrs. Price came back with the eggs, and I turned to go, feeling the conversation was becoming almost too personal.

“Good-by,” I said. “I am glad you are better. Is there anything I can do for you?”

He came painfully after me down the path; the muscles of his back had been hurt and he moved stiffly.

“Two things if you will,” he said, with rather a saucy smile: “tell me where I have seen you before, and lend me some books.”

This was getting on a little too fast. If he had been my social equal, if we had possessed friends in common, he could not have been more assured in his manner.

“I have never spoken to you before in my life,” I said, coldly. “I will send you some books, Mr. Holford.”

Again the merriment flashed into his eyes, and he stood in my path.

“You would prefer me with manners cold as my hands were the other day when you chafed them for me on the beach. You see, I remember—and I prefer you with a red Tam o’ Shanter on your curly locks. Oh, don’t be vexed!” he added, with entreaty in his voice. “I do not mean to be impertinent, but I have been haunted by a vision, and the impression is intensified by reality.” He drew aside to let me pass, and I hurried down the path, more in love with this impudent, outrageous stranger than before.

I sent Murphy with the books; a choice collection of direct narratives—Conan Doyle, Clark Russell stories, that I considered suited to a taste more practical than scholarly—but as an afterthought I added a novel I had just read, a psychological problem as to one’s right to dispose of life in the manner to give the richest fulfillment to present desires at the expense of future wreck or death.

I was thoroughly disingenuous with myself, for my only object in sending that book was to mark its effect, to welcome its discussion, and yet I pretended I never wished to see Mr. Holford again.

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Perhaps it was not altogether my fault that we met every day, and sometimes twice a day, in that week allotted to his recovery. If I strolled up the beach when my house duties were over, I was sure to be waylaid by Mr. Holford on my return, and he leaned so heavily on his cane, and entreated me so earnestly to sit down for a moment and rest, that common humanity made me accede to his request.

I had a shrewd suspicion that Bridget was always dogging my footsteps, and once or twice I surprised a flitting figure disappearing round the piazza when Captain Holford walked home with me, but as she never ventured to remonstrate openly, I did not suppose she would presume to write about me to mamma.

This went on for six glorious days, and we talked of everything on earth, and even exchanged views of the trans-celestial, and the rest of the time we talked of ourselves, and again of ourselves. He drew from me my thoughts and hopes, the monotonous story of a sheltered girl’s life, and the shrinking and longing—so oddly mixed—with which she viewed the impending future; and in return he talked much of his feelings, but little of his past, though vaguely I guessed that a great financial change had come to him not very long ago, and I understood how painful explanations might be, and admired his uncomplaining courage.

At our last meeting, for he was going away the next day, we discussed that burning question of what an enlightened conscience owes to others—to prejudice and class distinction as against its larger usefulness and happiness.

We were seated near the top of a sand dune with the Atlantic murmuring at our feet, and behind us the merry little village settling down to rest after the labors of the day. Mr. Holford had been talking of youth, its sensuous keenness to pain or pleasure, and saying that worldly prudence meant sacrificing life at its flood of physical development to the dreary protection of its decay.

“We must go hungry,” he concluded, disdainfully, “while we have the teeth to eat, in order that our mumbling old age may be regaled with banquets it is past enjoying.”

His reasoning seemed to me fallacious.

“If youth is restrained,” I said, “it is only in the cause of self-respect. What civilized being wishes to be a burden to others?”

“Civilization means hardened selfishness,” he said. “It conjugates all its tenses with *to have*, seldom with *to be*.”

I asked myself whether this bitterness was a protest against the social barrier between us, and I said, reproachfully:

“I don’t like you in this mood. You are hard.”

“The sordid side of life has been thrust upon me,” he said, sadly. “I have known poverty and riches, and I have suffered almost as much from one as the other, till I hate such influences. Why, even you—a girl of twenty—would deny your best impulses if you fell in love with a man below you in position. Look into my eyes and tell me if I have guessed the truth?”

I looked into his eyes and saw something that made the color mount to my cheeks and set my heart thumping.

“A girl doesn’t own her own life, Mr. Holford,” I managed to answer. “She only owns a little part of herself called her heart, and that seems of small consequence to her elders.”

“Her elders!” he repeated, scornfully. “There spoke the conventional girl. We will not talk in quibbles any longer. I love you. I am an honorable man, and therefore worthy of the woman I love. I can support you in decent comfort. Will you marry me?” 70

He held out that handsome brown hand to me, and I put mine in it.

“I will love you,” I said, “because I cannot help myself, but I will not marry you without my mother’s consent, because it would make me miserable. You have loved me in spite of my classbound education, now win me openly and honorably or go your way.”

I sprang to my feet, meaning to leave him, but he caught my frock like a naughty child, and held me while he scrambled painfully to his feet.

“God bless you, Kate,” he said, “you are right, as usual. As long as you love me for my very self, it makes little difference that your mother may probably accept me for a different reason. Tell me once more that you love the poor sailing master of the *Dido*—that if left to yourself, you would share his fortunes, no matter how humble—and then I will tell you the truth.”

And I told him; indeed, it was sweet to make the confession, with no one to share it but the crickets in the beach grass, and a belated bird calling to her mate, and when I had satisfied his craving to be loved, I claimed his promise.

“Now what have you to tell me?” I demanded, for he had stung my woman’s curiosity.

“Only that Holford is no longer my name,” he said, smiling; “at least only a part of it. Several years ago, by a strange turn of fortune, I——”

He stopped abruptly, for mamma appeared on the top of the sand hill and fluttered down upon us like an avenging angel.

“Kate!” she exclaimed. “What are you doing here? And who is this person with whom you are on such intimate terms that he holds your hands while he talks to you? My daughter seems unable to answer me,” she continued, turning to my lover; “perhaps you will favor me with some account of yourself?”

“With pleasure,” he said, his eyes dancing wickedly. “Miss Russell could not tell you my name because she doesn’t know it herself. I am——”

And here he was again interrupted by uncle Barton sliding down the sand hill and landing heavily.

“Great Scott!” he grumbled, “I’ve a ton of sand in each shoe! I hope I did not hurt you, sir—why, can it be? What the devil are you doing here, Battleford? Do you know my sister, Mrs. Russell? This is Lord Battleford, Julia, whom I met at Nassau.”

At this point his wits revealed to him that Lord Battleford was the castaway sailor whose attentions to me had alarmed Bridget into writing to my mother for help, and he turned upon the young gentleman with rancor.

“You don’t seem to need any introduction to my niece, Lord Battleford,” he said, loftily, while his face flushed with turkey-cock rage, “and I beg to inform you that I think it a deuced ungentlemanlike thing on your part to compromise a girl with clandestine meetings and flirtations in the absence of her family, and I tell you plainly the whole thing has got to stop.”

“Not so fast, if you please, Mr. Hay,” said my sailor, laughing. “I have won a wife who likes me for what I *am* irrespective of what I *have*, and I hope you and Mrs. Russell are not going to spoil our romance by refusing your consent. Speak up, Kate,” he said, turning to me; “tell these discreet people that I am something better than a title—a man you have learned to love.”

And so I had to make a second confession of the state of my heart, and mamma succumbed in two minutes to Battleford’s charms—or those of his title—but I heard Uncle Barton still scolding as he helped her up the sand dune.

“Oh, yes, he’ll make a she-earl of Kate—countess, I mean—but he’ll take her away from us, and I fancy you will yet regret the day you trusted her out of your sight, when the ocean lies between us and our little girl.”

But she didn’t! For in giving me to Battleford she not only had me often with her, but gained the dearest of sons.

WHEN Mrs. Evremond found herself actually in her carriage it seemed to her that it would never go fast enough, although Heaven knows she was indifferent to the speed of her vehicles as a rule, there being no reason why she should hasten—no place she especially cared to arrive at, no excitement or element of it in her quiet life. But this afternoon she was conscious of every rotation of the wheels.

When the Arc de Triomphe had been passed and in and out among automobiles and tramways her little yellow-wheeled brougham crossed the Etoile and began the descent, suddenly, with the inconsequence marking a woman's emotions as clearly as it stamps her reasonings, Mrs. Evremond decided the coachman was driving at a ridiculous rate. After all, she hoped never to reach the Place de la Concorde—never to traverse the Pont Royal and leave for the Latin Quarter and the other side of the river—the *insouciant* world of the Bois and American Paris. She had no desire to find the obscure street in which her husband had his studio—which street was, however, the direction she had given her footman, and it was toward No. 15 bis, Passage du Maine, that with such useless speed she was being driven.

They reached and passed the Elysée Palace Hotel. Mrs. Evremond blew through the tube at her side, the brougham drew up to the curb, stopped and she got out.

"You may go home. I shall not need you again to-day," she directed, and, turning to the avenue, she began to walk down the Champs Elysées. She might at least be mistress of her own gait; walk with short, feverish little steps or retard her pace to keep harmony with her alternate rapid or halting reflections, for her mind, as she walked, went back over the past six months of her married life with a persistence, a clearness, that denoted how important were the details, how ineffaceable were the marks her experiences had made upon her, how intensely she felt what she had lived, how seriously she had taken life, how absorbed she was in the man to whom she had attached herself—how desperately she loved her husband. The vividness with which she thought of him had the precision of a fresh image. The impulsive rush of herself toward the harbor her conception of him made proved, by its very force and freshness, that thinking of him like this was a new thing. She had lived with him, existed by his side, for six years, and had never thought about him, around him, as she did to-day.

She gasped. "Perhaps if I had thought about him a little more and loved him a little less, *this* might not have happened!"

The happening, so distressing to her, which had caused her, at an unusual hour, to ring for her carriage, dress and fly from the house on an expedition she knew to be close to ill-breeding in its likeness to melodrama and its distinct opposition to codes of expedient, had been finding a letter—the world-worn story that comes to each woman with a new pang.

As Mrs. Evremond reached the Rond Point, she asked herself: "What am I really going to do? What do I expect to see and find, and how shall I act when I find it?"

Women constantly commit the platitude—if such an expression can be used—of thinking they are acting on certain occasions contrary to their characters, out of gear with their codes. Mrs. Evremond was not an impulsive temperament. Unaccustomed to crises or events that called for the quick decision of more brilliant and self-sufficient minds, she had found herself face to face with a problem, and was acting with a precipitation that made her dizzy, and a promptitude that suggested she had been brought into contact with just such difficulties many times before.

The well-bred gentlewoman had seized, without second thought, the letter lying open at her feet, read it, gasped over it, paled over it, hated and disbelieved it—crushed it in her hand, and, with the now crumpled sheet between glove and palm, she was on her way to verify its purport; to make sure of the fact which women, if they would but know it, are many times happier in ignoring; to prove to herself what? That her husband was unfaithful to her; that she must either "cease to love him"—by the operation of one of those unbalancing *coups de foudre* which, we are told, turn honey to gall and love to hate in the human breast at one revolution—or that with the discovery she must also acknowledge, no matter *what* he did, she would love him still, and would, therefore, curse an enlightenment which should only give her a useless bitter grief to suffer for the rest of her life.

She stopped still at the Place de la Concorde. She never walked alone in the streets of Paris at this hour, and the aspect of the city was new to her. In the early winter twilight the Place shone through the mingled mists of evening, and the golden hazy scintillations haloing the yellow lamps. The sunset had left the sky over the Tuileries still red, and above the river the heavens darkened and grew cold, but the bridge lights beckoned. Her hands were in her muff, her cheeks red with exercise, and her eyes, which had wept more tears in the last few hours than they would acknowledge to have seen for many months, stung in the sharp air. She stood irresolute. Behind her the Champs Elysées stretched to the apex at the Arc. It would be a quiet, restful walk home. Should she not take it, return and force herself to learn the lesson—that it is folly to be too wise? As she clasped her hands together in her muff the letter crushed upon her palm; she set her lips, drew a sharp breath, and resumed her walk, turning across to the Pont de la Concorde, traversing it quickly, a graceful, agile pedestrian among the many foot passengers, unobserving of the admiring eyes of those whose chase is beauty.

After a very long walk, Mrs. Evremond gained the boulevard she sought, turned into a dark little street, into a still darker alley.

The old *concierge* met her at the *loge*, a peasant *gardienne*, blear-eyed and wearing the white cap of her province. She blinked at madame, and under the thick lace veil Mrs. Evremond had worn to shield her emotion from the curious, the old woman did not recognize her tenant's wife.

"Monsieur told me that he is expecting madame," she said, familiarly. "He will not be long. Madame will go in——"

Without reply, she passed the woman and went up to her husband's room.

Expecting her? No, that she knew was not the case—he was expecting another; even the old *portière* was in his wretched secret, while she alone, perhaps, of all Paris had been ignorant.

As she crossed the threshold of the studio she seemed to enter the apartment of a perfect stranger, so far away from her the last few hours had served to put him. The room was cold. She opened the door of the little stove, and, finding the fire laid, put a match to the kindling; in a moment the sharp crackling of the wood met her ears with a friendly domestic voice whose language was to her ears cruelly that of the hearth and home. If what the missive implied were true, her husband had loved another woman for many months. He had met her here in this place which the wife looked upon as sacred to his art; whose precincts she had respected with fidelity, believing them devoted to his work, and fearing to be obtrusive.

The studio had indeed been sacred, but to an unlawful love.

Her first impulse was to throw her muff down, unwind the fur from her neck and make herself as 73
comfortable as she could in the gloom of the spacious room; but instead she walked restlessly about, taking in the details of decoration, the attractive disorder, with unseeing eyes. Behind that large screen Maurice's models dressed and undressed—women of the people, women of the streets, of course, of the lowest, most degrading type; face to face with them, alone with them, he had passed hours of his life with them for years. She had never been jealous of them, she had never thought of them; she had regarded them in the same light with easels, and paint, and studio equipment.

Why had she not been jealous of them? They were women, and if Maurice was so unattached that he was either a prey or a victim, or a seeker of such affairs as this which she now believed she had discovered, why should she not take it for granted that there were many and varied experiences of which she had been the unconscious dupe? She shuddered—anger and distrust whispered her to hate her husband, to despise his weakness and never to forgive him.

In her lonely promenade she peopled the room with incidents and scenes which did her wrong, and proved to what extent she had unnerved herself, what rein she gave to jealousy and fear. She had lighted a lamp, and in its light took out the crumpled piece of paper from her glove and re-read it again. It was a love letter, the warm and confident letter of a woman who loves to the man who loves her. At its close it gave him rendezvous for half-past five o'clock at 11 bis, Passage du Maine.

As Mrs. Evremond's eyes followed the lines among the wrinkles of the crumpled page, her eyes brimmed over again with tears, her knees trembled, she felt herself actually ready to fall. With the return of her tears came a softening of her anger—a relief of her unnerved state, of her suffering—for a second she wept silently. At the moment when her control was beyond her power she thought she heard a sound on the stairway, and her heart stopped beating very nearly—the blood flew to her face.

A sense of shame overcame her—shame for herself, for him and for the other woman. What a horrible thing to follow and spy upon her husband! What scene did she meditate? What tirade should spring to her lips? It showed, indeed—the fact of her presence—how degrading was the whole matter, if it could bring her to this. And the woman who bravely had come all the way from her home to find out what she dreaded, now that enlightenment was at hand, longed to run from it, and wished herself a thousand miles away. *If it were true, she would rather die than know.* If it were not true, how she would loathe herself for her presence here!

The steps ceased, and in the consoling silence Mrs. Evremond regained her natural balance—and swung true. She turned from the table near which she had been standing, and more hurriedly than she had entered left the studio—almost ran past the *loge* of the old *concierge*, and unseen by her slipped out of the open gate, called a passing cab and crept into it, guiltily, closing the door upon what she felt was her dishonor.

* * * * *

Whereas Mrs. Evremond's life was made up of monologue reflection, of days of solitude and lately of lonely evenings, Mr. Evremond was seldom alone. Weariness and ennui possessed him as soon as he was face to face with his thoughts in solitude, and he, therefore, arranged his life, in as much as possible, to avoid his ego, which, for some reason or other, he cared never to entertain *en tête-à-tête*!

He gave rendezvous for the morning hours to his men friends, so that even while he painted he was attended by one or another of a dozen intimates, who amused and diverted him. When these failed, he would even call in the curtain hanger or a carpenter for some impromptu task, and the necessity of sharing the burden of his personality he attributed to his sociability. It was innocent enough that the mere noise of a carpenter's plane, 74
the tap, tap, of an upholsterer's hammer, should be company to him, yet this need of another's presence had been the demoralization of his character. So long as there was somebody with him, he put off the moment of reckoning with himself, the salutary confession productive of the efforts which count in a man's life. And so the inward voice of conscience had been drowned by the voice of human companions.

Evremond was pleased with the world and disgusted with himself. Good health and a love of beauty caused him perpetual enjoyment, whereas his moral insensibility, the deadening of his ego, deprived him of all happiness. He had too long stifled his yawns with a smile to be capable now of tears or laughter, and his attitude was a menace to his wife's contentment. In the best hours of Mrs. Evremond's married life, she had felt between her husband and herself that breach of solitude which, no matter by whom, *must be filled*.

She was six years younger than her husband, whom, without knowing, she loved passionately and timidly.

Silent as he was, indifferent, as a rule, and always preoccupied, nevertheless he depended upon her. She was the blank page at the end of a book, the instant's repose for the emotions—she was a habit—she was his wife.

Evremond was at the close of an affair; on his part, an affair not of business, but of the heart. For the past three months he had made desperate love to a woman not his wife. She had denied him nothing. And now it was over. Their meetings had taken place at her house and his own studio, he had seen her in her own boudoir, he had driven with her in the broad light of day through hidden alleys in the Bois. They had made sentimental journeys to the Louvre. Together they had sat in the public gardens of the Tuileries. For three long months they had amused themselves and each other. And now the affair was ended. Evremond was ready to yawn upon it already. Already the memory was becoming indistinct, blent with memories of other adventures so like to this one that it would require a useless effort to distinguish it. But this time there was something different in the ending of the romance, the happy ending reserved for sensitive readers.

This afternoon at five they had met and parted in his studio, a sundering of friendship by mutual consent, with adieux into which both had tried to put feeling enough to justify the hours they had consecrated to each other.

After she had gone he lingered in the familiar room. A long glass screen reflected the dying embers that had fallen red against the iron hearth of the stove. A certain perfume brought with a rush to his mind moments that now became intolerable to him. As he impatiently put the scenes from him, between the stove and the mirror, the mirror in which Evremond could not, try as he would, imagine himself alone, he saw a small gray spot on the polished floor. A handkerchief—no, a glove! He stooped, picked it up, and, as though in defiance of the bolder odors of heavier scent that hung in the air, a faint breath like an appeal came from the bit of *suède* which held still the imprint of a woman's hand. His heart seemed to stop as he turned the object over in his hand. It was a small gray glove, distinctly not the property of the woman to whom he had said good-by.

He picked it up and smoothed it out; there was something in it—a bit of crumpled paper over whose ruffled surface ran the words of love and the appeal which had brought him to his last rendezvous. He could not believe his eyes! This was his wife's glove! It meant, then, that she had found the letter which he had evidently carelessly let fall, and she had read the ridiculous sheet of paper whose words and expressions gave him now a sort of wearied nausea. She had come to the studio to confirm her doubts, she had seen them enter together, of course. She knew everything, then, everything—everything except that it was over—all that should never have been was ended. But that would not clear him in her eyes.

Much disturbed and sick at heart, he went out into the streets and walked slowly along, somewhat like a man in a dream, lighting one cigarette after another, following, as it were, the leading of the tiny light that faded and glowed at the end of the paper cylinder. He walked on until the small house in which he lived near the Avenue du Bois was not more than fifteen minutes distant, then he wandered away from it, his thoughts following an irregular route.

* * * * *

As Mrs. Evremond got into her cab without giving an address, the coachman waited for a second, then leaned down from his box and asked her where he should drive her.

Home—she had none! Why, the term was a farce! It had meant a place shared by her husband and herself—he had dishonored it, blighted it forever in her eyes. She would go at once to her mother's, and from there write him her conditions—they were hers to make, she knew—he would not put forth any plea; she would never see him again.

She gave the coachman an address in Passy, and the speaking of the number and street out into the dark put finality to what she did. He received it with a "*Bien, madame*," as casual and cheerful as if she had given him a point of happy meeting instead of neutral ground on which to decide for misery. She sank back in the *fiacre*, white and shaking, and watched the lights of the interminable streets mark her as she passed, and the unconcerned passersby, whom she envied in their apparent freedom from an hour of agony.

She had been betrayed; horribly, cruelly, disloyally left for another woman. At first the jealous bitterness of it obscured all other feeling. She was only conscious of a desire to escape—to put miles between herself and her husband and to be free. He had then not loved her for long, and she had believed herself cherished. Now she believed she had only been uneasily watched. No doubt, even the few occasions on which he had showed her marked affection—notably after some unintended indifference on her part—were to be attributed to his uneasiness, to the assuaging of his conscience. That to such caresses she had been dupe was a fatal obstacle to any reconciliation.

It was her hour to choose between her rights as a wife and her divine right as a woman, and as she mused, hidden in the corner of the little, rattling carriage, Mrs. Evremond saw only the first. The reality from which she was fleeing brought its flood of indignant shame to her face, and she began to despise the ignorance which had placed her in the way of being so easily deceived. She scorned her trust in her husband, and the beautiful qualities of confidence and belief grew to appear as the most pitiable dupes—a rage of humiliation filled her as she realized her blindness during the most poignant moments of her husband's treachery. Her constancy, her very loyal love, made her pitifully ridiculous in her own eyes.

That a man's betrayal has power to waken such heat of passion and base humiliation as this in a gentle breast is too unfortunately the case. Evremond's excuses for tardy entrances, his evading of little attentions to herself which would have involved the devotion of several hours, how puerile and trifling they seemed!—how bald and flagrant they appeared to her illumined understanding! Worst of all it was to feel that whatever love she had innocently shown her husband during these few months had for him no value; had only served to assure him that his wife was suspicionless—at ease; that she was successfully duped, and he might more fearlessly continue on his way. She would set him free—leave him to love whatever woman he chose without the sin of a dishonored vow. He would be at liberty—there would be no trace of her left in his life. And for herself? What would it mean for her? She must well think of it now.

With the completeness a supreme moment of grief alone is capable to accomplish, she saw in a flash her past filled with Maurice and her future without him. With an audible cry, quickly stifled, she leaned forward in 76
the little vehicle, and stretched her hands before her as if she would seize the first, then shrank back, covering her face as if she would shut out the latter.

"I don't believe he loves her more than me!" she cried, to her wounded soul. "I don't *believe* it; there is something in me still that tells me he cares for me—and there is *nothing* in me to tell me that I do not love my husband—nothing to help me to take the stand of pride and jealousy. I love him—and I always shall."

Ah, she loved him! There was no doubt about that. And how deeply inevitably it shamed her now to acknowledge it. Her history is the repetition of many a woman's, and of women less one-minded, less unselfish, more warped by petty jealousies, whose frequency has become habit. But this, the first jealous hour of Mrs. Evremond's life, was met by a storm of love, in which it was beaten down to the ground as, with a rush, came over her the accumulated tenderness of years, never checked, spontaneously allowed to live in her heart, if never shown to her husband. Instantly purged by its holiness—spiritualized by its unselfishness—she began to wonder if the fault did not lie with herself.

"It is never one-sided," she thought. "He really loved me very much once—why should he stop loving me? If I have not been able to keep my husband's love, part, at least, of the fault must be mine?"

It is rare that when a height is reached, after a painful climb, that the vision is dimmed; the reward of the struggle is sight. Whether or not she fatuously blamed herself, whether or not a stronger-minded woman, zealous for her rights and keen to the sense of hurt honor, would be able to detect *any* fault in the years of the gentle life, the wife, examining herself, believed she saw clear.

She had too readily accepted as a matter of course the idea that devotion promised at the altar is a commodity given over in sacred form and secure from all assaults; hers without future effort. She had slipped into married life too easily, too calmly, and now she thought stupidly, without varying, or seeking to amuse, distract or entertain—without eternally charming the man whom she had once charmed. For her restless and vacillating husband—he was this in her eyes as she mused—she had discovered nothing new in six years. She was a fixture to him—an article of furniture, one with the home, indispensable perhaps as the home itself, but only because, like inanimate things, she had been useful and had made no claim. If she now sought him in judicial manner and demanded confession, renunciation, and all the rest of it, what power remained with her still? Having brought her this far in her musings, the *fiacre* drove up and stopped. Looking out she saw the *grille* and the iron lamps hanging lit on either side the posts of the gate, and back of it the garden and her mother's home. But the sight of this destination brought only a chill to her and no comfort. It was no welcome asylum; she had no desire to fly to her mother's arms, to weep and pour out her grief. She felt no need of a confidant. She wanted to find some basis of her unchanged loyalty to rest upon—a natural resting place—some strength to take her to her own door.

Her grief, her contemplation of the disaster to her faith in her husband, had left her shaken in all but her love. She loved him, and any life without him was intolerable for her to face. "But," she reflected, "however much I may prefer a future with him to no matter what life without him, it does not follow that he would decide in the same way." Yet for some intangible reason she believed it.

She had arrived at the hour which presents itself sooner or later in the life of every married woman, the hour of combat whose issue decides the limit for all future relations.

If she should go to him to-night—wounded vanity recalcitrant—she might stipulate conditions that should forever sunder their lives. Sunder their lives she believed for a passing fantasy, for a weakness, for a caprice on 77
his part. If, on the contrary, she went to him with forgiveness, the very fact that there *was* such need, that he was forced to receive it, would leave a scar. It requires more grace to forget forgiveness than to forgive. She knew her husband's nature—it would rankle and corrode. She shrank from the ordeal of an explanation, of any rôle that would link her with this *liaison*.

At all events, descent here at the friendly home was impossible. She gave her own address, Rue Leonard de Vinci, and directed a return through the Bois de Boulogne. The coachman, thinking he was driving a disappointed lady from a *rendezvous manqué*, said: "*Très bien, madame!*" with less cheerfulness than he had shown at the first instructions. Turning briskly through Passy to La Muette, and entering the Bois at that gate, he drove her along at a jogging pace toward home. Home—it had become this once again; not as yet destroyed and marred by torturing questions and recriminations—never, please God, so to be by her! If it had any sacredness, she would try to save it still; if the link were not too fragile, she would mend it; if there were a hearthstone left she would, if she might, kindle some warmth upon it still.

"Perhaps," she mused, "happiness is ended for my husband and me; at all events, I will not seek its destruction. Perhaps he wants to leave me and be free. He must prove it to me. He has not proved it yet. Perhaps I can learn to be to him more than any other woman can ever be—can charm him to me again as I did when I was a girl. I can try with all my heart."

She let down the glass of the little window and leaned out. The air was sweet with the smell of the damp winter woods—the trees clustered like phantoms close to the road—there had been an ice storm, and the glistening tops of the pines shone in the night like fairy trees in crystal urns. A few stars were out, big and bright in a sky faintly blue; as Mrs. Evremond lifted her face to them they seemed to shine on her as never before. She looked up into the heavens with a childlike sweetness, and perhaps, in her hope and her goodness, with as pure a faith as prayer ever carried. She was possibly deserted definitely by the man she loved. She had been betrayed by him. She had never suffered in her life as to-day. She could never so suffer again.

We all possess the power to make those who love us suffer just so far. Evremond had come all at once to the high-tide mark of his limit. He could never cause her such keen pain again, and he paid the penalty. She loved him not less but differently, with a tenderness that comes only when we have ceased to lean—to repose; with a protection that only comes when we are conscious of weakness; with renunciation that only comes when we see and accept the destruction of the ideal, the death of illusion, and take up with courage the reality and embrace

it instead.

“He shall never know that I know,” she murmured, “unless he wishes to. He has a right to his life; he has a right to love where he likes, not by law, but because of his nature. If he loves me still, if he wants to go on as we are, he will make me feel it to-night. I shall know to-night, and for all our future he shall decide.”

* * * * *

Mrs. Evremond was a methodical woman of reasonable habits, and not given to tardy wanderings about shops or prolonged absences from her home. She was on this night very late indeed. The long time Evremond waited for her confirmed his most unpleasant fears. He had come in about six and gone to the salon to wait her probably speedy entrance. Then, with the nervous impatience of a person who had every reason to dread, and every reason to hope for, the arrival of the expected, he watched the clock mercilessly mark hour after hour. At eight—never had she been out so late before—he said, definitely:

“She has left me—there is no doubt about it. She knows everything, and she never wants to see me again.”

Such a fact as the termination of their married relations, in the most extreme moments of his interest in another, he had never thought of—he had never wished for. He had always considered his wife suited to him, understanding his idiosyncrasies, patient and a pleasant background, but never had he supposed that the naked truth of the loss of her—or the risk of the loss of her—would fill him with dismay. 78

Not caring to suggest significance in her absence by questioning the servants, he waited in the salon without giving orders to retard the dinner. Every passing cab that showed evidence of drawing up to the curbstone made him go to the window, only to see the vehicle roll unconcernedly past. His wife had left the house at five o’clock in her carriage, which had been sent back from the Champs Elysées; this was all he knew save that she had been to his studio half an hour before his rendezvous, and had there dropped her glove with the compromising letter. The end, then, of his conventional commonplace married life was to be a kind of tragedy; the public were to have their taste offended by his delinquencies—or to remain indifferent to the subject.

At all events, the poignancy of the affair was reserved for himself alone. Consistent with his self-absorbed nature, he pictured but one sufferer. He allotted to his wife righteous anger, disgust and a jealous pride—which, nevertheless, he justified—and nothing else. With surprise and vexation he discovered that he was suffering, and, unused to pain of any kind, annoyed and ill at ease with his conscience and his fate, he could have snapped at his irritation like an animal at a tantalizing wound.

If she were, indeed, gone, then his home was wrecked in consequence of his passing passion for a woman he had always thought in no wise equal to the wife whom he had dishonored, whom he, nevertheless, discovered he treasured and valued and could not lightly lose. What folly—what poor logic—what false judgment! Neither logic nor judgment entered into the case, and he knew it, nor did an overwhelming temptation of a grand passion justify even remotely his behavior in his eyes; he admitted his weakness, his facile drifting, when he took no means to stem the tide, his half-cynical pastime. It looked to have cost him dear.

As sentiments whose characters have changed in the unalterable and fickle moment of time, when love is love no more and desire non-existent, become as unpleasant and safe as they were secret and dangerous, so he thought of his late friendship with anger and held it cheap, a priceless imitation for which perhaps he had given a pure jewel in stupid exchange.

If she did not come in by nine o’clock he would go to her, to her mother’s, where she had undoubtedly taken refuge in the sudden storm that had driven her from her own doors. Once there, facing her, what should he say? She was so simple, so direct, so honest, so unworldly. He was too intelligent not to comprehend all that occasion would require of his duplicity, subtleties, to dupe her, to make her believe—what? He could *not* make her now believe anything but the truth. Her entire confidence had spared him hitherto the necessity of lying to her. He owed her that.

As he said this to himself, the debt of everything that he owed came very practically to his mind. All the peace he had known; agreeable and courteous companionship whenever he had sought it; the grace and comfort of a well-ordered household; and, if anything further, he had for a long time been too careless to foster it, unheedful of its value. If she were only a habit, she was a fixed one, more steadfast than any other hitherto formed. What should he say to her? Since he could not trick her to regard the situation with anything but disgust and anger, he would tell her the truth and plead weakness without love and beg her forgiveness. His nature twinged at this, a burning flush made him hot all over. A distaste of the cowardice in such confessions nauseated him. If she forgave him, if he made a clean breast of it in loyalty to her and disloyalty to the other, things would never be the same again. Between them there would always be his weakness and her nobility. Before humiliations such as these some natures do not shrink. Evremond shivered at it with all his sensibility and pride. 79

“Not,” he acknowledged, “that I am too beastly proud to own up, but that I dread the result to us both. *Que faire?*”

At nine o’clock, his nerves on the rack, his control gone, he telephoned to the little hotel, 75 Rue Docteur Blanche.

“Mrs. Evremond has not been at her mother’s for several days—who wished to know? Was there anything wrong?”

“Nothing.”

He put up the receiver—a new thought seized him horribly. Why had he supposed this the one and only solution—the quiet solution to his wife’s problem, the sequence to her discovery? What if she had suddenly, surprisingly, taken it to heart, and it had unnerved her? He had not thought of her or her feelings. She loved him—she had loved him, he knew it well—dearly.

“What if she had——” he exclaimed, aloud, white with emotion. Then: “Nonsense,” he exclaimed, “she is not

hysterical—she is control itself."

What was she? Really, what did he know of her accurately; when had he seen her obliged to face any crisis in her quiet life?

He rang violently, and when the man came in, asked:

"When did madame go out, did you tell me? Tell me again."

"At five. Charles drove madame a little way on the Champs Elysées, and was then dismissed."

She had been gone then five hours. There was no house of an intimate friend to which she could have gone for advice or even familiar confidence. She had no *intimes*, no enthusiasms; she lived, and he knew it, for him and her home absolutely. She had built a simple, healthful existence around him.

In this, his first solitude, his first long soliloquy, the state of Evremond's mind altered as did his countenance. He grew stilled, almost appalled, at what might come to his knowledge now, at any moment, and facts magnified by his vivid imagination became ghosts to him—every one.

He went from the salon to her rooms—the pretty rooms of the woman of wealth and good taste, where every article of toilet and furniture spoke charmingly of the mistress. Mrs. Evremond's dinner dress lay out on the bed; her maid stood in the window looking out. With a word about madame's being very late to-night, she left the room discreetly.

Neither dressing table nor bureau nor secretary had any letter for him. There was no evidence of a hasty departure, no melodramatic chaos in the tranquil rooms that, with bright wood fires and shut-in invitingness, waited her return. She had gone out, as usual, but not as usual had she returned.

These rooms, to whose voices he had been for months deaf and indifferent, spoke to him now so insistingly that he turned away from them, not able to bear their appeal.

Back in the salon the clock marked the quarter after nine—at half-past he would go out to the prefecture of the police—and what then? Did this mean that he discarded the idea of a voluntary flight from him? No—she was, of course, safe. She had simply left him without a word or sign. He could do nothing—but suffer and wait.

In her withdrawal, in his certainty of loss of her, she grew infinitely precious in his eyes and, above all the rest of the world, for the first in a long time she took her rightful place. If anything sinister had occurred he knew the whole face of life would be altered for him forever. If she had left him, he determined to move heaven and earth to win her back to him—and just here he turned sharply at the opening of the salon door.

He sprang toward her—his white and drawn face wore a look of fear and suffering that at the sight of her altered to a welcome and relief, and with a tenderness such as had never greeted Emily Evremond in her life before, he cried her name:

"*Emily!*" He stammered it and stopped. The face of his wife was so different to what he would have looked for it to be, her coming was so little what he had planned for, that he had no words at command.

"I am late. I am awfully late—I did not realize it was half-past nine. Have you dined, Maurice?"

She laid her muff and furs down. She had only one glove on—a gray *suède* glove; she drew it slowly off, her other hand was bare.

"*Dined!*" echoed her husband. "Why, I've been waiting for you here since six o'clock. I've been horribly anxious. Emily, where on earth have you been?" He might have said, "Where in heaven?" for her face was heavenly. He knew her for a pretty woman, a graceful woman, but the face of his wife, as she stood looking at him, quiet, unemotional, was of a divinity that made him marvel. He felt more infinitely far away from her than if she had not returned to him.

"I am sorry," she said. "I had some things to do, and I did not realize the time. You must be starved, Maurice."

What things—what had she done and planned further to do? That tears and reproaches and accusations were not in the rôle she had given herself, he saw. Any opening of the subject by him he felt would be a grave mistake. If she said nothing he would ignore that she knew. She did not, of course, know yet that he had found her glove, even if she had purposely left it—how could she be sure that he would return? Perhaps she did not know that she had lost it, or where. His heart leaped at the respite—the little respite it was—his color came back, and the possibility of a natural attitude.

She had gone over to the mirror and was taking off her hat tranquilly, instead of going to her own room. She arranged her hair deftly and lightly with a touch here and there. Maurice watched her, and the light on her hands and on the jewels of her engagement ring and the plain round of her wedding ring. Her hands were small; on one hand all day she had worn a gray glove, and between it and her palm had lain the letter with its cruel flaunting to her of his treachery and his sin. And she returned to him like this—gentle, controlled!

He drew a deep breath. "What pluck!" he thought. "What a woman!" He adored her, and all that her unspoken forgiveness meant, all that her grace conceded, worked in him a change—a conversion. Maurice Evremond was a different man to the one who had left her that very morning—she had won her husband.

And she, for her part, was under the spell of his greeting. She wanted never to forget his face until its pallor and its transfiguration, until its significance, were fixed upon her heart. He had believed her gone—and he cared. He answered her question unconsciously without speaking a word. If he loved her ever so little, she would win the rest. She would supersede any other woman in the world with him. She turned with a smile to find his eyes fixed on her.

"Let's go in to dinner as we are, Maurice, it's so late."

Evremond came to her, put his arms around her; for the thousandth part of a second he felt her shrink. He drew her close. Under his touch her face suffused like a bride's. He saw now, as he held her, the marks of tears

on her eyes; the illuminating of her spirit had concealed them until now, but the human touch brought her to life.

The sharp drawing of the cord, as the curtains were pulled back between salon and dining room, made them start apart as the *maitre d'hôtel* summoned them to a repast already two hours late.

"*Madame est servie.*"

IT commenced the day after we took old man Stumpton out codfishin'. Me and Cap'n Jonadab both told Peter T. Brown that the cod wa'n't bitin' much at that season, but he said cod be jiggered. "What's troublin' me jest now is landin' suckers," he says.

So the four of us got into the *Patience M.*—she's Jonadab's catboat—and sot sail for the Crab Ledge. And we hadn't more'n got our lines over the side than we struck into a school of dogfish. Now, if you know anything about fishin' you know that when the dogfish strike on it's "good-by, cod!" So when Stumpton hauled a big fat one over the rail I could tell that Jonadab was jest ready to swear. But do you think it disturbed your old friend, Peter Brown? No, sir! He never winked an eye.

"By Jove!" he sings out, starin' at that blamed dogfish as if 'twas a gold dollar. "By Jove!" says he, "that's the finest specimen of a Labrador mack'rel ever I see. Bait up, Stump, and go at 'em again."

So Stumpton, havin' lived in Montana ever sence he was five years old, and not havin' sighted salt water in all that time, he don't know but what there is sech critters as "Labrador mack'rel," and he does go at 'em, hammer and tongs. When we come ashore we had eighteen dogfish, four sculpin and a skate, and Stumpton was the happiest loon in Ostable County. It was all we could do to keep him from cookin' one of them "mack'rel" with his own hands. If Jonadab hadn't steered him out of the way while I sneaked down to the Port and bought a bass, we'd have had to eat dogfish—we would, as sure as I'm a foot high.

Stumpton and his daughter, Maudina, was at the Old Home House, at Wellmouth Port. 'Twas late in September, and the boarders had cleared out. Old Dillaway—Ebenezer Dillaway, Peter's father-in-law—had decoyed the pair on from Montana because him and some Wall Street sharks were figgerin' on buyin' some copper country out that way that Stumpton owned. Then Dillaway was too sick, and Peter, who was jest back from his weddin' tower, brought the Montana victims down to the Cape with the excuse to give 'em a good time alongshore, but really to keep 'em safe and out of the way till Ebenezer got well enough to finish robbin' 'em. Belle—Peter's wife—stayed behind to look after papa.

Stumpton was a great tall man, narrer in the beam, and with a figgerhead like a henhawk. He jest enjoyed himself here at the Cape. He fished, and loafed, and shot at a mark. He sartinly could shoot. The only thing he was wishin' for was somethin' alive to shoot at, and Brown had promised to take him out duck shootin'. 'Twas too early for ducks, but that didn't worry Peter any; he'd a-had ducks to shoot at if he bought all the poultry in the township.

Maudina was like her name, pretty but sort of soft and mushy. She had big blue eyes and a baby face, and her principal cargo was poetry. She had a deckload of it, and she'd heave it overboard every time the wind changed. She was forever orderin' the ocean to "roll on," but she didn't mean it; I had her out sailin' once when the bay was a little mite rugged, and I know. She was jest out of a convent school, and you could see she wasn't used to most things—includin' men.

The fust week slipped along, and everything was serene. Bulletins from Ebenezer more encouragin' every day, and no squalls in sight. But 'twas almost too slick. I was afraid the calm was a weather breeder, and sure enough, the hurricane struck us the day after that fishin' trip.

Peter had gone drivin' with Maudina and her dad, and me and Cap'n Jonadab was smokin' on the front piazza. I was pullin' at a pipe, but the cap'n had the home end of one of Stumpton's cigars harpooned on the little blade of his jackknife, and was busy pumpin' the last drop of comfort out of it. I never see a man who wanted to git his money's wuth more'n Jonadab. I give you my word, I expected to see him swaller that cigar remnant every minute.

And all to once he gives a gurgle in his throat.

"Take a drink of water," says I, scared like.

"Well, by time!" says he, p'intin'.

A feller had jest turned the corner of the house and was headin' up in our direction. He was a thin, lengthy craft, with more'n the average amount of wrists stickin' out of his sleeves, and with long black hair trimmed aft behind his ears and curlin' on the back of his neck. He had high cheek bones and kind of sunk-in black eyes, and altogether he looked like "Dr. Macgoozleum, the Celebrated Blackfoot Medicine Man." If he'd hollered: "Sagwa Bitters, only one dollar a bottle!" I wouldn't have been surprised.

But his clothes—don't say a word! His coat was long and buttoned up tight, so's you couldn't tell whether he had a vest on or not—though 'twas a safe bet he hadn't—and it and his pants was made of the loudest kind of black-and-white checks. No nice quiet pepper-and-salt, you understand, but the checkerboard kind, the oilcloth kind, the kind that looks like the marble floor in the Boston post office. They was pretty tolerable seedy, and so was his hat. Oh, he was a last year's bird's nest *now*, but when them clothes was fresh—whew! the northern lights and a rainbow mixed wouldn't have been more'n a cloudy day 'longside of him.

He run up to the piazza like a clipper comin' into port, and he sweeps off that rusty hat and hails us grand

and easy.

“Good-mornin’, gentlemen,” says he.

“We don’t want none,” says Jonadab, decided.

The feller looked surprised. “I beg your pardon,” says he. “You don’t want any—what?”

“We don’t want any ‘Life of King Solomon’ nor ‘The World’s Big Classifyers.’ And we don’t want to buy any patent paint, nor sewin’ machines, nor clothes washers, nor climbin’ evergreen roses, nor rheumatiz salve. And we don’t want our pictures painted, neither.”

Jonadab was gittin’ excited. Nothin’ riles him wuss than a peddler, unless it’s a woman sellin’ tickets to a church fair. The feller swelled up until I thought the top button on that thunderstorm coat would drag anchor, sure.

“You are mistaken,” says he. “I have called to see Mr. Peter Brown; he is—er—a relative of mine.”

Well, you could have blown me and Jonadab over with a cat’s-paw. We went on our beam ends, so’s to speak. A relation of Peter T.’s; why, if he’d been twice the panorama he was we’d have let him in when he said that. Loud clothes, we figgered, must run in the family. We remembered how Peter was dressed the fust time we met him.

“You don’t say!” says I. “Come right up and set down, Mr—Mr.——”

“Montague,” says the feller. “Booth Montague. Permit me to present my card.”

He dove into the hatches of his checkerboards and rummaged around, but he didn’t find nothin’ but holes, I jedge, because he looked dreadful put out, and begged our pardons five or six times.

“Dear me!” says he. “This is embarrassin’. I’ve forgot my cardcase.”

We told him never mind the card; any of Peter’s folks was more’n welcome. So he come up the steps and set down in a piazza chair like King Edward perchin’ on his throne. Then he hove out some remarks about its bein’ a nice morning’, all in a condescendin’ sort of way, as if he usually attended to the weather himself, but had been sort of busy lately, and had handed the job over to one of the crew. We told him all about Peter, and Belle, and Ebenezer, and about Stumpton and Maudina. He was a good deal interested, and asked consider’ble many questions. Pretty soon we heard a carriage rattlin’ up the road.

“Hello!” says I. “I guess that’s Peter and the rest comin’ now.”

Mr. Montague got off his throne kind of sudden.

“Ahem!” says he. “Is there a room here where I may—er—receive Mr. Brown in a less public manner? It will be rather a—er—surprise for him, and——”

Well, there was a good deal of sense in that. I know ’twould surprise *me* to have such an image as he was sprung on me without any notice. We steered him into the gents’ parlor, and shut the door. In a minute the horse and wagon come into the yard. Maudina said she’d had a “heavenly” drive, and unloaded some poetry concernin’ the music of billows, and pine trees, and sech. She and her father went up to their rooms, and when the decks was clear Jonadab and me tackled Peter T.

“Peter,” says Jonadab, “we’ve got a surprise for you. One of your relations has come.”

Brown, he did looked surprised, but he didn’t act as he was any too joyful.

“Relation of *mine*?” says he. “Come off! What’s his name?”

We told him Montague, Booth Montague. He laffed.

“Wake up and turn over,” he says. “They never had anything like that in my fam’ly. Booth Montague! Sure ’twa’n’t Algernon Coughdrops?”

We said no, ’twas Booth Montague, and that he was waitin’ in the gents’ parlor. So he laffed again, and said somethin’ about sendin’ for Laura Lean Jibbey, and then we started.

The checkerboard feller was standin’ up when we opened the door. “Hello, Petey!” says he, cool as a cucumber, and stickin’ out a foot and a ha’f of wrist with a hand at the end of it.

Now, it takes consider’ble to upset Peter Theodosius Brown. Up to that time and hour I’d have bet on him against anything short of an earthquake. But Booth Montague done it—knocked him plumb out of water. Peter actually turned white.

“Great——” he began, and then stopped and swallered. “*Hank!*” he says, and set down in a chair.

“The same,” says Montague, wavin’ the starboard extension of the checkerboard. “Petey, it does me good to set my lamps on you. Especially now, when you’re the reel thing.”

Brown never answered for a minute. Then he canted over to port and reached down into his pocket. “Well,” says he, “how much?”

But Hank, or Booth, or Montague—whatever his name was—he waved his flipper disdainful. “Nun-nun-nun-no, Petey, my son,” he says, smilin’. “It ain’t ’how much?’ this time. When I heard how you’d rung the bell the first shot out the box and was rollin’ in coin, I said to myself: ‘Here’s where the prod comes back to his own.’ I’ve come to live with you, Petey, and you pay the freight.”

Peter jumped out of the chair. “*Live* with me!” he says. “You Friday evenin’ amateur night! It’s back to ‘Ten Nights in a Barroom’ for yours!” he says.

“Oh, no, it ain’t!” says Hank, cheerful. “It’ll be back to Popper Dillaway and Belle. When I tell ’em I’m your little cousin Henry and how you and me worked the territories together—why—well, I guess there’ll be gladness round the dear home nest; hey?”

Peter didn't say nothin'. Then he fetched a long breath and motioned with his head to Cap'n Jonadab and me. We see we weren't invited to the family reunion, so we went out and shut the door. But we did pity Peter; I snum if we didn't! 84

It was 'most an hour afore Brown come out of that room. When he did he took Jonadab and me by the arm and led us out back of the barn.

"Fellers," he says, sad and mournful, "that—that plaster cast in a crazy-quilt," he says, referrin' to Montague, "is a cousin of mine. That's the livin' truth," says he, "and the only excuse I can make is that 'tain't my fault. He's my cousin, all right, and his name's Hank Schmults, but the sooner you box that fact up in your forgetory, the smoother 'twill be for yours drearily, Peter T. Brown. He's to be Mr. Booth Montague, the celebrated English poet, so long's he hangs out at the Old Home; and he's to hang out here until—well, until I can dope out a way to get rid of him."

We didn't say nothin' for a minute—jest thought. Then Jonadab says, kind of puzzled: "What makes you call him a poet?" he says.

Peter answered pretty snappy: "'Cause there's only two or three jobs that a long-haired image like him could hold down," he says. "I'd call him a musician if he could play 'Bedelia' on a jews'-harp; but he can't, so's he's got to be a poet."

And a poet he was for the next week or so. Peter drove down to Wellmouth that night and bought some respectable black clothes, and the follerin' mornin', when the celebrated Booth Montague come sailin' into the dinin' room, with his curls brushed back from his forehead, and his new cutaway on, and his wrists covered up with clean cuffs, blessed if he didn't look distinguished—at least, that's the only word I can think of that fills the bill. And he talked beautiful language, not like the slang he hove at Brown and us in the gents' parlor.

Peter done the honors, introducin' him to us and the Stumptons as a friend who'd come from England unexpected, and Hank he bowed and scraped, and looked absent-minded and crazy—like a poet ought to. Oh, he done well at it! You could see that 'twas jest pie for him.

And 'twas pie for Maudina, too. Bein', as I said, kind of green concernin' men folks, and likewise takin' to poetry like a cat to fish, she jest fairly gushed over this fraud. She'd reel off a couple of fathom of verses from fellers named Spencer or Waller, or sech like, and he'd never turn a hair, but back he'd come and say they was good, but he preferred Confucius, or Methuselah, or somebody so antique that she nor nobody else ever heard of 'em. Oh, he run a safe course, and he had *her* in tow afore they turned the fust mark.

Jonadab and me got worried. We see how things was goin', and we didn't like it. Stumpton was havin' too good a time to notice, goin' after "Labrador mack'rel" and so on, and Peter T. was too busy steerin' the cruises to pay any attention. But one afternoon I come by the summerhouse unexpected, and there sat Booth Montague and Maudina, him with a clove hitch round her waist, and she lookin' up into his eyes like they were peekholes in the fence 'round paradise. That was enough. It jest simply *couldn't* go any further, so that night me and Jonadab had a confab up in my room.

"Barzilla," says the cap'n, "if we tell Peter that that relation of his is figgerin' to marry Maudina Stumpton for her money, and that he's more'n likely to elope with her, 'twill pretty nigh kill Pete, won't it? No, sir; it's up to you and me. We've got to figger out some way to git rid of the critter ourselves."

"It's a wonder to me," I says, "that Peter puts up with him. Why don't he order him to clear out, and tell Belle if he wants to? She can't blame Peter 'cause his uncle was father to an outrage like that."

Jonadab looks at me scornful. "Can't, hey?" he says. "And her high-toned and chummin' in with the bigbugs? It's easy to see you never was married," says he.

Well, I never was, so I shet up.

We set there and thought and thought, and by and by I commenced to sight an idee in the offin'. 'Twas hull down at fust, but pretty soon I got it into speakin' distance, and then I broke it gentle to Jonadab. He grabbed at it like the "Labrador mack'rel" grabbed Stumpton's hook. We set up and planned until pretty nigh three o'clock, and all the next day we put in our spare time loadin' provisions and water aboard the *Patience M.* We put grub enough aboard to last a month. 85

Just at daylight the mornin' after that we knocked at the door of Montague's bedroom. When he woke up enough to open the door—it took some time, 'cause eatin' and sleepin' was his mainstay—we told him that we was plannin' an early-mornin' fishin' trip, and if he wanted to go with the folks he must come down to the landin' quick. He promised to hurry, and I stayed by the door to see that he didn't git away. In about ten minutes we had him in the skiff rowin' off to the *Patience M.*

"Where's the rest of the crowd?" says he, when he stepped aboard.

"They'll be along when we're ready for 'em," says I. "You go below there, will you, and stow away the coats and things."

So he crawled into the cabin, and I helped Jonadab git up sail. We intended towin' the skiff, so I made her fast astern. In ha'f a shake we was under way and headed out of the cove. When that British poet stuck his nose out of the companion we was abreast the p'int.

"Hi!" says he, scramblin' into the cockpit. "What's this mean?"

I was steerin' and feelin' toler'ble happy over the way things had worked out.

"Nice sailin' breeze, ain't it?" says I, smilin'.

"Where's Mau—Miss Stumpton?" he says, wild like.

"She's abed, I cal'late," says I, "gittin' her beauty sleep. Why don't *you* turn in? Or are you pretty enough now?"

He looked fust at me and then at Jonadab, and his face turned a little yellower than usual.

“What kind of a game is this?” he asks, brisk. “Where are you goin’?”

’Twas Jonadab that answered. “We’re bound,” says he, “for the Bermudas. It’s a lovely place to spend the winter, they tell me,” he says.

That poet never made no remarks. He jumped to the stern and caught hold of the skiff’s pointer. I shoved him out of the way and picked up the boat hook. Jonadab rolled up his shirt sleeves and laid hands on the centerboard stick.

“I wouldn’t, if I was you,” says the cap’n.

Jonadab weighs pretty close to two hundred, and most of it’s gristle. I’m not quite so much, fur’s tonnage goes, but I ain’t exactly a canary bird. Montague seemed to size things up in a jiffy. He looked at us, then at the sail, and then at the shore out over the stern.

“Done!” says he. “Done! And by a couple of ‘come-ons’!”

And down he sets on the thwart.

“Is there anything to drink aboard this liner?” asks Booth Hank Montague.

* * * * *

Well, we sailed all that day and all that night. Course we didn’t reelly intend to make the Bermudas. What we intended to do was to cruise around alongshore for a couple of weeks, long enough for the Stumptons to git back to Dillaway’s, settle the copper bus’ness and break for Montana. Then we was goin’ home again and turn Brown’s relation over to him to take care of. We knew Peter’d have some plan thought out by that time. We’d left a note tellin’ him what we’d done, and sayin’ that we trusted to him to explain matters to Maudina and her dad. We knew that explainin’ was Peter’s main holt.

The poet was pretty chipper for a spell. He set on the thwart and bragged about what he’d do when he got back to “Petey” again. He said we couldn’t git rid of him so easy. Then he spun yarns about what him and Brown did when they was out West together. They was interestin’ yarns, but we could see why Peter wa’n’t anxious to introduce Cousin Henry to Belle. Then the *Patience M.* got out where ’twas pretty rugged, and she rolled consider’ble, and after that we didn’t hear much more from friend Booth—he was too busy to talk.

That night me and Jonadab took watch and watch. In the mornin’ it thickened up and looked squally. I got kind of worried. By nine o’clock there was every sign of a no’theaster, and we see we’d have to put in somewheres and ride it out. So we headed for a place we’ll call Baytown, though that wa’n’t the name of it. It’s a queer, old-fashioned town, and it’s on an island; maybe you can guess it from that.

Well, we run into the harbor and let go anchor. Jonadab crawled into the cabin to git some terbacker, and I was for’ard coilin’ the throat halyard. All to once I heard oars rattlin’, and I turned my head; what I see made me let out a yell like a siren whistle.

There was that everlastin’ poet in the skiff—you remember we’d been towin’ it astern—and he was jest cuttin’ the painter with his jackknife. Next minute he’d picked up the oars and was headin’ for the wharf, doublin’ up and stretchin’ out like a frog swimmin’, and with his curls streamin’ in the wind like a rooster’s tail in a hurricane. He had a long start ’fore Jonadab and me woke up enough to think of chasin’ him.

But we woke up fin’lly, and the way we flew round that catboat was a caution. I laid into them halyards, and I had the gaff up to the peak afore Jonadab got the anchor clear of the bottom. Then I jumped to the tiller, and the *Patience M.* took after that skiff like a pup after a tomcat. We run alongside the wharf jest as Booth Hank climbed over the stringpiece.

“Git after him, Barzilla!” hollers Cap’n Jonadab. “I’ll make her fast.”

Well, I hadn’t took more’n three steps when I see ’twas goin’ to be a long chase. Montague unfurled them thin legs of his and got over the ground somethin’ wonderful. All you could see was a pile of dust and coat tails flappin’.

Up on the wharf we went and round the corner into a straggly kind of road with old-fashioned houses on both sides of it. Nobody in the yards, nobody at the windows; quiet as could be, except that off ahead, somewheres, there was music playin’.

That road was a quarter of a mile long, but we galloped through it so fast that the scenery was nothin’ but a blur. Booth was gainin’ all the time, but I stuck to it like a good one. We took a short cut through a yard, piled over a fence and come out into another road, and up at the head of it was a crowd of folks—men and women and children and dogs.

“Stop thief!” I hollers, and ’way astern I heard Jonadab bellerin’: “Stop thief!”

Montague dives headfust for the crowd. He fell over a baby carriage, and I gained a tack ’fore he got up. He wa’n’t more’n ten yards ahead when I come bustin’ through, upsettin’ children and old women, and landed in what I guess was the main street of the place and right abreast of a parade that was marchin’ down the middle of it.

Fust there was the band, four fellers tootin’ and bangin’ like fo’mast hands on a fishin’ smack in a fog. Then there was a big darky totin’ a banner with “Jenkins’ Unparalleled Double Uncle Tom’s Cabin Company, Number 2,” on it in big letters. Behind him was a boy leadin’ two great, savage-lookin’ dogs—bloodhounds, I found out afterward—by chains. Then come a pony cart with Little Eva and Eliza’s child in it; Eva was all gold hair and beautifulness. And astern of her was Marks, the Lawyer, on his donkey. There was lots more behind him, but these was all I had time to see jest then.

Now, there was but one way for Booth Hank to git acrost that street, and that was to bust through the

procession. And, as luck would have it, the place he picked out to cross was jest ahead of the bloodhounds. And the fust thing I knew, them dogs stretched out their noses and took a long sniff, and then bu'st out howlin' like all possessed. The boy, he tried to hold 'em, but 'twas no go. They yanked the chains out of his hands and took 87
after that poet as if he owed 'em somethin'. And every one of the four million other dogs that was in the crowd on the sidewalks fell into line, and such howlin' and yappin' and scamperin' and screamin' you never heard.

Well, 'twas a mixed-up mess. That was the end of the parade. Next minute I was racin' across country with the whole town and the Uncle Tommers astern of me, and a string of dogs stretched out ahead fur's you could see. 'Way up in the lead was Booth Montague and the bloodhounds, and away aft I could hear Jonadab yellin': "Stop thief!"

'Twas lively while it lasted, but it didn't last long. There was a little hill at the end of the field, and where the poet dove over t'other side of it the bloodhounds all but had him. Afore I got to the top of the rise I heard the awfullest powwow goin' on in the holler, and thinks I: "They're eatin' him alive!"

But they wa'n't. When I hove in sight Montague was settin' up on the ground at the foot of the sand bank he'd fell into, and the two hounds was rollin' over him, lappin' his face and goin' on as if he was their grandpa jest home from sea with his wages in his pocket. And round them, in a double ring, was all the town dogs, crazy mad, and barkin' and snarlin', but scared to go any closer.

In a minute more the folks begun to arrive; boys first, then girls and men, and then the women. Marks come trottin' up, poundin' the donkey with his umbrella.

"Here, Lion! Here, Tige!" he yells. "Quit it! Let him alone!" Then he looks at Montague, and his jaw kind of drops.

"Why—why, *Hank*!" he says.

A tall, lean critter, in a black tail coat and a yaller vest and lavender pants, comes puffin' up. He was the manager, we found out afterward.

"Have they bit him?" says he. Then he done jest the same as Marks; his mouth opened and his eyes stuck out. "*Hank Schmults*, by the livin' jingo!" says he.

Booth Montague looks at the two of 'em kind of sick and lonesome. "Hello, Barney! How are you, Sullivan?" he says.

I thought 'twas about time for me to git prominent. I stepped up, and was jest goin' to say somethin' when somebody cuts in ahead of me.

"Hum!" says a voice, a woman's voice, and toler'ble crisp and vinegary. "Hum! it's you, is it? I've been lookin' for *you*!"

'Twas Little Eva in the pony cart. Her lovely posy hat was hangin' on the back of her neck, her gold hair had slipped back so's you could see the black under it, and her beautiful red cheeks was kind of streaky. She looked some older and likewise mad.

"Hum!" says she, gittin' out of the cart. "It's you, is it, Hank Schmults? Well, p'r'aps you'll tell me where you've been for the last two weeks? What do you mean by runnin' away and leavin' your——"

Montague interrupted her. "Hold on, Maggie, hold on!" he begs. "*Don't* make a row here. It's all a mistake; I'll explain it to you all right. Now, please——"

"Explain!" hollers Eva, kind of curlin' up her fingers and movin' toward him. "Explain, will you? Why, you miser'ble, low-down——"

But the manager took hold of her arm. He'd been lookin' at the crowd, and I cal'late he saw that here was the chance for the best kind of an advertisement. He whispered in her ear. Next thing I knew she clasped her hands together, let out a scream and runs up and grabs the celebrated British poet round the neck.

"Booth!" says she. "My husband! Saved! Saved!"

And she went all to pieces and cried all over his necktie.

And then Marks trots up the child, and that young one hollers: "Papa! papa!" and tackles Hank around the legs. And I'm blessed if Montague don't slap his hand to his forehead, and toss back his curls, and look up at the 88
sky, and sing out: "My wife and babe! Restored to me after all these years! The heavens be thanked!"

Well, 'twas a sacred sort of time. The town folks tiptoed away, the men lookin' solemn but glad, and the women swabbin' their deadlights and sayin' how affectin' 'twas, and so on. Oh, you could see that show would do bus'ness *that* night, if it never did afore.

The manager got after Jonadab and me later on, and did his best to pump us, but he didn't find out much. He told us that Montague b'longed to the Uncle Tom's Cabin Company, and that he'd disappeared a fortni't or so afore, when they were playin' at Hyannis. Eva was his wife, and the child was their little boy. The bloodhounds knew him, and that's why they chased him so.

"What was you two yellin' 'Stop thief!' after him for?" says he. "Has he stole anything?"

We says: "No."

"Then what did you want to get him for?" he says.

"We didn't," says Jonadab. "We wanted to git rid of him. We don't want to see him no more."

You could tell that the manager was puzzled, but he laffed.

"All right," says he. "If I know anything about Maggie—that's Mrs. Schmults—he won't git loose ag'in."

We only saw Montague to talk to but once that day. Then he peeked out from under the winder shade at the hotel and asked us if we'd told anybody where'd he been. When he found we hadn't, he was thankful.

“You tell Petey,” says he, “that he’s won the whole pot, kitty and all. I don’t think I’ll visit him again, nor Belle, neither.”

“I wouldn’t,” says I. “They might write to Maudina that you was a married man. And old Stumpton’s been prayin’ for somethin’ alive to shoot at,” I says.

The manager give Jonadab and me a couple of tickets, and we went to the show that night. And when we saw Booth Hank Montague paradin’ about the stage and defyin’ the slave hunters, and tellin’ ’em he was a free man, standin’ on the Lord’s free soil, and so on, we realized ’twould have been a crime to let him do anything else.

“As an imitation poet,” says Jonadab, “he was a kind of mildewed article, but as a play actor—well, there may be some that can beat him, but *I* never see ’em!”

AS IT ENDED

GOD planned me for a butterfly,
But I was marred i’ the making;
What is it that old Omar says
Of the Potter’s hand a-shaking?
Ah, no, not that, the colors ran,
The form turned out awry,
And so I’m what they call a man
Who’d be a butterfly.

FARRINGDON DAVIS.

The TEARS of UNDINE

By Ediff Macvane

IN the morning young Glyn lost his steamer, so he was forced to spend the whole day at Pemaquid; in the afternoon he lost his heart, so he was forced to stay there for his entire vacation.

This is the way it happened.

After luncheon he went out to sit all by himself on the end of the pier, with a book on "Recent Developments in Dairy Machinery"; for Glyn was a young patent lawyer, a very rising one, in the city of New York; and, as he had failed to find one familiar face in this far-away Maine resort, it seemed to him that he could do nothing better with his time of waiting than devote it to his business. So he sat deep in study, lifting an eye occasionally to the granite cliffs, the dark, ancient fir trees, and the bay with its distant rim of purple-shadowed hills; while the old fisherman beside him smoked his pipe placidly, and the noisy crowd of bathers in by the shore splashed one another with screams of mirth. The student sighed occasionally, for, though a lawyer and a good one, he was still young; then he reproved himself for his sighing, for he aimed to be rather superior, and was also, as a matter of fact, rather shy.

Suddenly a shower of scattering drops fell cold upon his neck and glittered upon the page before him. He started and looked up; the sky was blue and cloudless, his ancient neighbor as placid as the day itself. Then it seemed to him that he heard a laugh, the merest tinkle of a laugh, from somewhere below the wharf; and, starting to his feet and looking downward, he beheld a mermaid floating in the water beneath him.

She lay slim and green upon the gentle harbor swell, her white arms outstretched, her eyelids closed, her wet, upturned face framed by the floating wreaths of dark hair that coiled and rippled in the water about her. Suddenly she threw up her hands and sank slowly, vanishing with a cloud of little bubbles. Glyn started back, horror-smitten. He was not much of a swimmer, even in the warm waters of the Sound; and this North Atlantic water chilled his very eyes with its icy-green transparency.

Nevertheless, under the racial impulse of the life-saver, he threw off his coat and swung his arms preparatory to a jump. Suddenly the hoary and languid old sea dog by his side reached out a slow, restraining hand.

"Don't go wettin' yourself for nothing young fellah! That girl, she's a fish. Watch and see her come up again."

In a cold perspiration of anxiety the young man waited for a fulfillment of these words. The suspense seemed endless, till suddenly, and at an amazing distance, the waters heaved and parted, and the swimmer's sleek dark head emerged like a seal's. Back she came to the wharf, swimming with strokes like those of an oarsman—easy, long and sure. At the end of the pier she paused and clung to the foot of the slippery green steps that ran down the side of the piles, and, resting her chin upon her clasped arms, she glanced up at the two men above her like a severe and dripping cherub. The old fisherman returned to his line, but the student, flinging away his book, ran down the oozy staircase to meet her.

"May I—may I be of any assistance to you?" he inquired, with eager politeness.

She continued to look up at him with the same disapproving air. "You didn't jump in after me, did you?" she observed, suddenly.

"Well, no," returned Glyn, somewhat dazed at this greeting. "You see, I was told that you could swim."

She glared up at the unobserving fisherman. "That was Ben—old tattle-tale!" she hissed; then, turning back to the young man, she inquired, with sudden pathos: "And how should you have felt if I had never come up again?"

"Like a murderer," replied Stephen Glyn, solemnly. The answer seemed to please her, for she relaxed her frown. "Oh, well, you are all right, anyway," she was good enough to observe, as she loosed her hold upon the step and swam slowly away to the shore.

So when the afternoon steamer left Pemaquid, one hour later, it left without Stephen Glyn.

He told himself that the air of this sea-girt promontory was just the thing for him: good chance to learn to swim; quiet place, capital chance to study and get at the bottom of those dairy implements. As for the girl—she was pretty to look at, to be sure, with her big green eyes and the glancing motions of her long white hands beneath the water. But still what did the prettiness of a passing girl matter to a prosaic fellow like him? "Besides," as Stephen added, wisely, to himself, "I'm too old for nonsense, and too young for business—so what's the use?"

And so, being in this indifferent frame of mind, he spent an hour in putting on his newest English flannels and the very latest thing in pale green shirts, and then, upon descending to the dining room, he bribed the waiter to give him a seat at the next table to his casual acquaintance of the pier; merely, as he told himself, out of curiosity to see how she looked with her hair dry.

In spite of all this indifference, there was a distinct sinking at Glyn's heart when at last she came, passed by him, seated herself at her table without even a glance in his direction. She seemed in high spirits, she ate with a remarkable appetite, and she talked and laughed incessantly with the large, pink-faced lady on her right and the

jolly youth in a blue necktie on her left. All Glyn's honest Harvard blood rose and boiled within him at the sight of that blue necktie—merely, he assured himself, at the thought of recent football scores. As for the girl, what did it matter to him if she let a dozen Yale men tell her jokes and crack her lobster claws for her?

It must be confessed, however, even by the most disapproving and indifferent critic, that she was charming to look upon, with her thick hair—yellow with greenish lights—and her warm, white skin, tanned by the sun to the pale brown of coffee with cream in it. So after dinner, when a half dozen other youths had dispossessed the Yale man of his monopoly, Glyn strolled up to him and inquired whether he had not seen him at New London the month before.

The Yale man replied to these overtures of friendship with the offer of his cigarette case, his name and the secrets of his heart. "I'm Martin, '05," he confided. "Ever been in New Haven? Best place on earth! I say, how do you like Pemaquid—how long are you going to stay? There are some ripping girls here. At least, there's Elfie May, that girl I sat next to at the table. Notice her? A queen, isn't she? And you just ought to see her swim! But she throws a fellow down so. I guess I'll go home to-morrow." The blithe face drew down into sudden sadness—ah, poor little Yale man!

"The girl that sat next to you at dinner," mused Glyn. "Ah, yes. I think I noticed her—rather good-looking, yes. New York girl?"

"No, Boston. Want me to introduce you?"

"If you will be so kind," returned Glyn, with elation, and a sudden softening of his heart toward the blue. Martin went over to the far end of the piazza, where Miss May sat trailing her indifferent gaze across her little 91
court of admirers, and laughing lazily at their witticisms and their compliments. As the Yale man spoke to her, Glyn saw her glance flash for a brief instant in his direction, and he started forward to meet his new friend halfway upon his return. But oh, disappointment! "I'm so sorry," said the pleasant little chap from New Haven, "but she says no! I don't know why, but she said it, just like that—no!"

"It doesn't matter in the least," returned Glyn. "And thank you so much for taking all that trouble." He spoke gayly, but his hand trembled as he tried to strike a light upon the side of his match case. "Here, let me give you some fire, old chap," cried his new acquaintance, genially.

That night Glyn did not sleep very well. Not that he cared one scrap for a snub from a disagreeable, spoiled child! But deep down he recognized what it was—the regretful ache, the yearning, baffled tenderness that had newly filled his heart. He writhed in recollection of the repulse he had received, and then forgot the pain in delight as that glance came back to him, those eyes raised to him from the water, eyes so thickly fringed, with dark irids rimmed in clear sea green.

Dawn broke early and brilliant; after that there was no sleep for the restless newcomer, and suddenly it occurred to him that the best plan—the most enjoyable and the most independent—would be to hire a craft and go out for a day's deep sea fishing, far from the jars and distractions of the hotel. For though, like many sailors, he had but little skill in swimming, he was excellent at managing a boat, and fishing was one of his favorite sports. A descent to the pier, in the long-shadowed quiet of the early morning, proved this plan easy of fulfillment. Old Ben, the fisherman of the day before, was there clearing out his tiny sloop, the *Fried Cod*. For a mildly exorbitant sum he agreed to let the boat to the New York man for the day, provide tackle, throw in bait, and give all necessary directions to the fishing grounds.

So Glyn had a day of long-shore sport, of long waiting, of rolling in a hot and oily sea, finally of hauling in fat, plobby fish—cod and hake, which lacked blood to make even a decent fighting struggle for their lives. Then in the calm of the sunset the *Fried Cod* drifted back with the tide into the little harbor on the nose of the rocky promontory. Her skipper worked lazily at the sweeps, keeping a dazzled eye out ahead over the glassy reflection of the golden west which fronted him. Suddenly, as he floated in between the breakwaters, it seemed to him that he saw the head of a swimmer silhouetted blackly against the sunlit water, approaching him from the shore in a wake of fire.

"Sloop ahoy!" called a slow, soft voice. Glyn jumped up, his heart beating, and with a few more vigorous side strokes the swimmer shot to the side of the little craft and blinked two clear wet eyes up at its skipper.

"Please, may I come aboard for a moment?"

Glyn forgot all past injuries as he bent over the side of the boat, beaming upon the face upturned to him from its aureole of ripples.

"Oh, I can climb up all right," she cried, in answer to his offers of aid, and with a quick, vaulting motion she swung herself up over the gunwale of the little sloop. Seating herself upon the thwart, she threw back her long, wet locks from her face, and shot a glance, half serious and wholly sweet, at the young man before her.

"I've been waiting for you all day," she said, plaintively. "Why didn't you come in sooner?"

Glyn regarded her in amazement.

"Well, you could hardly expect me to believe that I was wanted," he retorted, in a slightly aggrieved tone, remembering his wrongs of last night.

She began to laugh softly—a long, noiseless chuckle that moved even Glyn's watchful dignity to a smile. "Oh, you mean last night." Glyn noticed that her voice was deep and smooth, with just the faintest suspicion of 92
hoarseness, and deep, mellow tones and overtones that vibrated richly through its inflections. "Last night, you see, is just what I want to explain," she went on. "You see, that little Martin thing has such a funny way of dropping his jaw when one says no to him, that I just couldn't resist. And, besides, you see, I didn't want to have him introducing us—little calf! So, if you don't mind, I'll just introduce myself: Elfrida May, that's my name."

Glyn looked at her seriously as he set his tiller for a course to the anchorage near the pier. "Thanks very much," he returned, "but, if you don't mind, I should rather make believe it was Undine."

"Undine!" she cried. "Who was Undine?"

“You don’t know about poor little Undine? Very well, then, I’ll tell you her story some time. Now you must let me introduce myself, too.”

“Oh, I know your name, Mr. Glyn,” she cried, artlessly, and, extending her wet hand, she gave him a hearty grip, like a man’s.

Suddenly her eye roved to the floor of the little cockpit, and her face took on suddenly its severe lines of the day before. “Ah, they are dead!” she whispered, in a kind of horrified way; then stooping, she picked up one of the fish—a small cod, curved in a rigid bow from nose to tail. She stroked its slippery back tenderly. “Poor little thing!” she mourned.

Glyn stared at her bewildered. “Don’t you approve of fishing?” he asked.

“No, I don’t!” she replied, with vehemence. “I won’t eat them, even canned! I’d feel like a cannibal! Poor things! To drown in the lovely green water—that wouldn’t be bad. But to be pulled out of the sea, and drown in the air, think how horridly unpleasant! Do you mind if I put them back again, please?” she asked, anxiously.

“Certainly not,” replied Glyn, though, as a matter of fact, he was particularly fond of fresh boiled cod, and also proud of his morning’s catch.

One by one the tender-hearted pirate dropped the motionless things softly into the sea; they sank heavily, and then rose, floating with white bellies upturned. Her eyes, as she regarded them, were surprisingly soft and tender. “Poor things,” she murmured, “they can’t swim any more, but I am sure that they must rest easier so. Thank you, Mr. Glyn, for giving them back to me.”

And so their friendship began, in bewilderment and mutual good will.

Now, much can happen in a month, and as July drew near to a close Stephen no longer tried to disguise from himself the change that had come into his life. The question that unceasingly knocked at his brain was no longer “Do I care for her?” but “Does she, oh, can she possibly, care for me!” The very intensity with which he put this question to himself made him delay, from day to day, the crucial test of putting it to the only person that could decide it for him. So he relieved his feelings by sending every week to Maillard’s for a huge box wrapped in silver paper; and every morning he waited with impatient heart upon the pier for the coming of that slim and dancing figure with the long green silk legs, the cream-white arms and the flying strands of pale yellow hair, that fell to the hem of the short green petticoat.

Her skill in the water was to him a constant wonder, a constant delight. His own attempts at diving and swimming he soon gave up, finding this northern water too cold for him; and so, in spite of Elfrida’s gibes, he sat on the dock and watched her as she took backward somersaults and dead-man dives and went down below in search of sinking clam shells. Her high jump from the piles, holding up her little skirt with a dainty hand, and winking blithely as she descended, was a thing long to be remembered for sheer mirth, for frank, childish joy. Yet it was then that Stephen sighed as he regarded her. After all, was it a woman he loved, with a warm human heart to respond to his own; or a careless mermaid, a cold creature, whose sole joy was thus dancing, plunging, flashing through the foam of the white, curling waves?

So far as he could judge, there was no real affection in her heart except this for her friend, the sea. Toward her mother, a heavy, placid woman with literary pretensions, Elfrida was kind in an impersonal, far-off sort of way; to the other girls in the hotel—who respected her for her high dives and hated her for her monopoly of the few men at Pemaquid—she seemed indifferent, with a kind of mocking politeness; while toward her little court of admirers she showed a capricious tyranny, at times almost savage. To these things even the adoring eyes of Stephen Glyn could not be blind; and one day when, owing to a severe headache of her mother’s, she was obliged to forego her swim, and appeared at dinner a muttering thundercloud, it was impossible for even the most ardent of adorers to pass by these signs without a sigh.

True, she had shown a tender heart toward the lifeless cod and hake; and sometimes, as she looked at the sea, in the uproar of a summer squall or in the silvery silence of a fog, Glyn would be startled by the look that suddenly crept into her eyes.

“Ah!” she breathed one evening, as they sat together watching the sunset from the pier. “Ah, it wouldn’t be hard to die, would it, if one could lie at the bottom of the sea?” Glyn grunted uncomfortably in answer, and tried to look as though he agreed with this sentiment.

The next day, when they were out canoeing together, Elfrida surprised him by reverting suddenly to one of the first conversations of their acquaintance. “You said you were going to tell me about Undine,” she said, “but you haven’t—not a word.”

Glyn sighed as he regarded her. She had been unusually tantalizing, not to say aggravating, that afternoon, and his honest heart was sore within him. But what better mood, what better occasion, for relating the story of the unfortunate water nymph, from the time she first appeared in the hut of the old fisherman, a light-hearted, soulless child, to the unhappy hour when, abandoned by the man she loved, she vanished silently into her native element—“a woman gifted with a soul, filled with love and heir to suffering.”

It was but recently that Stephen had read the story, and he told it well, for, though a lawyer, he was in love, and he had a poetical soul. Elfrida listened in silence, her face turned away, her hand trailing in the still water beside her. After the story-teller had finished, there was a pause.

“Well,” said Stephen, disappointed, “didn’t you like it?”

Elfrida glanced up at him—a quick, irresolute glance, quite unlike her usual frank gaze. She seemed about to speak, but to Glyn’s disappointment she turned away her head again, so that her face was hidden from him. With her trailing hand she drew a long, dripping spray of brown seaweed from the water.

“What did Undine gain, after all,” she said, “by leaving the sea?”

“She learned how to love, and she won a soul,” responded Stephen, leaning toward her. “Don’t you think that she was the gainer, after all?”

She suddenly flung away the seaweed. “No, I don’t!” she cried, passionately. “In the sea she had freedom and happiness! But love—what did she find it, after all, but a miserable slavery? And she got her heart broken in the end. No, indeed, you can’t make me pity her—she was just silly, your Undine!”

Nothing more was spoken as they paddled to the shore. Glyn was hurt, disappointed; and Elfrida kept her face still turned away.

The next morning, however, Glyn was more disappointed than ever; for when he came down to breakfast he failed to find the one face that he desired to see. From Mrs. May he learned that Elfrida had gone out for a day’s sail with young Martin and two or three others. So he moped about all day, smoking and trying to read his “Dairy Machinery,” now sadly rusty. And from time to time he was drawn unwillingly into the universal discussion on costumes for the coming dance and masquerade.

Toward evening Elfrida and her companions returned. In spite of her day’s amusement, her face wore its 94
severe expression, and she glanced at him without a smile as she passed him on the piazza.

“You’ve been here all day, I suppose,” she said, with an inflection of resentment in her tone. “Just think, a great big man like you afraid to go into the sea!”

Before Glyn could open his mouth to defend himself she was gone. But after dinner she came to him with a shy, suspicious air, and a touch of mystery that was explained by her first words.

“See here,” she said, softly, “this masquerade. I’ve been thinking it over, and I think if I can manage it, I want to go as Undine, you know.”

Stephen was filled with delight. “And you’ll let me help plan your dress?” he cried.

Elfie nodded, and offered her ideas on the subject to the approval of his authority. The young man listened, offered suggestions here and there, and then, with a sudden backward thought, he remembered a trinket in his possession—a little pearl bracelet, a trifle, but beyond anything appropriate to the costume in hand. Within himself he resolved to send home immediately for it, and to present it to Elfrida on the night of the dance.

In the days that followed it seemed to him that he saw strangely little of her, and the little that he did see was less than satisfactory. Her absence from the piazza, and her refusals to go paddling with him, she excused on the plea of being busy with her new costume. But even on the pier at the bathing hour she seemed to shun him, or noticed him only with jeers and gibes at what she called his laziness.

“Ah, can anybody have a soul that is afraid of the sea?” she cried. “Come, Mr. Martin, let us race over to the monument!” With a splash and a flounce the two set out together, the green bathing dress and the triumphant blue; while Glyn sat alone on the wharf with a leaden heart and rage at his soul.

This state of affairs had very little altered when at last the day of the dance arrived. A hundred times in the interim had Stephen resolved to give up the whole affair and go home; but then he decided to wait and see this new Undine in the flesh. To his anxiety, the bracelet had not yet arrived; nor did it come until the last post on the evening of the dance, after everybody had gone upstairs to dress. In joyful relief, Stephen slipped the little box in the pocket of his improvised admiral’s costume, and ran downstairs to the hall to wait for the coming of his Undine.

Elfrida did not appear till late, when the room was filled with whirling harlequins and Pompadours and Swiss peasant maidens. The admiral stood by the door, waiting for her, his little box in his hand and his heart in his mouth. Finally, as though she had been on the watch to avoid him, he saw her enter the hall by one of the long windows opening from the veranda without. In spite of his vexation, he could not but smile with sheer pleasure at the sight of her, as her eyes and her white teeth flashed a smile upon the room. In her pale, sea-green draperies, dragging heavily at the hem with a fragile border of urchin shells, her creamy neck and shoulders bare, her flowing yellow hair bound and wreathed with strands of dark, wet seaweed—oh, she was pretty, indeed! Stephen sprang forward.

“Good-evening, Undine! Here—I have something for you, will you let me give it to you? A little ornament to complete your costume.”

“You may give it to me later,” she replied, with an indifference that chilled and baffled him; and he watched her miserably as she swung off into the two-step with a tall, sunburned youth from Boston—a conceited-looking pup, Glyn told himself, in a vain attempt at consolation.

The evening was half over before he managed to get near her again. “Our dance, Mr. Glyn,” she cried, taking his arm and smiling up at him. Her eyebrows, which, in spite of her fair hair, were black and thickly ridged, were arched high in the mocking expression that he hated to see upon her face. She was in wild spirits, 95
gay with the evening’s success, fluttered with a reckless and inconsequent laughter that set the fibers of her lover’s heart quivering painfully.

“Let’s go down on the breakwater,” she said, “instead of dancing. It’s so hot here.” Bewildered and obedient, Stephen followed her, and a few moments later they were sitting side by side at the end of the moonlit pier.

“Doesn’t the water look nice?” cried Elfie, bending over it lovingly. “For two cents, I’d jump into it this very moment.”

“Please don’t!” expostulated Stephen, in alarm. She turned her bright eyes toward him.

“What did you say you had for me?” she said.

Half shamefacedly, Stephen drew from his pocket the little box that he had received a few hours before. “Just a trifle,” he said, “that I picked up in Swabia a few years ago. See!” He opened the cover and took out a slender string of fresh-water pearls set in silver, some milk-white, some shimmering prismatically in the moonlight.

“Oh, how lovely!” cried Elfie, with artless delight. “And they’re for me?”

“If you’ll take them,” replied Stephen, hurriedly. “You see, they are perfectly valueless little things—but the reason I wanted you to wear them was because, you see, they really belong to you. These pearls are found in one of the headwaters of the Danube, in Undine’s own country. The peasants say they are the drops that Undine wept after she had returned heartbroken to her water world. And so they call these pearls the tears of Undine. Will you have them, Undine?”

He bent toward her tenderly, and she held out her hand with a constrained gesture. “This Undine doesn’t intend to shed any tears of her own,” she answered, “and so, I suppose, that these drops will save her a lot of trouble. Thanks! Yes, do clasp it on. Thank you very much.” She tried to pull her hand away, but Stephen retained it in his own.

“I love you. Don’t you care a bit for me, Elfie?” he blurted, desperately. “Elfie, will you be my wife?”

She snatched her hand away this time, and scrambled to her feet. “Oh,” she cried, “*don’t* be silly, *don’t* be sentimental—here by the lovely, sensible sea, too!” Stephen rose and stood staring at her, and she went on with a hurried laugh: “Thank you very much, Mr. Glyn, and now that I have had a proposal, I shall always be a bachelor-lady, and shan’t ever have to worry about being an old maid. And the pearls are lovely, but I never intend to marry anyone—and now, oh, *do* let’s go into that dear black water.”

She stood, a lovely, pale figure in the moonlight, embarrassed, half-laughing, while her green eyes shot out and streamed a reckless gleam at the young man standing dejected before her. “Do you dare me?” she cried.

Stephen saw that in her present daredevil mood she was equal to anything. “No, please don’t!” he cried. “This time of night, in all those long draperies, it wouldn’t be safe—please don’t!”

“Not safe for Undine?” she laughed, defiantly. “Pooh, who’s afraid?” Stephen put out his hand to restrain her, but she laughed again—one of her long, silent chuckles. “Such a grand chance to show off. I’m not going to miss it!” she cried, and, eluding Stephen’s touch, she sprang like a long, silvery streak over the edge of the breakwater into the phosphorescent blackness beneath. In wrath and anxiety, the young man waited until her head emerged in a whirlpool of silvery fire.

“You are quite safe, Elfie?” he called, anxiously.

Her wild, careless laughter answered him. “Come in, the water’s fine. Come in; oh, come in! I dare you! I dare you!”

She swam off toward the moonlight with powerful side strokes, hardly diminished by her encumbering drapery. “I dare you!” she cried again.

No flesh and blood, not even of the most prudent young lawyer in New York, could withstand such a challenge. Heedless of consequences, Stephen flung himself over into the dark. The water was cold, his clothes were heavy; but he struck out valiantly. “Come on, oh, come on!” called the voice, far away on the surface of the water, and he strained every tendon to follow. A canoe drifted out slowly from somewhere—he didn’t know where—then it seemed to draw nearer, or else to disappear—he didn’t know which. The water was icy cold, his breath drew thick, his limbs, unaccustomed either to the cold or to the unwonted strain, were wrenched with a sudden muscular agony, and seemed to pass from his ownership and his control. Still, in the white moonlight before him, the black streak that he was following moved steadily along. He cursed himself as an effeminate monkey—“beaten by a girl!”

Then girls and Undines, farming implements and crystal palaces, whirled and shimmered dimly before his eyes. All he wanted was to rest—just a chance to rest! And, throwing out both arms, he gave himself up helplessly to the water.

II.

It was late the next morning when Martin thrust his cheerful little face in at the door of Stephen Glyn’s room at the hotel.

“Well, how are you to-day?” cried the newcomer. “Gee, that was a narrow squeak you had last night, and no mistake!”

Stephen woke with a start, and turned in a dim and growing amazement at the stiffness of his limbs, the painful heaviness of his breath. Slowly, as the little Yale man sat chattering by his bed, the troubled events of the night before came back to him—the foolhardy plunge from the breakwater, the interval of blank nothingness, the agonized struggle back into life, the hands working at his chest and his limbs; then the slow opening of his eyelids under the frightened face of young Martin, bending over him.

“Yes, I did make an ass of myself, and no mistake,” he mused, aloud, in a hoarse and broken voice.

“Nonsense!” cried Martin. “A cramp—why, that’s likely to come over anybody. No one could laugh at you for having a cramp; though Miss May——” he stopped short, with a half-embarrassed laugh.

“What about Miss May?” asked Stephen, trying to conceal the agitation he felt.

“Why, nothing. Only, I met her just now going out to sail with some of the fellows. They all stopped to ask how you were. She didn’t say a word—stood there looking queer, somehow. So I told them you were feeling better this morning with all the water pumped out of you; and she began to laugh; didn’t say a word, just stood and laughed, till, upon my word, I thought she was going to cry. She’s a funny one and no mistake—half fish, I call her.”

Glyn was silent. So this was the way that his narrow escape from drowning appeared to Elfrida—to her for whom he had risked not only his life, but his dignity as well.

“Can I do anything for you, old chap?” asked the other, with good-natured solicitude.

“Thanks, I think you have done quite enough for me already.”

“Pshaw!” cried Martin, rising in the alarm of approaching thanks. “It was nothing. And now I’ve got to be going downstairs. As for you, my boy, you’d better lie still to-day. You don’t want to get pneumonia out of this, do you?”

But in spite of timely warnings, in spite of aching limbs and a dizzy head, it was not very long after this that Stephen rose, dressed himself and went slowly downstairs. From the few people sitting about on the piazza waiting for lunch—ladies with toy poodles, old gentlemen with newspapers—Glyn received congratulations on his escape, and remarks of a more or less trying facetiousness. Of course Elfrida was not there; of course she had not yet returned from her sail. And even if she had, what difference should it make to him?

So he strolled down on the rocks toward the breakwater with a rather slow and uncertain step. His heart was sore within him. The future was dim; in the present, one fact only stood out with dreary distinctness—he 97
had given the best love of his life where return was not only denied, but, from the nature of things, impossible. As well toss a rose in a monkey cage as bestow a living heart on a perverse and freakish child like Elfrida, who regarded the gift merely as the means of a moment’s amusement, to be picked to pieces and then tossed to the ground. After all, was she a woman, or, as Martin had said, a wild creature, half human and half fish, for the possession of whom it was useless to contend with her cold and tempestuous lover, the sea?

He caught himself almost shaking his fist in a helpless rage of jealousy at the little green waves that lapped at his feet. “Rubbish!” he said to himself, in scorn at the fanciful absurdity of his notion. But then, as the scene of last night came back to him, he shook his head in mournful bewilderment.

A light clatter of stones on the breakwater above his head roused him from his reverie. Looking up, he saw a white figure hurrying silently along. “Good-morning,” he called, with a wild hope that his thoughts had translated themselves into the wild, living embodiment. There was no answer. “Miss May, is that you?” he called again.

There was a moment’s pause, then Elfrida’s face, white and severe, appeared over the stone coping. “I didn’t intend that you should hear me pass,” she said, frowning. “It was these hateful old stones that gave me away.”

Glyn’s heart contracted. Was his presence so disagreeable to her, then, that she chid the very stones that betrayed her presence to him? Then concern for his own pain was lost in sudden concern for the unsteadiness of her position.

“Take care, please! Those stones are loose where you are standing, I can see from below here.”

She smiled willfully. “Thank you, Mr. Glyn, I am quite secure. You see, this breakwater is a friend of mine. It would never go back on *me*.”

In her words, as in her smile, Glyn found an echo of that laughter with which earlier in the day she had greeted Martin’s story of his narrow encounter with death. “Yes,” he replied, with a bitter sinking of the heart, “I did make rather an ass of myself last night, didn’t I?”

She laughed abruptly, but made no reply. Glyn stood looking up at her as she stood on the barrier of loose stones above his head—shading her eyes with the book that she held in her hand, looking out over the sea. A sense of his own helplessness rocked Glyn’s soul in a sudden rage. He wanted her, oh, he wanted her, as she stood there, cold and immovable, defended at every point by her own scornful ignorance of common human emotion, unassailed even by the twin lords of mankind, Love and Death, which had so newly brushed closely past her.

Suddenly she started and turned to meet his gaze with half-startled, inscrutable eyes. “The tide is on the turn,” she said, in a quick-breathed undertone—then the stone under her foot slipped and settled, she flung out her arms to steady herself, and barely recovered her balance as she swayed for an instant on the edge of the rough stone parapet. In wild anxiety Glyn sprang forward, heedless of her book, which fell fluttering past his head.

“Take care!” he cried. “Take care!”

She smiled down at him, her lips a little white, but otherwise perfectly composed. “It’s too bad,” she said. “From the first day I met you, I am always frightening you to death, Mr. Glyn.”

Was she thinking of his failure of the night before? Glyn’s heart quivered with mortification. “Yes,” he said; “it’s easy to frighten me, you see.”

She laughed again—a little, quick, troubled laugh. “But I didn’t come down here to see you, you know, Mr. Glyn,” she said. “I was going out on the end of the breakwater to read for a little while, till lunch time—I didn’t expect to see you, you know.”

Why need she disclaim so eagerly any wish to see him? thought Glyn to himself. Not much danger of his flattering himself to the contrary. So he bowed with as much composure as he could muster. 98

“Certainly,” he replied; “and I am very sorry to have intruded upon your solitude. But let me see, your book—it fell past me just now, I think.”

He turned to search among the bowlders which lay strewed about him. Suddenly Elfrida’s voice came to him, strained and high.

“Mr. Glyn,” she said, “please don’t take any trouble about my book.”

He paused, perplexed. “It’s no trouble, Miss May, I assure you. Look! I can see it there between the bowlders in the seaweed—a new book, isn’t it? Here, let me give it to you.”

He took a step toward it. “Mr. Glyn!” cried Elfrida. “You mustn’t—you mustn’t! I forbid you to touch my book!”

Glyn turned and gazed up at her. She was leaning down toward him from the rough masonry above, her

hands stretched out, her face flushed to a bright crimson, her eyes sparkling, wide open, filled with anger and with something else besides—misgiving and something that was almost like fear.

"Mr. Glyn!" she repeated, violently. "Please go away now, please! And let me come down and pick up my book myself!"

Glyn looked up at her, at her face, wild, beautiful and threatening, bent down toward him. So her scorn for him was so deep, her detestation so entire, that he was not to be permitted to touch so much as the book that had fallen from her hand.

Now, at last, beyond a doubt, he had his answer. He stood silent for a moment, looking dumbly first at the half-soaked volume almost hidden among the seaweed, then at the head above him, so lovely and so carelessly terrible, bright and golden against the blue background of the sky.

"Miss May," he said, "believe me, I had no intention of intruding on you. I beg your pardon, and—good-by, Elfie!"

* * * * *

Now, the solitary steamer that calls at Pemaquid makes her single trip in the morning; the overland route to the distant railway station is so hilly and rough as to be almost impossible to the few aged horses in the village; hence there are difficulties in the way of anybody who is resolved to take his departure from Pemaquid immediately after lunch. "It's too bad," drawled old Ben, in sympathetic reply to Stephen's eager inquiries, "but, you see, down East here nobody ain't ever in a hurry. We hev all the time they is. In the West, of course, I know it's different. I suppose, naow, in N' York you have a train every hour in the day, don't you?"

Stephen stood helpless. To remain another day in Pemaquid, after what had happened, was to him an impossibility; and yet how to escape? His eye fell on a small fishing schooner at the end of the wharf, the only boat of seagoing size that the place boasted. Her sails were hoisted and two men were working at her anchor. A sudden idea came to Stephen. "Couldn't I hire that boat," he said, "to sail me over to Boothbay Harbor?"

Old Ben began to laugh. "Couldn't you hire a whale?" he said. "That boat, she's the *Twin Sisters*, and she belongs to my brother-in-law, Jabez Hooper, and he's sot in his ways, like the old monument over there. This is the day he's goin' swordfishin' in her; and now he's p'inted her nose for 'Tit Menan, it would take more money than you could find in six pots o' gold to git him to p'int her to the west'ard for you instead."

Stephen grasped eagerly at the idea. A few more weeks away from his work—what did it matter now, after all, in the emptiness of the dog days? "Swordfishing? Just the thing! Do you think he'd take me with him?"

"*As* a passenger?" asked the cautious Ben.

"A passenger? Certainly. I'll pay him anything in reason."

To this proposition the old longshoreman gave a grudging and indifferent assent; then gleefully pushed out in a dory to arrange terms with his relative and wrangle about the amount of commission which his own enterprise was to receive; while Stephen went back to the hotel to pack up a few necessaries for the trip and arrange with the landlady for the storage of his luggage till his return.

A hurried inquiry brought forth the information that Martin had gone out sailing, together with most of the others. "Miss May, she's gone, too," remarked the woman, with the faint and flickering ghost of a smile. "They'll all be *real* sorry to find you turn up missin' when they come back, I'm sure of that."

Glyn left a hastily scribbled note for Martin, and hurried down to the pier, with strength restored to his limbs and hope to his heart by this unlooked for and novel means of escape. On the deck of this rough fishing boat he might escape from the fancied chains which had weighed him down to the unmanly servitude here in Pemaquid. Here on the sea he might find "the world of men for a man"; the world of hand-to-hand struggle with forces unchanged since the earth was made; the wind, the water, the sharp necessities of the chase. Here, if anywhere, was the path of deliverance from the chimera of Unfulfilled Desire.

III.

It was nearly three weeks later that the *Twin Sisters* rounded Allen's Island—traveling, as her skipper said, "with a bone in her mouth"—and set her homeward course across the windy and sparkling waters of Muscongus Bay. In the stern the steersman flung his weight on the wheel; in the bow lay Stephen, his hand closed upon the helplessly fluttering leaves of his "Dairy Machinery," his eyes fixed upon the mound of glittering green foam that swept in perpetual advance of the vessel's bow.

Through his mind flitted a shifting retrospect of these last weeks upon the sea—the rushing voyage through rock-sown bays and windy fairways; the days of creaking rise-and-fall upon the heavy swell of a dead and scorching sea, or of groping for buoys through the blind white fog; nights under the starlight, nights when the wild summer rain had driven him for shelter to the hot and evil-smelling cabin of the little schooner. And, above all, the ceaseless watch for the great fish that they had come to hunt, the tense excitement of the signal, the swift dark flight of the harpoon; then the breathless chase of the flying keg that marked the flight of the frenzied monster across the sea. In their wild hunts Stephen had shown a reckless audacity, a rapidly acquired skill, that gradually commanded the respect of the cynical and indifferent Captain Jabez himself. "Y'ain't so bad, for a rusticator," was his outspoken praise. Stephen sighed in helpless irritation; after all, what was the use of pretending to himself that it was the respect of his fellow man for which he exerted himself in these strenuous exertions to show nautical strength and skill? What was the use, after all, of leaving Pemaquid at all, so long as the very sea foam itself brought him a fantastic vision of white arms flashing from the water, and each curling green wave recalled to him a pair of eyes deeper and more transparent than the sea itself?

"Spoony!" hissed Stephen, in fierce self-contempt, when suddenly the skipper raised a languid cry from the

stern.

"There's the old p'int, Stephen, if you want to see it."

Sure enough, there were the high brown walls of Pemaquid, bare to the wind and the surrounding ocean. In spite of himself, Stephen's heart leaped up as he regarded it.

The wind calmed down with the approaching sunset as the *Twin Sisters* floated slowly in between the breakwaters, recalling to Stephen that first evening when his boat had been met and boarded by a wandering sea nymph. This time the mirrored sunset was empty and bare, the harbor was silent.

"Reckon they're all busy with their fried lobster an' hot biscuit, up to the hotel," remarked Captain Jabez, sourly, as he surveyed their catch, laid out upon the deck—seven great swordfishes, black and shapeless, like elongated kitchen stoves, their skin still glistening from their icy bed in the vessel's hold. "I thought we'd git a 100
dozen," he remarked, discontentedly. "Mind, I tell you, it's just my luck. A catch like that makes me feel like all my folks was sick to home."

Suddenly from the end of the breakwater a white figure started up, her eyes shielded with a book, her hair reddened brilliantly by the sinking sun.

"For the law's sakes!" exclaimed Captain Jabez. "See, there's what's-her-name, the fish girl, waitin' to see us land!"

Stephen turned; the world was warm and smiling. Was she really waiting for him? He waved his hat and cried to her. For a moment she stood, white, slim and motionless; then, with a single gesture, lifeless and perfunctory, she turned and walked slowly up to the hotel.

"Of course," said Stephen to himself, in vain mockery at his own pain. After all, what did it matter? Tomorrow he would leave it forever, this cold and alluring coast of Maine; and with paved streets and the rush of work would come forgetfulness.

Martin welcomed him warmly at the hotel. "Gee, you're as brown as a nut," he said, "and old Jabez says you're the best hand he ever had—worth any two of these native loafers about here. Say, come and sit at my table, and tell us about your trip."

So, after Glyn had changed to the garb of civilization, he came down and ate his supper, listening to the merry chatter of the little Yale man. Elfrida bowed to him as he entered, but left the table soon after he sat down. "I am going down to the breakwater, to look at those poor swordfish that you killed," she said, with some reproach, as she passed by him. Her face was severe and unsmiling; it seemed to Glyn that she was paler than usual, and her large eyes were faintly shadowed with dark circles beneath their lids.

"What's the matter with Miss May?" he asked Martin, abruptly.

The other turned his eyes from her retreating figure. "Oh, yes, I forgot you'd been away. We've had great excitements since you were gone, here at little Pemaquid."

"What was the matter?" cried Stephen, while a thousand terrible possibilities rose in his mind.

Martin began to laugh. "Oh, nothing very thrilling, that I could see. But that girl—you know she's a queen, but she's half a freak, too—the good half! Anyone that tries to understand her will have his job cut out for life."

Glyn raised his cup of tea carelessly. "But what did you say it was that happened?"

"Why, this is the way it was—see if it doesn't make you tired! Everybody was talking about it. You remember that time last month when you came so near your end, going in with her the night of the dance, she never made a sound. And last week, when she lost a little trifling bracelet in swimming—gee! she burst out crying right there on the pier before everybody!"

A wild thought flitted into Stephen's mind. "What kind of a bracelet was it?" he inquired, with elaborate indifference.

"Nothing very much, to make a girl cry like that—a girl like Elfie, too, the cold, superior, athletic kind. But, then, she'd been acting queer for some time, didn't you notice? No, it was since you went away—nervous and quiet, and ready to snap your head off if you spoke to her, always sitting down there on the breakwater, reading—Elfie reading! Just fancy that! Gee! I never saw a girl change so quick before."

Stephen went on with his supper. "Well, did she find her bracelet?" he inquired, carelessly.

"After the harbor was turned inside out—that's the excitement, you see. The whole town was out every day. Then she offered a reward—fifty dollars; then a hundred. She wanted to send to Portland for divers. But an old native chap found it at low tide—old Ben, you know, that is always fishing there on the dock. So she paid him, on the nail—a hundred plunks. And her mother said she couldn't have any autumn clothes, and she said she didn't care one scrap."

Stephen lit a cigarette with elaborate pains. "So, I suppose," he observed, tentatively, "that it was quite an 101
elaborate bit of jewelry."

"That's the joke. A hundred dollars would have bought a dozen like it—just clam pearls and silver. Say, it's a peachy evening. Let's go and look up some of the crowd, and have a marshmallow toast on the beach."

Glyn rose. "I'm sorry, Martin, I have to go down and help my skipper ashore with our catch. See you later—business, you see."

"Three cheers for the bold fisherman!" grinned Martin, as Stephen rushed from the hall with an eagerness which did credit to his sense of duty toward Jabez.

Twilight was drawing down, damp and dusky, over rocks and harbor, as Stephen hurried down to the breakwater. With swift precaution, he stepped along over the loose stones—no one was there. He looked about in desperate search. Then, in a little rocky nook at the extreme point, he caught the glint of a familiar yellow

head.

“Elfie!” he called, softly, as he hastened toward her. Her white form rose up; she stood there looking at him, her book still in her hand—looking at him silently.

As he joined her she laughed, a little, nervous laugh. “Oh, Mr. Glyn, is that you?” she said. “And have you come to tell me about your cruise?”

For a moment Stephen stood at a loss. Here before those clear cool eyes, what Martin had told him seemed so absurd, so impossible. His eyes fell upon the book in her hand. Suddenly, as he read the title in the fading light, his heart beat again high and quick.

He put out his hand and gently took the volume from her. “I see that you have been reading about Undine,” he said, tentatively.

She flushed a bright rose color; it was the second time he had ever seen her color change. “Ah!” she cried, in a pale reflection of her old mocking defiance. “The story you told me about—I’m sorry, you know, but, really, I don’t find it very interesting.”

Stephen looked at her. “Elfie——” he said, but she stretched out her hand in sudden embarrassment. “Give it back to me, please,” she whispered. “I didn’t mean to be reading it now. Give it to me, please.”

For a moment Stephen stared at her, bewildered at this sudden intensity of appeal. With her old impulsiveness, she flung out her arm to snatch the betraying volume from his grasp. The laces of her sleeve fell back, and there about her wrist Stephen beheld a bracelet—a string of large, irregular pearls, rimmed and linked in silver.

He dropped the book and seized the hand in both of his own.

“So you still think of me sometimes, Elfie?”

She glanced up at him, frowning.

“Why did you go away without saying good-by to me last month?” she asked, with her old air of severity.

“I didn’t want to bother you. I knew you didn’t care.” Beneath the rigid inquisition of her gaze, Stephen stumbled over his words.

“You thought I didn’t care!” She turned her eyes away from him, and twisted the bracelet upon her wrist. “Do *you* care?” she asked, abruptly.

“Elfrida, you know why I had to come back. You know that I care about nothing else in the world but just you—dear, dearest little Elfie!”

She stepped back. “And yet,” she said, with a catch in her voice, “you went away and left me.”

“But, Elfie dear, what else could I do? After you had laughed at me, after you had refused to let me touch as much as your book when you dropped it here on the beach!”

She began to laugh brokenly. “Don’t you understand?” she said, softly. “I wasn’t going to let you know how silly I was. I couldn’t let you see that I had sent for the book for myself—just because I wanted to read again the story that you had told to me.”

“Elfie! My own dear Elfie!”

She raised her hand. “No, Stephen, one moment! Listen to me.” She leaned toward him a little, standing there white and slender in the gathering dusk, while Stephen listened eagerly. The little waves lapped and gurgled through the rocky spaces of the breakwater; all about them was the quiet evening of the sea.

“Last month, when you told me about Undine, I hated you,” she said, passionately; “because I thought you meant that she was *me*, all the time. And I was bound to show you that I wasn’t weak and silly like that, and that I didn’t care a single scrap! And I didn’t care then, either—not till that night when I was such a beast to you, and made such a fool of myself, and you almost died—all my fault! So next day I was so ashamed of myself, I didn’t dare even to speak to you, until I had told you I was sorry. And just then I was so afraid you’d see that book, that I made you go away—little fool! As though *that* made any difference!” She paused a moment. “And then in the evening I came back and found that you were really gone away, without a single word!”

She raised her eyes to him slowly, and, to his amazement, he saw that they were bright with the transparent wetness of tears.

“Do you remember,” she whispered, brokenly, “how—that night—I told you that I never intended to shed any tears—planning to live like a little brute? And you gave me these pearls, and told me they were the tears that Undine had wept, after her soul had been given to her. Oh, Stephen! There’s not a night since that night that I haven’t cried myself to sleep thinking of you. So now I know that I have a soul, and I have a heart. And the heart is all yours, if you want it, Stephen!”

NOW’S THE TIME O’ YEAR

NOW’S the time o’ year when the deep skies seem
(Look where you will) like the dream of a dream;
Toss of gold, floss of gold, weed-tip and tree,
And purple like the twilight for the lone late bee.

Now’s the time o’ year when the cider-stills run
Amber—luscious amber—in the round red sun;
And the bloom on the grape’s like the bloom on the cheeks
Of a maid at the tryst when a low voice speaks.

Now’s the time o’ year when the hill-crests call,
And the clear rill-music has a tinkling fall;
Piper of the South Wind, play up, play!
Your hand in mine, love, let us away!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

AT luncheon Bishop Chalmers, ensconced snugly between his hostess, the handsome widow, Mrs. Patricia Danvers, and her equally charming daughter, Miss Isabel, sublimated from the seclusion of boarding school to society two seasons before, listened quietly to the many laudatory comments on his sermon of the previous evening.

The sermon had been delivered in the large and fashionable city church of St. Barnabas. Ostensibly it had been on “Charity”; principally it was a plea for aid for the bishop’s struggling diocese in the South. The bishop had received the invitation to preach from the rector of the rich congregation, a classmate at the theological seminary, who occupied a seat at the left of the hostess.

The rector was wifeless, as was the bishop, and after Mrs. Danvers had satisfied herself that she had paid due deference to the bishop she left him to the tender mercies of the daughter.

Mrs. Danvers, Patricia Hardesty that was, had begun life with a devotion to the church, especially its representatives in this mundane sphere. Her impoverished family, painfully aware that dollars were far scarcer than devotion, insisted on her giving up her maidenly intention of wedding a clergyman and urged on her the necessity of marrying Horace Danvers, by no means religious, many years her senior and “interested in cotton.” Now that the cotton had been shelved for all time by the death of the husband, leaving a magnificent golden fleece in its stead, her devotion to “the cloth” had reasserted itself. Witness the bishop as a guest, the presence of the rector.

To the mind of the widow, worldly-minded, even if a devotee, the rector was the far more desirable prospective *parti*. The bishop was too small to fit her ideal. Her fancy was for large blond men who, in the pulpit, have the appearance of Greek gods brought up to date by the saving grace of the surplice. The rector was one of these.

Although Bishop Chalmers was below medium height, with anything but a robust figure, he had a striking face. It was clean-shaven, ascetic and of cameo-like clearness. The nose itself was indicative of ancestry, the mouth was sensitive yet strong, and his blue eyes were remarkable for their depth and expression of sadness. His silvery gray hair belied his age, not yet fifty years. Pride of vocation and of race showed itself in every feature.

The adoring women of his diocese were accustomed to describe the bishop as one who was never known to smile.

“When his wife died he lost interest in everything but his life work,” they were accustomed to say. “He reveres her memory as that of a saint. Her death cast a shadow over his life, poor little bishop!”

That was not the underlying cause of his sadness. In the ecclesiastical closet—a sanctum the interior of which none might see—a skeleton was concealed.

As Mrs. Danvers glanced to her right with uninterrupted speech to the rector, she smiled with satisfaction to see that the daughter was cleverly holding the attention of the distinguished guest.

The girl had taken up the subject-thread of conversation where her mother had dropped it.

“In your sermon I was greatly impressed by the story you told of the unknown donor who each year sent you the large sum of money for your diocesan work,” she was saying. “It appears so strange that anyone should wish to conceal identity where such good work is concerned. You have no intimation as to his or her identity?” she asked.

The bishop shook his head.

“Not the slightest. The nearest I have approached is to learn the name of the bankers through whom the annual donation is made. It is a good seed sown in a fruitful field, and some day the sower will reap harvest an hundredfold,” he declared, reverently.

Of course Miss Isobel was properly impressed. She said nothing for a little. She was a bright, butterfly sort of creature, whose veil of innocence and apparent ingenuousness hid a nature which delighted in sacrificing dignity and reserve to her mischief-making propensities. She was of the kind ever ready to revert to the subject of round dances or divorce with a High Church dignitary.

This idiosyncrasy asserted itself when she said to her listener, with her well-feigned air of irresponsibility:

“Bishop, I should greatly like to have the pleasure of taking you this afternoon for a spin in my runabout, had I not an engagement to see the Derby run. Besides my promise to go, my favorite jockey is to ride in this race, and I cannot miss the chance of winning or losing kid gloves or bonbons on his horse. I suppose it is very sinful,” she sighed, resignedly, glancing with challenging eyes at the bishop.

Emboldened, though disappointed, perhaps, by the fact that he did not appear shocked or surprised, she continued in a tone wherein earnestness and raillery were mingled:

“Could you reconcile your conscience so far as to accompany me to such a sinful place as the race course, bishop?”

For a time, so long that the silence grew painful, the bishop made no sign that he had heard. She noted a look on his face—was it one of offended dignity or simple disgust at her daring? She could not determine. Already she had framed an apology, when he said, without lifting his eyes:

“Is it really so sinful?” continuing, quickly: “I do not doubt that it is, and, perhaps, it may strike you as being strange and unworthy of my calling, but for just once I should like to see the inside of a race course.”

For some reason the statement struck a chord of sympathy in the girl’s heart. It was in the nature of a confession.

“It is a beautiful sight, bishop,” she hastened to reply, thinking of nothing less inane as her mind struggled to find reason for his admission. “The horses, with their coats like satin, the jockeys in their bright colors, the excited throng of spectators and the velvety greensward. One jockey is a special favorite among the girls of the ‘horsy’ set,” she continued, now fairly advanced in her stride, figuratively speaking. “He’s a darling!”—ecstatically. “I surely believe half the women attend the races simply to see him ride, and all of them make wagers on his mounts.” She paused for a moment and glanced at the bishop. He did not appear offended. “When his horse wins and he returns to the judges’ stand they cheer him and wave their handkerchiefs, and some even throw kisses at him. He doesn’t notice it, though, for he never even smiles, but only looks up at the Blaisdell box.”

“Blaisdell?” echoed the bishop.

“Yes, ex-Secretary Blaisdell. Rumor says that Bettina Blaisdell wants to marry him, but, of course, the family couldn’t countenance such a thing—her becoming the wife of a jockey. It is reported he is of an excellent family, however, and rides under a *nom de course*.”

“And this name—what is it?” inquired the bishop, scarcely above a whisper. Feverishly, almost, he appeared to wait for an answer.

“Nowell—of course it is an assumed one——”

She would have said more, but the words were checked on her lips, and she was staring at her companion in undisguised astonishment. His head was bowed over, and the hand, one finger of which held the episcopal ring, was trembling violently. In a moment he had regained composure.

“Tell me of this race,” he said, in his accustomed well modulated voice. “Does this—jockey”—the word came with an effort—“ride for Mr. Blaisdell altogether? Is it the Blaisdell who was once in the Cabinet?”

Eagerness was evinced in his voice, his expression, the attitude in which he leaned toward his fair informant.

“Ex-Secretary Blaisdell—the one formerly in the senate, you know. He is more interested in the ponies now than in politics,” she said, dropping unconsciously into slang. “He was thinking of selling off all his race horses, when he discovered this jockey, who is said to get a princely salary. Mr. Blaisdell treats him almost as a son.”

The bishop winced.

“And this particular race—you call it the Derby, I believe?” he ventured.

“It’s the greatest racing event of the year. The papers this morning were full of it. Secretary Blaisdell has set his heart on winning it with Nowell and Ixion, his favorite race horse. He is tipped by all the papers, and will be the favorite. That is, it is believed he has the best chance of winning, you know,” she explained. “Ixion and Nowell are a winning combination.”

“Where is the race to take place?” persisted the bishop.

“At the Ravenswood Park race course,” answered the girl, and then, impulsively: “Why, bishop, I might almost be tempted to believe that you are going! Why not let me take you?” she pleaded, coaxingly, with sweet, pursed-up lips and chin stuck out coquettishly toward him.

She pictured to herself what a sensation she would create with a bishop on parade at the races. Well she knew that not a few would be there who would recognize them both, and she could imagine herself the cynosure of the eyes of hundreds of churchgoers transformed into racegoers on this Derby day.

The idea was positively entrancing! With glowing eyes and cheeks flushed at the thought, Miss Danvers awaited the bishop’s reply. It was merely a shake of the head, without comment on her daring.

Then the mother, having overheard the latter part of the conversation, turned to her daughter with gentle reproof:

“I’m surprised at you, Isobel, having the audacity to extend such an invitation to a bishop. It’s shocking bad taste, really. I’m ashamed of you.”

Naturally the conversation drifted into other channels.

During the rest of the meal the bishop was strangely distracted. On more than one occasion his hostess found it necessary to address the same remark to him, whereat he excused himself somewhat lamely for his inattention.

After they had risen from the board he pleaded some matter that needed his especial care, and retired to his chamber. Probably a half hour later Mrs. Danvers and the rector, who remained to talk over church affairs, saw the bishop descend the main stairway near the drawing room.

“He wishes to be alone still. I can tell by his expression,” said the rector. “I know him like a book. A queer man in some ways, but no better anywhere. Inclined too much to melancholy, and a trifle too straitlaced for his advanced age, perhaps.”

In his own chamber the bishop had gone over in his own mind, not once, but a hundred times, the question, at the present the one momentous to him above all others, should he visit the race course that afternoon to see

the Derby run? A thousand reasons had suggested themselves why he should not do so. One why he should stood forth clearly and plainly. When all had been turned over in his mind, something told him “Go!”

But how should he go? As he was, his clothes of severe clerical cut singling him out for the sneers of the unrighteous? He would not deny his Master. In his own heart he knew that his presence at the race course meant no intent of desecration of his calling, though he believed horse racing was one of the unpardonable sins. 106

So his mind was settled that he should go!

At the street corner he bought a newspaper. In it he read that the great Derby would be decided about four P. M. By inquiring casually, he learned that the race course was not many minutes distant.

Hailing a passing cab, he asked, in a voice in which he endeavored to hide the shame he felt:

“To the race course, please. Shall I be in time for the Derby race?”

The half-intoxicated driver looked him over carefully before replying, with a leer:

“All the time you want. I’ll take you right there as cheap as anybody, and I’ll give you a tip besides! If this wasn’t my busy day I’d be inside there, too, quick.”

He pointed his whip indefinitely. “Take my tip, sir,” he added, insinuatingly, holding to the swinging door. “Don’t bet a penny on Ixion. Hotspur is the goods to-day. He’ll beat Ixion a mile. You mind what I’m telling you. I’ve got inside information.”

The bishop’s soul was filled with disgust as he stepped inside.

The cabby slammed to the door, whirled the vehicle sharply around and started.

By and by they ran out of the street into an open space with large gates in front, through which people were passing by the uniformed gatekeepers. The bishop could catch the flutter of flags in the air; men and boys were selling sheets of paper and bawling loudly in his ears. Many cabs and carriages and automobiles were “parked” about the inclosure. He paid the driver, who again took occasion to tell him, in a hoarse whisper:

“Take my tip; you won’t be sorry. Bet it all on Hotspur.”

On either side of the gates the bishop saw booths at whose windows men were selling tickets. Approaching a booth, he tendered a five-dollar bill, receiving in return a badge and three dollars. For a moment he hesitated, and looked at the grinning countenance of the ticket seller.

“How much is—this?” he faltered, holding up the badge.

“Grand stand, two dollars; that’s a grand-stand badge.”

The window shut down with a bang, and the small man in black passed through the turnstile, holding out the badge dumbly to the gatekeeper. The man tore off something and handed the larger portion back to him.

As the bishop passed inside he saw a man attach the—to him—badge of iniquity to the lapel of his coat. He himself held the gaudy bit of pasteboard as if its very touch was defiling, and then tossed it on the ground.

Presently he found himself in front of a stand a quarter of a mile long, black with people. So many never had he seen gathered together at one place.

A band was playing back near the grand stand. Men and women jostled him, laughing, chatting, paying no attention. He heard a young man near him say: “Get your program—one dime,” and gave ten cents for the narrow-leaved “racing card.” He stood holding it mechanically in his hand. Though his eyes rested on the verdant green of the infield, they did not see it. They were looking back into the past of little more than four years before. The racegoers shouldered him heedlessly. He hardly realized the discomfort, he had forgotten the place to which he had come, the sights and scenes of the race course on this great Derby day were forgotten.

How well he remembered the other, the day when the crushing blow had fallen on his heart! That had been the real reason for his sadness.

Until that morning, four years before, as fresh in memory as yesterday, the bishop had thought his only son, at college, would follow in the footsteps of the father. He recollected tearing open the missive in the beloved handwriting, and reading the letter which had burned deeply into his memory and his soul. 107

As he stood looking back into the past, isolated, though surrounded by thousands, he went over it again:

> Dear Father: Your last letter, in which you suggested that it was high time I had made the choice of a profession, set me to thinking. As a result I have made my decision.
>
> Father, you know how fond I have been of horseflesh. Do you remember—but of course you do—when I rode in the tournament three years ago, the youngest knight there, I captured the prize and crowned the queen of beauty? You seemed very proud of me then, and when I crowned mother the queen you complimented me on my good taste.
>
> Near the college grounds is a race course, with training stables attached. Owing to my fondness for thoroughbreds, during the winter I have become acquainted with one of the trainers. I told him I could ride, and he let me exercise one of his best racers. He says that I have an excellent seat and hands, and has asked me to go with him as an apprentice boy, after which I will become a first-class jockey—a big thing nowadays. I think I am exceedingly fortunate in having such an opportunity.
>
> You know, father, I never have been very studious. I would rather sit in the saddle all day than be perched on a stool in an office for a few hours. I have heard you yourself say that a man cannot succeed in his vocation unless he is in sympathy with it.
>
> Please don’t oppose me in my choice, for I know I shall make a great name for myself in the turf world, as you are known in that of the church. Hoping to hear from you soon and favorably, I am,
>
> Affectionately, your son,

At first the little bishop had been highly indignant at his son. The idea of his presuming to couple his own name, as one in the direct line of apostolic succession, with that of a jockey! Surely his son was bereft of his senses.

From wrath the father had changed to heartsickness. Rather in anything else would he have his son engaged than in such a pursuit. He had in mind his own brother, the pride of his mother's heart, the idol of the family, who, through that same love of horseflesh, had fallen so low that he was either an outcast or the occupant of an unmarked grave in the Western country.

His answer to the letter had been this:

> MY DEAR SON: I am sure that you have not reflected deeply on the course which you write me you are bent on pursuing. I cannot consider it as a serious resolve, but regard it rather as the result of sudden impulse on your part induced by the promptings of a man who would lead you away from all that is good and proper to something which is most sinful, degraded and pernicious.
>
> If, after seeing your father in his priestly vestments, you can array yourself in the trappings of Satan—the jockey's colors—you are not the son I have fondly imagined.
>
> I will not pretend to coerce you in the matter. Yet I counsel you well to consider fully before you take the final step.
>
> Of course if you persist in your wild determination, in future all communication between us must cease. I can advise you no further.
>
> I am glad your dear mother is not alive to share in the pain which your communication has caused me.
>
> YOUR DISAPPOINTED FATHER.

The bishop had hoped, rather than expected, that his son would turn from his resolve. He knew the breed! From the time when their ancestor, Hugh de Chalmers, had started forth to the Crusades, not one had ever retreated. And this same De Chalmers, knighted for some deed of valor on the field of battle, had chosen his coat of arms, which had remained to the house through the vicissitudes of generations. And this coat of arms consisted of field *gules*, horse *argent*, with the motto: "*Ubique honor et equus*" ("Wherever honor and his horse should lead him"). Always the horse had been associated with the Chalmers race, for good or bad, it seemed.

After the two letters there had been no others. The lives of father and son were as those of persons unknown to one another.

The little bishop, sadder than ever—more sanctified, the women of his flock said—went about his work with renewed vigor, if it were possible. They did not know of the derelict.

And the son? Never until this day had the father heard of him.

Try as hard as he had done, the bishop could not put from him the desire, the consuming, yearning wish, 108
once more to look on the face of his only child, even if engaged in his ungodly pursuit. The bishop considered this would be his only chance; he was certain his heart was affected.

Suddenly he came to himself. He was here, but as yet he had seen no horses or jockeys. His son was apparently as far away from him as he had been when he first had become a professional rider. The bishop had supposed men and women, horses and jockeys, were all wallowing together in one slough.

Neither did Bishop Chalmers distinguish the face of an acquaintance. Vaguely he had supposed he would be seen by some who had heard him preach the night before, and who would express astonishment at meeting him there. Where was Miss Danvers?

If he had only known, he would have been aware that the people who would recognize him were in their boxes or grand-stand seats, or in the paddock, where society condescends to jostle elbows with stable boys, proving the truth of the adage enunciated by a true sage: "On the turf, and beneath it, all men are equal." At least, the bishop was saved from explanation.

It was just after the third race he had arrived. Even now that he had come, he saw no prospect of accomplishing his design. He knew nothing of a paddock.

Looking about him helplessly, his black garments contrasting strangely with the bright costumes of the women, and the "horsy" garb of the male portion, his eyes rested on the figure of a man near him. He was a big, burly fellow, with a good-natured Irish face, the most noticeable feature of which was a huge red mustache. Certainly here was one who could help him, for the man's attire was as typical of his calling as the bishop's own. A glittering diamond pin in the shape of a horse's head was in the cravat, a horseshoe watch charm rested on the double-breasted waistcoat of "loud" pattern.

Chalmers' eyes caught those of the turf gambler as the latter lifted them, after making an apparently satisfactory calculation on the back of his program.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the bishop. "I—er—as you possibly may guess, I am not well versed in racing matters. Would you please enable me to understand a few things? I believe a jockey named Nowell——" he paused, interrogatively.

"Nowell is it, Blaisdell's crack jock, ye are askin' about, now, father?" inquired the man, with an expression of mild surprise. Evidently he mistook the bishop for a priest.

"Yes. Somebody said—I understood he was to ride in the Derby to-day," continued the bishop, anxiously.

"I see ye ain't used to racin' at all, at all, now, father," laughed the man, good-humoredly. "If ye were, sir, ye

would have seen his name on the official jockey board over beyant. Do ye see it now, father? The numbers have been up so long they'll be takin' them down shortly. Over beyant, father."

The bishop's eyes followed the outstretched finger across the track to where he saw opposite "No. 1" on the board the name "Nowell" in large letters, with other numbers and names below it.

"Let me show ye, father," said the man, taking the program and turning over the leaves rapidly.

"There ye are—foorth race, the Derby—No. 1, Ixion. That's the horse Nowell rides. It's No. 1 on the board, an' I'm hopin' he'll be No. 1 at the finish."

"Do you attend the races regularly?" asked the bishop, hesitatingly.

"That's about the size av it, father," acknowledged the other. "I'm what ye call a 'regular.' I don't suppose annywan is known better about the tracks in this section than Miles Halloran. I play the ponies for a livin'. Mebbe ye'd be scoldin' me, now, father?" he inquired, indulgently.

The question was ignored.

"Perhaps you can tell me about this jockey Nowell?" the bishop asked again. "Do you know him?"

"Little Nowell?" repeated the man. "I reckon not. Nobody knows him but Blaisdell and the horses. They say 109
his own father don't know him. But that don't keep me from playin' his mounts, father. I've been backin' him ever since he started to ride. That's why I'm all to the good. I don't know him, but sure I can tell ye av him, an' nothin' but good. He's as straight as a string."

"Do you mean that he rides sitting straight up in the saddle?" inquired the bishop, misunderstanding.

"No, no, sir; not that. Sure, if all the boys were like him the bookies would go out of business, I'm thinkin'."

"Bookies?" repeated the bishop. "Will you kindly elucidate what you mean by bookies?"

"Sure, the bookmakers."

"Bookmakers—publishers, do I understand you to mean?" inquired the bishop, failing to see the connection between publishers and the race course.

"No, no, father; the layers what takes your long green, your dough, your yellow backs—the ones ye make your bet with, ye know."

"Oh!" said the bishop.

"This little jock, Nowell, as I was sayin'," continued Halloran, "is pounds better than any rider in the country."

Once more the bishop failed to comprehend.

"Pounds? Do you mean in the nature of dollars and cents? Do I understand that his services are so much more valuable than those of any other rider?"

The ill-concealed pride of a father was manifest.

Unable to hide his merriment longer at the dense ignorance displayed by his interrogator, the race-track *habitué* gave vent to a series of chuckles, ending with spasmodic gasps which threatened to choke him. Finally he said:

"When we say that a horse is so many pounds better than another, we mean that he can pick up so much more weight than another one carries and win out. It's made by lead carried in the saddle pad. Now, this Darby to-day——"

"Go on, I think I understand," said the bishop, faintly. "About the Derby——"

"Now, in this here Darby—it's a mile and a half race—all the horses are three-year-olds, and they carry the same weights."

"Ah, yes, I see, I see. Then Nowell should win?"—tentatively.

Halloran meditated, frowning deeply.

"Ye seem to take uncommon interest in this jock, sir——" he began.

"You are quite right, Mr. Halloran," said the bishop. "I—I knew him well some years ago. It was before he became a jockey. His—his mother and father I was well acquainted with."

"Well, annywan that has been a friend av that lad is all right. I'm goin' to put ye wise to somethin'. It's only track gossip, but I believe there's truth in it. It's this"—he paused a moment before continuing, impressively: "Nowell will win if he gets through alive. It's a mighty rough passage he'll have this day. If he finishes with his neck safe, he'll have the saints to thank at the end."

The bishop's face blanched. He could not understand.

"Is there a plot against his life? Can such a thing be allowed?" he demanded.

"Ye see, it's this way—all the other jocks is jealous of Nowell, one of them in particular. That's the Dago, Satanelli. 'Little Satan,' they call him, and he's one of the devil's own imps. He's next to Nowell in winning mounts. He rides the second favorite, Hotspur, and it's said Hotspur's owner, Cantrell, has promised Satanelli two thousand dollars if he beats Ixion. He don't have to win—come in ahead of Ixion, that's all. More'n that, I hear each one of the other jocks has been slipped a hundred-dollar bill if he does all he can to beat Ixion. It's easy money, you see. They'll try to beat Nowell now if they have to put him over the fence to do it."

"I am truly grateful to you for your information," was the bishop's reply. "What you say is a terrible state of affairs. Could you not find time to warn him—Nowell, I mean?"

"Why, he knows it, all right, father. Bless your soul, he's wise as to what's goin' on." 110

“And still he will go into this death trap set for him! Where can I find the officials?” implored the bishop. “Certainly they cannot be aware of the existing state of things. Mr. Halloran, won’t you help me?”

At the instant the clear notes of a bugle rang out. The bishop and his companion were separated. In some unaccountable manner the air appeared surcharged with electricity. For a second the noise and clamor of the grand stand, the babble of thousands of tongues, were succeeded by a strange stillness.

Again the noise began, but now it was more subdued—the vast crowd seemed to be under a spell. Wondering and bewildered, feeling that he had lost his mainstay, conscious that the crisis was near at hand, Bishop Chalmers looked about him.

He was brought to himself by a friendly hand on the shoulder, a rough but kindly voice in his ear:

“I slipped into the bettin’ ring to put down an extra wad, father. It looks now like everywan thinks Nowell will get through all right. All the big plungers is bettin’ on him, and they know what’s afoot. I thought maybe the little church might be needin’ some money now, and I put down a bet for ye,” he said, with a sly smile.

“Thank God!” was the bishop’s fervent ejaculation. But he was not referring to the wager.

“That was the call to the post, father,” said Halloran. “Come down here by the rail, so ye can get a good look at the boy. It’s the only chance ye’ll have. Right here, up against the rail, with me.”

Leaning over the rail, forgetful of all else, the bishop watched in the direction indicated by his companion for the horses and riders. Soon he saw them trooping out of the paddock gate on the track, in single file, a brave show. He thought he recognized the figure on the leading horse. A mist came before his eyes.

“That’s him—the wan on the big chestnut in front, No. 1, that’s Nowell. Ye’ll be havin’ a good look presently,” whispered the Irishman. “That’s him—the jock with the blue jacket, brown sash, brown cap.”

The bishop’s highly imaginative brain had preconceived this first glimpse of his son. He imagined the boy he had known would be transformed into a rough, profane creature, with heartless laughter and obscene jest to catch the applause of the crowd—young in years, old in crime, a tool of gamblers and blacklegs.

What the father saw, as with trembling fingers he clutched the rail near the judges’ stand, was a bright-faced young man, or, rather, a youth, with the father’s calm, deep blue eyes looking out from under the peak of his jockey cap straight ahead, fearless and confident.

The face had lost its boyish laughter—it wore an earnest, business-like expression. The father felt a thrill of —was it pride? His son was still a Chalmers, going to what might prove his death with unmoved countenance, just as his cavalier ancestor had gone generations before.

The horses—twelve of them—“a big Derby field,” some one said—passed by in parade, one after the other, on their way to the starting post, a half-mile distant around the circular track on which the Derby was to be run. There had been yells for Ixion and Nowell, handclapping and cheering, but the jockey had ridden on without noticing the favor with which he was received; past the grand stand, the field stand and around the turn.

At last the bishop was roused from his contemplation by the voice of Halloran. The plunger explained to him the manner of starting, the positions at the post. Most of it was meaningless to the bishop. He endeavored to understand. It had been his intention first to remain only until he had seen his son, and then go. The startling information given him had changed that.

Nervously expectant, imbued with the general feeling of suspense, Chalmers stood by the side of Halloran, the big Irishman peering through field glasses, shifting uneasily, and muttering to himself incoherently. The bishop watched silently, trying to pick out the blue and brown colors from the jumble of others, a prayer in his heart for one in peril of sudden death.

Would it never end? For minutes and minutes, each one of which added its load of misery to the watcher’s heart, the bishop saw the twisting and turning, the perverse actions of the racers as the starter tried to line them up behind the frail barrier. The wait was nerve racking—would it continue to torture the heart and brain for hours?

A something like a white ribbon flashed upward. For the infinitesimal part of a second—silence.

A roar as of relief from the vast multitude, a cry so concerted that the thousands might have rehearsed it for weeks, sharp, short, distinct and crescendo: “They’re off!”

The tension was broken.

A simultaneous darting forward of the released level line of racers.

A flirt downward of a glaringly yellow flag.

Already the rumble of hoofbeats was heard, approaching closer each fraction of a second. Now the flying racers had reached a position opposite the grand stand. The leaders were sweeping by the bishop and his companion with their marvelous, frictionless, space-devouring strides. A sharp exclamation came from Halloran, a jubilant expression: “I told ye Nowell would get off well. He’s second now, an’ takin’ it easy.”

Even the inexperienced eye of the bishop had picked out instantaneously, well to the fore, the blue and brown of his jockey son.

They had swept past the paddock; they were making the first turn to the back stretch. The grand-stand spectators had risen in their excitement, the occupants of the packed lawn were tip-toe with expectation, eyes strained to lose no move of the Derby contenders well advanced in the struggle for the great prize.

Halloran gave an inarticulate cry—a burst of dismay and sympathy came from the backers of the favorite.

“Bumped into, by——!” was the Irishman’s sharp exclamation, coupled with a fierce oath. One of the flying racers, urged on to terrific pace by its rider, with no thought of saving for the heartbreaking finish, had struck Ixion on the quarter with his shoulder. For a moment the favorite was seen to falter and fall back; the next,

under the superb handling of his rider, he had regained his stride and recovered the ground lost to the leaders.

The bishop had merely guessed something had happened. He was brought to full realization by Halloran saying, impersonally:

“They’re up to their devil’s tricks early in the game. They don’t care for foulin’ in this Derby.”

Some man alongside answered, with a sneer:

“I guess they’ll fix Blaisdell’s kid-glove jock to-day. I see his finish. The other boys will see to him, all right—his uppishness.”

Halloran, letting fall the glasses from his face, grabbed the strap, turned on the speaker like a tiger, and said in a tone of deepest menace:

“Ye know me, Cantrell. Another word the like av that, an’ I’ll brain ye right in the presence of his riverence, here. Don’t forget that little jock is a friend av him an’ av me.”

The man was silent.

“Watch yerself, Nowell,” the big fellow cautioned, as if the jockey was in earshot. “It’s all right in the straight. Watch yourself on the last turn for home; it’s there they’ll try to do the dirty work.”

Down the back stretch they raced in a compact bunch, the blue and brown on the rail, the black horse of Satanelli, like an avenging demon, hanging on to Ixion’s quarter, the rest close behind, ready to aid in the devilish work cut out for them by the chief conspirator.

In reality it took but a few seconds, though it seemed minutes, until the far turn was reached. Here the blue and brown, the all yellow of Satanelli, the violets and greens and pinks and blacks and reds and all the other 112
colors of the jockeys, became merged in a maze to the bishop. Whether the positions had changed, how his son was faring, he could only guess by the disjointed utterances of the man beside him. Halloran, on tiptoe, breathing heavily, and with head turning slowly, followed the movements of the racers. The bishop had a sensation of faintness steal over him. For a space he feared he would lose consciousness.

“Oh! Mother of mercies!”—from Halloran. “They pinched him off at the far turn! Bumped into again! He’ll never win now. If the stewards don’t take action now——”

A heavy foot was raised and stamped the ground savagely.

His breath coming in gasps, the bishop watched the expression of the other to try and read the fate of his son. To him the race itself was as a closed book.

Around the far turn they had swept, and the bishop, looking at the other’s face, listening intently, caught the words:

“They’ve got Ixion pocketed. He’ll never get through. If he tries, they’ll put him over the fence, sure. Ye young devils, ye’ve done your work well.”

Now they had reached the turn for home. They had rounded it. A black horse, with the all yellow, was in the lead, a jockey, white and black checks, was alongside, half a length away, both at the whip. Two lengths back, in the middle of the ruck, seemingly hopelessly beaten, apparently shut off with no chance to get through, was the blue and brown.

Between Ixion and the rail two horses nearly on even terms with him; in front Satanelli on Hotspur, and Blashford, the second choice, carrying the black and white “magpie” colors; on Ixion’s whip side a beautiful brown filly, with gray and magenta, the filly so tired she was ready to lean against Ixion’s heaving flank.

So with those in the “first flight,” the racers came down the stretch in a whirlwind finish, the vast crowd, in a frenzy of excitement, shouting frantically, hysterically, the names of the two leaders, Hotspur and Blashford, for it seemed certain one or the other was sure to win. Halloran was silent.

Suddenly the brown filly halted perceptibly in her stride. Now she had fallen back! The racer in front of Ixion, slightly to his right, running gamely and true under the now added incentive of pricking steel in side, had drawn slightly away from under the nose of Ixion, and was pressing hard the two leaders, with evident intention of capturing a portion of the purse. An open gap of daylight showed between the colt in front of Ixion and the completely fagged filly. It was but a chance, but it meant freedom. It was the one thing remaining for Nowell and Ixion.

Rising in his saddle, crouching forward, whip lifted and falling with one lash only, Nowell reined Ixion sharply to the right.

A horse less royally bred than Ixion, an animal with more temper and less courage than this thoroughbred, after the buffeting he had received during the race, would have sulked, or responded at best with feeble effort. Not so with the Blaisdell thoroughbred, under the skillful guidance of a premier jockey.

Ixion checked his stride, almost landing on his haunches, and, with a plunge which threatened to throw his rider over his head, had found an opening, on the extreme outside, it is true, but an unobstructed path to the finish. With tremendous leaps and bounds the horse was recovering his lost ground.

Another second and Ixion’s clean-cut head, outstretched until the upper lip was lifted, baring the grinning teeth, was seen with that of Blashford, fallen back three-quarters of a length behind Hotspur, as yet showing no diminution of his wonderful speed under the cruel rawhide and steel of Satanelli.

Scarcely before that jockey realized it—probably the first intimation he had of his rival’s nearness was the crowd yelling Ixion’s name—the racer had drawn up to Hotspur, changing places with Blashford, now dropping further behind.

Head and head Ixion and Hotspur hung together for a couple of strides. 113

As a man transformed from a paralyzing grief to sudden great unexpected joy, Halloran was dancing up and

down like a madman, pounding the rail with a huge fist.

Ixion and Hotspur were nose and nose. Once more, only, nearing the finish line, did Nowell strike his horse with the whip, and the racer, as if understanding the need, lengthened his stride, passing Hotspur by the small space of a man's hand at the finish, and winning by so much.

At the instant, with a shrill yell of rage, all the ferocity of his Latin nature roused by defeat when victory seemed assured, Satanelli jerked his right rein, so that his horse "bored" against Ixion, at the same time hitting viciously at that racer's head with his whip.

His mighty stride as yet unchecked, Ixion swerved, stumbled, fell to his knees and rolled to one side, on the jockey.

Snorting wildly, the colt regained his feet and rushed on as the rest of the field, contesting for third place, rushed up to the finish.

Two of the leading horses jumped clean over the prostrate figure of the jockey in blue and brown; the flying hoofs of another struck it and rolled the body of the little rider to one side. The others, sufficiently far behind, avoided it altogether.

Yells of exultation at the winning of the favorite were checked. They were changed to groans of sympathizing men, screams of terror-stricken, white-faced, fainting women.

When the bishop came to himself he was in the center of the track, kneeling down by his unconscious son, holding the head of the unfortunate in his hands. Uniformed men were by him.

Through a little gate opening from the judges' stand hurried a large, distinguished-looking man, with gray mustache.

He had the unmistakable air of authority as he stood over the jockey's form, his uncased field glasses, with the case itself, dangling by his side. The others moved away, all but the bishop. The elderly man, to whom the others gave way, would have lifted the boy in his arms, but the bishop would not release his hold.

"Pardon me, sir; let me have him," said the gentleman, with something of austerity, as if hinting that the presence of a clergyman was more superfluous than necessary. "What he needs now most of all is prompt medical attention. He is my jockey."

"And he is my son, sir; my only child," was the response of the kneeling, dark-garbed figure. He permitted the large man to lift the boy in his arms.

As the ambulance drove sharply on the course, the large man, still clasping the jockey in his arms, looked hard at the anguished face.

It was a brief but all-comprehensive glance. The next instant he had lifted a foot on the step, and with the assistance of the surgeon had deposited the insensible boy on the stretcher inside.

"Drive direct to Fordham," he commanded. "I will follow immediately."

Only then did he turn to the bishop.

"I am William T. Blaisdell. You say the boy is your son? You are——?"

His eyes roved over the other's ministerial dress.

"I am Bishop Chalmers, sir. This young man is my son, my only child," he repeated, quietly.

"How is it that his name is Nowell? He told me that was his right one?" said the owner, doubtingly.

"It is his own middle name, and his mother's maiden one," was the low reply.

"Come with me, bishop," said Blaisdell, his face softening. "He is a son of whom any father might be proud. Let us hope his injuries are not serious. My automobile is outside here, and we will go direct to the hospital."

During the swift ride to the hospital, in the wake of the ambulance, Bishop Chalmers, as to a father confessor, unbosomed himself to the quiet, self-contained man beside him. When he had finished the recital, concluding with the remark that he had misjudged his son, and the two men had looked into one another's eyes, the father saw that Blaisdell's were filled with tears.

"You have misjudged him sadly," was Blaisdell's reply. "No one in any capacity was ever truer to his trust than your son, bishop.

"None ever lived a cleaner life, I know. He had offers innumerable to ride for men who would have paid him extra thousands for retainers. The methods of some on the turf are questionable. As in any other business, it depends altogether on the man. Your son preferred to ride only for me, because he knew that always my horses were ridden to win."

He was silent a little.

"Although your son received from me a retaining fee of fifteen thousand dollars a year, he seemed to spend but little money," he continued. "Each year, at his request, I deposited my personal check, payable to him, for the whole amount with my bankers, Relyea & Farnum. As he seemed to spend little, and, like myself, never ventured a wager, it must have accumulated to a good round sum. I always supposed hitherto that the boy had others dependent on him."

Cringing in his seat, positively cringing, at this latest revelation, Bishop Chalmers heard.

To think how he had mistaken his son! Relyea & Farnum, bankers? Their names were familiar. Now the bishop knew who furnished the seed for his harvest. On this point alone could he not reveal the truth to Blaisdell.

"It was remarkable how he could handle horseflesh," continued the latter, in a matter-of-fact tone. "No one

else could ride Ixion. I verily believe he would have pined away in any other profession. He was not perfectly happy unless he was about horses. Honest? Why, bishop, the whole racing public be——" He checked the word, smiling to himself. He had started to say "bets on him." "The whole racing public believes in him," he declared, gravely.

"'In whatsoever calling,'" murmured the bishop.

The patient had been taken into the operating room, was the report that awaited Blaisdell and the bishop on their arrival at the hospital. Nothing was known regarding his condition. Blaisdell whispered to the obsequious interne who met them:

"I am ex-Secretary Blaisdell. Your patient is the son of Bishop Chalmers here, and in my employ. You will greatly oblige me by sending for my surgeon, Dr. Abercrombie. Leave no stone unturned to save the boy. And, by the way, doctor——"

The departing physician returned to Blaisdell's side.

"If—er—when he regains consciousness—you might tell him that his father, Bishop Chalmers, is waiting to see him. The news might prove of benefit."

In the hallway, too excited and interested to remain quiet in the reception room, the bishop and ex-Secretary Blaisdell paced up and down. A few minutes they had passed thus, conversing together gravely, when the click of small, dainty heels, the rustle of a woman's skirts, were heard on the bare floor.

A tall girl, with light hair; a lovely, highbred creature, gowned in the most approved of summer "creations," the perfume of whose presence nullified the odor of anæsthetics and antiseptics—a young lady whose features were strikingly like those of Blaisdell—the light of whose blue eyes was dimmed by weeping, threw herself, sobbing, into his arms.

"How did you get here, Bettina?" Blaisdell asked her, with something of reproof in his tone.

"I saw it—the—oh, it was too terrible!" she cried. "I asked where they had taken him, and followed directly. They said you were here."

Her eyes rested on the bishop, standing near.

"Is it—is it so bad as that, father?" she cried, sobbing anew. "Oh, don't tell me he is——"

She could not bring herself to say the word.

"This is Bishop Chalmers, daughter," was Blaisdell's reply.

"Bishop Chalmers!" gasped the girl, with wide-open eyes. "Why, bishop, I heard you preach on 'Charity' last night."

"On 'Charity,' which I so badly lacked—that which I thought I possessed, but which I had so little of for my own son," said the bishop. "The boy whom you knew simply as Nowell was my son, Miss Blaisdell—Lionel Nowell Chalmers. His father"—he cleared his throat—"was so uncharitable as to deny him the privilege of calling him father."

"To think that he was the son of a bishop, and now it's too late! Oh, why would not he tell us!" she cried, reproachfully.

She had burst into a fresh fit of sobbing. Blaisdell, one arm thrown affectionately around the waist of the weeping girl, placed the other on the bishop's shoulder.

"Your son and my daughter were in love with one another," he said, simply. "I have no son, and the boy was much at my house. I trusted him fully in everything. I saw the growing attachment between the two. I was certain that he came of good people, but, as a father, and on account of my social position, I had to be sure. I asked him, as he loved Bettina and she him, to tell me who his father was.

"He would not," continued Blaisdell, after a pause. "I felt sure he had some excellent motive for keeping his secret. I did not press him further, and there the matter rested."

A pent-up sob came from the soul of the bishop. "So much it would have meant to him," he said, and added, softly, as if to himself: "As the father, in his priestly vestments, would not recognize the son in his Satan's trappings, so the son could not acknowledge the father. Oh, Lord, spare him to us yet a while."

The door opened and a nurse appeared on the threshold. She looked curiously at the group.

"Jockey Nowell is conscious and asking for his father, the bishop," she stated, with unintentional emphasis on the last word, and then added, in a coldly professional tone:

"He will recover, the physicians say, but his injuries will probably prevent him from riding again—at least not for a very long while."

Blaisdell drew a sharp breath. His face was troubled.

"That means my retirement from the turf," he said, with a sigh. "I have lost the one jockey I could trust."

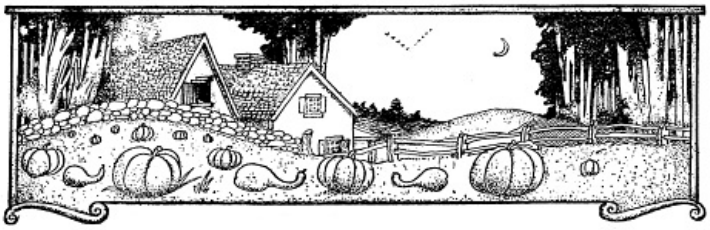
"And I have gained—a son," breathed the bishop, starting forward.

Pausing, he took the sobbing girl by the hand.

"You will see him later, daughter," he whispered.

His face radiant with a smile it had not known for years, the little bishop followed the nurse down the passage.

A door opened and closed noiselessly behind them.



The PRINCESS' KINGDOM

THAT there once was a real Prince Rabomirski is beyond question. That he was Ottilie's father may be taken for granted. But that the Princess Rabomirski had a right to bear the title many folk were scandalously prepared to deny. It is true that when the news of the prince's death reached Monte Carlo, the princess, who was there at the time, showed various persons, on whose indiscretion she could rely, a holograph letter of condolence from the czar, and later unfolded to the amiable muddle-headed the intricacies of a lawsuit which she was instituting for the recovery of the estates in Poland; but her detractors roundly declared the holograph letter to be a forgery, and the lawsuit a fiction of her crafty brain. Princess, however, she continued to style herself in Cosmopolis, and princess she was styled by all and sundry, and little Ottilie Rabomirski was called the Princess Ottilie.

Among the people who joined heart and soul with the detractors was young Vince Somerset. If there was one person whom he despised and hated more than Count Bernheim—of the holy Roman empire—it was the Princess Rabomirski. In his eyes she was everything that a princess, a lady, a woman and a mother should not be. She dressed ten years younger than was seemly; she spoke English like a barmaid, and French like a cocotte; she gambled her way through Europe from year's end to year's end, and, after neglecting Ottilie for twenty years, she was about to marry her to Bernheim. The last was the unforgivable offense.

The young man walked up and down the Casino terrace of Illerville-sur-Mer, and poured into a friend's ear his flaming indignation. He was nine-and-twenty, and, though he pursued the unpoetical avocation of sub-editing the foreign telegrams on a London daily newspaper, retained some of the vehemence of undergraduate days when he had chosen the career—now abandoned—of poet, artist, dramatist and irreconcilable politician.

"Look at them!" he cried, indicating a couple seated at a distant table beneath the awning of the café. "Did you ever see anything so horrible in your life? The maiden and the Minotaur. When I heard of the engagement today I wouldn't believe it until she herself told me. She doesn't know the man's abomination. He's a byword of reproach through Europe. The live air reeks with the scent he pours upon himself. There can be no turpitude under the sun in which the wretch doesn't wallow. Do you know that he killed his first wife? Oh, I don't mean that he cut her throat. That's far too primitive for such a complex hound. There are other ways of murdering a woman, my dear Ross. You kick her body and break her heart and defile her soul. That's what he did. And he has done it to other women."

"But, my dear man," remarked Ross, elderly and cynical, "he is colossally rich."

"Rich! Do you know where he made his money? In the cesspool of European finance. He's a Jew by race, a German by parentage, an Italian by upbringing, and a Greek by profession. He has bucket shops and low-down money lenders' cribs and rotten companies all over the Continent. Do you remember Sequasto & Co.? That was Bernheim. England's too hot to hold him. Look at him now he has taken off his hat. Do you know why he wears his greasy hair plastered over half his damned forehead? It's to hide the mark of the beast. He's anti-Christ! And when I think of that Jezebel from the Mile-End Road putting Ottilie into his arms, it makes me see red. By heavens, it's touch and go that I don't slay the pair of them!"

"Very likely they're not as bad as they're painted," said his friend.

"She couldn't be," Somerset retorted, grimly.

Ross laughed, looked at his watch and announced that it was time for *apéritifs*. The young man assented, moodily, and they crossed the terrace to the café tables beneath the awning. It was the dying afternoon of a sultry August day, and most of Illerville had deserted tennis courts, *tir aux pigeons* and other distractions to listen lazily to the band in the Casino shade. The place was crowded; not a table vacant. When the waiter at last brought one from the interior of the café, he dumped it down beside the table occupied by the unspeakable Bernheim and the little Princess Ottilie. Somerset raised his hat as he took his seat. Bernheim responded with elaborate politeness, and Princess Ottilie greeted him with a faint smile. The engaged pair spoke very little to each other. Bernheim lounged back in his chair, smoking a cigar, and looked out to sea with a bored expression. When the girl made a casual remark he nodded rudely without turning his head. Somerset felt an irresistible desire to kick him. His external appearance was of the type that irritated the young Englishman. He was too handsome in a hard, swaggering, black-mustachioed way; he exaggerated to offense the English style of easy dress; he wore a too devil-may-care Panama, a too obtrusive colored shirt and club tie; he wore no waistcoat, and the hems of his new flannel trousers, turned up six inches, disclosed a stretch of tan-colored silk socks, clocked with gold, matching overelegant tan shoes. He went about with a broken-spirited poodle. He was inordinately scented. Somerset glowered at him, and let his drink remain untasted.

Presently Bernheim summoned the waiter, paid him for the tea the girl had been drinking, and pushed back his chair.

"This hole is getting on my nerves," he said, in French, to his companion. "I am going into the *cercle* to play *écarté*. Will you go to your mother, whom I see over there, or will you stay here?"

"I'll stay here," said the little Princess Ottilie.

Bernheim nodded and swaggered off. Somerset bent forward.

"I must see you alone to-night—quite alone. I must have you all to myself. How can you manage it?"

Ottilie looked at him anxiously. She was fair and innocent, of a prettiness more English than foreign, and the

scare in her blue eyes made them all the more appealing to the young man.

"What is the good? You can't help me. Don't you see that it is all arranged?"

"I'll undertake to disarrange it at a moment's notice," said Somerset.

"Hush!" she whispered, glancing round. "Somebody will hear. Everything is gossiped about in this place."

"Well, will you meet me?" the young man persisted.

"If I can," she sighed. "If they are both playing baccarat, I may slip out for a little."

"As at Spa."

She smiled, and a slight flush came into her cheeks.

"Yes, as at Spa. Wait for me on the *plage* at the bottom of the Casino steps. Now I must go to my mother. She would not like to see me talking to you."

"The princess hates me like poison. Do you know why?"

"No, and you are not going to tell me," she said, demurely. "*Au revoir.*"

When she had passed out of earshot, Ross touched the young man's arm.

"I'm afraid, my dear Somerset, you are playing a particularly silly fool's game."

"Have you never played it?" 118

"Heaven forbid!"

"It would be a precious sight better for you if you had," growled Somerset.

"I'll take another *quinquina*," said Ross.

"Did you see the way in which the brute treated her?" Somerset exclaimed, angrily. "If it's like that before marriage, what will it be after?"

"Plenty of money, separate establishments, perfect independence and happiness for each."

Somerset rose from the table.

"There are times, my good Ross," said he, "when I absolutely hate you."

* * * * *

Somerset had first met the Princess Rabomirski and her daughter three years before, at Spa. They were staying at the same hotel, a very modest one, which, to Somerset's mind, ill accorded with the princess' pretensions. Bernheim was also in attendance, but he disposed his valet, his motor car and himself in the luxurious Hôtel d'Orange, as befitted a man of his quality; also he was in attendance not on Ottilie, but on the princess, who at that time was three years younger and a trifle less painted. Now at Illerville-sur-Mer the trio were stopping at the Hôtel Splendide, a sumptuous hostelry, whose season prices were far above Somerset's moderate means. He contented himself with the little hotel next door, and hated the Hôtel Splendide and all that it contained, save Ottilie, with all his heart. But at Spa, the princess was evidently in low water from which she did not seem to be rescued by her varying luck at the tables. Ottilie was then a child of seventeen, and Somerset was less attracted by her delicate beauty than by her extraordinary loneliness. Day after day, night after night, he would come upon her sitting solitary on one of the settees in the gaming room, like a forgotten fan or flower, or wandering wistfully from table to table, idly watching the revolving wheels. Sometimes she would pause behind her mother's or Bernheim's chair to watch their game; but the princess called her a little *porte-malheur* and would drive her away. In the mornings or on other rare occasions, when the elder inseparables were not playing roulette, Ottilie hovered round them at a distance, as disregarded as a shadow that followed them in space of less dimensions, as it were, wherever they went. In the Casino rooms, if men spoke to her, she replied in shy monosyllables and shrank away. Somerset, who had made regular acquaintance with the princess at the hotel and who took a chivalrous pity on her loneliness, she admitted first to a timid friendship and then to a childlike intimacy. Her face would brighten and her heart beat a little faster when she saw his young, well-knit figure appear in the distance; for she knew he would come straight to her and take her from the hot rooms heavy with perfumes and tobacco on to the cool balcony and talk of all manner of pleasant things. And Somerset found in this neglected little sham princess what his youth was pleased to designate a flower-like soul. Those were idyllic hours. The princess, glad to get the embarrassing child out of the way, took no notice of the intimacy. Somerset fell in love.

It lasted out a three years' separation during which he did not hear from her. He had written to several addresses, but a cold post office returned his letters undelivered, and his only consolation was to piece together from various sources the unedifying histories of the Princess Rabomirski and Count Bernheim, of the holy Roman Empire. He came to Illerville-sur-Mer for an August holiday. The first thing he did when shown into his hotel bedroom was to gaze out of the window at the beach and the sea. The first person his eyes rested upon was the little Princess Ottilie issuing, alone as usual, from the doors of the next hotel.

He had been at Illerville a fortnight—a fortnight of painful joy. Things had changed. Their interviews had been mostly stolen, for the Princess Rabomirski had rudely declined to renew the acquaintance and had forbidden Ottilie to speak to him. The girl, though apparently as much neglected as ever, was guarded against 119
him with peculiar ingenuity. Somerset, aware that Ottilie, now grown from a child into an exquisitely beautiful and marriageable young woman, was destined by a hardened sinner like the princess for a wealthier husband than a poor newspaper man with no particular prospects, could not, however, quite understand the reason for the virulent hatred of which he was the object. He overheard the princess one day cursing her daughter in execrable German for having acknowledged his bow a short time before. Their only undisturbed time together was in the sea during the bathing hour. The princess, hating the pebbly beach, which cut to pieces her high-heeled shoes, never watched the bathers, and Bernheim, who did not bathe—Somerset, prejudiced, declared

that he did not even wash—remained in his bedroom till the hour of *déjeuner*. Ottilie, attended only by her maid, came down to the water's edge, threw off her peignoir, and, plunging into the water, found Somerset waiting.

Now, Somerset was a strong swimmer. Moderately proficient at all games as a boy and an undergraduate, he had found that swimming was the only sport in which he excelled, and he had cultivated and maintained the art. Oddly enough, the little Princess Ottilie, in spite of her apparent fragility, was also an excellent and fearless swimmer. She had another queer delight for a creature so daintily feminine—the *salle d'armes*—so that the muscles of her young limbs were firm and well-ordered. But the sea was her passion. If an additional bond between Somerset and herself were needed, it would have been this. Yet, though it is a pleasant thing to swim far away into the loneliness of the sea with the object of one's affections, the conditions do not encourage sustained conversation on subjects of vital interest. On the day when Somerset learned that his little princess was engaged to Bernheim he burned to tell her more than could be spluttered out in ten fathoms of water. So he urged her to an assignation.

At half-past ten she joined him at the bottom of the Casino steps. The shingly *plage* was deserted, but on the terrace above the throng was great, owing to the breathless heat of the night.

"Thank Heaven you have come," said he. "Do you know how I have longed for you?"

She glanced up wistfully into his face. In her simple cream dress and burnt straw hat adorned with white roses round the brim, she looked very fair and childlike.

"You mustn't say such things," she whispered. "They are wrong now. I am engaged to be married."

"I won't hear of it," said Somerset. "It is a horrible nightmare—your engagement. Don't you know that I love you? I loved you the first minute I set my eyes on you at Spa."

Princess Ottilie sighed, and they walked along the boards behind the bathing machines, and down the rattling beach to the shelter of a fishing boat, where they sat down, screened from the world, with the murmuring sea in front of them. Somerset talked of his love and the hatefulness of Bernheim. The little princess sighed again.

"I have worse news still," she said. "It will pain you. We are going to Paris to-morrow, and then on to Aix-les-Bains. They have just decided. They say the baccarat here is silly, and they might as well play for bonbons. So we must say good-by to-night—and it will be good-by for always."

"I, too, will come to Aix-les-Bains," said Somerset.

"No, no," she answered, quickly. "It would only bring trouble on me, and do no good. We must part to-night. Don't you think it hurts me?"

"But you must love me," said Somerset.

"I do," she said, simply, "and that is why it hurts. Now I must be going back."

"Ottilie," said Somerset, grasping her hands, "need you ever go back?"

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Come away from this hateful place with me—now, this minute. You need never see Bernheim again as long as you live. Listen. My friend Ross has a motor car. I can manage it—so there will be only us two. Run into your hotel for a thick cloak, and meet me as quickly as you can behind the tennis courts. If we go full speed we'll catch the night boat at Dieppe. It will be a wild race for our life happiness. Come!" 120

In his excitement he rose and pulled her to her feet. They faced each other for a few glorious moments, panting for breath, and then Princess Ottilie broke down and cried bitterly.

"I can't, dear, I can't. I must marry Bernheim. It is to save my mother from something dreadful. I don't know what it is—but she went on her knees to me, and I promised."

"If there's a woman in Europe capable of getting out of her difficulties unaided it is the Princess Rabomirski," said Somerset. "I am not going to let you be sold. You are mine, Ottilie, and, by Heaven! I'm going to have you. Come."

He urged, he pleaded, he put his strong arms around her as if he would carry her away bodily. He did everything that a frantic young man could do. But the more the little princess wept, the more inflexible she became. Somerset had not realized before this steel in her nature. Raging and vehemently urging, he accompanied her back to the Casino steps.

"Would you like to say good-by to me to-morrow morning, instead of to-night?" she asked, holding out her hand.

"I am never going to say good-by," cried Somerset.

"I shall slip out to-morrow morning for a last swim—at six o'clock," she said, unheeding his exclamation. "Our train goes at ten." Then she came very close to him.

"Vince, dear, if you love me, don't make me more unhappy than I am."

It was an appeal to his chivalry. He kissed her hand and said:

"At six o'clock."

But Somerset had no intention of bidding her a final farewell in the morning. If he followed her the world over he would snatch her out of the arms of the accursed Bernheim and marry her by main force. As for the foreign telegrams of the *Daily Post*, he cared not how they would be subedited. He went to bed with lofty disregard of Fleet Street and bread and butter. As for the shame from which Ottilie's marriage would save her sainted mother, he did not believe a word of it. She was selling Ottilie to Bernheim for cash down. He stayed awake most of the night plotting schemes for the rescue of his princess. It would be an excellent plan to insult Bernheim and slay him outright in a duel. Its disadvantages lay in his own imperfections as a duelist, and for the

first time he cursed the benign laws of his country. At length he fell asleep; woke up to find it daylight and leaped to his feet in a horrible scare. But a sight of his watch reassured him. It was only five o'clock. At half-past he put on a set of bathing things and sat down by the window to watch the hall door of the Hôtel Splendide. At six out came the familiar figure of the little princess draped in her white peignoir. She glanced up at Somerset's window. He waved his hand, and in a minute or two they were standing side by side at the water's edge. It was far away from the regular bathing place marked by the bathing cabins, and further still from the fishing end of the beach, where alone at that early hour were signs of life visible. The town behind them slept in warmth and light. The sea stretched out blue and unrippled in the still air. A little bank of purple cloud on the horizon presaged a burning day.

The little princess dropped her peignoir and kicked off her straw-soled shoes and gave her hand to her companion. He glanced at the little white feet, which he was tempted to fall down and kiss, and then at the wistful face below the blue-silk foulard knotted in front over the bathing cap. His heart leaped at her bewildering sweetness. She was the morning incarnate.

She read his eyes, and flushed pink.

"Let us go in," she said.

They waded in together, hand in hand, until they were waist deep. Then they struck out, making for the open 121
sea. The sting of the night had already passed from the water. To their young blood it felt warm. They swam near together, Ottilie using a steady breast stroke and Somerset a side stroke, so that he could look at her flushed and glistening face. From the blue of the sea and the blue of the sky and the light blue of the silk foulard, the blue of her eyes grew magically deep.

"There seems to be nothing but you and I in God's universe, Ottilie," said he. She smiled at him. He drew quite close to her.

"If we could only go on straight until we found an enchanted island which we could have as our kingdom!"

"The sea must be our kingdom," said Ottilie.

"Or its depths. Shall we dive down and look for the 'ceiling of amber, the pavement of pearl,' and the 'red gold throne in the heart of the sea' for the two of us?"

"We should be happier than in the world," replied the little princess.

They swam on slowly, dreamily, in silence. The mild waves lapped against their ears and their mouths. The morning sun lay at their backs and its radiance fell athwart the bay. Through the stillness came the faint echo of a fisherman on the far beach hammering at his boat. Beyond that and the gentle swirl of the water there was no sound. After a while they altered their course so as to reach a small boat that lay at anchor for the convenience of the stronger swimmers. They clambered up and sat on the gunwale, their feet dangling in the sea.

"Is my princess tired?" he asked.

She laughed in merry scorn.

"Tired? Why, I could swim twenty times as far. Do you think I have no muscle? Feel. Don't you know I fence all the winter?"

She braced her bare arm. He felt the muscle; then relaxing it by drawing down her wrist, he kissed it very gently.

"Soft and strong—like yourself," said he. Ottilie said nothing, but looked at her white feet through the transparent water. She thought that in letting him kiss her arm, and feeling as though he had kissed right through to her heart, she was exhibiting a pitiful lack of strength. Somerset looked at her askance, uncertain. For nothing in the world would he have offended.

"Did you mind?" he whispered.

She shook her head and continued to look at her feet. Somerset felt a great happiness pulse through him.

"If I gave you up," said he, "I should be the poorest-spirited dog that ever whined."

"Hush!" she said, putting her hand in his. "Let us think only of the present happiness."

They sat silent for a moment, contemplating the little red-roofed town of Illerville-sur-Mer, which nestled in greenery beyond the white sweep of the beach, and the rococo hotels and the Casino, whose cupolas flashed gaudily in the morning sun. From the northeastern end of the bay stretched a long line of sheer white cliff as far as the eye could reach. Toward the west it was bounded by a narrow headland running far out to sea.

"It looks like a frivolous little Garden of Eden," said Somerset, "but I wish we could never set foot in it again."

"Let us dive in and forget it," said Ottilie.

She slipped into the water. Somerset stood on the gunwale and dived. When he came up and had shaken the salt water from his nostrils, he joined her in two or three strokes.

"Let us go round the point to the little beach the other side."

She hesitated. It would take a long time to swim there, rest and swim back. Her absence might be noticed. But she felt reckless. Let her drink this hour of happiness to the full. What mattered anything that could follow? She smiled assent, and they struck out steadily for the point. It was good to have the salt smell, and the taste of the brine, and the pleasant smart of the eyes; and to feel their mastery of the sea. As they threw out their flashing white arms and topped each tiny wave, they smiled in exultation. To them it seemed impossible that 122
anyone could drown. For the buoyant hour they were creatures of the element. Now and then a gull circled before them, looked at them unconcernedly, as if they were in some way of his kindred, and swept away into the distance. A tired white butterfly settled for a moment on Ottilie's head; then light-heartedly fluttered away

seaward to its doom. They swam on and on and they neared the point. They slackened for a moment, and he brought his face close to hers.

“If I said: ‘Let us swim on for ever and ever,’ would you do it?”

“Yes,” she said, looking deep into his eyes.

After a while they floated restfully. The last question and answer seemed to have brought them a great peace. They were conscious of little save the mystery of the cloudless ether above their faces and the infinite sea that murmured in their ears strange harmonies of love and death—harmonies woven from the human yearnings of every shore and the hushed secrets of eternal time. So close were they bodily together that now and then hand touched hand and limb brushed limb. A happy stillness of the soul spread its wings over them and they felt it to be a consecration of their love. Presently his arm sought her, encircled her, brought her head on his shoulder.

“Rest a little,” he whispered.

She closed her eyes, surrendered her innocent self to the flooding rapture of the moment. The horrors that awaited her passed from her brain. He had come to the lonely child like a god out of heaven. He had come to the frightened girl like a new terror. He was by her side now, the man whom of all men God had made to accomplish her womanhood and to take all of soul and body, sense and brain, that she had to give. Their salt lips met in a first kiss of passion. Words would have broken the spell of the enchantment cast over them by the infinite spaces of sea and sky. They drifted on and on, the subtle, subconscious movement of foot and hand keeping them afloat. The little princess moved closer to him so as to feel more secure around her the circling pressure of his arm. He laughed a man’s short, exultant laugh, and gripped her more tightly. Never had he felt his strength more sure. His right arm and his legs beat rhythmically, and he felt the pulsation of the measured strokes of his companion’s feet, and the water swirled past his head so that he knew they were making way most swiftly. Of exertion there was no sense whatever. He met her eyes fixed through half-shut lids upon his face. He lost count of time and space. Now and then a little wave broke over their faces and they laughed and cleared the brine from their mouths and drew more close together.

“If it wasn’t for that,” she whispered once, “I could go to sleep.”

Soon they felt the gentle rocking of the sea increase and waves broke more often over them. Somerset was the first to note the change. Loosening his hold of Ottilie, he trod water and looked around. To his amazement, they were still abreast of the point, but far out to sea. He gazed at it uncomprehendingly for an instant, and then a sudden recollection smote him like a message of death. They had caught the edge of the current against which swimmers were warned, and the current held them in its grip and was sweeping them on while they floated foolishly. A swift glance at Ottilie showed him that she, too, realized the peril. With the outgoing tide it was almost impossible to reach the shore.

“Are you afraid?” he asked.

She shook her head. “Not with you.”

He scanned the land and the sea. On the arc of their horizon lay the black hull of a tramp steamer going eastward. Far away to the west was a speck of white, and against the pale sky a film of smoke. Landward, beyond the shimmering water, stretched the sunny bay, and the Casino was just visible. Its gilt cupolas shot tiny flames. The green-topped point, its hither side deep in shadow, reached out helplessly for them. Somerset and Ottilie still paused, doing nothing more than keeping themselves afloat, and they felt the current drifting them ever seaward.

“It looks like death,” he said, gravely. “Are you afraid to die?”

Again Ottilie said: “Not with you.”

He looked at the land, and he looked at the white speck and the puff of smoke. Then suddenly his heart leaped with the thrilling inspiration of a wild impossibility.

“Let us leave Illerville and France behind us. Death is as certain either way.”

The little princess looked at him wonderingly.

“Where are we going?”

“To England.”

“Anywhere but Illerville,” she said.

He struck out seaward, she followed. Each saw the other’s face white and set. They had current and tide with them, they swam steadily, undistressed. After a silence she called to him.

“Vince, if we go to our kingdom under the sea, you will take me down in your arms?”

“In a last kiss,” he said.

He had heard—as who has not?—of love being stronger than death. Now he knew its truth. But he swore to himself a great oath that they should not die.

“I shall take my princess to a better kingdom,” he said, later.

* * * * *

Presently he heard her breathing painfully. She could not hold out much longer.

“I will carry you,” he said.

An expert swimmer, she knew the way to hold his shoulders and leave his arms unimpeded. The contact of her light young form against his body thrilled him and redoubled his strength. He held his head for a second high out of the water and turned half round.

“Do you think I am going to let you die—now?”

The white speck had grown into a white hull, and Somerset was making across its track. To do so he must deflect slightly from the line of the current. His great battle began.

He swam doggedly, steadily, husbanding his strength. If the vessel justified his first flash of inspiration, and if he could reach her, he knew how he should act. As best he could, for it was no time for speech, he told Ottilie his hopes. He felt the spray from her lips upon his cheek, as she said:

“It seems sinful to wish for greater happiness than this.”

After that there was utter silence between them. At first he thought exultingly of Bernheim and the Princess Rabomirski, and the rage of their wicked hearts; of the future glorified by his little princess of the unconquerable soul; of the present’s mystic consummation of their marriage. But gradually mental concepts lost sharpness of definition. Sensation began to merge itself into a half-consciousness of stroke on stroke through the illimitable waste. Despite the laughing morning sunshine, the sky became dark and lowering. The weight on his neck grew heavier. At first Ottilie had only rested her arms. Now her feet were as lead, and sank behind him; her clasp tightened about his shoulders. He struggled on through a welter of sea and mist. Strange sounds sang in his ears, as if over them had been clamped great sea shells. At each short breath his throat gulped down bitter water. A horrible pain crept across his chest. His limbs seemed paralyzed, and yet he remained above the surface. The benumbed brain wondered at the miracle.

The universe broke upon his vision as a blurred mass of green and white. He recognized it vaguely as his kingdom beneath the sea, and, as in a dream, he remembered his promise. He slipped round. His lips met Ottilie’s. His arms wound about her, and he sank holding her tightly clasped.

* * * * *

Strange things happened. He was pulled hither and thither by sea monsters welcoming him to his kingdom. In a confused way he wondered that he could breathe so freely in the depths of the ocean. Unutterable happiness stole over him. The kingdom was *real*. His sham princess would be queen in very truth. But where was she?

He opened his eyes and found himself lying on the deck of a ship. A couple of men were doing funny things 124
to his arms. A rosy-faced man in white ducks and a yachting cap stood over him with a glass of brandy. When he had drunk the spirit, the rosy man laughed.

“That was a narrow shave. We got you just in time. We were nearly right on you. The young woman is doing well. My wife is looking after her.”

As soon as he could collect his faculties, Somerset asked:

“Are you the *Mavis*?”

“Yes.”

“I felt sure of it. Are you Sir Henry Ransome?”

“That’s my name.”

“I heard you were expected at Illerville to-day,” said Somerset. “That is why I made for you.”

The two men who had been doing queer things with his arms wrapped him in a blanket and propped him up against the deck cabin.

“But what on earth were you two young people doing in the middle of the English Channel?” asked the owner of the *Mavis*.

“We were eloping,” said Somerset.

The other looked at him for a bewildered moment and burst into a roar of laughter. He turned to the cabin door and disappeared, to emerge a moment afterward followed by a lady in a morning wrapper.

“What do you think, Marian? It’s an elopement.”

Somerset smiled at them.

“Have you ever heard of the Princess Rabomirski? You have? Well, this is her daughter. Perhaps you know of the Count Bernheim, who is always about with the princess?”

“I trod on him last winter at Monte Carlo,” said Sir Henry Ransome.

“He survives,” said Somerset, “and has bought the Princess Ottilie from her mother. He’s not going to get her. She belongs to me. My name is Somerset, and I am foreign subeditor of the *Daily Post*.”

“I am very pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Somerset,” said Sir Henry, with a smile. “And now, what can I do for you?”

“If you lend us some clothes, and take us to any port on earth save Illerville-sur-Mer, you will earn our eternal gratitude.”

Sir Henry looked doubtful. “We have made our arrangements for Illerville,” said he.

His wife broke in:

“If you don’t take these romantic beings straight to Southampton, I’ll never set my foot upon this yacht again.”

“It was you, my dear, who were crazy to come to Illerville.”

“Don’t you think,” said Lady Ransome, “you might provide Mr. Somerset with some dry things?”

* * * * *

Four hours afterward Somerset sat on deck by the side of Ottilie, who, warmly wrapped, lay on a long chair. He pointed to the far-away coast line of the Isle of Wight.

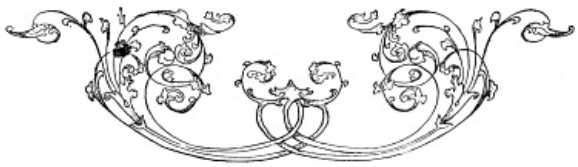
“Behold our kingdom!” said he.

The little princess laughed.

“That is not our kingdom.”

“Well, what is?”

“Just the little bit of space that contains both you and me,” she said.



THE MOST EXCLUSIVE CITY IN AMERICA

By Anne Rittenhouse

THE mighty colony of rich tourists who go South with the birds have begun to love two quaint, historic Southern cities. One hears gossip and anecdote of them in the Fifth Avenue clubs and the Philadelphia and Chicago drawing rooms. Many a man has become instantly *persona grata* in Northern centers because he registered from one of these towns.

Each city has recognized this advent of an army of Northerners in a different way—a way which indicates the heart and soul of the people. Charleston sits and smiles behind its jalousie blinds—a conservative relic of Huguenot days. Augusta leaps eagerly forward to meet them, commercially, if not always socially.

The difference between these two cities lying so close together, separated by the great yellow Savannah River, which leisurely picks its way among the rice savannas, is understood but not defined by the tourists. They are more desirous to enter into the social life, of these two places than they are of any other winter resort, for, while the South is honeycombed with Northern hotels, they are usually laid along the lines that will make capital for promoters. Beyond the climate and the visitors, there is nothing.

Palm Beach is an imitation of Monaco. It is not a city. It is without history. New Orleans is the quaintest city alive in America, but its horizon is broader, its basis more substantial, than any other Southern city, and it is not such a Mecca for the casual traveler. Neither is Richmond, with all its history and picturesque tradition.

Atlanta is the Chicago of the South, and is too busy with its future to remember it has not a cobwebbed past. Aiken, the best-known cottage resort of the South, is a suburb of Augusta. It is but a village in the pines.

This is the reason Charleston and Augusta stand with the Northerners for character study, history and individual charm. Yet thousands of travelers, eager as they are about it, know almost nothing of the core of these two cities. They dwell lovingly on the quaint houses of the one and the great street of the other, but the blinds are jealously down. The wooden shutters of the domestic life are kept closed. So they miss that which is most exquisite, most appealing, in any city—personality.

Charleston is, without doubt, the most exclusive city in America. It gives nothing out to the stranger beyond its physical beauty and tempered climate. One keen observer said of it: “It has only one equal—a German principality, where almost everyone is royal and noble and all intermarried. Other places and social codes exist, of course—New York, Chicago, Denver—but not for Charleston.”

A small child of that city was asked where Charleston was placed. Proudly she said, “It is between the Cooper and the Ashley Rivers, which join and *form* the ocean.”

When the Bostonian speaks grandly of the *Mayflower*, the Huguenot of Charleston smiles. He is remembering that Jean Ribaut landed a Huguenot emigration in Port Royal fifty-eight years before the Puritans landed in Massachusetts Bay. The Knickerbocker has no boast to make before the South Carolinian, because the Dutch settled New York over half a century later than Port Royal was begun.

Charleston was settled by aristocrats from France, and later from England—men who came from the court and wore the garments and spoke the language of the world’s highest circle. Like New Orleans, it sprang into life as a cultured community. It had not the struggle upward for social position. The great names it held then are its first names to-day. And the world recognizes the bearers of these names as those who have the hallmark of admission into the reserved social corners of America.

The St. Cecilia Society exists in all its former charm and exclusiveness. It is the oldest dancing club in America, as far as the Charlestonian has any record, although the Philadelphian claims this honor for the Quaker City’s famous Assemblies. It has not changed in one iota since the early days of the eighteenth century, and, as far as possible, the names of its managers have continued the same.

Josiah Quincy, who went to Charleston in 1773, says of the city, in his diary: “It far surpasses all I ever saw or ever expect to see in America.”

As early as January, 1734, Charleston had its drama, which was probably the first theatrical performance in America. Its citizens went to college in England; and Mr. Snowden, who knows his Charleston as Thackeray knew his London, says South Carolina headed all the colonies in the list of the London Inns of Court, and up to the time of the Revolution had forty-five law students there.

When the Philadelphian speaks serenely of the Liberty Bell, the Charlestonian smiles and remembers that in 1765 South Carolina took the first step for a Continental Union, and that in Charleston was formulated the first independent constitution in any of the colonies; also that she furnished three of the signers of the Declaration of Independence—Arthur Middleton, Thomas Heyward and Thomas Lynch, Jr. To the world of art it gave Charles Fraser, the great miniaturist; and Malbone also did his work there. The private houses held Gainsboroughs, Stuarts, Romneys and Wests in the eighteenth century.

These are a few of the reasons that give the Charlestonian that serene pride in self, country and relatives. This serenity broods over the city; and the shock of wars, earthquakes, tidal wave and stupendous fires has not shaken it.

Its laws of behavior and its rules of society are without change. Whatever happens in the rest of the world need not be followed there. There is a story told of the sexton of the famous old St. Michael’s, the notable church, and of Crum, the negro whom President Roosevelt made collector of the port. Crum brought several

Northerners in a carriage to the door. It was at an hour when no one was allowed in the church. Crum insisted upon going in and taking his guests to the belfry to see the famous bells. The sexton declined to allow it.

The negro collector drew himself up and said to the sexton:

"You surely don't know who I am. My name is Crum."

"Well, you could be the whole loaf and you wouldn't be allowed in St. Michael's," was the laconic answer.

It is easily inferred that the sexton was none too sorry to give a verbal blow to the negro collector who persuaded white men from the North to be his guests.

The Charleston negro who belongs to "the quality" shares and echoes his master's pride of birth and social tradition. The man who for decades has delivered invitations for all the exclusive parties prides himself on knowing every person worth speaking to in the city. A certain Northern woman, who was kindly received in Charleston, gave a large ball. She asked this colored man to carry the invitations for her. In looking over the list, he made several suggestions concerning people who should be crossed out, and those who should be put on.

The Northern woman asked if he was quite sure he knew where all these people lived. His answer was delightful.

"Madam," he said, "if there is any person in Charleston who lives where I don't know, that person shouldn't 127
be invited to your ball."

Another colored retainer of a famous family has a stiff-necked belief that nothing can happen to such aristocracy. A fire broke out in an adjoining house on a back street, burned through the dividing fence and destroyed the carriages in the stable. The master upbraided the old negro for allowing it to happen when he could easily have removed the traps. He said: "Massa, who'd ever t'ink dey fire would come in we yard!"

Another negro butler, who dominated the household of a certain judge, was serving at table one day when a second judge from up the State was present. Both men were equally well-born of an ancient and honorable ancestry, but the up-country man had not the graces of table etiquette.

When the fish course was served, he said to his host:

"Judge, I'd like to have some rice with this fish."

"Did you hear the judge?" was asked the negro butler by the host.

The man gave a certain look at his master, then one of extreme annoyance at the guest. Leaning over, he whispered distinctly in the ear of the up-country judge:

"We don't serve rice with fish in Charleston."

The inner life of this Huguenot city is little known to the public, because Charleston won't have it known. The same exclusiveness and privacy pervade her social and domestic system in the beginning of the twentieth as in the eighteenth century.

No detailed description of this feeling could so firmly fix it in the mind of the stranger as a remark made by a member of one of the oldest families in the city. When a certain history of the Revolution was published, it had a chapter on the part played in it by men of South Carolina. Included in this was an intimate description of the bravery of a Charleston general. An ancestor of this man wrote at once to the publisher:

"You will be so kind as to leave out in your next edition all allusions to my ancestor, General ——. What he did in the Revolution is a purely private and family matter, and we do not wish it boldly displayed for the public to read."

In the next edition of the book the career of the Charlestonian was left out!

This pride, however, works in another way. The well-born Charlestonian expects the world to know who he is and whence he sprang.

This story is told—possibly as a joke, by Charlestonians—of an elderly man at the head of a family a member of which signed the Declaration of Independence. He presented a check to be cashed at a bank in another Southern city. The cashier told him he would have to be identified. To which he replied: "My God, has it come to this, that a M——n must be identified in America!"

Socially, Charleston exercises a spell over the visitor. A famous Northern lawyer, who went South last winter for the first time, could not make up his mind to step off the train into the Charleston station because of his rebellious feeling against that first shot at Sumter; so he went on to Florida. Coming back, he determined to conquer his prejudice and take a look at the Battery and St. Michael's. He remained for days. His observant criticism for once failed him.

"What people! What culture! What society!" This was all he could say, but his exclamation points grew larger and longer after each phrase.

The first evidence of social quaintness in the town is the way the first families live. Here comes the strain of French blood. The venerable houses are placed among dense foliage, the side, never the front, of the house facing the street. In this side are the parlor and upper bedroom windows, which are never open to the public streets, but covered with wooden shutters. Instead of a front doorbell to ring, there is a small gate with a bell. This you tinkle, and a servant lets you in. There is a long piazza running the full side length of the house, which 128
is often used as a sitting room. The piazza is usually protected by jalousie blinds. If the formal caller finds it deserted, he is shown in the reception room, with closed shutters, but in the warm days all informal entertaining is done on the piazza.

A Western visitor said he knew it would not be as hard for a stranger to pass St. Peter as to get by one of the heirloom butlers at a Charleston gate.

Some of these houses are nearly two centuries old, and in many of them the family name has been unchanged in that time. To sit on those “galleries” of the Charleston aristocracy in the fragrant days of early spring is one of the social memories that cling for life. There are the wonderful voices of the people who are talking. The accent is without imitation. It stands aloof as a study in folklore from any other accent in the South. It is a perceptible mixture of French and English, impossible to imitate or classify.

The air is salty with the breezes that drift past Sumter from the sea, and keen with roses, jasmine and magnolias. The Spanish moss, trailing to the ground from sturdy oaks, is silver in the moonlight, mysterious in the shadow.

The pathways called residence streets are lines between lawns and flowers. There is something here of the atmosphere of New Orleans, something of the pungent odor and nerve-soothing softness, but the Charlestonian is reposeful and the Creole is nervous and *staccato*.

You feel that here is a corner where things need not change, where evolution is not worship, where the strenuous life is not considered and may be thought a trifle vulgar.

It is not the simplicity of the simple-minded, not the stolid repose of the uneducated. It is the calmness of those who have helped to make history, who have achieved much, and who, believing they have no superiors, are not made restless with social ambition.

The stranger who can lead those on the “galleries” to talk of days that have gone, of characters who exist, of quaint traditions that are kept, is fortunate. He has lifted a veil that hides much that is delightful and unique.

It is told of the Charlestonian by his neighbors, that he often criticises some improvement in another part of the South with the remark, “If that change is progress, I want to progress backward.”

Charleston protects her age and her traditions against all newcomers. She is not poor, she has few vagrants, she is not without a solid bank account, she is the greatest phosphate shipping port in the world, but, as a New York editorial writer said of her, “no tragedy that has passed over her, or no change that has been made in America, has ever been able to interrupt her prosperity or discourage her fixed purpose to be comfortable.” She would no more change her architecture, or willingly introduce new blood into her best families, than she would uproot the gravestones of her first inhabitants, who rest in St. Michael’s, or remove the shells of the bombardment from her walls.

Her manners, her society, her behavior in drawing room, ballroom and street, are those of an older and more elegant world. Why should she change? The girls in all other parts of the South may go unchaperoned to balls, but she does not allow her girls to do it. Neither does the exclusive Philadelphian nor the Knickerbocker of New York.

Other clubs use their windows as lounging places for the curious, where idle men may sit and stare at the parade of women who pass on the street. Charleston considers this vulgar. The front windows of its club have drawn blinds. It is also regarded as beneath a gentleman to mention a woman’s name in the club.

Promoters can talk all they wish, but, charm they never so wisely, they can’t persuade the Charlestonian to welcome with delight a horde of unidentified tourists. Cottages are rented here and there for writers and artists and quiet people, but Charleston shakes her head when approached on the subject of huge hotels which will accommodate the man with millions from the swarming centers of America. She does not want her streets, her 129
shops or her atmosphere invaded by aliens.

It is almost impossible to think of her graciously accepting new blood and new customs. The most notable person who came there would, if accepted, owe his reception to the fact that one of her own had said something of him. In this she has her counterpart in the creole of New Orleans.

General John B. Gordon described this feeling in the French city with a story of the Civil War. A Virginia soldier was boasting of General Robert E. Lee during the first year of the war.

“Lee? Lee? I think I have heard General Beauregard speak well of Lee,” answered the Creole zouave, as he rolled his cigarette.

Even the best lovers of innovation should eagerly desire Charleston to retain its serenity. New ways would mean tearing down old places, not at once, but in the end. And this would mean historical desecration.

St. Michael’s, its famous Episcopal church, should never be swamped by incongruous buildings, as New York’s famous old churches have been.

It is to be preserved not only because of its socially exclusive congregation, but because of the manifold troubles it has outlived.

Among its own people it is jestingly referred to as the Chapel of Ease of the St. Cecilia Society, but every South Carolinian ardently loves the old building. It was first opened for service in 1761, and is still the finest piece of church architecture in the South. In 1782 the English took possession of the bells, and sent them to Great Britain. The next year they were bought and sent back to Charleston. When General Sherman was an unwelcome guest in 1865, two bells were stolen and the rest made useless. These were sent to England, and a new set recast by the firm which had made them in 1764. The same patterns were exactly followed, and the bells replaced in 1867. During the great earthquake of 1886, the bells and belfry were fearfully shaken, but no harm came.

Augusta is not without her fine old past, too, but she is sharply different in her modern standpoint from her sister city across the Savannah. She gives Charleston the same adjective that New York kindly bestows on Philadelphia—the word “slow.”

Augusta is a modern. She eagerly discusses and adopts that which is new. She says of the Huguenot city that she “is joined to her idols, let her alone.” And while she may now and then run after new gods, she valiantly protects herself from any such reputation, and refers to Atlanta, the capital city, as “new, so new.”

If Charleston says, “Oglethorpe—adventurers,” too often, Augusta daringly answers back that the morals of the court of Louis were not quite swamped in the French *émigrés* by Calvinism.

But it is a merry war, a family tiff, in which let the outsider beware of interfering.

Back of the rows of oaks are some splendid specimens of the finest early architecture for residence purposes; spacious homes, with rounded, vaulting white columns to support the arched façades which project over the windows of the second story.

In one of the great houses a ball was given last winter, where six spacious rooms on the lower floor were thrown open to the dancers, two square halls were given over to foliage, loungers and orchestra, and about three hundred guests were easily seated for an elaborate course supper.

These Augustans know how to entertain. They are a prosperous people, and they spend willingly and widely in New York on all the paraphernalia that goes to enhance the modern table. The women buy their clothes in New York whenever possible, and important dressmaking and tailor firms think it worth while to open up for part of the season at the two hotels that lure the Northern traveler. It is not the Northerner they cater to, but the Augustans.

Their social life is lavish and strenuous. The St. Valentine Ball, held once a year, is their oldest and most exclusive social function. While it has on its list the first families, still it is not such an institution as Charleston’s 130
St. Cecilia, and there is constant talk of its being dissolved. It has an exclusive series during the season of dinner dances at its Country Club, which is one of the handsomest in the South.

Far from discouraging tourists’ hotels, Augusta is anxious for them. When the winter emigrants from the ice-swept North come well recommended, they are received into the fashionable life of the place. These people are always dazed at the magnitude and charm of the social life. Less the millionaire splendor, a season in Augusta is quite as time-absorbing as one in New York or Boston.

A New York bride who went there for two weeks on her honeymoon last year attended five balls and dances, twelve luncheons, ten afternoon teas and as many suppers, with a dozen invitations for morning card parties. The bridegroom naïvely remarked, “I’ve never been on a honeymoon before, but this one doesn’t seem like the real thing.”

It is almost certain that no town with equal population in the East compares socially with the brilliancy of private life in this town on the Savannah.

The tea and sandwich afternoon “at homes” of the East are poverty-stricken affairs in the mind of an Augusta hostess.

“I wouldn’t treat a casual caller worse than that,” one of them remarked, after looking at the fare provided at a smart Northern afternoon affair, where the daughter of the house was being introduced to society.

At an Augusta “tea” one receives the daintiest dishes the markets offer, with wines and punch, prepared so as to follow out some artistic color scheme. Massive silver, candelabra, mahogany, lace and embroidered damasks, and profusion of Southern flowers, make these dining rooms a pungent memory with those who have had the good fortune to be asked behind the closed shutters.

Augusta is so modern in its desires and endeavors that it makes two tourists’ hotels, which crown its hills, a part of its social life. One is in Georgia, one in South Carolina, for the city is built on both sides of the Savannah River; and in these are given smart dinners and dances by the residents.

It is true they often refer to the guests of the hotels and to the Aiken cottagers as “the Yankee millionaires,” as though they belonged to another flag, and knew not the star-spangled banner. But if these people have anything to teach, Augusta wants to learn it.

Commercially, she is rapidly going ahead in an extensive cotton and manufacturing business, but her business streets do not give any idea of how progressive is her financial and personal element. There is still the *dolce far niente* to be expected in every Southern town except Atlanta and Richmond. The victorias still stop in front of drug stores and wait for the clerks to bring soda water out to the occupants on thirsty days; even occasionally one sees an ox team on the central street; but the personal element, the people, have a zestful, sprightly contact with modern life, and leap forward to meet its requirements and demands. The Augustan is modernizing himself and his home. Rapid transit in the business atmosphere may come later. It is bound to come, for the soul of the people has reached out toward it. It now remains merely a question of money; and Augusta is frankly striving after money, and making it.

The Easterner and Westerner do not see beneath the surface of the seeming commercial indolence. They are used to their own spick and span little towns, filled to the brim with bustle, noise, activity and the whoop-la of American get-ahead-of-your-neighbor atmosphere.

It may be that this will never be quite duplicated in a sub-tropical climate. But the business is there, even if the men do walk slowly.

The tourist, looking at commercial externals only, naturally marvels at the gowns of the women, the artistic and lavish homes, the unbridled entertaining and the constant touch its richer members keep with New York, nearly nine hundred miles away. Its people discuss the last play, the best opera and the newest dishes at 131
Sherry’s as easily as they do home gossip. Naturally, this is not true of all the people, but it fairly represents the attitude of the leading set.

The New York trip has been made easy by the “Yankee millionaires,” who have made Augusta part of an elaborate railway and hotel system.

Of course there remains—and praise be that it is so—those of the old *régime*. They are not altogether carried away by this elated modern spirit. They do not entertain tourists or the passing cottager. They are not quite sure but the new spirit may bring the Newport morals. They recoil from the constant phrase, “They do it in New York.”

They remind the imitative younger generation that a well-born Southerner has nothing to learn in manners and morals, and that progress is not always improvement.

They point to Charleston as the dignified ideal of all that is old and best.

They sigh, and say, “Things are not as they used to be.”

To which *Punch* would again reply, “They never were.”

THE GATE

I WHO had wandered a weary mile, harkened a voice and knocked.
Lo, Love answered, with song and smile,
Though the wind of autumn mocked;
All in the dawn I beheld Love's face, set in a rose of flame—
Oh, song is sweet in a lonely place
And Love called me by name!

"Stay while the rose and the song are one, linger with Love for a day!"
"And what of the heart at set of sun
When it fares on its lonely way?"
"Nay, bide with Love in the flower of dawn, only the dawn with me!"
"And what of the heart when it wanders on?
And what of the night to be?"

"Think not of night, but of Love's fair face, thine for a golden morn!"
Oh, song is sweet in a lonely place,
But I turned to the rock and thorn.
For had I lingered a fleeting while, what of the Road of Years?
I, who had wandered a weary mile,
Fared on to the Well of Tears.

VIRGINIA WOODWARD CLOUD.

THE beach was comparatively deserted. After the week-end, which had been unusually gay, the few scattered groups gathered under the hired umbrellas, with here and there the flash of an individual crimson or green parasol, scarcely served to populate the stretch of hot sand.

Near his stand, the Harvard student who was serving as life-guard during the summer months stood, bronzed and athletic, talking to a young fellow whose scant bathing costume revealed the lines and muscles of an Antinous.

“It is the day like this that strains my nerves,” the guard was saying. “When the surf is filled with people, even if some one goes under, there are a score of hands to give rescue, but that girl out there now, beyond the breakers, makes me uneasy.”

“Swims like a fish,” responded the Antinous. “I’ve watched her for days.”

“But she isn’t a fish, and if the realization came to her out there in the water, she’d be altogether like a woman.”

“Since you are ill at ease about her, suppose I swim out, just to relieve your mind?”

The guard nodded. There was the suspicion of a smile about his lips, but he continued to watch the woman in question.

The distance to which the venturesome swimmer had gone was greater than had been apparent from the beach, and before Merrington had made half of it, the eyes of all those upon the sand and of those in the surf were upon the woman and himself. Only the swimmers themselves remained oblivious of the general interest.

Merrington swam on with the free, easy strokes of one to whom deep water conveys no terrors. The very touch of the sea was tonic that July morning, and he stretched his sinuous limbs with the overbounding energy and delight of a perfect manhood. The thought of danger, even to another, seemed an absurd thing to him, so sang the lusty blood in his veins. Yet he swam with unerring, cleaving strokes after the woman, who still went outward.

It was not until he had almost overtaken her that it occurred to him that it might be necessary to formulate an excuse for his following. The action had been so direct as to admit of no misunderstanding. Consequently, as she turned, and found him near her, Merrington spoke.

“Miss Selwyn, if you will pardon me, it is not without danger that you come so far out from shore. My name is Merrington—Geoffrey Merrington.”

She flushed slightly under the clear tan of her skin; then she bowed her crimson ’kerchiefed head gravely.

“Thank you for your trouble, but I have never been drowned yet.”

“Nor have I,” he affirmed, laughing, keeping stroke with her. “Nor do I want to be to-day.”

For answer, she turned her back upon him, and deliberately swam seaward. Merrington followed.

“Miss Selwyn,” he said, presently, when her audacity sent queer sensations about his heart, “may I remind you that this coast has many counter-currents? Believe me, you should not venture out further—not half so far.”

If she heard, she made no sign of doing so. Merrington, with an added determination, cast a glance to shore, where he could see small forms standing together in a way that, even at that distance, spelled anxiety. He caught a glimpse of the guard, erect upon his observation stand. Then he threw out his splendid limbs in strokes that sent him beyond the girl, and, turning, faced her.

“Miss Selwyn, the entire beach is watching us. They will send a boat for us in a moment, and compel our return.”

At that she looked him squarely in the eyes, the fire in her own blazing into full wrath.

“This is an unwarrantable liberty.”

Merrington smiled. It had frequently been said that his smile made him irresistible for any purpose he might have in mind. In all her anger, Jacqueline was conscious of the full-throated tones of his voice.

“It has the highest warrant—that put upon it by Miss Selwyn herself.”

Perhaps it was his words, or, more probably, the masterful man himself, that made her color vividly. Merrington held his clear, bold eyes upon her as she hesitated.

“If I promise you to return now, will you leave me?” she asked, slowly.

“No, Miss Selwyn.”

“Look!” she commanded, imperiously, pointing to the shore.

When Merrington turned his face a second later there was no sign of the girl. It seemed to him minutes before he caught sight of the familiar crimson head, freshly risen from the sea, some distance off. His own existence was apparently forgotten.

At this point of the game something altogether unexpected came over the youth, favored of gods and man, and accustomed to getting what he would. The remembrance of the scorn in the dark eyes that had flashed into his stung him. The recollection of the defiance in the face and a something bewitching in the taunting curves of the full lips, sent a fire that was far from unpleasant through his blood. He stretched out the supple muscles of his arms, and gave chase.

“That was very neatly done, Miss Selwyn,” he said, when his vigorous action had brought them together again. “I think I may safely promise, however, that you will not outwit me again.”

She raised her eyebrows ever so slightly. He was sure there was a twinkle in the downcast eyes, but it was equally evident that the girl did not intend to encourage his presumption by any speech. As he watched her with a swiftly increasing interest, she turned over upon her back with a complacence that was a rebuke, floating unconcernedly past him.

Merrington followed. That he was being remorselessly snubbed for his pains was giving him a novel sensation of self-pity that did not seem to affect his genial humor very acutely. It served to keep him silent, however. When Jacqueline sat up suddenly, the first thing that she saw was Merrington’s gleaming eyes looking into her own. He had been so near to her, when she unexpectedly faced him, that she could not ignore his presence. Had he spoken, she might have used silence to positive purpose. As it was, she said, coldly:

“You are strangely persistent.”

“I am never conquered,” he boasted.

For a brief moment she let her glance sweep over him as he lay in the transparent shadow of the waves. A sense of vexation at his superb virility, at his assured mastery of the situation, left her trembling. Merrington misconstrued the reason.

“You are becoming chilled. We are a long way from the shore. If you were to have a cramp now!”

“You’d have the cheap distinction of being a hero of the beach,” she ejaculated, uncompromisingly rude.

“The poor opinion of the beach would not affect me in the least,” he laughed, softly, “if you did not share it.”

“Mr. Merrington,” she flashed, “if you will swim back to the shore, I shall follow you at an agreeable distance.”

“You have given me the slip once,” he said, slowly. “I am acting *ex officio*; I fear I must be the judge of the agreeableness of the distance.” Abruptly his banter fell from him. The dancing light in his large eyes darkened into intensity. “Won’t you let me see you safely in, Miss Selwyn?” 134

“Have your own way, then,” she said, with swift impatience, turning toward the land. Merrington kept but an arm’s-length between them.

As they came out of the water, a little distance apart, a tall woman separated herself from a group standing to one side, and bore down upon Jacqueline.

“What a fright you have given us!” she cried. “I came down to the beach to find you, and found instead everyone watching your rescue in mid-ocean. Who was your deliverer?”

“Be sensible, Peggie. I do not know who it was that drove me in by his officious intrusion.”

“Intrusion! Good gracious, Jacqueline, do you think you own the Atlantic?”

Mrs. Le Moyne turned to look at the man, who, having accomplished his purpose, was making his way to the stand of the guard once more. She gave a little cry of surprise, which arrested his attention.

“Geoffrey! Where in the world did you come from?”

“Peggie!” Merrington cried, gleefully. “You don’t mean to say you’re here?”

“I never make useless remarks, Geoffrey. How good you are looking! Of course I needn’t introduce you now to Miss Selwyn. Jacqueline, this is Mr. Merrington, my only and best cousin.”

Jacqueline bowed stiffly, without looking up. She was wringing the water from the skirt of her suit.

“Of course,” Mrs. Le Moyne laughed, “it’s absurd to introduce people that have been across seas together, but Jacqueline said she didn’t know you, Geof. When did you come down, and where are you? But it doesn’t matter. You must come to my cottage. I am just next door to Jacqueline—plenty of room for you.”

Merrington looked at the girl, who apparently did not hear. In a moment she turned, and joined the group which Mrs. Le Moyne had forsaken.

“She will never forgive me for intruding upon her out there,” Merrington said, indicating the sea by a sidewise motion of his head. “She was really in danger, but wouldn’t acknowledge it.”

“And you want her to forgive you! I can see that with half an eye. What a boy you are still, for all your body and legs! Have you let her see that you care for her?”

“Hold on, there,” he laughed, folding his arms as he stood dripping before her. “Don’t be in such a hurry.”

She looked him over carefully.

“Of course you made love to her more or less earnestly,” she said, frankly. “It may only have been with your eyes, but it is a tendency you can’t resist. The only trouble is, you never mean it.”

“If I did, Peggie, she would have none of me, and I did not mean to, because——”

“Why?”

“I should rather do it to better purpose later on.”

“Really!” laughed his cousin. “That is the first time I’ve ever known you willing to put any purpose in the

indulgence."

The gravity of his manner made her serious also.

"Peggie, old girl, this is the first time the indulgence has become a necessity."

Mrs. Le Moyne glanced over the wide beach, and above, at the almost deserted board walk. Her party had withdrawn under the shade of the promenade, and the bathers had all disappeared. She and Merrington were alone except for a few outstretched figures, their faces covered with newspapers. She turned to her companion.

"Go and get on some clothes," she said, a hint of amusement about her eyes. "It's absurd to talk love to a man in such a state of nature as his bathing suit."

II.

Merrington had not been slow to avail himself of Mrs. Le Moyne's invitation to transfer his things from the 135
hotel to her cottage. Any hesitation he might have felt at abandoning the bachelor freedom of the public hostelry was quite overcome when she pointed out to him, from the windows of the room she offered, a view of the Selwyn cottage, just across a plot of trimly kept grass.

For the first few days the move did not seem to profit him any in his desire to see more of Jacqueline. Once he had met her on her way to the beach, and she had given him a bare nod of recognition. Now and again he caught glimpses of her on the neighboring veranda, but she never let her glances stray in the direction of Mrs. Le Moyne's cottage. Several times when he had passed her on the board walk at the promenade hour, she had not cared to notice him, and never with anything but a bow so formal as to make it evident that she did not cut him entirely merely because of his cousin's introduction. Merrington knew, for the first time in his enviable life, the pangs of misprized love.

His cousin was watching the course of his malady with interest.

"What do you know about Jacqueline?" she asked him one morning, as they sat upon their veranda, and in response to his reiterated determination to conquer that young lady's aversion and make her his wife.

Merrington leaned forward, his boyish face radiant, the bronze of his skin dark against the white suit he wore. His cousin let her eyes rest on him with an admiration he was too modest to detect.

"Nothing and everything," he returned, after a time. "She is the most striking girl I've ever seen. She is plucky and daring and defiant."

"Charming qualities for a wife! Is that all?"

"I can't put the rest in words," he answered, coloring swarthily.

Just then the latch of the Selwyns' front gate clicked, and Jacqueline appeared on the shaded street. Peggie came to a speedy resolution.

"Jacqueline!" she cried. "Wait a minute until I get my hat. I want to join you."

As the girl stopped at the foot of the path, Merrington went briskly toward her. She met him with grave annoyance.

"We have become near neighbors, Miss Selwyn." There was not a trace of nervousness in the clear tones.

"That is a seaside perquisite. Asbury, especially, makes the whole world kin."

He could not have said that she was rude, but every word was a rebuff and a disclaimer of intimacy. His instinct told him it was not rudeness of which she was accusing him. So much, at least, had his introduction to her wrought. The reflection made him smile genially, and she noted how dazzling his even teeth were in his suntanned face.

"Miss Selwyn, I wish you would forgive me."

"Really there is nothing to forgive. Do you think Mrs. Le Moyne has forgotten me?"

"I am sure she has not. Do you know that is the first friendly remark you have made me?"

He saw her brows arch themselves slightly while her glance sought him an instant.

"To be frank with you," she said, "I do not know that I meant it to be particularly friendly."

"It wasn't, but you have been so particularly unfriendly."

She flushed, turning long before she needed to greet Peggie, who came leisurely down the walk with book and parasol, and tossed a cap to Merrington.

"We are all going to listen to the music, isn't that it?" she asked. "The orchestra is really worth hearing this year—too good, indeed, for the crowd that goes to the pavilions."

"I am going in the water," Jacqueline said, laying an accent of defense on the pronoun. They walked on together, Peggie in the middle.

"Let us all go," Merrington urged. "It is a gorgeous day. The sea is absolutely singing to us."

When they reached the board walk, the sea stretched out before them resplendent in the sun. There were a 136
few bathers at the upper lines, but lower down, the beach could be seen already dotted by the patrons of the more central baths. In the glare of the hot sun the walk was empty, but in the grateful coolness of the pavilions many had gathered to hear the music. Peggie espied an acquaintance on the platform above them, and ran thither. Jacqueline was plainly provoked.

"If Peggy deserts us," Merrington said, sententiously, "why should we not desert Peggie?"

Jacqueline frowned.

“Need I detain you?” she asked. “I was coming here alone when your cousin stopped me. That is, I mean, I was going in the water. I had no intention of stopping in this sunless dampness.”

“I hate it, too. Why should we stop?”

The girl looked at him intently, her heart quickening with an emotion that she could not have defined, so complex was it, indeed, of many emotions. Mingled with her anger and annoyance was an almost imperceptible tremor of fear which made her catch her breath.

Merrington waited patiently for her answer. There was nothing in the bold squareness of his youthful attitude to betoken the uncertainty of mind in which she was holding him. On the contrary, he smiled with well-assumed assurance, his eyes frankly admiring in their gaze. Jacqueline spoke, suppressing partially her irritation:

“How dull you must be finding the time! Do you know no one down here?”

“I have forgotten time and people.” The meaning in his look and voice sent the blood to the girl’s face. She glanced about her uneasily, but Peggie’s back, and the animation with which she was talking to her friends, gave no encouragement. She turned, impulsively.

“Come,” she said, imperiously enough. “We will go in the water for a little while.”

To Merrington’s surprise, when he appeared on the beach in his swimming suit, Jacqueline was already in the surf. This tacit avoidance of him banished the smile from his lips for a moment as her more positive combativeness had not been able to do.

That he was really in love at last, Merrington knew beyond the possibility of a doubt. He knew it, because in all the twenty-six years of his petted life he had never experienced anything like this peaceful elation underlying all the tremor of his senses. Jacqueline disdained him; he recognized that fact, but it caused him no more genuine annoyance than the breaking upon him, when he entered the surf that was now rolling in before him, of the waves which his manhood delighted to buffet and overcome. For much favoring had never spoiled the sweetness of his character, and he met resistance with a healthy determination.

He strolled into the surf, and a great billow lifted Jacqueline into his arms. He held her firmly as another followed close upon.

“I hate the surf,” she gasped, blinded and helpless. “It does exactly with you what you do not want.”

“Do you think so? Now rise to this one.”

He lifted her over a magnificent roller, turning to watch it break, and sweep inward the less daring bathers near shore.

“Why did you not wait for me?” he asked.

“I never for a moment thought it necessary.”

He looked delighted.

“Is it very hard for you to accept the inevitable, Miss Selwyn?”

“In what way, Mr. Merrington?”

“In the way of my devotion?”

She hesitated, not daring to take him seriously. He still held her hands, and the depth of the water at its smoothest was up to her neck as they stood.

“We must look like a pair of jumping-jacks from the shore,” she said, with a swift remembrance of his deserved punishment at her hands, and of their present position. His strong muscles never seemed to tire of lifting her to each succeeding billow. She hardly knew how her reticence had slipped from her, but now, at the risk of being bowled over by a wave, she released her hands from his. He turned back with her.

“Do not let me take you in,” she said, politely formal. “You have had no swim at all.”

“There is always the ocean,” he replied.

III.

It was easier for Jacqueline to assure herself that she would discourage Merrington’s obvious attentions than it was in fact possible for her to do so. With every meeting she was finding it harder to hold her own against him.

It was his imperturbable good nature that defeated her. If she could have provoked him to anger or even to moodiness, she would have found it easier to forgive his original offense. Moreover, underlying all of the determined deference of his bearing to her, there was that which brought an undefined thrill of fear, that touch of primitive mastery in his wooing with which a man of strong virility may yet transfuse his personality through the pallid conventions of the centuries. It was but a small consolation that she could still deny him the invitation to call upon her at her father’s house, without which even so frequent an intercourse as theirs had become remained but a street acquaintance.

Things had reached this pass when, one Saturday afternoon, Jacqueline found herself threading her way among the crowds that packed the station awaiting the incoming trains from New York, bringing their loads of week-end guests. As she wedged her way to the front, a little bewildered by the jam, she espied Merrington’s broad shoulders at the outermost edge of the crowd. At the same instant he saw her, and in a moment was

beside her.

“This is worse than the breakers,” he said, with a nod of his capped head at the surging crowd, “and almost as dangerous, and, of course, you are to be found at the outer verge.”

“Do you think they all have friends coming? What an elastic place it is!”

“Mere idle curiosity brings many of them, a summer idleness to see new faces. It brought me.”

“I came to meet a cousin,” she said, a little sharply.

“Then I shall be handy with bag and baggage. Even in these days, I believe, ladies carry things when they travel.”

Jacqueline looked at his gray eyes with an expression that baffled him. At length she spoke.

“My cousin happens to be a man. He doubtless will carry the regulation dress-suit case, which he is quite able to manage himself.”

Merrington let her irony pass unnoticed.

“How little you have allowed me to learn about you,” he said, holding her sunshade so as to break the glare in her eyes, “and we have known each other—how long?”

“Over two weeks,” she replied, instantly, and then shut her lips tight, coloring crimson.

“And it seems to me for always. Do you think time has anything to do with feelings of intimacy?”

“Oh, yes. There is the summer-time intimacy which the cool weather and return to town put an end to.” She leaned past him with regained composure, looking down the cinder-strewn tracks, over the shining rails of which heat devils shimmered upward.

“You are thinking of the summer girl and her beaux,” he said, softly. “I wasn’t.”

“Neither was I.”

“Tell me about your cousin,” he asked, demurely. “Isn’t it strange that you and Peggie should both have cousins?”

“My cousin is a very nice man. He is not a bit like you.” Then her audacity wavered. “He is very blond. Is the train late?”

“I hope so.”

“I hope not.”

It was not, and in a minute more it rolled in, distractingly long and overflowing with eager passengers.

“How shall I ever find him?” Jacqueline cried, in dismay. “He may be already out of a dozen cars and lost in the mob, and he doesn’t know the way.”

“What is he like?” Merrington asked.

“Oh, he is tall, like you, and square-shouldered and very good-looking, only his hair isn’t like yours.”

“Then I’m to look for some one like me with blond hair, is that it?”

“Of course not,” she exclaimed, indignantly. “He isn’t at all like you, but you offered to help, and you are tall.”

Merrington, curiously happy, he could not just know why, looked around over the sea of people.

“There is some one I know with yellow hair,” he said, presently.

“I wouldn’t acknowledge it if I did,” Jacqueline replied, with stiff propriety, but for once Merrington was unmindful of her words, and was waving his hand with facile grace above his head.

“There’s Dick, now!” the girl cried, as a tall, blond young fellow bore down upon them; then she stood still in amazement as the two men seized hands. “You two know each other!” she exclaimed.

“Know each other! I should say we did. Didn’t we ‘do’ Europe together for a year, and then dine with each other the night we got home? How’s that for a test, Jack?”

“Splendid,” Jacqueline responded, but she was not feeling very comfortable.

When they reached the waiting trap, and Merrington had helped Jacqueline up, Brinton turned to his friend.

“Where are you staying?”

“My cousin, Peggie Le Moyne, is down here. I am with her.”

In spite of her reluctance, Jacqueline spoke.

“Mrs. Le Moyne’s cottage is next door to ours, Dick.”

“Good!” exclaimed Brinton. “I say, Jack, have him over to dinner to-night.”

Jacqueline turned to Merrington. “Will you come?” she asked, a lovely smile adding to the beauty of her blushes.

Merrington hesitated. He felt that the invitation had been forced.

“Peggie will spare you,” Jacqueline urged, “and old friends do not turn up every day.”

“Thank you,” said Merrington. “I will come.”

IV.

“You are a very lucky young man,” said Peggie Le Moyne to her cousin, when he had told her of the invitation. “Of course Jacqueline was cornered, and gave it perforce, but there is a potency in hospitality that works both ways. Besides, when a man has seen a woman in her home she can never be altogether formal to him again.”

“I feel as though I were sneaking in through the back door, all the same,” Merrington replied, more moodily than was his wont.

Notwithstanding his misgivings, Jacqueline met her guest with a graciousness that made her adorable in his sight. Driven from her vantage ground though she was by her cousin’s outspoken invitation to Merrington, there was no hint of anything but cordiality in her welcome.

It was her more strictly feminine side that she exhibited that evening. There was nothing about her save the delicate tan of her skin to remind Merrington that the girl of the surf and sun-flooded beach was one with the dainty and charming woman in the trailing muslin, with the soft masses of her hair dark above the small head.

“Why did you never mention to me your friendship with my cousin?” she asked him after dinner, finding herself for the moment alone with him in the dimly lit parlor. He answered with native frankness:

“You never encouraged me to talk about myself, and, to tell you the truth, I never thought of anyone when with you—except yourself.”

“Dick has been telling me of your long friendship.”

“It has never brought me anything that I would less wish to part with than this pleasure to-night.”

“I do not know,” she said, musingly, yet with a precision nearer akin to her former treatment of him than she had shown that evening, “that pleasures are what we should value most in our friendships. You remember what Burns says about them?” 139

“Is that a hint or a threat?” he asked, smiling.

She colored slowly and threw him a question that changed the subject.

“Will you go with Dick and me to see the mob to-night? He does not know the delights of this place. Indeed, I think he came down resigned to boredom, until he met you.” She appealed to Brinton for confirmation of her remark as he sauntered in.

“Don’t make me fib after a full dinner, Jack,” he protested. “Besides, it isn’t anything like what I expected.”

“There,” she laughed, rising; “but now we are going to take you out and realize your expectations, Mr. Merrington and I.”

As they walked along under the pulsing stars, the void of the sea broken before them in crested waves that gleamed ghostly, a strange disinclination for speech beset Merrington. The fact that he could, without any sense of restraint, rather with a feeling of intimacy that sent delirious thrills along his veins, be with Jacqueline as one sharing her mood and interest so surely that he turned to silence in preference to words, placed, as it were, a bewitching perspective to his love. The mood changed, indeed, by the time they reached the crowded portion of the board walk, for it was not Merrington’s nature to keep silence long in the midst of jollification, and the Saturday night spirit was abroad. Moreover, he suddenly found himself alone with Jacqueline.

“I never had a brother,” she remarked, coming to a standstill by the railing of the walk, “but if they hold themselves any freer to do cavalier things than cousins, I am glad I hadn’t.” She showed annoyance in the glance she sent at the laughing party her cousin had joined. “Maybe he will leave them soon,” she added.

“I hope not. I am sure he won’t. The taste of cousins and brothers is always poor, but it is to be depended on.”

“You are right,” she said, severely. “He does not deserve to have us wait for him.”

Under the lower pavilion, the band was playing a Hungarian rhapsody, and the crowd had packed itself close to listen. Merrington followed Jacqueline slowly through the current moving in the middle. She stopped so abruptly that he pressed upon her, and steadied himself by a touch upon her arm.

“Why should we go on?” she asked, facing him. “Dick is joined to his idols, let him alone. Shall we walk back where we may be quiet? Or do you care for the crowd?”

He did not heed her last question, so rapturous was the music of her other. He led her through the slowly moving impact of people, impatient until he might get her beyond and to himself. Neither said very much until they were where the crowd ceased to make itself felt, and the night reclaimed its darkness from the glare of the many electric lights of the gala part of the town.

He was madly palpitant under the almost somber calm which he preserved outwardly. His passion, like a fever long incubating, leaped suddenly into full force by no conscious volition of his own. That evening, with Jacqueline in her home, the spell of the woman with the halo of domesticity around her had swept his love into an ardent desire—the desire of the man to have the woman he loves in a home of his own. And now he was with her alone under the throbbing stars, and something other than her former intolerance of him was keeping Jacqueline wordless. He knew that it was something very different, knew it by the instinct of the lover, and his heart bounded at her silence. When he spoke, Jacqueline shivered at the ground-roll of emotion which his words seemed to break into a momentary surge.

“I am very glad that Brinton came today.”

She nodded, acquiescent. She had meant to speak, but the words stuck.

“When the avalanche is ready,” he murmured, “or the sea is at the flood, a touch of nature’s breath—and the 140

thing is done."

"How prosaically you drop your figures," she said, with a nervous laugh. "What are you trying to say?"

"Jacqueline!"

She started away from him, her face, very white, turned to his.

"Do I frighten you?"

"Yes," she whispered, her eyes held by his penetrating gaze.

Merrington smiled.

"And yet," he said, so low that the words seemed to her almost as breathing in her ears, "I would give every drop of blood, every fiber in my body, to make you happy, for I love you with every drop of my blood."

"Mr. Merrington——" she began, but he cut her short.

"Listen to me," he said, guiding her into the little balcony that projected from the walk just where they were, and overhung the beach. "No man, since man and woman were made for each other, has wanted a woman more than I want you. Every bit of myself, body and soul, soul and body, I offer you, Jacqueline, in return for your love."

"I have no love for you," she breathed, slowly.

"You must have. Such love as I have for you compels love in return."

She looked away, struggling with herself. At last her words came, strained and muffled.

"I have always disliked you. You know it."

"I would rather have your love at once, of course," he said, with a patience that sat well upon his power, "but I am not afraid of your dislike." He held out his hands impulsively. "Jacqueline, you must be my wife. You are going to be my wife."

She was silent, accepting, with a dullness of compliance, the overmastering sense of his determination, her will for the moment existing as something benumbed within her. The dashing of the sea beneath them broke through its own monotony, and, with her consciousness of it, a remembrance of Merrington's early words rushed to her mind. She drew herself up with a snapping of the spell that had held her.

"You told me once that you had never been conquered, but the days are past when a man carries a wife by storm. Shall we go on, Mr. Merrington?"

"Jacqueline, do you love me?"

She had started forward, but at the tense question, fell back against the railing of the balcony. There was that in the calm of Merrington's manner that left her breathless.

"I believe you do love me in your heart of hearts," he said, the passion of his tones thrilling through the words, though he stood rigidly erect before her. "You may not know it, but you do, and I am going to make you know it, because I cannot live without your love, which, being mine, you shall not keep from me."

"Oh!" she cried, facing him at her full height, "how I hate you for that! Love you! From the first moment you spoke to me I have disliked you. You are a cave-dweller! A savage! Such men as you don't want wives. They want mates."

V.

The next day Jacqueline was not on the beach, but as the day was Sunday, and as he knew her aversion to holiday crowds, Merrington did not take this as any indication that she especially desired to avoid him. In the afternoon Peggie, who always did what she was wanted to do without asking, proposed to her cousin that they stop with their roadcart and take up Jacqueline and Brinton. But Jacqueline had a headache, so Brinton said, as he mounted to the seat beside Peggie, leaving Merrington in solitary state behind the grays all the way to Seabright and back. When he dropped in casually that evening to see his friend, Mr. Selwyn met him with the intelligence that Jacqueline and her cousin had gone out for an informal tea with friends. Things began to look serious. Peggie, whose ears and eyes had been open, hailed Merrington as he sauntered slowly up her front walk.

"No one at home but papa, eh, Geof? I felt that headache of Jacqueline's was a bluff. What gave it to her?"

"Don't ask questions," he returned, a little disconsolately.

"Oh, dear!" she sighed, as he seated himself on the low railing before her, "why did you do it in this heat? Men are so impatient."

"It wasn't anything I asked her. It was the statement of a fact that offended."

"Of course you told her you loved her, but that implied a question, didn't it?"

Merrington lit his pipe with deliberation. In the light of the match Peggie saw his eyes, bright and humorous, fixed on her face.

"I told her she loved me," he said, between puffs. "What does that imply?"

"You didn't!" was Peggie's unsatisfactory answer. Then she was silent for quite five minutes. She entirely approved, however, of his purpose, expressed a little later, to go up to the city for a few days.

"And take my advice," she said, rising to leave him, "and forget that you ever laid eyes on Miss Selwyn. You've done the one unpardonable thing in a woman's sight."

* * * * *

After his luncheon the next day, Merrington was aimlessly standing on the corner of Broadway and Twenty-sixth Street when the clang of bells and the shriek of a fire-engine whistle dashed the purposeless hour with an instant's interest. By some occult power, the drivers of several coupés and hansoms, impelled by the same thought of safety and curiosity, turned their vehicles into the short side street between Broadway and Fifth Avenue, pausing there to see the engine tear by. By a further process of this psychic power, one and all suddenly became aware that the street they blocked was the street for which the rapidly driven horses were heading. Merrington, with a quick thrill of excitement, straightened his height, watching the now thoroughly frenzied *impasse*. At that moment a swiftly driven hansom turned for refuge into the congested street, the clatter and frantic signals of the engine just behind. Then his heart leaped, and fell down, for the girl in the hansom, heedless of her danger, was Jacqueline.

How he forced his way through the crowd that had gathered before him, sprang before the rearing and terrified horses of the engine checked in full flight, tore open the doors of the hansom and lifted out the girl, Merrington could not have said. As he did so, however, the engine tore on, carrying with it a wheel of the hansom. Jacqueline, white and shaken, stood in his arms.

"You!" she gasped.

"I might say the same," he answered, the blood coming back under his bronze, but he seemed to speak with a very dry humor, indeed, for his eyes were fixed upon her, dark almost beyond her recognition. Her own drooped, as she shuddered slightly. "Don't faint," he begged, in quick alarm. She shook her head.

"I thought you were down there," she murmured.

"I came away that you might have the sea to yourself. That is, I thought I came. It must be that I was sent."

"I came away for the same reason," she confessed. She was quite aware that the colors of her resentment against him were flying very low, but two things, at least, kept her humble. She had been badly frightened, and her hat was awry. Somewhere about her there was a third reason that, as she became conscious of it, made her abruptly stand away from him and at once cloak her humility.

"I need not trouble you any more. You have been very good."

His lips tightened grimly. He was not yet altogether over his alarm.

"You needn't have troubled me at all—if you care to call it trouble—for you need not have come to town at all. Your hansom is wrecked, however. Shall I call another?"

"Let us walk," she returned, with a meekness that made his heart throb wildly.

Merrington dismissed the cabman, giving him such a tip and such a berating for his carelessness that the man was left pondering whether he was considered a hero or a fool. Jacqueline was looking on with a new light in her regard. How big and strong he was, she thought. No wonder he was so masterful. Her cheeks were flushed when he turned to join her.

"Where is it?" he asked, taking his place beside her.

"Anywhere. I was just killing time."

"And do you mean to say that thought of meeting me actually drove you from one place to another?" The reproach in his voice fed her humility hugely, but she even tilted her head back on the firmness of her neck, and became perverse.

"I was really enjoying my day in town. I like to see New York in midsummer. It is like meeting a woman you have known only superficially, suddenly in negligée. Don't you think so?"

"I had never thought of it in that way. Maybe my lack of experience puts a damper on my imagination."

She stopped with admirably feigned compunction.

"I am afraid I am keeping you from an engagement."

"You are."

She drew her brows together, puzzled, more hurt than provoked at his candor. "Then please go," she pleaded. "Was it very important?"

"Essentially so; to me, at least."

She shrank somewhat from the look in his eyes, but held out her hand with an accession of friendliness. The broad avenue was nearly deserted at the moment.

"I have been thoughtless, but you said—that is, I thought you, too, were just putting in your time to-day." She smiled at him a little shyly.

"The engagement I had in mind can't possibly come to pass without you." He was holding her hand, and looking from it to her face, as though uncertain of this new graciousness in her.

She laughed, attempting to withdraw her hand.

"Mr. Merrington, while no one in sight would suspect the absurdity of our conversation, suppose we walk on."

"Now, if I were that poor cave-dweller you likened me to," he said, not at all balking at the allusion, "I'd take you to the Little Church Around the Corner."

"Take me, anyway, will you not?" she surprised him by saying. "I am fond of that little church."

* * * * *

They were alone. Into the cool gloom the light of the outer day fell through windows of exquisite dyes. Jacqueline sighed with a sense of relief that was greater than she had anticipated. She made up her mind that when she left the church she would go straight to the boat. In the meantime, she felt sure that Merrington, if somewhat restless, would, at least, not pursue his determined wooing.

It nonplused her to realize in what a different spirit she was accepting that wooing. It did not seem to be within the range of her emotions to summon up against him even a pale reflection of the fierce anger with which she had met his first declaration, only two evenings before. It was hard to believe that it had been only two evenings ago. In some indefinable way, she knew him so much better to-day. During the long hours of the previous day, when she had avoided him with persistent purpose, her anger had not abated, nor yet this morning, when she turned her back on the sea, and put the breach of other surroundings between him and herself. Now she knew, with a warm wave of color, that there had been no breach all this time in her thought of him, even when she had most sought to have him think she was unmindful.

Under the force of this consideration, she slipped into a pew and sat down, watching Merrington, as he stood with his back to her, a shaft of topaz light outlining the firm, square cut of his profile and the lithe blocking of his figure. Something in his attitude of vigorous yet refined enjoyment of the painted window showed him to Jacqueline in a new phase of his character.

He turned abruptly to appeal to her, and his hand rested on hers as it lay on the top of the pew. She had withdrawn her glove, and the cool, dry touch of his flesh affected her strangely. She rose quickly, but her hand still lay beneath his.

The words he had been going to say died upon his lips. What he saw in the girl’s face made him forget the art of the world in the magnetic thrill of their young nature.

“It is another omen,” he murmured, his strong fingers closing about the slimness of her hand. “Even unconsciously we find each other.”

For a moment she did not resist his pressure. Then she drew her hand away. He noticed that she was paler than her wont.

“I am not a bit superstitious,” she said, softly but clearly. “I could never detect an omen, good or bad.”

“I have the faculty. It will serve for both.”

“You are not religious.” She spoke with a hint of reproach in the statement that was really to him a caress. He let her pass by him out into the aisle, and walked with her toward the chancel, taking up her words.

“I am reverent, and I love.”

She shook her head, but made no other answer. Her heart was beating until she dared not speak, and she walked on because she dared not stop. In the extreme corner of the chapel-like annex she came to a standstill, facing him with a timidity that appealed unnoticed.

Merrington himself had followed, his senses tingling and his vision a blur. When they stopped, his heart flamed into words.

“Do you not see that it must be, because it is?” Resting both hands on the backs of the pews between which she stood, he held her prisoner.

She implored him silently.

“You think I am not in earnest, that I am impetuous, that I do not know you, do not know my own mind, perhaps. I did not need to know you as the social man knows women. At the first moment I spoke to you I knew what it had been that, ever since I first saw you, had filled me with a newness, a joy, a something that has no name because it underlies and embraces all things—love, love, the love of a soul for a soul, of a heart for a heart, of a man for the woman of all women for him. Jacqueline!”

He bent to see her averted face, but she held up her hand, entreating. He seized it in his own.

“That avalanche I spoke of the other night is started again. You did not stop it. You cannot stop it. If you do not hear me now, the moment will come at another time. It is the fulfillment of my being, to love you as you never dreamed of love, as no one else will ever love you, and to tell you so, over and over again, until it is music in your ears.”

He was close to her. In the gathering twilight of the church her face seemed very white, and she was watching his lips with a species of enchantment. She did not see the ardor in his eyes that made them glow as with fire, but as he ceased speaking, her lashes quivered and fell.

“I shall never give you up,” he whispered, his lips near her ear. “The bud comes no surer to the tree, the rose comes no surer from the bud, than my love will awaken love in you. Is it not so?”

The swift color darkened her face to the heavy shadow about her brow, and she pressed her hand against his breast resistingly. But at the touch he took her in his arms.

“Jacqueline,” he cried, “tell me that you love me.”

She lay very still, suddenly finding it good to be thus vanquished.

“Jacqueline,” he repeated, and bent his head to catch her words.

“You are a tyrant, but I am afraid I do.”

And then, his lips on hers, their world stood still.

WHEN Katherine Corning married Dick Catherwood people predicted they would not live together five years, and they didn't. The five years were up and so was the marriage.

Dick was the most charming fellow in the world, when you were not married to him. As a companion for life he was intolerable. He was far handsomer than a Greek god, but when you find your Greek god full of mundane ungodliness you cannot help regretting that so much charm should be wasted on merely outward appearance.

Yet, in spite of her thorough understanding of his character, Katherine could not help going back sentimentally to the time she first met and loved the man from whom she was now separated. He had attracted her with a magnetism no other man had ever inspired. She *felt* him looking at the back of her head before she had ever seen his face. It was at the opera, and later, when Mrs. Wesley introduced him, she knew instinctively she had met her fate.

His wooing was prompt and picturesque. But possession with him was *ennui*, and in the most childish fashion he ceased to prize the thing he obtained, and treated it with as much indifference as he had sought it with zeal.

Katherine, finding marriage an irremediable failure, had at length resorted to that haven for the incompatibles—the divorce court.

From a crude Western town, where they had cyclones for breakfast, she had only recently emerged, chastened in spirit and with a very formal red-sealed document in her keeping.

It was what she had waited so patiently for, yet now that it was in her possession she felt like going into mourning. It seemed indecent to act as though nothing had happened. She kept Dick's old letters and cried over them, and wore a picture of him—taken during their happy engagement—in a heart-shaped locket inside her bodice.

Quite unusual with young and handsome divorcées, there was no other man in the case. She had not divorced Dick to marry some one else, but because of their incompatibility, which absolutely prevented their living together in harmony.

But no sooner was she settled in her old home than she began receiving proposals. Her old beaux came flocking around her, in more or less damaged condition, and there seemed a general belief that she had divorced Dick only to try it again with a new candidate for Dick's shoes.

Her women friends were as bad. They would not permit her to pass into retirement, but insisted upon her accepting invitations. "Now you are free," they told her, "you must make up for that miserable period of your married life by being as gay as possible."

They turned a deaf ear to remonstrances.

Katherine could not deny that a wonderful peace was settling over her soul, freed from the wearing grind of Dick's perpetual bickerings, and she tried to blot out the memory of his faults and to think of him kindly as one does of the dead. But she lived in the dread of meeting him, for she knew he still was in town, where he had remained throughout, gallantly permitting her to secure the decree without a contest. Poor Dick, how like him! For, whatever his faults, he was always a gentleman. She trembled at the thought of meeting him, for, unmarried to him, it was easier to think of his fascinations than of his shortcomings. It had never become possible for her to treat the matter as some of her similarly placed women friends and to joke flippantly about "my former."

Among the beaux of the past who had promptly presented themselves, on her return from the West, was Willis Shaw. She had come nearer accepting him than any of the others in the old days; and had it not been for Dick and his compelling magnetism, Shaw would have won out. He had shown himself a man of worth, and had made a name for himself, remaining, as some of the others had not done in spite of protestations of hearts broken past mending, a bachelor. He was among the first to send up his card; and Katherine, in her black frock, went down with a sober face to receive him. She expected sympathy, and received—a proposal.

Shaw could not but see the shock in her face.

"Forgive me," he begged, becoming at once as grave as she; "I have been too precipitate and have hurt you. I do not take back the words—I cannot do that; but keep them in your mind and think them over, and, when you feel ready, give me an answer. Although women parted from their husbands have come to be an everyday occurrence, I cannot help regarding them with pity. They seem so defenseless, so unprotected, and the world is so unsparing in its treatment of unprotected, defenseless things. It pains me to think of you who ought to be so tenderly cherished and shielded occupying in any way an equivocal position. But you must not think that pity is my reason for putting the question to you again. It is the same reason which prompted me five years ago, and which has never altered nor lessened in the years. I wish you could give me a different answer, for I feel that I could make you happy. You deserve happiness, and your failure to secure it makes me the more anxious to mete it out to you in fullest measure."

He left her a shade graver than he found her, but she only came to appreciate his considerateness when other men pranced in, assumed easy positions, talked jauntily about their blighted state and made more or less

rakish proposals. One had even genially suggested that if she were disappointed in him she could easily have recourse to the divorce court again. “It’s always a handy fire escape,” he added, pleasantly.

She took Dick’s picture into her confidence. Of course she had no *love* for Willis Shaw; she should never indulge in that confiding, girlish thing again; but she respected him, and felt that with him she would at least be safe. Her position certainly *was* equivocal. There were always people who had been abroad or something, and had not heard of her decree, and who were forever rushing up in public places and asking how her good husband was, and if he were as devoted as ever. It would be embarrassing, of course, to have to explain that another husband was now displaying that devotion, but not nearly so embarrassing as to confess to no husband at all—even in these days of rapid conjugal changes.

Katherine was going through the tortures of the sensitive divorced. One day, returning from her lonely drive, a note was handed her, and she recognized Mrs. “Billy” Wesley’s characteristic hand.

“Mrs. William Wesley requests the pleasure of your company at dinner on Monday, November 16th, at half after seven”; then down in the left-hand corner the words: “Vaccination at ten.”

It was sure to be something out of the ordinary—all of Mrs. Billy’s affairs were—and at first she had no idea of accepting. Then Mrs. Wesley called her up on the telephone and insisted upon her coming, drawing her attention to the fact that several cases of varioloid in the upper part of town had made her hit upon the idea of the vaccination, and that it would not only be a pleasure but a precaution to accept. She also impressed upon 146
Katherine the necessity of a sleeveless bodice for the occasion.

It was not until she had finally yielded that it suddenly occurred to Katherine that Dick would certainly be at the dinner. Mrs. Wesley had retained her friendship for both, and it would be just like her erratic fancy to bring them together. In the women of Mrs. Billy Wesley’s set that sort of thing passed for *chic*. At first a hot wave of resentment rose in her breast, and she was on the point of calling Mrs. Billy up and, incidentally, of calling her down; then all at once a curious reaction came about. It was no less than a mad desire to see Dick again. The *immodesty* of the thing appalled her, but the desire remained.

Not even in the rosy days of her engagement had she longed with such eagerness to spend an evening in his society, and as the night drew near she found herself making the foolish preparations of a débutante for her first ball.

She engaged a dressmaker, who turned her out a purely classic costume; and with a pedestal and the limelight upon her, she might have played *Galatea* with enthusiastic applause from the house. When fully arrayed on the evening of the dinner, she surveyed herself in the glass, and trembled.

Mrs. Billy greeted her effusively. She herself was prepared for the surgical part of the entertainment with an arrangement of pearl chains which attached her bodice to her person across the upper part of the arms.

“A dream, darling!” she cried, in the caressing, coddling tone she used to all. “I vow I could eat you!” and so saying, she dipped down, kissed Katherine with a light peck on each shoulder, then passed her on, to fall on the neck of the next.

Katherine glanced about the room with a beating heart. At first she saw no one whose presence caused her agitation, and her spirits sank. Then all at once a voice fell upon her ear which sent the blood mantling to her cheeks and brought a faintness to her breast. A man had just entered, and was paying his respects to Mrs. Wesley—a man like unto whom there was not another in the room. Such an air! Such grace! Bayard himself, who, historians agree, was an ideal knight in every particular, was possessed of no more graceful bearing, comeliness of person and affability of manner.

Katherine stood up and shivered. She might have been transformed to *Galatea* then and there, so statuesque her pose. She was totally unconscious that every eye in the room was wandering with prying curiosity from her to Dick.

Then he saw her.

For a moment he hesitated, but a moment only.

He sped to her with as much *empressement* as he had shown in the most zealous days of the courtship; his expressive eyes and face were aglow with eagerness.

Katherine remained perfectly still, but two little pulses beating visibly in her temples told whether she was indifferent. “You *will* speak to me!” he cried, in eager entreaty, under his breath. “If you want me to die in an hour, treat me as a stranger!” He was holding out his hand, and, mechanically, and because she was suddenly aware of the scrutiny of the room, hers went out to it. When Dick clasped it, and she felt the familiar contact of his flesh, she thought she was going to faint.

“Take me away,” she gasped, “into the air.”

He drew her arm quickly through his and led her to a seat in a bay window, screened from the rest of the room by curtains.

Dick stood over her, breathing quickly. “I never thought it would be like this,” he said, brokenly. “I fancied I should never see you again, and that in time I would get over it, like other men who have lived down their sorrows. But coming upon you unexpectedly like this takes it out of me. Look up,” he begged; “let me see your 147
eyes, and try if I cannot find there some trace of the old affection. When I see you in the flesh I forget your cruelty, your unkindness—how you have made me suffer. I can only remember the happy days when you were loving and affectionate, and wanted me by your side. Have you forgotten? Tell me that, Katherine, have you? To think that, after all your vows of love, you should have grown tired of me!”

Katherine dared steal a look at him. Reproach met her view.

Yet this was the man who had made life so unbearable that she was forced to appeal to the courts for relief! Strangely enough, she could only remember his faults in the vaguest way, and it did not seem at all incongruous

that he should be reproaching her. Never was his fascination more dangerously potent, his charm of person more alluring.

"Forgive me, Dick," she found herself murmuring.

She held out her hands, and he drew them to his breast.

She did not know what might have followed had not the voice of Billy Wesley's butler, announcing dinner, fallen upon her ear at the moment.

"*After dinner*," whispered Dick, with significance; then offering her his arm, they emerged from their retreat with assumed *sang-froid*.

"Been kissing and making up?" asked Mrs. Billy, with frank indelicacy; but she was not indelicate enough to place them together at dinner, although her decadent ideas made her quite capable of things of the sort. Instead, she had separated them by the entire length of the table. But over the orchids and the electric bulbs, with the glint of glass and silver between, Katherine could feel Dick's eyes upon her, and her flesh warmed beneath that gaze as *Galatea's* when her sculptor breathed life into her with the passion of his glance. It was when the glass bells were brought in that she caught his eye fully and realized with a thrill that he had not forgotten her relish for *champignons* under glass.

In return, she flashed him a glance letting him know she had not forgotten his partiality for canvasbacks, and after that the rest of the dinner was a telegraphic communication between the pair of recognized intimacies of their married life.

The dishes sometimes choked her with a too vital remembrance.

"But we can't sit here all night!" exclaimed Mrs. Billy, suddenly. "There's Dr. Webb coming to vaccinate us!"

"Madam," said the butler, "Dr. Webb is in the drawing room."

The men were permitted to carry their cigars with them, owing to the curtailing of the dinner, and the whole party passed into the drawing room. Dr. Webb had been dining also, and was in evening dress, a messenger having brought his instruments and the virus.

"Let's see," said Mrs. Billy, running her eye over her list, which she found in a rose jar, "who's to submit first? It wouldn't be polite for me in my own house; won't you lead the way, Katherine?"

Katherine was just stepping boldly forward when she drew back in alarm. "Oh!" she cried, "it might hurt, and I don't like being hurt!" and she drew her beautiful bare arm close to her, and stood nursing it.

Immediately Dick pressed forward. "And she shall not be hurt!" he proclaimed, with authority. "It would be a shame to disfigure such an arm, even as a precaution. I must ask you, Mrs. Wesley, not to insist upon Mrs. Catherwood submitting to the operation. Let me be the first victim;" and hastily throwing off his coat, he appeared before the company in his well-made waistcoat and faultless shirt sleeves. The latter he began rolling up coolly, and when the cuff refused his elbow, he drew out his penknife and slit the linen along the seam. "Now, then, doctor, I am ready for you," he said, unconcernedly.

Everyone looked on with admiration, but particularly one to whom the sight of him in the familiarity of shirt sleeves brought back the past with even more moving and electrifying vividness. How many a time had that same splendid arm been about her, and how often had she pillowed her head in its bend! 148

"A fine development," said Dr. Webb, appreciatively. He then took out his point, and with a deft touch injected the virus, while Dick looked on, smoking an Egyptian cigarette.

Emboldened by his example, Katherine insisted upon submitting next, and, reclining on a gilded couch, she bravely held out her lovely left arm. It was clear the doctor was quite as appreciative of its perfection as he had been of the one before it, though he forbore any comment. The scraping produced a faintness, and her eyes sought Dick's pleadingly. In a flash he was at her side, and supporting her head against his shoulder, where it rested until the doctor had drawn a drop of crimson to the ivory surface. A glass of water was brought, and she quickly recovered.

The guests after that began submitting in turn, with more or less merriment in the matter, until one Mrs. St. Cyr Smith cast discredit upon the party by refusing to be vaccinated on the arm.

Discussion arose on every side, and under cover of it Dick sought Katherine.

"Come," he begged, not feeling at all interested in the location of Mrs. St. Cyr Smith's vaccination. "I did not finish what I had to say before dinner;" and, gently shielding her newly scratched arm, he led her back to the curtained recess.

Katherine let him guide her where he would, as completely under his spell as in the first days of his magnetic attraction.

"You were so brave," she murmured, "and so handsome!"

He drew the curtains before he answered.

"Then you *do* cherish some little memory of the old days?" he asked, with indescribable persuasion. "You have not forgotten? Yet you tired of me, Katherine; cast me off like a worn glove. Oh, but you were cruel to the man you swore to love and honor!"

She tried to look him in the face, but her eyes fell before the passionate reproach of his.

"Dick," she managed to gasp, "don't blame it all on me. You forget how soon you tired of me."

"I tire of you!" he cried. "Never, Katherine." He knelt on the window seat, speaking in words that came warm and panting from his lips to her shoulder. "It isn't possible you ever imagined such a thing? I love you now—to-night—this minute—as I have loved you always, and as it is given to man to love but once in a lifetime. I never so appreciated your beauty, never so longed for the privilege of owning it. Oh, beautifulest"—the name he

had given her in the happiest days of the courtship—“I want you, want you, want you! You are the very breath of me, and unless I can have you back, I swear to put an end to myself!”

His arm found her waist as it had in the old days, and before she was aware, he had her close against him and was kissing her.

The never-to-be-forgotten essence of his lips suddenly brought her to a realizing sense of the situation. He had no right to embrace her. It was an impropriety as great as though any stranger in the room beyond had presumed upon such a liberty. In spite of all they had been to each other in the past, he was now no more to her, legally, than any of the others, and there was nothing to warrant such a course of conduct. True, his lips were dearer than anything this side of heaven, but she had thought that once before, and yet had lived to feel those same lips grow cold and passionless, those strong arms deny her protection. This sudden return to his early ardor made her the more mindful of the indifference that had followed. In his impetuosity he was forging the sequence that her mind in its wrought up state had refused to grasp. She tore herself with quickly summoned force from his embrace.

“For God’s sake,” he cried, hoarse as in the old days, when his feelings rent him, “don’t refuse me! Haven’t you made me suffer enough?”

“You forget,” she reminded him, a shiver running along her frame and her words coming thinly, “that we are 149
legally separated, and that you have no right to the privileges you have presumed upon. You are not my husband. In the law we are strangers.”

Yet always that magnetic influence which drew her with supernatural force, and which she had to fight with all the strength of a body and a mind which had no inclination to fight; and, even while she remonstrated, she found herself drifting to him slowly, until, without power or volition of her own, she sank into his arms. He spoke mad, wild words in her ear; and she listened, thinking mad, wild things herself.

Inferior people have their place in the world. They save their superiors from grave situations. It was the Wesley butler who again interposed to save Katherine from an impending fate. He came to the curtains, coughing, in the respectful manner reserved for upper servants, to say that her maid had come for her early, as she had requested.

Dick caught her hand. “Let me take you home!” he entreated.

But the presence of Dunn, with his eyes that saw nothing and his mouth that never relaxed, helped Katherine, and she could command herself even with an upholstered lackey for inspiration.

“No,” she said, firmly; “that is out of the question.”

“But you cannot leave me like this,” he persisted, refusing to release her hand; “you will kill me with your cruelty. If you will not let me see you home, let me come to you to-morrow—you surely will not refuse me that!”

“Well,” she yielded, in a hurried undertone, “to-morrow evening at nine.” Then she passed out and made a hasty adieu to Mrs. Billy.

Dick did not stop much longer, and went to his hotel a bit fagged but exultant. He had not lost his old power over Katherine, that was clear, and he desired her with all the craving that non-possession brought him.

Meanwhile Katherine went home and thought—thought till her brows ached, and until she had sounded the very depths of her reasoning powers. The burden of her thoughts was much the same as his—that Dick had not lost his old influence. The next day found her still thinking, yet uncommonly active and busy. Indeed, it was quite the busiest, most breathless day of her life. Time went rushingly, and when nine o’clock chimed from the cathedral clock in the library she was still busy.

Dick was prompt. His eagerness manifested itself in his simultaneous ring at the bell with the chiming of the clock.

Katherine, in a brilliant evening gown, with some long-stemmed roses on her breast, heard the ring and started up with an excited flush.

Dick hurried in, groomed and perfect. He did not stop for conventionalities of greeting, but let all the high pressure under which he was laboring appear in his eloquent eyes. He had brought her violets, but he dropped them from his fingers, and held out his arms with entreaty.

“Soul of my soul,” he cried, “there are to be no more separations! You belong to me, and you cannot live without me any more than I can without you. Last night proved that, and that I have not lost your love. I have come back, and you are never going to be cruel again.” But to his astonishment Katherine did not yield to the arms that begged, did not pale to marble as she had the night before when he had brought the same influence to bear.

Instead, she stood off, without a sign of weakening, and smiled as conventionally as she would to the merest chance visitor.

The sight maddened him, and he sprang forward to take her by force.

But Katherine held off with a strange new imperiousness that was not to be trifled with. “You came for your answer this evening, Dick, and I have it ready for you—the answer that will determine the future for us both beyond a question;” then she held herself a little straighter and spoke distinctly:

“I was married to Willis Shaw at three this afternoon.”

Some plays in Paris. “Ces Messieurs” at the Gymnase, once prohibited by the Minister of Public Instruction, is unsatisfactory, but well acted. Little theaters, like the Berkeley Lyceum, immensely popular in Paris. In London one feels more at home because the dramatic atmosphere seems more wholesome. Alfred Sutro’s play at the Garrick, “The Walls of Jericho,” the most successful of the season. Other plays and some players

TWO distinct sets of impressions were carried away from the Paris season by two distinctly different individuals. One pure and conventional set was borne by that extremely nice and unsophisticated young man, the King of Spain; the other by that not-so-nice, more sophisticated, less-young person whose name appears at the head of this. We jostled each other—the little juvenile king and myself. He, poor young man, was taken by thoughtful people, who had his welfare at heart, to that over-advertised home of mediocrity, the Théâtre Français, and to a “gala” performance at the Opéra; I—well, I went where I liked. Not being a young king, it was not necessary that my impressions should run along conventional grooves.

The King of Spain saw what he could see anywhere, and would probably avoid seeing in his own country. I was able to select my own dramatic fodder. Possibly we were each equally glad when we had done our duty and were allowed to proceed. If the King of Spain rejoiced more than I did, then he must have been exceedingly exultant. We found the Paris season quite disordered and fatigued. The Grand Prix was in the air; open-air vaudeville was hurling defiance at the drama; Bernhardt and Réjane were packing themselves off to London; it was all very comfortless and noisy. I felt sorry for the little King of Spain, as I saw him bowling along the Rue de Rivoli bound for the Français. I was on my way to the Gymnase to see the new shocker called “Ces Messieurs.”

The most uncomfortable and gloomiest theater in Paris has given itself up to the laudable purpose of stirring up dissension. Last year it was “Le Retour de Jerusalem” that aimed at fomenting anti-Semitic feeling; this year it is “Ces Messieurs,” the sole object of which is to stir up anti-clerical strife. Perhaps the Gymnase needs this sort of “attraction.” I cannot imagine anybody sitting tortured in its stuffy, ill-kept, poverty-stricken auditorium for mere restful enjoyment.

“Ces Messieurs,” from the pen of M. Georges Ancey, was prohibited for a long time by the minister of public instruction, a benign censor, who objected to the play because it attacked the priests. His decision was, of course, bitterly resented; and it was asserted that Molière in “Tartuffe” had done a similar thing, and was a classic. Possibly we should have urged the same arguments in New York if—let us say—Mr. Theodore Kremer had woven a brand new melodrama around the theme of Shakespeare’s “Cymbeline,” and it had been “stopped” on the ground of impropriety.

The drama at the Gymnase seemed to me rather a pitiful effort at sensation. There is but one way of treating a priest upon the stage, and it is by placing him in juxtaposition with a woman. He is rarely allowed to be 151
interesting in any other shape. Among actors there is a superstition that regards every play with a priest in it as “unlucky.” The cleric is supposed to “hoodoo” the drama. If I were a playwright I think I should elect to be on the “safe side.” I should take no risks, for very rarely does a priest-ridden drama succeed. “Ces Messieurs” certainly seems to be a case that justifies the actors’ superstition.

The heroine of the piece is a young widow, who, after the loss of her husband and child, has given up mundane pleasure. She lives in the provinces, with a large and singularly talky family, and has “taken up” religion. Upon the scene comes the *Abbé Thibaut*, a young priest with good looks and even better intentions. He is eloquent and mystic; *Henriette* interests herself in him immediately, and gives him funds for his schools and benevolent institutions. *Thibaut* is ambitious, and he needs the money. The man and woman are soon embroiled in an “affair,” though they are both unconscious of that fact.

Other priests occur. One—the villain of the piece—reports *Thibaut* to the other, a benevolent Monsignor, who is displayed in a luxury of “monsignor” robes. Pettiness, intrigue, jealousy, hatred, malevolence, are ascribed to the *Abbé Morisson*, who is as deep-dyed a villain as one could wish to find in the Third Avenue Theater or the Grand Opera House. Through a sea of talk, the audience is carried to the fourth act—which is *the* act—where *Henriette* learns that *Thibaut* is to be removed from her clutches to another scene of action. Then the storm bursts, and the air is cleared with much electrical sensation.

It is not necessary to go into details. All that a woman can say who has horridly mixed up the religious with the secular, the carnal with the mystic, *Henriette* says, in an ecstasy of exclamation points. *Thibaut* was essential to her, for she could not pray without him! He was part of her life, both earthly and heavenly. In an exasperation of anguish she develops a sort of insanity that makes a plausible excuse for the ugly irreverence and the blasphemy of the playwright.

Blasphemy always seems to me the weakest sort of sensation. Any idiot can blaspheme, and most of them do. It is the keynote of “Ces Messieurs.” The priest is the target at which the woman hurls her ugly shafts. Sensuality masquerading in the cloak of religion renders this heroine as disagreeable as any I have ever seen staged. And this—with nothing more—is M. Ancey’s case against the priests. The *Abbé* has accepted *Henriette’s* money for his works of benevolence, and she had given it not because she was actuated by religion, but because she was hopelessly in love with the priest himself, who had involuntarily inspired the sentiment.

There was nothing at all in the play but this fourth act, that gave you mingled sensations of disgust and

shock. Moreover, nothing happened. After *Henriette's* insanity, during which she threatened the priests with all sorts of scandals, she calmed down, went back to the family, devoted the rest of her life to her little nieces and nephews, and lived happily ever afterward. The moral—as far as I could see—was that women menace the life of priests, and not, as M. Ancey tried to insist, that priests threaten the welfare of women. The minister of public instruction, who must be as silly as the London censor, objected to the piece because it was supposed to malign the priesthood, and to hold it up as something to be ousted from the domestic hearth. The piece taught me quite a different lesson. It was that priests should beware of designing but apparently perfect ladies.

Fortunately "Ces Messieurs" was well acted. Madame Andrée Mégard played *Henriette* with exquisite distinction and much dramatic power. André Hall was the *Abbé Thibaut*, and into the rôle he managed to infuse a good deal of picturesque mysticism. The other priests were assigned to M. Arvel and to M. Jean Dax, who 152
resisted the temptation to cheapen a cheap subject.

The cream of Paris—generally called "*tout Paris*," which is quite a mistake, because the underlying milk is more important—no longer goes to the big, usual, conventional theaters. Little nooky places have become immensely popular here, and are gaining ground all the time. The Grand Guignol, the Boite a Fursy and the Mathurins are always packed to their tiny little doors, and the idea is to present varied dramatic entertainments in capsule form. It is the idea that Mr. Frank Keenan essayed so unsuccessfully at the Berkeley Lyceum in New York last season. Paris is fatigued, and finds no trouble in digesting tabloids. New York, still young, vigorous and hale, prefers its drama in lumps, and suffers from no dyspeptic results. We are not yet ready for drama in whiffs. In Paris that is the approved style of taking the medicine.

While the little King of Spain was inhaling grand opera, I took five dramatic pills at the Mathurins. It is such a tiny little place that at first I thought I had gone wrong, and was in an antechamber. Plain papered walls, ascetic chairs, a moldy piano, and a couple of usherettes seemed extremely bare. The price of admission did not suffer in the same way. It was exorbitant. The Mathurins was crowded with a swagger-looking collection of men and women. Above its doors appeared the following, that you may translate for yourselves:

Ici point de facheux, ni de mine bourrue
Laissez, avant d'entrer, vos soucis dans la rue.

The five plays at the Mathurins were "Retour de Bal," by Claude Real; "Oui! Benoist," by Rito de Marghy; "Le Chasseur de Tigre Blanc," by Tristan Bernard; "La Rupture," by M. Nozière, and "Le Pyjama," by Jules Rateau. Two of these, the second and fourth, were blood-curdlers, in the style of Edgar Allan Poe, with modern improvements and a Parisian outlook.

"Oui! Benoist" was a frenzied effort to be grewsome. The title represents the incessant remark of a country clodhopper to his "boss." This "boss" was in love with a stout siren, who preferred a neurasthenic gentleman perpetually haunted by a particular melody. This melody had got on his nerves and had made him insane. (I couldn't help wondering if he had enjoyed a season in musical comedy in New York, for, if so, I could quite understand his case.) *Mathyas*, as he was called, was trying to live down the melody, and nobody dared to hum it in his presence. He was made up with a white face, and dark rings under his eyes. The siren was most solicitous for his welfare.

Then came the innings of *Benoist*, the jealous "boss." There was a well upon the stage, very deep and dark, and—in dismal conspiracy—he prevailed upon the country clodhopper to go down into the well and from its depths sing up the forbidden melody till it reached the neurasthenic gentleman. The scheme worked. No sooner was the invalid upon the stage than from the bowels of the well the luckless dirge emerged. Instantly the patient was stricken. In wild insanity, he took a huge stone, and flung it into the well to kill the music.

Groans and anguish from the clodhopper. Agony all over the stage.

"Are you mortally hurt, Joseph?" asked the guilty "boss," peering into the depths.

And from the well came up the halting murmur, "*Oui, Benoist!*" as the curtain fell.

The other blood-curdler was "La Rupture," which introduced Mme. Polaire, a lady who has had a multi-colored career. At one time she was a sort of rival of Yvette Guilbert. At present she does the melodramatic upon the slightest provocation. Her "attraction" is her ugliness—her extreme and unmitigated homeliness. Even that sort of thing is popular in fatigued Paris. A woman who is homely to the verge of distraction may be as great a draw as her sister who is just as bewilderingly beautiful. It is the extremes that meet.

In "La Rupture" Mme. Polaire played the part of a woman with a poor lover. She was very fond of him, but 153
he was impecunious, and she was expensive and terribly jealous. So she listens to the suit of a disgusting old fossil, who is smitten with her charms. Her repulsion is displayed with startling realism, and it furnishes the cue to the lover, who darts out and stabs the old man in the back. He falls dead, and there is a panic-stricken scene between the lovers. The woman is terrified; the man is horror-stricken; the corpse lies before them. There is a dark green atmosphere, full of the hoarse whispers of the guilty couple, in recrimination and disgust. There is no end to "La Rupture." It leaves off suddenly; the curtain falls. You spear a sensation, but it is half-fraudulent.

Across the Channel, and to London. It seems healthier, even if it isn't. At any rate, one feels more at home there. The American manager stalks through the English land, with his pocketbook in evidence, and his plans neatly newspapered. He is a bit lost in Paris, because he can't produce the plays offered there without adapting them, and in the adaptation much is lost, and nothing takes its place. He sees a Parisian success, but the hero and heroine are never married. That is the stickler. A wedding ring would ruin them, and we have our little prejudice in favor of that magic circlet. The wedding ring may not be artistic—that is the Parisian answer to our plaints—but until we have discovered something that will aptly take its place, we prefer it. The American manager dare not fly in the face of the wedding ring, and that is why he shuffles about rather uneasily in Paris.

Sometimes he takes his adapter with him to see these French plays. Even that is unsatisfactory. The adapter is human, and he wants some work to do-o-o. He scents "possibilities," and he is not afraid to say so. But French plays are becoming more and more impossible for New York. An American audience will not stand talk, and a

French audience enjoys it when it hovers around the one eternal theme. Then the French idea of ending happily differs so essentially from the American notion, which is indissolubly allied with the wedding ring. The merry peals of nuptial bells ring no music into French ears.

The one attraction of the London season that has "attracted" is Mr. Alfred Sutro's play at the Garrick Theater, called "The Walls of Jericho." Mr. James K. Hackett, who has hitherto contented himself with being merely beautiful, in the rôles of fanciful and highly upholstered kings, and the daredevil idiots of cheap, book-tweaked "romance," has secured the play for New York. Mr. Hackett will have to forego his gilt and plush adornments, the silken tights that he has worn so long and so lovingly. He will have to dress as a modern man, and to blazon forth the persistent and hackneyed criminality of that section of humanity known as "society."

Society, as we are all aware, has an irresistible attraction for the "kid-glove" playwright. Whether it be a case of "the fox and the grapes," or a mere gallery desire to cater to the multitude, certain it is that the dramatist, skilled or unskilled, delights in portrayal of the alleged smart set; even if he be forced to approach the tinsel glories of Mayfair and Fifth Avenue by the way of the scullery door. Even if all his "points" be obtained from a communicative Jeames or a not-too-reticent Sarah Jane, he is not dismayed.

Society must be shown up and periodically exposed; its vagaries must be held up to ridicule; it must be set forth as degenerate; it must be made to suggest the effeminacy and luxury of Rome at the time when Mr. Gibbon made it "decline and fall." How to do this perpetually, and with a "new wrinkle"? The playwright in reality has no grudge at all against "society"—that is blissfully unaware of his very existence. His object is merely to evolve some sort of a "roast" that has a semblance of novelty. In London there are penny papers devoted purely to "society gossip" that are boons to the ambitious playwright—and to Sarah Jane.

Mr. Alfred Sutro, author of "The Walls of Jericho," was in luck. In England at the present time there lurks a 154
horrible disease known as "bridge." It is a kind of mania on this side of the pond, and, although it is quite as middle class, and even lower class, as it is smart set, naturally Mr. Sutro need not notice that unimportant fact. That society plays bridge is no more remarkable than that society golfs and motors. Mr. Sutro's point—very far-fetched, cheap and sensational—is that Mayfair has undermined and corrupted itself by the game. According to "The Walls of Jericho," bridge seems to be responsible for childless women, sexless ladies, an unmoral outlook and other ills from which society—in novels and on the stage—is bound to suffer.

From what I have seen of the game—and I am not a card player—it seems to be nothing more than disagreeable in a very ordinary way. Every fellow hates his partner, and dogs certainly delight to bark and bite—for is it not their nature to? But, as for any illicit after-effect, I cannot imagine where it can come in. Bridge players appear to me to be far too engrossed in bickering and fault-finding to worry about immorality and laxity.

You will pardon this apparent digression. "The Walls of Jericho" being a long, preachy and rather foolish tirade against a game of cards, my apparent digression is necessary. The success of the play with the pit and gallery in London shows that the game is popular with the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker. Otherwise, these would fail to understand the second act, as—I candidly admit—I did.

In this act, various ladies of rank and title, including a duchess, are displayed in the act of playing bridge, in *Lady Alethea Frobisher's* boudoir. They are all handsomely gowned, and exceedingly "bong tong," but nothing happens at all. Mr. Sutro undoubtedly intends that the picture shall be extremely infamous, and prepare us for the subsequent rebellion of *Lady Alethea's* nauseatingly right-minded husband. To my mind, *Lady Alethea* was but a weak and wishy-washy version of a certain *Lady Teazle*, and if Jericho could fall so easily there must have been Buddensiecks in those days. It deserved to fall.

I should like to come down to mere facts, but in "The Walls of Jericho" there are so few that they are scarcely worth mentioning. Viewed from the standpoint of one immune from the bridge germ, it is a dull and preachy succession of platitudes. *Jack Frobisher*, the righteous hero, has made his money in Queensland, with sheep. Perhaps that is why he baas through four acts. He is the husband of *Alethea*. They have a son. She is too absorbed in her "set" to pay much interest to the child, who—thank goodness!—does not appear.

In the third act *Frobisher* announces his intention of returning to Queensland and "nature," and of taking her with him. Queensland, under any circumstances, must be horrible, but with such a prig as Mr. Sutro's hero, it would be so loathsome that my sympathy was entirely with *Lady Alethea*, when, like a Laura Jean Libbey lady, she "drew herself up to her full height" and refused to go. In the last act she changed her mind, and went. *Mr. Frobisher* blew the trumpet, and the walls of Jericho fell. There is the play. As the comedian in the piece remarked—and it is the only phrase you carry away—"Jericho must have been jerry-built."

Mr. Arthur Bourchier, who, I understand, is reveling in the fact that he "discovered" Mr. Alfred Sutro, played *Frobisher*. Mr. Bourchier is an actor-manager of much talk and self-importance. As the righteous husband of a butterfly wife, and the adoring father of an unseen brat, he was lacking in lightness and "sympathy." The playwright's point—always presuming that he had one—went hopelessly astray. Mr. Bourchier was a bore, rather than a bridge-pecked husband, and his preachiness was appallingly tedious, his delivery savoring of that supposed to be popular in the House of Commons. I could have slept through it; I think I did.

Miss Violet Vanbrugh, popular in London as the actor-manager's wife, is a clever actress marred by 155
mannerisms which would make her impossible outside of London. The affectation of her speech, the peculiarity of her stare and glare, give the casual spectator a curious sensation. There is a good deal of the freakish in her method; it is not natural, wholesome and universal. Yet beneath the surface one realizes that Miss Vanbrugh is an artist, who has evolved marvelously since New York saw her in a silly play called "The Queen's Proctor." The other puppets in this bridge bout included Miss Muriel Beaumont, a little *ingénue* who is charming; H. Nye Chart, Sydney Valentine, O. B. Clarence—one of the conventional senile bores—and Miss Lena Halliday.

Stamped as a London success—and the stamp is genuine—it will be curious to watch the fate of "The Walls of Jericho" in New York. Possibly Mr. Hackett may do more for it than Mr. Bourchier, for he has played so many inane heroes that one more cannot hurt him; but he will have to work very hard, and I do not envy him his job.

The second play I saw after my arrival in London was "What Pamela Wanted," at the Criterion Theater. Of

course I had no idea what *Pamela* did want. I had a vague notion what I, myself, wanted. It was a good play, and I'm sorry to say I didn't get it, and the piece has since been withdrawn. It was a so-called comedy from the pen of Mme. Fred de Gresac—author of "The Marriage of Kitty"—and that weakest of French writers, Pierre Veber. These twain were done into London by Charles Brookfield.

Mme. de Gresac is an amusing Parisienne, who has played some merry tunes on the marriage theme. She is a bit flighty, according to our notions, and inclined to regard the wedding ring as a huge joke, but she is really humorous, and with a clever adapter has possibilities. We realized that fact when we saw "The Marriage of Kitty." "What Pamela Wanted" was unfortunately used as a vehicle for Miss Ethel Irving, who—unlike Marie Tempest—was by no means ready to emerge from the slough of musical comedy. In an effort to make the piece fit Miss Irving, Mr. Brookfield failed to make it fit her public.

Pamela was introduced as a bread-and-butter miss, who, after a few moments' talk with a strange young man, agreed to marry him, on the understanding that both should gang their ain gait. *Pamela* had just left school as she met the youth, and the character, translated into English, was not plausible enough to be funny. There must be plausibility before comedy can take root. The foolish husband, jealous of *Pamela*, and the badly drawn *Pamela*, jealous of the foolish husband, all leading up to a happy understanding, which was "what Pamela wanted," left gaps in an evening's entertainment.

The piece was eked out by conventionally stupid characters, including one of those nasty old fathers that our sense of propriety will not tolerate; the usual "dashing" young actress, a French maid, and a skittish widow. The only type that amused was a flabby dude, and this was funny only because it was so well played by Mr. Lennox Pawle. Miss Ethel Irving herself, so charming in musical comedy, was heavy, stodgy and uninteresting. As a "star," she was so lacking in all essentials that she reminded me of New York rather than of London. She recalled my favorite "rushlights," and I didn't cross the Atlantic to sample them anew.

The part played by “high life” in fiction. The significance of its popularity as a theme for new novels illustrated by recent books. “The Marriage of William Ashe,” “Belchamber,” “The Dark Lantern.” Other books. The twenty-five best selling books of the month

THERE is at least one field in fiction that will probably never be exhausted; at any rate, not until the distinctions that have always divided human beings into classes become obliterated. High life has always possessed, as it does to-day, peculiar attractions both for the novel writer and the novel reader. Whatever may be the truth about the importance of the part played by the devotees of society from a purely utilitarian point of view, whatever may be said about their follies and extravagances and even immoralities, it still remains true that their doings and characters constitute a theme in fiction which is perennially active.

Other “types” come and go as manners and methods change, just as, in recent years, we have seen the development of the “industrial” or “commercial” novel, but the society story still flourishes, as it always has. The Englishman is not the only one who dearly loves a lord. Though we have no nobility on this side of the water, there is no lack among us of interest in the class that in America supplies its place. The society columns in the daily newspapers furnish sufficient evidence of this, for it is not to be presumed that so much space would be devoted to a topic if there were not a widespread interest in it.

What is done by the votaries of fashion is of little importance, so long as they do something. It may be that they shock sober-minded people and supply material for satirists. Their scandals, of which probably they have no more than their fair share, and their monkey dinners, may be offenses against propriety and good taste, but those who object still consume the news that comes from Fifth Avenue and Newport and Belgravia, whether it is told in newspapers or in the latest novel.

The significance of all this is that, even if we ourselves have not the time for play in our strenuous lives, we still like to hear about those whose chief pursuit is entertainment and recreation. The leisure class in every community is the conspicuous class, just as is the successful man. The toilers and the failures may be sure that they will be undisturbed and forgotten, and take what comfort they can in the knowledge that their right to privacy will be respected.

But social leaders must pay the penalty of their leadership. The publicity that those in humbler walks of life shrink from, they must accept as part of the day’s work. They must submit to satire, caricature, and even slander, without concern. They must not complain if, as has recently been intimated, envious novelists misrepresent them and their customs and traditions. They are to remember that they exist, not only to entertain and amuse themselves, but to do the same for the lookers-on, who are not part of the show.

Mrs. Humphry Ward has outdone herself in the interest aroused by “The Marriage of William Ashe,” Harpers, and the book has kept readers and reviewers busy, with many editions, since its publication. The surmise that its author provided herself with some historical backing for her portraiture of Lady Kitty and Geoffry Cliffe, in the characters of Lady Caroline Lamb and Lord Byron, by no means diminishes admiration of her creative powers. The background of reality merely serves to protect her from the charge of over-exaggeration, while the personality of the restless and many-sided little heroine herself takes too strong a hold upon all readers to leave much room for criticism in this respect.

Ashe is, as the best type of English gentleman and statesman, capitally done. Mary Lyster would have been as perfect a portrait of the same class of social product but for the author’s inartistic slip in degrading her unexpectedly to the rôle of stage villain, the jarring note in this clever story. Logically, Mary would have been William’s wife but for Kitty’s appeal to the latter at a time when his sympathies were most vulnerable. Their marriage is, from the first, an incongruous one; Ashe’s indulgence and blindness throw Kitty’s absurdities into increasingly conspicuous relief, and his absorption in political exigencies is broken only at intervals by some startling misdemeanor on her part, resulting in scenes of passionate and half-remorseful affection. Cliffe’s strange influence upon Kitty forms a powerful developing force upon her destiny. Her occasional revolt against it is quite in keeping with the strength which now and then manifests itself in her untrained and abnormal make-up. The character of Lady Caroline is followed in main events; seldom overdrawn, though in the capacity of hostess she is now and then allowed to lapse into a lower grade of social standards than one would expect, and her heartlessness toward her child seems inconsistent with certain other outbreaks of maternal passion.

The gentle, worldly-wise little Dean must not be passed over. Perhaps the strongest point in the whole story is laid in the closing scene, where he brings home to Ashe the latter’s terrible responsibility for his wife’s degradation because of the poverty of a love which has taken no account of the soul and its claims in his policy of blindness and indulgence. Poor Lady Kitty discovers that same soul, too late for the discovery to be of much use either to herself or her husband, but one is rather relieved to leave them reconciled, even with the interruption of Lady Kitty’s demise, and to wish William a more serene period of existence. For Mrs. Ward’s heroes and heroines are very real people, moving in familiar paths, and the charm of her stories is that one

forgets the fictitious in a thoroughly absorbing interest.

"A Dark Lantern," by Elizabeth Robins, Macmillan Company, is another story of English society, and involves a somewhat striking study of character, though that is by no means all there is to the book.

Katharine Dereham is a very human and a very charming personality, in spite of the almost incredible inconsistencies which mark her relations with Prince Anton of Breitenlohe-Waldenstein in the beginning, and Garth Vincent at the end. It is not altogether incomprehensible that she should have been both attracted and repelled by the prince, when one considers the innate deceitfulness of his nature, and perhaps, after her experience with him, it is not so strange that she should have turned with relief to Vincent, whose sincerity was indomitable, even if it was habitually brutal.

Probably the feminine reader will more thoroughly understand and sympathize with Kitty Dereham's distress 158
of mind and spirit in her struggles with the problems presented to her, and even with her unconditional surrender to Garth Vincent.

If so, it will be because women lay greater stress upon uncompromising truthfulness in a man than in a mere artificial exterior.

These three characters are the predominating ones in the book, and they are drawn with a good deal of skill; those who assume the minor rôles are used with good effect to carry on the action and develop the story naturally and logically.

The style of the narrative is a little vexatious at times, but, on the whole, the story is extremely well told, and there is a succession of more or less dramatic episodes that make the book very interesting reading.

It happens, sometimes, that a novel is written for the publication of which no good reason can be given. Fortunately, such occurrences are rare, even in these days of "the literary deluge." One such book has lately appeared from the press of G. P. Putnam's Sons, under the title of "Belchamber," the author of which is Howard Overing Sturgis.

The book is one of undeniable literary excellence in many respects, a fact which merely adds to the regret one must feel at its equally undeniable immorality in tone, its artistic iconoclasm, its distinctly pessimistic tendency, and its deplorably bad taste in its frank discussion of conjugal matters, some of which are commonly referred to only in treatises on physiology.

It is a story of English society, and, notwithstanding all the unpleasant truths that have been and may be told of this branch of "high life," it is difficult to believe that any such considerable portion of it as Mr. Sturgis deals with is so destitute of attractive characters. It is for this reason that the book cannot be read without a feeling of depression. People as depraved as Cissy Eccleston and Claude Morland, so sordidly unprincipled as Lady Eccleston, so uselessly selfish as Arthur, so nearly degenerate, physically and mentally, as Sainty, the hero, is intentionally represented to be, should, if they are to be used in fiction at all, be subjected to the counterbalancing influence of decent people; but in "Belchamber" there is no such relief.

Sainty, otherwise Lord Belchamber, in spite of the fictitious virtues with which his creator seeks to invest him, cannot but repel the healthy-minded reader by his pitiable weakness of character, to say nothing of his physical infirmities, the more that they are the consequences of the excesses of his progenitors.

A superficial reading of "The Fire of Spring," by Margaret Potter, D. Appleton & Co., might lead to the conclusion that the book is very different from "The Flame Gatherers," the last work of the same author, which was published a year ago, but, as a matter of fact, they are, in substance, not at all dissimilar. In one respect, at least, they are identical, and that is the point of view from which the love element is considered. The time and space which separate the scene of the action of the two stories have not modified the primitive quality of the love which supplies the *motif*. It is a love in which the material predominates.

It must be confessed that there were grounds for the doubt felt by Charles Van Studdiford's two companions as to the possibility of his being in love "with a young girl, of gentle birth and highest breeding, as unassailable by the coarser methods as the women Charles had hitherto known would have been by the finer." Nevertheless, he cannot justly be blamed for all of the trouble that followed his marriage with Virginia Merrill. As she took him obviously for his money, her distress at the subsequent discovery of his grossness is not likely to provoke much sympathy for her, and in becoming entangled with Philip Atkinson, "the erotic man," she sacrificed her last claim to respect.

The theme and plot are more or less familiar, but the author has, with an unusual subtlety and power, 159
imparted to them a vitality that not merely engages the attention, but actually involves the reader as an active participant. She has given evidences of a rather unique gift of magnetism, the development of which will bear watching.

"Lady Noggs, Peeress," by Edgar Jepson, McClure, Phillips & Co., though a story of children, or, rather, of a child, for her contemporaries play an inconspicuous part through most of the tale, is essentially a book for the

grown-ups, and unhappy must the man or woman be who cannot enjoy it. Lady Noggs, who would, if she were actually what she is represented to be, have her place in “Burke’s Peerage” as Lady Felicia Grandison, is a delightful mixture of dignity and impudence. Full to brimming over with a harmless mischief that is instinctive in a healthy, normal child, yet when the occasion requires she never fails to exact the homage which she considers due to her position as a peeress and her birth as a British subject, as the Prince and Princess of Meiningen-Schwerin found to their cost.

If her uncle, the prime minister, was invariably baffled and perplexed by her vagaries and distressed by the consequences of her escapades, Mr. Borrodaile and Miss Caldecott had reason to be grateful for her aid in straightening out their affairs.

Mr. Beresford Caldecott’s dismay at the openly expressed admiration and persistent attentions of the Lady Noggs, the Admirable Tinker and Elsie will not excite much sympathy; on the contrary, the emotions of the children will be appreciated and shared by most readers. For “a dapper little man with a very red face and a very shiny top hat” to assume such a sobriquet as “Tiger Jake” is calculated to stir the suspicions even of children; and when such children begin to suspect that they are being imposed upon, the results are likely to be unpleasant for the offender.

“The Belted Seas,” by Arthur Colton, Henry Holt & Co., is a story, or, strictly speaking, a series of stories, told in the course of a winter’s afternoon by Captain Buckingham, who, with his audience, was seated “by Pemberton’s Chimney.”

“Pemberton’s” was a small hotel near the village of Greenough, somewhere, perhaps anywhere, on the southern coast of Long Island, frequented mostly by sailors, not superannuated exactly, but at least of the age when men who have had an active and adventurous life like to sit around and tell of what they have seen and done, or listen while some one else tells of their experiences. Of course, if a landsman happens along, he hears many strange tales, and, if he is an author, gets “copy.” And on this particular winter afternoon such a landsman was present while Captain Buckingham talked. Hence “The Belted Seas.”

The captain, according to his own account, had had some extraordinary adventures, shared by extraordinary companions, Stevey Todd, Sadler and Captain Abe Dalrimple. It seems doubtful, however, if Captain Buckingham would have had such a fund of rich material to draw upon for his yarns if it had not been for Sadler’s genius for creating original situations. The latter’s doings in Portale and Saleratus would make a book of themselves, if they were duly amplified.

The “Hotel Helen Mar” was an inspiration, and only goes to show how buoyant and optimistic dispositions may, with a little ingenuity, turn disaster into prosperity.

The stories are deliberately told, a little too much so, perhaps, for sustained interest, though it is to be remembered that an old sailor cannot be hurried while he is spinning a yarn.

Miss Marie Van Vorst, who collaborated with her sister-in-law, Mrs. John Van Vorst, in the authorship of “The Woman Who Toils,” the book which, it will be remembered, provoked President Roosevelt’s famous utterance concerning race suicide, has published, through Dodd, Mead & Co., a novel that ought to make a permanent place for itself, and add much to its author’s fame.

If it can be classified at all, it must be said to belong to the industrial type; the scene of its action is laid in the cotton mills of the South, and its special problem is the employment of child labor—though it is not to be understood that it is a problem novel in the strict sense of the term.

The degradation of Henry Euston, his descent into the moral and physical depths which he has reached at the opening of the story, and his subsequent regeneration; Amanda’s development from a child of the “poor whites” to the impressively elegant young woman, are the main threads about which the story is woven. Other matters, incidents and characters alike, are subordinate to these two, but are of a nature to combine in making a very strong story. The book is full of dramatic climaxes, more or less strenuous, and it cannot be said to be lacking at any point in interest; it is a book to be read more than once if it is to be thoroughly digested and appreciated.

If it contains any faults, they are to be found in the construction rather than in conception or style. There is rather forced upon the reader the impression of deficiency in this respect, which seems to be due to the author’s failure to grasp thoroughly and hold firmly at all times the details of the plot, with a resulting lack of co-ordination in the action.

It must be said of John F. Whitson’s new book, “Justin Wingate, Ranchman,” Little, Brown & Co., that in it the author has failed to realize the promise of his earlier book, “The Rainbow Chasers.” This is partly due, doubtless, to the fact that, compared with the latter story, the theme of “Justin Wingate” is more or less threadbare. The lumber camps of Arkansas furnished a new setting for a story, and their customs and local color were intrinsically interesting, even though, aside from this, the story was a good one.

But the sheep and cattle ranch, especially the latter, and the cowboy, have figured so often in novels, that to make a commendable tale of such material nowadays, there must be a decided human and dramatic interest, and a considerable degree of literary skill.

The Twenty-five Best Selling Books of the Month.

“The Marriage of William Ashe,” Mrs. Humphry Ward, Harper & Bros.
“The Masquerader,” Katherine C. Thurston, Harper & Bros.
“The Accomplice,” Fred’k Trevor Hill, Harper & Bros.
“The Orchid,” Robert Grant, Chas. Scribner’s Sons.
“A Dark Lantern,” Elizabeth Robins, Macmillan Co.
“The Game,” Jack London, Macmillan Co.
“The Life Worth Living,” Thos. Dixon, Doubleday, Page & Co.
“The Clansman,” Thos. Dixon, Doubleday, Page & Co.
“Sandy,” Alice Hegan Rice, Century Co.
“Mrs. Essington,” Esther and Lucia Chamberlain, Century Co.
“Constance Trescot,” S. Weir Mitchell, Century Co.
“Pam,” Bettina von Hutten, Dodd, Mead & Co.
“The Purple Parasol,” George B. McCutcheon, Dodd, Mead & Co.
“The Princess Passes,” C. N. and A. M. Williamson, Henry Holt & Co.
“The Divine Fire,” May Sinclair, Henry Holt & Co.
“Nancy Stair,” Elinor M. Lane, D. Appleton & Co.
“The Garden of Allah,” Robert Hichens, F. A. Stokes & Co.
“The Rose of the World,” Agnes and Egerton Castle, F. A. Stokes & Co.
“The Man on the Box,” Harold McGrath, Bobbs-Merrill.
“The Master Mummer,” E. Phillips Oppenheim, Little, Brown.
“The Breath of the Gods,” Sidney McCall, Little, Brown.
“The Great Mogul,” Louis Tracy, E. J. Clode.
“Jörn Uhl,” Gustav Frenssen, Dana, Estes & Co.
“For the White Christ,” Robert A. Bennet, McClurg Co.
“The Ravenels,” Harris Dickson, J. B. Lippincott Co.

Transcribers' Notes

The articles in this magazine were written by different people, and some of the articles contain dialect. So, inconsistent punctuation, hyphenation, and spelling were not changed.

Page 1: The opening quotation mark of the first paragraph was intentionally omitted by the original publisher.

Page 17: "CHAPTER VIII." was misprinted as "CHAPTER VII." and has been corrected here.

Page 45: The closing quotation mark after "masculine point of view:" was added by the Transcriber. It may belong after "dazzle me with light."

Page 150: The introduction to "Dramatic Flashes from London & Paris" ends abruptly after the word "players".

Page 150: An unmatched quotation mark before "prohibited for a long time" was removed by the Transcriber.

Page 156: The introduction to "For Book Lovers" ends abruptly after the word "month".

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