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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XVI. OCTOBER, 1905. No. 3.

YOUNG CARRINGTON'S CAREER

BY

Beatrice Hanscom

CHAPTER I.

THE studio in Numero — rue Boissonade had on its holiday togs: model stand covered with rugs, tea table much in evidence, framed picture on the easel, and lilacs enough in the great brass bowl in the corner to serve as sweetly affirmative witnesses that the heart of Paris and the heart of spring had renewed their yearly alliance.

To judge from the blitheness of Carrington, he, too, had spring in his heart and a festal day in prospect.

Life, already lavish in good gifts, was on the point of giving him the one he most desired to grasp.

At twenty-one he had health, plenty of money, and a talent to which he considered health and money merely subservient—a talent which lured him to work indefatigably.

The portrait on which he had lavished himself hung on the line in the spring salon; and Velantour, the master for whom he had toiled tirelessly for the last three years—Velantour, the sternest critic in France, most sparing in praise—Velantour, whose painting expeditions in the far East were always solitary save for his trusted courier—*Velantour* had invited Carrington to go with him to the Vale of Cashmere and the Himalayas! To paint with him and by his side for three long, delicious months.

"It is not enough to put people's souls on canvas, *mon cher*, if you can't put nature's heart back of them," he had told him, hand on his shoulder. Velantour, whose caustic criticisms usually confined themselves to technique, and took small account of souls!

Carrington tingled to his finger tips in the desire to be off. Life was good—was "bully," as Carrington phrased it. And he whistled softly, rapturous as a thrush, as he crossed the studio to lift a corner of the rug which covered a trunk masquerading as a seat, a trunk locked and strapped; packed with an infinite forethought for any possible contingency that might arise during the trip; with enough paint tubes and brushes to set up a small dealer; packed, too, with hopes and aspiration, which luckily take up no room, and do not increase the excess baggage rate. Had they weighed the smallest fraction of an ounce apiece, modern hydraulics could not have lifted that trunk a single inch.

"And we start to-night! Jove, it's unbelievable!" he said, exultantly, as he dropped the rug corner and stood up, straight and slender and tall, a handsome boy with his black hair a trifle long, his blue eyes aglow, his delicate features alight with enthusiasm as he drew in a long breath of satisfaction.

There was a touch of the romantic in his attire—in the loosely hanging, dark gray velveteen suit that was almost black, and the soft cravat that had the color of pigeon's blood.

He was young enough to like that sort of thing, dandy enough to order those dull gray suits by the half dozen, with long, crimson lined cloaks and marvelous soft felt hats; and handsome enough to make Velantour vow he would immortalize him in them. "*Le nouveau* Van Dyck," he whispered to himself, for he loved the boy as much as he believed in his future, and he believed in that with the intensity and concentrated fervor of a man who permits himself few beliefs.

"To have a son like that!" he would murmur—little, squat, short-legged, gray-headed, lonely old, famous Velantour; and the words wrenched his lips into the dry twist of an old grief.

For Velantour's scapegrace son had rested many years in Père-la-Chaise.

* * * * *

Velantour was coming this afternoon to the informal little reunion of the half dozen friends whom Carrington had summoned to wish him God-speed.

With the warning swish of the curtains Carrington turned to see if it was he even now. But he saw instead a young fellow of his own age, a youth whose brown hair curled obstinately, whose mouth was wide and mobile,

and who had the kind of snub nose one inevitably associates with jollity.

"My dear Ned, you're most disappointing," the newcomer stated, with burlesque complaint and a gesture that sent his hands far apart. "You ought to be putting the last touch to a tuft of grass in the foreground. It's a poor foreground that won't stand a few extra tufts here and there, and it's an immensely effective proceeding. Or else you ought to be on your knees to the gods. You're neither posing piously to please Providence, nor patently to please Paris. I'm afraid we've overrated your genius. You'll never make a Whistler."

He laughed good-humoredly as he grasped Carrington's outstretched hand. Robert Parker, yclept Bobbins, took life easily.

"I'm so happy, Bobbins," Carrington confided in him, "that I can't even think. Isn't it ripping—going east with Velantour?"

"It is for you, Rising Genius," Bobbins assured him, "but so far as I am concerned, though I might manage to sit under a Kashmirian cedar with a fan, standing on an icy peak with a pot of paint strapped to my waistband, and a fault-finding old gentleman to tell me how badly I was using it, isn't my ideal of bliss. No Himalayas for me."

"Bless you, Bobbins, we're not contracting to paint them by the yard, the way you do a fence," expostulated Carrington, laughingly. "We're going to make pictures, not advertise breakfast foods."

"What is your sister going to do?" queried Bobbins.

"Elenore is going to Brittany to-morrow with the Waldens," Carrington told him promptly.

"And Hastings, I presume, has always wanted to go to Brittany," Bobbins laughed.

"Well, Hastings has certainly developed a sudden enthusiasm in that direction," Carrington acknowledged.

"Do you suppose Elenore——" Bobbins began mysteriously.

"I know enough to know that I don't know anything about girls," Elenore's brother announced, promptly. "Do you suppose Hastings——"

"I certainly do," said Bobbins, fervently. "And he has a bad case of it. Wouldn't go to the *Bal Bullier* the other night; thinks *cafés chantants* are vulgar; doesn't hear what you are saying half the time, and has taken to humming 'Home-keeping hearts are happiest.' You don't have to take him to the hospital to see what's the matter with him."

"I told him distinctly *by the hour*," a high-pitched, patrician voice floated in from the hall, "and if he doesn't stop swearing he'll have to put his *pourboire* in troches." Coincident with the remark a fluent outburst of Parisian profanity came wafting in the open windows.

"My dear Ned," said Mrs. Van Velt, the owner of the patrician voice, appearing in the doorway; "would you mind sending some one to chloroform my cabby? The more Carol argues with him, the more vocal he becomes. He seems to think that they also swear who only sit and wait."

Mrs. Van Velt was a dowager unmistakably American.

She appeared to have been poured into her black satin gown at some abnormally high temperature and at a calculation perilously close. Her gray pompadour strained back from her high forehead in an apparent endeavor to oust her bonnet as an insolent trespasser on its private domain, but the bonnet, a black octopus with an intelligent jetty eye, wound two narrow black velvet tentacles firmly beneath Mrs. Van Velt's double chin, and triumphed calmly.

"You go, Bobbins," said Carrington, gayly. "Mrs. Van Velt, may I present Mr. Parker? Chloroforming cabbies is one of his specialties. You may be sure that it will be painless and thorough."

"And bring back my daughter, Mr. Parker," said Mrs. Van Velt, as placidly as though she had said spectacles or handkerchief. The obliging young knight was already half way to the door. "Carol thought she ought to argue it out with him; and as she couldn't understand his French, and he couldn't understand hers, it seemed perfectly safe."

She laughed good-humoredly.

"That's a nice-looking boy, Ned," she said, as the subject of her remark disappeared. "Who is he, and how did he get such a remarkable name?"

"Bobbins?" said Carrington. "Oh, he's a trump. His father is the inventor—no, his grandfather—of Parker's Peerless Sewing Machine. You know all the advertisements say: 'Observe the bobbin. So simple, a child can work it.' And Robert the Third is such a generous chap, he's an awfully easy mark. So—Bobbins."

His hands turned palms upward in an explanatory gesture.

Mrs. Van Velt laughed again. Then she put a hand on Carrington's shoulder with a touch that was almost motherly.

"Ned," she said, affectionately, "I wish your father could be here to-day to see you before you go east. He'd be so proud of you. How long is it since he has seen you and Elenore?"

"Six years," said Carrington. "Dear old dad! Not since he sent us over here in Aunt Sarah's care, six years ago, when mother died. He's intended to come every year, but there's always been something at the mine to prevent it. Dad loves the struggle of business, you know."

"He loves his children, too," said Mrs. Van Velt, seriously. "It must be lonely for him. And the mine is in such a forlorn little, out-of-the-way place, 'way up there in northern Michigan."

"The mines situated right in the heart of Manhattan are pretty well worked out," Ned expostulated, humorously.

“Yellow Dog! Did you ever hear such a ghastly name?” Mrs. Van Velt went on. “Half the people thought your mother was crazy when she married him and went out there to live. They said he was harnessing Psyche to his mine machinery for motive power. And the other half said that when he was tired and wanted sympathy she’d write him a sonnet. Everybody agreed that they would be unhappy. And they were the happiest people I ever knew.”

“They certainly were,” said Carrington, emphatically. “How do you account for it?”

“Modern prophets have a horror of the country,” said Mrs. Van Velt, sententiously, “unless it’s in easy motoring distance of Sherry’s. And they overlooked the vital fact that when you’re making two human beings one, duplicate good qualities are quite as useless as duplicate wedding presents.

“It’s curious,” she continued, “about you twins: that Elenore has all her father’s love of adventure and his executive ability, for all her girlishness; and you have your mother’s talent and her tastes. You couldn’t be more different, and yet you look as much alike as you did when you were tots. I remember the first time your mother brought you east. Your Uncle Dick—well, your Uncle Dick thought rock-and-rye a splendid tonic for other people, but personally he took it without the rock, which he thought might be indigestible—and he looked at you both as you stood there side by side. And he said: ‘Bring on your blue ribbons. I can see two of them.’” 4

“Why, Mrs. Van Velt, and so early in the day, too!” said a gay voice behind her, a voice so like Carrington’s that it seemed his echo; and Elenore Carrington came forward to kiss the dowager on both cheeks.

As Mrs. Van Velt had said, the resemblance between the twins *was* remarkable.

They had the same height, the same coloring, the same blue eyes that had a trick of turning violet under emotion; the same delicate arch to the eyebrows; the same wavy line of hair upon the forehead; the same buoyant poise of body. Even a certain quick suppleness of motion belonged to them both; and, stranger still, their hands were wonderfully like.

The artistic impulse that gave to Ned’s a certain femininity in slenderness and taper fingers was curiously balanced by a strain of resourcefulness which lent to Elenore’s well-shaped white palms so strong a resemblance to her twin’s that it was only by putting them side by side and noting that hers were a bit smaller, a shade more femininely modeled, a trifle more delicately cushioned, that they were distinguishable.

The black locks that Carrington permitted to wave back just enough for picturesqueness, with no trace of the bizarre or of unkemptness, gave to his face a boyishness that carried a suggestion of eternal youth.

But Elenore’s dark hair was coiled low in the nape of her neck, and her manner was as feminine as was her distinctly smart and frilly pale blue chiffon frock.

“I’m glad,” Elenore went on, chaffingly, “that Aunt Sarah is safely on her way to the North Cape and cannot hear you describe your shocking condition.”

“Bless you, child,” said Mrs. Van Velt, promptly. “You’re altogether too good-looking. You ought to wear a veil. That’s what young Hastings thinks, I hear. He’s confided in Carol. And anyone who would confide in Carol must be laboring under strong mental excitement. And so your Aunt Sarah has really started for the North Cape! Women as plain as Sarah Moore are always pretending to be absorbed in the beauties of nature, but they are really trying to get their own minds and yours away from such sensitive subjects as snub noses.”

“Where is Carol?” demanded Elenore, laughingly. “Isn’t she coming to say good-by to Ned and me?”

“Carol seems to be putting in a stitch in time with that young sewing machine,” said Mrs. Van Velt, unperturbed. “She’s like her father. He never could bear to see machinery idle.”

Elenore looked up at her smilingly from the place she had taken at the tea table. The samovar was steaming gayly, and the girl’s white hands moved with housewifely deftness as she prepared to make tea. They were firm, capable hands, that it was a pleasure to watch.

The portières swung back with a decided flourish to admit a short, bright-eyed, gray-headed, animated old gentleman, who came forward with the buoyancy of a boy.

“Here I am, *cher* Edouard,” cried Velantour, gayly. “*Mademoiselle, mes hommages*, I come *exprès* to assure you that I shall take the bes’ of care of this brother of yours.”

“Mrs. Van Velt,” said Carrington, putting his hand affectionately on old Velantour’s arm, “I present to you Monsieur Velantour, the master of painting in France.”

“Madame,” said Velantour, courtly in turn, “I presen’ to you Monsieur Edouard Carrington, a *nouveau maître* of whom America will one day be very proud. 5

“You have a daughter, madame?” he added, gravely.

“Somewhere,” said Mrs. Van Velt, calmly.

“*C’est ça!*” said Velantour. “I fall over two young peopl’ in the hall as I enter—young Monsieur Parker and a young lady—and the young lady say: ‘Oh, Monsieur Velantour, will you tell mother I’ll be in in a minute?’ And Monsieur Parker say: ‘So soon as she have finish’ winding the bobbin.’”

“It’s all right, Mrs. Van Velt,” said Carrington, amusedly. “Bobbins is decidedly an eligible.”

“What is that, an eligible?” demanded Velantour, puzzled to know what could justify such calm.

“Well, in America, Monsieur Velantour,” Mrs. Van Velt informed him, “an eligible is an attractive man entirely surrounded by daughters—other people’s daughters.”

“When mother begins to talk about other people’s daughters it’s always time for me to appear,” announced Miss Carol Van Velt, entering gayly.

Bobbins, radiant, was just back of her; and a tall, serious, thoroughbred young fellow followed them.

Carol Van Velt was a remarkably pretty blonde, who looked delightfully *ingénue*, but was entirely capable of managing most masculinity. She accepted admiration as nonchalantly as she did bonbons, and considered that the sources of supply of both were unlimited. Experience seemed to prove that this theory was correct.

"*We* saw, anyway, that we were just being used as stepping-stones to higher things," she went on; "so we thought we might as well come in with Mr. Hastings."

She sank gracefully down on one end of a large divan, and drew her skirts aside with a gesture that assumed matter-of-factly that Bobbins would occupy the other half of the seat. He justified the conclusion with a promptness which left no doubt that he regarded it as a heaven-sent opportunity.

"Not that we minded being an angels' ladder," he asserted, cheerfully, "but I thought from Hastings' cast of countenance that he might be going to give you a few scenes from 'Hamlet,' and I didn't think it was safe to be sitting behind a curtain when he got to that part about *Polonius*."

Velantour regarded them with that awe which a Frenchman must feel for the rollicking frivolity of the American young and the placid inefficiency of the American parent.

Meantime Hastings had made his way to Elenore and slipped into a vacant chair by the tea table, as a matter of course.

She smiled at him very charmingly.

"You're late," she said, "and you were coming early, you know. Do you think you deserve caravan tea with a dash of burgundy in it?"

"I think I deserve all the good things I can get to-day," he said, and though his tone was light, there was an undertone that suggested that he meant it.

"It tastes to me more like burgundy with a dash of caravan tea," said Mrs. Van Velt. "After a while they will forget to put in the tea at all."

"And then, Monsieur Velantour?" said Carrington, amusedly; for the old Frenchman was sipping the mixture cautiously.

"Then it will not need mademoiselle's hands to make it perfection," said Velantour, with a humorous twist of his keen old lips.

His gray eyes gleamed as they applauded him laughingly. Age had intensified in him the love of appreciation which is innate in the Gallic heart.

"While we have tea, let us have toast," said Bobbins, promptly. "I propose a toast to Monsieur Velantour. Turn it into rhyme, Ned. You're a crack *improvisatore*."

Carrington stood up, with the easy grace of an Italian. He had the temperament of a troubadour, and he loved in turn a compliment.

"To Monsieur Velantour" (he began) "whose name
Is but a synonym for fame——"

He had the *improvisatore's* trick of lingering on the final syllable until it brought its own suggestion. 6

"Bravo!" they applauded him; while Velantour enjoyed the adulation with the frankness of a child.

"So irresistible that Art" (he glanced with gay raillery at Velantour)
"Quite womanlike, has lost her heart.
Yet knows it in his keeping, sure.
A health to Monsieur Velantour!"

They drank it in hilarious mood.

Velantour was on his feet the next instant.

"If I could but make one littl' Americain verse," he implored, expansively. "But I speak so poorly. You mus' help me a littl'."

"Well," said Mrs. Van Velt, practically, "you have to begin with the street he lives on, or something like that. *Rue Boissonade*——" she began, and halted.

"Shall have its Claude," suggested Bobbins.

"*Bon!*" cried Velantour. "Now I have it.

"*Rue Boissonade*
Shall have its *Claude*,
And *l'Amerique*
The new *Van Dyck*."

His *naïf* delight was contagious.

He patted Carrington's arm affectionately.

"But we shall paint, *cher* Edouard!" he said, fondly. "And you are quite ready?"

"More than ready," laughed Carrington.

He glanced at the little clock on the mantel.

"And our train goes in just two hours," he whispered, triumphantly.

"Till then," said Velantour, gayly. Then he crossed over to Elenore. "Mademoiselle, I will guard your brother

as though he was—what is mos' perishable in English—a bubbl', is it not? Madame"—he bowed to Mrs. Van Velt. "Mademoiselle"—he inclined to Carol. "In two littl' hours," he called to Carrington from the doorway, and was gone.

"Isn't he the dearest thing?" Carol demanded, frankly, of Bobbins.

"He's an old brick, but not my idea of the dearest thing," that discriminating individual replied, promptly. "I don't suppose you could guess what my idea would be," he insinuated.

"Oh, that's too much of an antique," said Miss Van Velt, with crushing promptness.

"Antique! I bought it this year," said Bobbins, tacking, unharmed.

"Then some one is selling you back numbers," Miss Van Velt assured him. "Try to get your money back. It's been taking candy from children, and it ought to be stopped."

"The police won't give it back," said Bobbins, mysteriously.

"The police!" said Miss Van Velt, startled. "What have they to do——"

"With my Mercedes?" said Bobbins, cheerfully. "That's just the attitude I've tried to take with them. But it has cost me five hundred francs this week, and this is only Wednesday. The dearest thing on earth to me is Mercedes, my Mercedes," he hummed, pathetically.

"You naturally would lavish your young affection on machines," Miss Van Velt remarked, cruelly, but she gave him a look of decided favor.

"So long as you think I am in the running," said Bobbins, placidly.

The maid had brought in a letter with an American postmark. Carrington held it in his hand as he crossed over to join the group around the tea table.

Mrs. Van Velt was enjoying her usual volubility, and Hastings was paying her the flattery of an apparent attention and a comprehendingly amused smile, while his eyes gave the deeper homage of frequent and involuntary glances to Elenore.

For him, at least, Elenore was the central figure. Nor was it only for him. Things were quite apt to gravitate around Elenore. Ned himself did not overshadow his twin. If there is any truth in theosophic theories, she had an unusually powerful aura; if we discard the esoteric for the exoteric, beauty and wit and reserve force, cast in the mold of an alluring femininity, are quite as attractive as the same buoyant youth, plus tremendous talent, in masculine fiber.

Elenore had, too, a certain firm, keen grasp on the realities of life which Carrington, with all his localized talent, lacked. One felt that she would not fail in any qualm, that she would not be daunted by any obstacle, that in crises she would think not of surrender or sacrifice, but of resource and expedient.

Mrs. Van Velt was concluding her story of a recent tea given for a famous woman novelist.

"*Did* she talk about her work?" she exclaimed. "She never got away from her books, and she drenched us with her successes until our ardor was more than dampened. It was soaked. She gave us to understand that she had Browning beaten on obscurity, Ibsen on subtlety, and Maeterlinck on imagination. And when she left there was a heavy silence for a minute, and then Alec Carter said: 'Now let's talk nursery rhymes for a while. We might begin on "Little *bas bleu*, come blow your horn."'"

She made her adieux on the strength of that, collecting her purse, her feather boa and her daughter from different parts of the room, with surprising promptitude.

It was her practice to save her best rocket for the last, and disappear in the glory of its swish.

Bobbins accompanied the Van Velts to their carriage, and, to misquote long-suffering Omar, once departed, he returned no more.

Carrington turned to Hastings the moment they were out of the door.

"You'll excuse me if I read dad's letter, won't you? My time is getting so short," he said, apologetically; and went over to one of the long windows to get the benefit of its light.

Elenore turned to Hastings with the question that had been hovering on her lips for the last half-hour.

"Tell me why you are so serious," she said. "Has anything gone wrong? It doesn't mean that you are not coming to Brittany to see the Waldens and—me—this summer, does it?"

"It means a great deal more than that," said Hastings, soberly. "Yesterday I thought I was on my way to being a rising architect. To-day I am simply cast into outer darkness. The shears of fate have clipped this piece of my life short, and I can't see what the next is going to be like."

"Tell me," said Elenore, quietly.

"It's grotesquely simple," said Hastings, and there was an involuntary tinge of bitterness in the tone he tried to keep even. "My uncle, who has given me my start in life—the only relative I have—has written me to come back to New York at once. I'm to give up being an architect. When it's the only thing I am fitted for! He has something else for me. He doesn't explain what. He does vouchsafe the information that the place is quite impossible, but, he says, what are a few years out of a young man's life?" His voice was a trifle unsteady. Years seemed eternity to him just then.

"I must go, of course, unquestioningly," he went on, holding himself in check. "Considering that I owe him everything, it's a military command. And I have no right to say anything but good-by to—to any woman. I'm out of things, that's all."

So much, at least, he vowed he would tell her; but he was determined that he would not be so weak as to ask her to wait for him.

The years of his uncle's bounty fettered him hopelessly. When he knew where he stood, when he had something definite to offer her, then—but not till then. But it was bitter. He had supposed, of course, that he would go back in the autumn, open an office, be self-supporting, and then——

It was a few seconds before Elenore spoke. When she did her voice was cheerful and friendly.

"There is always something interesting in the most impossible places," she said. "It may be rather fun. And we shall expect you to make it as picturesque as possible in your letters, if we tell you all the gossip here in exchange."

He said to himself that she understood, at least. He thanked Heaven for that, as youth is prone to thank Heaven when Heaven lives up to its expectations. And if the place was not so very impossible—*if*—and *perhaps* —— 8

So hope began to whisper. And then because If and Perhaps were all he could take with him, because she was so winsome and dear and so desirably human, because she was so daintily proud, and because the things he was not to tell her refused to be held back, he caught her hands in his, whispered: "God bless you! I shall write you everything—that I can," and, wrapping his New England conscience round him, went without a backward glance.

Elenore stood quite still for a moment. The shadows were beginning to thicken in the long room, and she felt a certain restfulness in the half-light.

Then she turned resolutely toward her brother. Something in the dejection of his poise quickened her instantly.

"Ned! What is it?" she demanded.

"It's the deluge—without an ark," said Carrington, without stirring.

"Well?" said Elenore, tersely.

"I'm not going east with Velantour. I'm going home," he said, mechanically.

"Not dad?" she said, breathlessly.

"No." He answered the unfinished question. "But he's broken his leg, poor old dad! And other things are wrong, and he wants me."

"And me?" she questioned, quickly. "Doesn't he want me?"

"No," said Carrington, impatiently. "He wants his son, he says, and he shall have me. And he shan't know I ever whimpered about coming. I'm not cad enough for that. But going east with Velantour *is* the chance of a lifetime, and it takes a minute or two to get heroic about giving it up, that's all. All except that it's bitter to think how little use I shall be to him when I get there, for it's partly business, and I haven't a particle of business ability. That will be *his* disappointment, which is bitterer still."

"Do you mean to say that he doesn't want me?" Elenore demanded. "Where is the letter?"

Carrington held it out to her without a word.

> Dear Ned (it read), I'm sorry to call you home, but I must. I'm laid up with a broken leg—compound fracture. Don't be alarmed. I'm in no danger of dying. But there are business complications I want to talk over with you—things it's only fair to you to let you help decide. It may be only for a few weeks. Then you can go back. Let Elenore stay in Paris. It's all man's work to be done here. Just responsibilities to be met.
>
> Your father,
> JOHN CARRINGTON.

Ned Carrington was turning over the pages of the morning *Herald*.

"I can catch the train for London in an hour, and sail from Liverpool tomorrow, or—no, here it is—I can leave here in the morning and get a boat at Boulogne. That will be better," he planned.

"And Velantour?" Elenore questioned.

He threw out his hands despairingly.

"I'll drive to the station and tell him," he said. "Then I'll come back and unpack—and pack."

"Why can't I go to dad instead of you?" Elenore demanded.

"Because it's man's work to be done," said Carrington, impatiently. "Don't argue it. I wish I had your brains for it, though. But it's me that dad wants, and what he wants he shall have."

"Two people are going to America who don't want to go in the least. But they are men, and so, presumably, useful," she said, spiritedly. "And the one person who would really like to go can't; because she is a woman, and so, presumably, useless." She flung her head backward a bit impatiently as she looked at her twin. He was fumbling among the papers on his desk; and the long mirror above it showed his face flushed and perturbed and boyish. Then she caught sight of her own in the glass, and started.

"There isn't a pen here," Ned said, irritably. "I must send dad a cable."

"There's one in my room," she said, and her tone was full of energy and spirit. "Get it, while I tell Berthe to run for a cab, and you can take the message to the office on your way to tell Velantour." 9

Her hand was on the bell as he disappeared. She had snatched up paper and pencil the next second, and was dashing off a note.

"Berthe," she said, as the little maid hurried in, "you are to go for a cab, and see that it gets here in just

fifteen minutes precisely; not before, mind. Tell the *cocher* that he shall have five francs *pourboire* if he is exact."

"*Bien*, mademoiselle," said the little maid.

"Post this note to Mrs. Walden, and come back with a second cab in twenty-five minutes, without fail. Either my brother or myself will give you your last instructions for the summer."

"*Bien*, mademoiselle," said the little maid—as she would have said it to any command short of murder.

She sped out, pleasingly stimulated by the silver coin in her palm.

"Has she gone?" demanded Ned, feverishly, as he reappeared with the pen.

"Yes," said Elenore. "Write your message and read it off to me when you've done it, will you? I want to tuck some things into the bag that's going to America."

She nodded, smilingly, as she sped into his room.

Carrington sat down with a stifled groan. The sweetness had gone out of life. It was duty now. Say what you will, six years' absence loosens ties of blood; and though he was ashamed to confess it himself, it was with a lagging loyalty that he thought of going home.

His whole life had been bent in one direction, and this abrupt break demanded a heroism which he resolved to simulate, at least. But he need not begin yet.

He could make his little moan to himself for this instant when he was alone.

He dipped the pen in the ink.

The first sheet of paper blotted hopelessly. And the second. The fingers that held a brush with unfaltering and delicate touch were clumsily nervous now.

John Carrington, Yellow Dog, Mich, (he got down). Am coming first boat.

"What was the boat?" he demanded of himself, and helplessly turned back to the *Herald* for information.

Kaiser Wilhelm sailing Cherbourg tomorrow.
NED.

Then he dropped his face in his hands.

The written words seemed to make the thing so irrevocable.

He pulled himself together and walked nervously over to the window. Where on earth *was* the cab? It was a comfort to vent irritability on something.

Then he roved over to the trunk he had packed with such forethought.

He laughed a little bitterly.

"Poor old Velantour! He will be disappointed, too," he whispered. "But of the two old men who love me, one has to go to the wall. And it shan't be dad."

He tramped up and down restlessly until he heard the sound of wheels.

Then he called to Elenore.

"I am going now."

"Not in this cab, you are not," her voice answered him. "This is mine. Yours will be here in ten minutes, and you will have lots of time then."

"What?" he called, halfway to the door, and not believing his ears.

The door swung open, and in it he saw—himself.

Clad in loosely hanging dull gray velveteens, with a soft cravat the color of pigeon blood. Over his arm a long crimson-lined cape hung, half-concealing a suit case. The face, which was his, laughed at him triumphantly, and shook its dark hair, worn a trifle long, back from the forehead.

In the disencumbered hand a soft felt hat waved him back with a dash of bravado.

"Tell Berthe what you please when she comes with your cab," his own voice cried gayly. "I've just time to catch the London train. You are for the east, I believe." Then, as he stood thunderstruck, his double laughed exultantly.

"There's a letter, with copious details, on your dresser," the apparition stated, with a lilt of pure joy of escapade. "Considering the shortness of the time, I think I've been marvelous in thinking out all possible exigencies."

And to his gesture of protest, of incredulity: "Don't argue! You are to live the life you care for, for your three wonderful months, and so shall I. It's not sacrifice. It's selfishness. I want to go desperately. And I'll write you here—volumes. You'll find them when you get back."

Then that voice which was his, and was not his, chanted saucily:

"Rue Boissonade
Shall have its Claude,
And l'Amerique
The new Van Dyck;
But Carrington
Shall have his son."

The doorway was empty. He heard a *cocher* crack his whip, and a cab-horse evidently making record time. Five francs, *mon Dieu, ça vaut la peine*!

Ned Carrington stood bewildered. What should he do? He might follow her—might make a scene—but he was always worsted when Elenore became daintily willful. She was quite capable of carrying it off, too. And it *was* a lark!

A cab came clattering up the little street. The call of the East came to him with an overpowering lure. A wave of joy swept over him that he *could* go, after all. He felt a fury of impatience to be off. He grudged the time to give Berthe her instructions, to snatch Elenore's letter from the dresser, to catch up his hat and coat. The mere thought to do these things should be enough. But Berthe's willing feet were speeding up the stairway. He flung the rug from his more-than-ready trunk, and laughed as he touched the strap caressingly with his fingers.

"I'm going!" he whispered; and the words sung themselves to the rhythm of rapture unalloyed.

"*Et puis, m'sieu?*" said Berthe, breathlessly, from the doorway.

CHAPTER II.

The case of the old-fashioned watch snapped together for the fortieth time in John Carrington's restless hands, and he sighed impatiently.

Not since those days of dread loneliness after his wife's death, when he had first sent the children abroad, had time dragged so rackingly.

His leonine, iron-gray head moved irritably among the pillows of the bed where he had been "caged," as he called it, for three interminable weeks.

Mrs. Kipley, tidying up the room with an accentuation of her usual briskness, gave him as indulgent a look as the formation of her rigid cast of countenance would permit.

"Wearin' out your watch case won't hurry up that train none," she observed, as she straightened a china cat on the mantel into an expectant attitude.

It had been her gift the previous Christmas to John Carrington, and her admiration of it extended to the hope that it would pleasingly impress the returning traveler.

"Miss Elenore was fondest of animals, though," she murmured, absently.

John Carrington's eyes twinkled appreciatively. He did not share Mrs. Kipley's admiration for her feline gift.

"Ned will appreciate that cat, though, Mrs. Kipley," he said, genially. "You know he's been studying *art*;" but with the word a shadow came over his face.

"It's hard on the lad, bringing him back," he said. "Yellow Dog will look pretty crude to him, I expect."

He moved his head restlessly, and the leg in its swinging splint became more exasperatingly painful.

Of course it would be only natural for Ned to have grown away from home ties. It was an unspoken thought against which he had braced himself for all these ten days. If the boy came back half-heartedly, contemptuous of the place, indifferent to the mine, alienated from his father—that was the touch of the thumbscrew.

And yet, he told himself wearily, six years was a long time. The boy was talented, cultured, used to all the refinements of an older civilization. What wonder if—— And if he, through love for his son, and carrying out his mother's wishes for his future, had been responsible for the separation which might mean all this?

Ah, well, he was not the first father, nor the last, to think out these same things, and try to see them dispassionately.

"He was real spry about starting," said Mrs. Kipley.

John Carrington's face relaxed.

"Caught the first boat," he said. Then "Is his room ready and comfortable?" he demanded, as he had demanded many times.

"I wouldn't worry about that room none, if I was you," said Mrs. Kipley, serenely.

"Did you remember about the cigars and a decanter of whisky?" he asked.

Mrs. Kipley looked at him in a patient exasperation.

"They's two kinds of cigars, every brand of cigarettes Kipley could lay hands on in Yellow Dog, the biggest decanter full of whisky, the motto 'Love One Another,' that my Sunday-school class worked for me last winter; red-white-and-blue soap in the soap dish, and two pincushions with a French motto worked on each of 'em. Hemmy did 'em in black and white pins. She thought't would make it seem more like Paris to him. One says '*Vive Napoleon*,' and the other says '*Veuve Cliquot*.' Kind of twins, you see."

John Carrington's mouth twitched. Then he frowned slightly. For would the boy understand? If he were not

amused—if he were merely contemptuous!

“Hemmy’s picking some flowers for the house now,” Mrs. Kipley went on, serenely. “And Kipley’s took a saddle horse besides the road wagon, so’s if Mr. Ned wanted to ride over, he could.”

The case of John Carrington’s watch came open once more. If the train was on time, and Ned did choose the saddle horse, another ten minutes—— But would he? The lad was a bit of a dandy. Carrington had smiled indulgently over some of his tailor’s bills. Probably you couldn’t coax him on a horse, even in Yellow Dog, unless he was arrayed in all the proper paraphernalia.

But what was that clatter of horse’s hoofs—fast and furious—faster and more furious than any Yellow Dog had heard since the day three weeks ago when the Carrington team, terrorized by a small boy’s premature bunch of firecrackers, had run away, and John Carrington, thrown from the wreckage of his light buggy, had been brought home with a badly fractured leg?

Mrs. Kipley looked out of the window.

“Merciful sakes!” she ejaculated, startled.

Not an accident to Ned, John Carrington prayed, with stiff, dry lips and apprehensive eyes.

“Of all things!” Mrs. Kipley murmured; and her tone indicated that she was now past surprise, and merely numbered with the numb.

Some one was running up the veranda steps; the door was flung open, and a tall, dark, slender boy in a marvelous suit of dull gray velveteens stood on the threshold.

A long, crimson-lined cape was flung over his arm. He tossed it from him. And “Dad!” he cried, exultantly, and was across the room, with his arms around his father’s neck, and had kissed him on both cheeks.

“French fashion, dad!” he laughed, flushing suddenly.

“Now we’ll do it the Anglo-Saxon way;” and he caught both his father’s hands in his own and wrung them heartily. “It’s great to be home again,” he said, buoyantly.

And the joyful light in his eyes was unmistakably genuine.

John Carrington’s face softened amazingly. Happiness such as he had not known for six years gripped him. The warm ardor of his son’s embrace, the touch of the soft, boyish lips, unnerved him, but he liked it astonishingly. It was so naïf, so unspoiled, so reassuring against that dread of alienation he had endured, that he felt submerged in the warm, comfortable certitude of his son’s affection. He gripped the lad’s hands strongly, and surveyed him with a proud, fatherly interest.

The blue eyes that looked frankly into his own were like the lad’s mother’s, like Althea’s; the face that smiled gayly at him was alight with youthful energy, and the mouth, though the lips were a trifle full, had firm and resolute lines.

It was no dawdling dreamer that he saw, but an action-lover.

He nodded satisfiedly.

“You’ll do, lad,” he said, briefly.

Then he smiled as he caught sight of Mrs. Kipley, standing with the rigidity of an automaton, dust cloth in hand.

“You remember Mrs. Kipley,” he said, significantly. The boy wheeled instantly.

“Don’t I!” he said, laughingly, and something in his advance galvanized Mrs. Kipley into life again.

“None of your French fashions with me,” she said, severely, extending her right hand to him, less in greeting than as a rampart.

He swept a wonderful bow over it. Bent to it as a courtier might have done, and kissed its wrinkled, work-hardened back lightly. Then he straightened up to look her full in the eyes, and laughed his bubbling laugh once more.

“Do you still make those wonderful twisted doughnuts, Mrs. Kipley?” he asked, gayly. “I’ve bragged about them in Paris till they’re famous.”

Mrs. Kipley was scrutinizing the back of her hand minutely, to see if it was still intact. Finding it apparently uninjured, she drew breath and looked the surprising apparition in the face. Her own relaxed to his handsome, dashing youth and to his praise.

“I guess they’re about the same,” she said, dryly. But John Carrington chuckled to himself. He recognized the subjugation of Mrs. Kipley.

“What will he be with the young women!” he commented, to himself, amusedly.

Then he asked the question that was consuming Mrs. Kipley:

“Ned, are those clothes the *style* in Paris?”

The boy swung himself lightly into the big armchair beside the bed.

“They’re the badge of my craft, sir,” he said, good-humoredly, settling the soft cravat with deft fingers. “Don’t you like them?”

“Oh, *I* like them,” said John Carrington. (“Handsome lad!” he was whispering to himself, proudly.) “But I was wondering how they would strike Yellow Dog, that’s all.”

“There did seem to be some little interest in my arrival,” the lad admitted, gleefully.

“Sakes alive! They beat anything I ever see in all my life!” Mrs. Kipley communed with herself.

“And Elenore?” said John Carrington. “How did you leave Elenore?”

The boy stirred slightly in his chair.

“Elenore is well, dad. She wanted to come. I think she was a little disappointed that you didn’t want your daughter instead of your son.”

John Carrington shook his head.

“Yellow Dog is no place for a young lady, Ned,” he said. “It was better for her to stay with her friends. I should have liked to see her, though. She’s quite a woman, from her picture. Time for sweethearts, eh? Your Aunt Sarah wrote a good deal about a young Hastings. She seemed to think it might be serious.”

The boy flushed annoyedly.

“Aunt Sarah loves to fuss and exaggerate,” he said, and there was a slight coolness in his voice. “Maiden aunts are apt to, you know,” he went on, more naturally. He smiled his attractive smile once more. Whatever had perturbed him for the instant was past.

Miss Hematite Kipley, *ætat* seventeen, coming into the room with a fragrant bowl of syringa blossoms, compared it favorably with any picture her beloved romancers had been able to conjure up.

From the moment when she had seen the picturesque figure dismount and make a rapid way into the house, she had been perishing to make this entrance, but she had restrained herself in accordance with her ideas of propriety and gentility. Miss Kipley strove to be “elegant,” aided by certain open columns in respected periodicals, after which she patterned her conduct and her clothes. 13

The meeting between father and son she characterized as “a sacred moment,” and she regretted her mother’s continued intrusion upon it with the resigned exasperation of one who had often and fruitlessly pointed out to a primitive parent the proper forms of procedure.

Miss Kipley was rather pretty in a wholesome, buxom, blond way, and the “open columns” had stimulated her to a crisp freshness of attire, and partially reconciled her to the maternal regulations of its enforced simplicity.

She came into the room with her eyelids so demurely lowered that she might have been taken for a sleepwalker.

“Good-morning, Hemmy,” said John Carrington, with an outward courtesy which marked an inward amusement. In spite of her physical bulk, Miss Hematite was mentally transparent.

“Why, *Hemmy*!” said young Carrington, gayly, “how awfully pretty you have grown!”

Miss Kipley felt an inward commotion which threatened suffocation. Her fingers tightened on the blue bowl in a way which tested its enduring qualities. Mrs. Kipley’s maternal eye became vigilant.

There was a suggestion of a wrinkle on John Carrington’s brow. He hoped the boy would remember that this was not Paris; that the Kipleys represented the survival of a good many New England traits.

But neither parent could find anything to criticise in the way the lad relieved the blushing Hemmy of the bowl, shook her hand in a cordial, unaffected way, and turned to set the white blossoms on the square ledge of the open window, where the breeze converted them into a spicy censer.

As for Hematite, though visibly she stood in a deep pink embarrassment, in fancy she trod the sunny slopes of romance. This was the way things happened in the books over which she pored, palpitant. She sought vainly for some appropriate expression of welcome.

“I guess Hemmy and me will let you have a chance to get acquainted. I can finish dusting by and by,” said Mrs. Kipley, tersely. “Your old room’s all ready for you, Mr. Ned. Come, Hemmy.”

That young person followed her mother mechanically from the room.

“Cat got your tongue?” inquired Mrs. Kipley, severely, in the hall. “For all you are forever reading about the proper way to do things, you can’t even say ‘Glad to see you back.’”

Miss Kipley looked down from the happy heights to which she had mentally withdrawn herself, to the prosaic parent treading the valley of plain realities.

“There are moments beyond words,” she vouchsafed. Then she sped down the garden path to the now sacred syringa.

Mrs. Kipley watched her from the doorway with an anxious air.

“I hope she ain’t caught anything,” she murmured. “That was a terrible fool remark. I don’t know what there is around just now for her *to* catch.”

But it is characteristic of the disorder which Miss Hematite had so recently acquired that no one save the person afflicted knows it’s around till the case has taken.

* * * * *

The lad had slipped his fingers in his father’s, and they sat a little while in silence. So Althea and John Carrington had often sat, in that silent communion which is the bond of the finest fellowship.

Mr. Abner Kipley, entering suddenly, with Ned’s suit case in hand and a desire to expatiate on recent events oozing from every pore, viewed this singular proceeding as one further extraordinary manifestation emanating from the same remarkable cause.

“Seems you *can* teach an old dog new tricks,” he communed with himself. “Probably by to-morrow I’ll be holding hands myself.” He chuckled grimly to himself over the impossible thought. But the glance he gave the lad from under his shaggy eyebrows was unwillingly admiring. 14

Yet Mr. Kipley prided himself on his unerring attitude of judicial criticism.

The boy swung round in his chair to greet him smilingly.

“You walked over, Mr. Kipley, I assume,” he said, mischievously.

“I didn’t try to kill a horse ’n’ get my neck broke,” responded Mr. Kipley, defensively.

“You picked up thet baby nice, though,” he added, with the air of a man willing to be just.

John Carrington looked at him with an air of sudden inquiry.

“It *was* lucky,” said the lad, languidly; and he lounged over to the open window, as though the subject was finished.

“I’m goin’ to,” said Mr. Kipley, impatiently, to the growing insistence of John Carrington’s look.

He objected to being hurried in the narration of a story which he rejoiced was his to tell.

“When he,” he began, jerking his head in the lad’s direction, “’lected to ride the Colonel home, he threw that red-backed garmint”—no mere black-and-white could reproduce the patronage of Mr. Kipley’s tone—“’cross the saddle in front of him. ’N’ the Colonel, not being used to the fashions in Paris, bolted. They went up the road’s though they was goin’ to glory, ’n’ didn’t have but one chance to ketch the limited. ’N’ *I* threw his grip in the wagon ’n’ started after ’em.

“It was good ridin’,” said Mr. Kipley, approvingly, “’n’ everybody thet could turned out to see it. It was interestin’ and free.

“Thet curve by Trevanion’s cottage is a mean place,” Mr. Kipley continued, reflectively. “I’ve run the team into several things there myself, includin’ a dog fight, which c’ncluded about the time we run over the principal fighter’s tail.” He switched himself back on the main track. “Thet baby of Trevanion’s was tryin’ to ketch a hen just as the exhibition come along.”

“Well?” said John Carrington, and his voice whistled like a pistol shot.

“Down with his arm, ’n’ half out of the saddle—grab—’n’ yank up—’n’ ’bout face—hand the baby to a long-legged girl—’n’ off he goes, leaving me to destroy my c’nstitution, breathin’ dust all the way home. Thet’s your son’s idea of gettin’ here,” he concluded, dryly.

John Carrington drew a breath of relief.

“If anything had happened to that baby, we should have had the devil’s own time,” he said. “Trevanion has been sullen ugly ever since his wife died—took his trouble that way—and the baby is the only thing in the world he cares for. If—well, we might have lost the best shift boss in the country.”

Young Carrington stood very still, looking out of the window. If the incident had shaken him a bit, there was at least no outward sign of it.

Mr. Kipley drew nearer to the bed.

“There’s good stuff in him,” he said, semi-confidentially, as though recent residence in a foreign land unfitted one to hear undertone, “’n’ grit. But, for the sake of Moses, get those clo’s offen him.”

Upon which advice, he retired hastily from the room.

John Carrington looked across the room at his son with a smile that was at once quizzical and affectionate.

“Yellow Dog finds you a trifle too picturesque, boy,” he said, and his tone suggested that he at any rate was satisfied. “How about you? Pretty big trial to come back?”

“I should have come, whether you sent for me or not, when I knew you were hurt,” said the boy, and there was a defiant little ring in his voice. “Where should I be, or want to be, but at home and with you?”

John Carrington’s heart beat proudly. This was the kind of son to have. He said “home” as though he meant it. He was loyal. Now he, John Carrington, had an heir to show to some people——

“I needed you,” he said, quietly. “Not on account of this confounded leg; though it’s been hard to be shut up for the first time in my life—hung up to mend, like a china plate. But it made me think I was just mortal, after all. And of your future and Elenore’s. And it’s only fair to you to let you decide how you’d rather have things.” 15

The look the boy gave him now was a quiet, concentrated attention.

“Without going into details about our mine, that no one but a mining man could understand,” Carrington went on, with a restful security engendered by that look, “I want to tell you the straight facts. It’s characteristic of this region that in sinking every now and then you strike a big hole filled with water—a vug, they call it. Now, we can take care of what we strike ourselves, but the Tray-Spot, which is newer and shallower, is letting us take care of theirs. Instead of pumping it up, they let the water seep through to the Star, and *we* lift it. It cuts off profits, and makes our mine dangerous. The two mines ought to be under the same management, anyway. Expenses could be cut almost in two. So I wrote the owner of the Tray-Spot—an Easterner—never comes out here—to ask him what he’d sell for. Richards, the superintendent, is a good deal of a scoundrel, and responsible for all the trouble. Of course mining is just a business proposition to those Easterners. They haven’t fought things out here in the early days, as some of us have. And this man had never even been on the ground. Bought the mine from Riley when he went to smash. And he’s childless. No second generation to take it up.

“That’s practically what I wrote him,” Carrington went on, doggedly, “and why it should have struck him just wrong, and turned him pig-head and ugly is beyond me. But he wrote back that if he had never been here, he wasn’t too old to come now. And that if he didn’t have a son, he had a nephew, who was a first-class business man and smart as a steel trap, whom he proposed to bring out here, and to keep on the ground. And that, as he understood from his superintendent that the one son *I* had was spending his time in Paris studying art, the mines would be better off with his heir than mine. And would I put a selling price on the Star? The Star, that

I've put my lifeblood into! And that letter"—there was the rage of a wounded lion now—"was the first thing they read me after I came out from the ether to find myself tied up like—like this——" he finished, at a loss for any adequate comparison.

"We've got to fight or to sell," he finished, "and if anything happened to me, what would you children know about disposing of it? That's what I've thought as I've lain here. Hadn't I better leave things safe for you, if I do have to kill time for a few years myself?"

His eyes looked worn. How many times he had gone over it! How many times affection for his children had warred against his pride in the mine he had discovered, developed, managed, owned! It all seemed a part of long, restless nights, of narcotics and anodynes that brought nightmares as often as oblivion; nights in which the young mine doctor seemed mixed up with the obstinate Easterner who owned the Tray-Spot, and the pain throbs and the pumping apparatus at the mine seemed to have some curious relationship.

"Sell! Never!" the fresh young voice flung back instantly, and the timbre of it was a battle-cry. "We'll fight, dad—for our rights first, and then—then we'll buy!"

He stood erect, every curve of fine youthfulness buoyant with victories to come, his head flung a trifle back and his mouth resolute.

Fatherly pride, exultation, triumph, swung John Carrington up on his elbow from his pillows in a certain fierce joy, and something glistened on his cheek—something that pain and fatigue and loneliness had never crystaled there.

"I have a son to stand by me," he said, and it was the dignity of a king to the crown prince.

The leonine old head was lifted proudly, and the hand that he stretched out might have held a scepter.

Then reaction of the strain came swiftly, and the lad leaped to him, as he dropped back limp and white against the pillows, with a sudden film drawn over the eyes so lately keen of sight, and the rushing of many waters in the ears that had heard so happily.

CHAPTER III.

Yellow Dog was having the time of its life.

It was, to use a local idiom, passing out a new line of talk every day.

What this sudden access of interest meant to an isolated small town which existed solely on account of its two mines one would have to live in Yellow Dog to understand.

The Tray-Spot and the Star were at opposite ends of the town's main street, each a local fetish in its way to the miners.

Underfoot everywhere the soft red hematite ore stained everything that it touched.

Beyond, hills after hills covered with scraggy pine. Half a mile to the south was the railway station, and a spur ran to both mines.

Since the loungers around that station had witnessed the home-coming of young Carrington, conversation had flourished in dialects Cornish and Irish and Swedish and "Dago," as well as that tongue to which its users alluded proudly as "United States."

The first comment of all this polyglot assemblage had inclined toward the critical, with emphasis which ran the gamut from the humorous to the snarl, laid on what Mr. Kipley had characterized as "those dum clothes."

Trevanion, shift boss, coming to the surface that first night, to learn of the child's peril, heard it in silence and with smoldering eyes; heard it sullenly as he held the child in his arms, and with a surly nod went back to his cottage.

And the long-legged girl who told him resented his silence as a lack of interest not only in the event, but in her narrative.

It was not often that anything so exciting happened. Events were usually underground casualties in Yellow Dog. "'E could 'a' said 'e was glad the child wasna killed," she complained to her father.

"'E'd na say what you maun know, onyway," she got for comfort; for the men admired Trevanion, and trusted him blindly.

They comprehended, too, the way he had taken his trouble, and they left him to himself, since he wished it. It was his way; just as it was his way to read, to study, to get some beginnings of the patiently dug-out education of a dully persistent man.

If he had lost his Cornish accent, save in excitement or in his orders to them, he had not lost his Cornish patience, nor that curious Cornish affinity between man and mine.

What they did not understand was the measure of his fierce love for his child; the child that was to have a chance. This was the mainspring of his life.

Trevanion was seated on his doorstep, with the child on his knee, when young Carrington rode down the street once more, leisurely this time; looking at everything with interested eyes that recognized the old and familiar, and saw the new and changed, with a buoyant alertness which seemed to match the careless grace of the way he sat his horse.

The boy Trevanion had used to see at play had grown up to this lordliness, had he? To ride recklessly, careless of whom he ran down, trusting to luck to snatch children from under his horse's feet. Trevanion hated him.

He saw him rein in the Colonel to ask some question of a woman who was leaning her elbows interestedly on her gatepost. Then young Carrington came on to stop opposite him.

"You're just the man I'm looking for, Trevanion," he said, and his tone was clear and crisp.

Trevanion got on his feet and looked at him loweringly. The child smiled at him.

"One of these days, Trevanion, I'm going to let you give me a few lessons in practical mining," he said, pleasantly. "I may decide to become a mining man, after all. But that will have to go for the present, and you may be thankful for it. I'm inclined to think you'd find it harder work than being shift boss." 17

Trevanion looked at him unsmilingly.

"However," young Carrington went on, "they tell me you've never failed in anything you've tried yet, and I'm sure you wouldn't begin with me. I'm no record-breaker," he laughed, and there was something so pleasant in its sound that Trevanion was furious to find that he liked it.

"No, soberly, Trevanion," he said, and his voice dropped to a seriousness that was sweeter toned than even his laughter, "father isn't quite so well to-day. We've got to keep him pretty quiet for a few days, free from worry as much as possible; but we don't want the men to know that. When he is up again we'll get after those Tray-Spot people and put a stop to those free baths they've been good enough to give us. But we've got to pull him up carefully for a while. It'll mean extra work and responsibility for you."

Then a new note came in the musical voice.

"It means everything to the mine just now, Trevanion, that you are just where you are, a man to be trusted."

The words were spoken with a grace which made them seem like a decoration conferred. The eyes that Trevanion raised met deep blue eyes with a mysterious something in them that conquered him. Fealty was suddenly strong in him, loyalty to the lad through thick and thin. Every fiber of his big burliness thrilled with a proud protectiveness. The child on his arm was holding out his arms to young Carrington. Three minutes before, his father would have resented it. Now he saw the firm, sure, tender grasp with which Carrington took him up before him on the saddle; he exulted in the child's laugh as the Colonel walked off daintily, then took a bit of a canter down the street, and finally young Carrington brought a reluctant two-year-old back to the fatherly arms.

It was then that he said what he had had in his mind since morning—said it with a tenderness that rang perfectly true:

"All I was thinking of this morning, Trevanion, was to get to my father as soon as possible. But if my impatience had resulted in accident I should never have gotten over it."

And Dick Trevanion, holding the little, warm, happy figure close in his great arms, said what half an hour ago he had never thought to say:

"I believe you, Mr. Ned."

* * * * *

"Quiet!" said Mr. Kipley, to young Carrington's comment, as he sat on the veranda steps that evening after dinner, looking with growing approval at that young gentleman as he lounged in a big wicker chair. "Well, of course, it tain't the Boo-lee-vards"—for Mr. Kipley had consulted the encyclopedia painstakingly in order to converse comfortably with the returning traveler. "It tain't the Boo-lee-vards," he repeated, with an air of erudition, "but there *are* times when Yellow Dog can have as big a pack of firecrackers tied to its tail as you'd see anywhere."

"Yes?" said the boy, and it was a yes that coaxed. He was enjoying Mr. Kipley hugely.

"Yes," said Kipley, placidly. "Day after pay-day occasionally, or when the lumber-jacks come down from Raegan camp at Christmas time to get their money and blow it in before New Year's." Then he chuckled reminiscently.

"They're queer cusses," he said. "One of 'em came in last Christmas that was a walkin' woolen store, 'n' when he tried to sell mittens and stockin's by the hundred pair, they just naturally locked him up. But he come by 'em honest, after all. You know," he explained, kindly, "these lumber-jacks can't get any money while they are in the woods, but they can trade at the company's store there, 'n' have it checked against their time. 'N' they *will* play poker. So they used mittens 'n' stockings for chips. 'N' this fellow had got most of 'em. He told *me*," said Mr. Kipley, with intense enjoyment, "that he won eleven hundred pair of mittens on three aces. The other fellow had kings. 'N' he bluffed forty pair of stockings outen a greenhorn on ace high. 18

"You play poker?" he inquired, for young Carrington's laugh had been deliciously prompt.

The boy nodded.

"Enough to appreciate a good poker story, anyway," he said. "That's a corker."

Mr. Kipley wiped his mouth with his handkerchief to hide a pleased smile.

"D'you know," he said, "Mis' Kipley can't see a thing in that story?" His tone suggested a puzzled commiseration.

"Oh, well," the boy said, gayly, "it's hardly a woman's story, you know." And he showed his white teeth in so gleeful a smile that it warmed Mr. Kipley's heart.

It resulted in his making some inquiries on a subject that had roused his interest earlier in the day.

"Paris is gettin' kind of run down, ain't it?" he asked, cautiously.

"Why, no," said the boy; "it's getting built up. What made you think so?"

"They's a picture in the encyclopedia," said Mr. Kipley, "that I come acrost to-day. What a lot a person would

know who'd read 'em all through!" he commented. "It was a cathedral—Catholic, I s'pose, 'n' they're usually willin' to give liberal to keep up their buildin's, too. It was pretty well timbered up the back, 's though they was expecting a cave-*out*."

Young Carrington recognized the description with an inward joy.

"That's one of the most famous churches of Paris," he said, soberly. "Notre Dame. And it was built that way on purpose."

"Do they *believe* that?" Mr. Kipley inquired.

"Yes," said young Carrington.

"Who give it its name?" Kipley demanded.

"I really couldn't say," the boy laughed.

"It would be interestin' to know," reflected Mr. Kipley. "Of course he wa'n't no kind of an architect, or he wouldn't have had to brace his walls like that; but whether he had the gall to name it because he didn't care a damn, or they named it because it wasn't worth a damn——"

"Your pa's waked up and wanted to know where you was," said Mrs. Kipley, appearing in the door, just as young Carrington was trying to decide whether to enlighten an ignorance which was such bliss to the listener.

"Thank you," he said, and sped into the house at once.

Mr. Kipley turned a philosopher's eye upon the wife of his bosom.

"He's got good principles, M'r'," he said, with conviction; "'n' a very entertainin' way of puttin' things. He's good company."

"What was he talkin' about?" asked Mrs. Kipley, interestedly.

Mr. Kipley's cough was extremely apologetic.

"Come to think of it, I guess I did most of the talkin'," he said, with some embarrassment.

"I should say 't was likely," said Mrs. Kipley, dryly; and she disappeared in the house. She reappeared for a parting shot. "I s'pose his principles was good because he agreed with you," she observed, sarcastically. Mr. Kipley gazed at the evening star confidentially.

"Beats all about women!" he mused. "They act's if all the principles was theirs, 'n' kind of exasperated if you've got any. 'N' more if you ain't," he murmured.

He had refilled his pipe, and was looking placidly across the lights of the town to the hills beyond.

Hemmy came up the walk with the light of a new and lovely romantic suggestion in her eyes.

She sat down beside her father and slipped a warm, plump hand in his.

"Pa," she said, sweetly, "am I really your child and ma's?"

Mr. Kipley recoiled sharply.

"Well, of all things!" he ejaculated.

Miss Hematite Kipley experienced a pang of disappointment.

She had just been reading a "perfectly lovely romance," where an adopted child turned out to be the daughter of a duke. While she did not insist on a dukedom, she had had an ecstatic feeling that she might be a millionairess.

"You never brought me home in your arms and told ma that a beautiful young gypsy girl——" she began, falteringly.

"No," said Mr. Kipley, with precision; "I never did, and that's the reason I'm alive to-day. If I'd come home with a baby, talking about beautiful young gypsies, there'd have been a funeral, and no mourners. An 't would have served me right, too."

Then he softened parentally toward this young woman of his own flesh and blood.

"It don't seem so very long ago, Hemmy, since you was born. Born in the regular, genu-wine way. Why, we named you Hematite because they struck the big find of ore in the mine that same morning. It was my idea, too, for your aunt, who lived in the copper country, had just named her little girl Amygdoloid—Amy, for short—and she was plum offensive about having the most elegant name out. 'What's the matter with Hematite?' says I!"

Miss Hematite kissed her undoubted parent forgivingly, and rose from the ashes of her air castle like an undiscouraged young phœnix.

Already she had another in process of construction, and she pillowed her cheek against the battered volume containing the encounter between Cophetua and the beggar maid, though *he* was not a king, and *she* was not pauperized. "I think, perhaps, it's even *sweeter*," she whispered, as she fell asleep.

* * * * *

Down in the village of Yellow Dog, the club which the Star had built for its miners was ablaze not only with lights, but with excitement.

There was a circle of miners around the room.

In the center of the floor lay a man who had been shaken into a little heap of clothes; a heap that stirred with caution even in catching breath, lest more punishment should follow.

Over it towered Dick Trevanion's sturdy figure, made brawnier still by rage.

“Any more remarks about Mr. Ned and his clothes?” he demanded, sweeping that quiet group with furious eyes.

There was not a breath from them. Trevanion’s reputation as an athlete and a boxer was a matter of local pride.

He walked across the room to the door and flung it open.

Then he turned his flushed face to them.

“You can all have as much and more, if you like,” he said. “I stand for him.”

He struck the side of the door a blow with his closed fist, a blow that seemed to shake the entire side of the room. “Remember that when your tongues start,” he emphasized, and was gone in the darkness.

There was no danger that they would forget.

* * * * *

In a quiet bedroom, the lad whom he had championed had fallen asleep in a big chair beside his father’s bed.

He had sat there till John Carrington had slept, and then, too drowsy to move, had slept himself—that youthful sleep of healthy exhaustion.

John Carrington, waking in the night, looked at the boy as he rested his head in the corner of the high-backed chair. The long, dark lashes lay lightly on cheeks rounded daintily enough for a girl, but the lines of the firm young chin had a quiet decision even now.

Far into the night John Carrington lay with open eyes resting on his son, and in the depths of those eyes was content immeasurable.

* * * * *

The days stretched into weeks, weeks to months. It was September now.

John Carrington was almost convalescent.

He could walk now with a crutch from his bedroom to the veranda couch. The bone had knit, but the flesh was slow to heal.

And what a comfort his son had been to him through those months!

Sunny. Tireless. Capable. Ready to read if he wanted to be read to; to write letters when they had to be written; to amuse him with tales of his life and Elenore’s in Paris, when the pain was bad and time dragged.

And outside there was not a miner who did not speak boastingly of Mr. Ned. Even Yellow Dog, noncommittal Yellow Dog, sang his praises.

Only the miners at the Tray-Spot sneered. Only their wives flung a contemptuous laugh when young Carrington and the Colonel sped by out on long rides through the country.

These rides, in whose solitude one might think one’s own mind freely; and certain letters that went overseas addressed to one E. Carrington, to be held in Paris till called for, were the only relaxations in which young Carrington permitted himself an entire honesty of thought.

One morning Mr. Kipley came home jubilant.

“Strangers in town,” he announced. “Owner of the Tray-Spot, I guess, and a young fellow. Saw them driving with Richards.”

John Carrington rapped his crutch sharply against a chair.

“Now there’s going to be something doing,” he said, defiantly; and all the repressed activity of months rang in the words.

Young Carrington waved a hand airily in the direction of the other mine.

“The Tray-Spot shall cease from troubling,” he said, gayly, “and we’ll just gather you gently in.”

If anything stirred the stillness, it was the mocking laughter of the goddess of fate.

CHAPTER IV.

The brownstone house on Madison Avenue suggested the solid and respectable affluence of its owner, Mr. Livingstone Wade, in that quieter old New York way which preceded Millionaire’s Row, and which, on account of that precedence, Mr. Livingstone Wade considered immeasurably superior.

Nor was this suggestion a mere exterior effect.

The somber elegance of its interior furnishings showed in every detail that Mr. Wade’s conservatism to earlier ideals was unfaltering.

The ormolu clock on the drawing-room mantel was flanked by a pair of tall vases, Sèvres, as a matter of course, standing equidistant with the precision of sentinels.

His pictures included a Landseer, a Meissonier, a Bouguereau, and some excellent copies of Raphael. He was fond of calling your attention to the fact that all of these gentlemen could draw, and that their figures “stood out.”

The books in his library showed a strong tendency to run in sets, with modern fiction conspicuously absent.

And as for his dinner services, they were complete, and he considered odd sets of plates as a fad which had its origin in economy or inefficient housekeeping.

He rated *l'art nouveau* with *nouveaux riches*, considered impressionism as a cloak for defective draughtsmanship, declined to admit anything made as far west as Rookwood to the companionship of the Capodamonte and Meissen in his cabinets, and would have banished to his stables the most priceless Indian basket ever made.

West of New York he considered that the wilderness howled, impelled to such mournful vocalization by a dawning sense of its own abnormal crudities.

In business, however, Mr. Wade consented to compromise with the spirit of the times. No out-of-date methods characterized the bank of which he was president, nor, on the other hand, did any up-to-date crook contrive to outwit the keen-eyed, white-haired, thin-lipped old gentleman, who held himself as erect ethically as he did physically.

His wife, born a Van Dorn, christened in Grace Church and married in the same, had died at fifty-seven, childless—a course of conduct which Mr. Wade, while he preserved a high silence, felt as deeply as a European monarch might have done. It was not a mere personal question, but the continuation of the Wade line would 21
have been for the good of the country at large.

As for his only nephew, he had done his duty by him. Not extravagantly, to spoil the young man, or delude him with unfounded hopes of heirship; but by a college course, Columbia *bien entendu*! and when he determined to become an architect, the Beaux Arts was naturally the only correct place.

When he read John Carrington's letter, with its phrase "since you have no direct heir," Mr. Livingstone Wade experienced a very primitive bitterness, which resolved itself into a determination to make his nephew heir to that particular piece of property at least; to recall him from Paris, and to insist upon his going out to Michigan and becoming thoroughly conversant with the mine as soon as possible.

Having begun the accomplishment of this design, Mr. Livingstone Wade began to feel a consciousness of benevolence in acting so generously toward the young man, which resulted, very naturally, in his regarding his nephew with more affection than even Mr. Wade himself would have thought possible.

As they sat together in the well-ordered library, Mr. Wade said to himself that he had done well.

"When the mine came to us with that tangle of collateral from the Riley failure, I found that it was paying dividends regularly; and Richards, the manager, wrote me that they could be doubled easily if he was allowed a free hand to cut down expenses and exercise his own judgment. He has done it, too, and the mine is a splendid property. And it is yours, my boy, when you have made yourself thoroughly conversant with it." Mr. Wade's tone was complacently benevolent.

"Do you mean that you want me to take a course in mining engineering?" said Hastings, and his voice was carefully expressionless.

"No," said his uncle; "I want you to go out to the mine itself, put yourself in Richards' hands, and get a good working knowledge of the proposition, so that Richards will know you are master. He wouldn't try any tricks with me, because it is pretty well known that men who have tried have repented it; but with a young fellow like you, it's different, of course. I shall not expect you to spend all your time there. Perhaps for a year or so you'd better stay on the ground. Then come East, open your architect's office, and go West once a year on a tour of inspection."

Hastings' face cleared.

"It is more than good of you, sir. I'll try to deserve it," he said, frankly.

"There is only one condition," Mr. Wade went on, "and your word is sufficient for that. You are not to sell the mine without my consent. The very fact that John Carrington is so anxious to get hold of it is one of the best points in its favor."

"Carrington?" said Hastings, mechanically, wondering if the name so constantly in his thoughts had begun to repeat itself audibly.

"He is a—a boor—who owns the adjoining mine," Mr. Wade classified him. "He offered to buy the Tray-Spot. Of course I declined. And he had the insolence to charge Richards with flooding his mine with water from ours, instead of pumping it to the surface. Threatened us with a lawsuit if we didn't put in additional pumps. He said his men were not educated to the luxury of free baths as yet, and that swimming was an unpopular sport on the eleventh level."

"But if it was true?" said Hastings.

"Of course it wasn't," said Mr. Wade, testily. "I wrote Richards, and he said Carrington was just trying to get hold of the mine, and wouldn't stop at anything to do it, because his, the Star, is down so deep it is about worked out. Do you know," Mr. Wade went on, "this John Carrington had the audacity to say that, since I'd never been West, he didn't suppose I'd care to begin such trips *at my age*, and that, as I had no son, he should think a reasonable proposition to sell ought to interest me."

Mr. Wade intended to suggest only John Carrington's breach of good manners, but in spite of himself his 22
voice showed where the taunt stung. And Hastings had a sudden comprehension of his uncle's sudden benevolence, which in its very humanness quickened him from his heavy sense of indebtedness for benefits received, into that warmer loyalty of the ties of blood, into that sense of inter-dependence which this was the first emergency to rouse.

He began to feel ashamed of the sense of injury he had had in the abrupt summons to quit Paris, to put away his chosen profession for a time. He began to feel ashamed of the lagging gratitude with which he had received a gift which would make him a rich man; of that involuntary wish that his uncle's generosity had taken another

form.

A realization of the loneliness of age bound him to the older man with bonds of sentiment stronger far, with warmhearted, generous youth, than all those the government has seen fit to issue.

But Carrington? Though there might be dozens of Carringtons who owned mines in the West.

“We’ll take Holliday’s car—he’s offered it to me time and again—and go out there. We can live on the car the few days I am here, and you’re young and can manage to make yourself comfortable afterward. I shall be proud to introduce you as my nephew, Laurence.” Mr. Wade was tasting victory in prospect, and the taste was palatable. “Carrington has only one son, and he’s daubing canvas in Paris.”

Then this was Elenore’s father. Hastings foresaw complications to come.

“Ned Carrington and his sister were two of my best friends in Paris, sir,” he said, firmly. “I knew their father was a mine owner somewhere in the West.”

“Has this young Carrington any business ability?” demanded Mr. Wade. His tone was quick and keen. He was getting at an important factor.

Hastings smiled in spite of himself.

“Not a scrap,” he said, amusedly, “but he’s a genius. He’ll be a new ‘old master’ one of these days.”

Mr. Wade’s countenance relaxed amiably.

“These erratic young fellows are always *going* to do wonders,” he said, indulgently. “For all the help he’ll be to his father, he might as well be a girl. One of these days you will be buying out John Carrington on your own terms.”

Nor did he dream that in the silence that followed, as he sat comfortably certain of the discomfiture of the man who had flung at him the two-edged taunt of age and childlessness, his nephew was saying to himself that surely Elenore’s father must be a reasonable man, that there must be some rational basis on which he and John Carrington could meet as friends. More, he saw himself with an assured income. *Then* could he not, by virtue of that future friendship, gain a remarkably valuable ally in that siege of the marvelous citadel—invulnerable, indeed, save to a certain small sportsman who bends his bow to no man’s dictation, and yet for love of valor, or from mere caprice, ranges himself at the unlikeliest moment with the besieging force, and wins with a single well-sped shaft?

Whatever emotions the arrival of Mr. Wade and his nephew at Yellow Dog excited in Richards, his outward attitude was one of bluff heartiness.

“You can’t stay on your car, though, Mr. Wade,” he said, decisively, looking over its comfortable appointments with an appraising eye. “The miners at the Star are too lawless. You’ll have to put up with the hotel.” (“About twenty-four hours of the Raegan House will start them for New York,” he thought, with grim humor.)

“Do you mean to tell me that they would dare attack a private car?” Mr. Wade demanded, aghast.

Richards shrugged his shoulders.

“There isn’t much they wouldn’t dare,” he said, coolly, wondering how thick it would be safe to pile it on, “but they’re more interested in people than property. The car’s safe enough as long as you aren’t in it, but if a stick of dynamite happened to drop under it some night when you were——”

“What has made such bad feeling between the mines?” Hastings asked, quietly.

Richards’ eyes narrowed slightly.

“Miners take the tone of their manager,” he said, significantly.

Simple as question and answer were, antipathy quickened in that instant between the two men.

Richards resented a certain something in Hastings’ tone, and Hastings made up his mind that Richards was overplaying.

Mr. Wade was regretting with exceeding heartiness that he had come at all. Being blown to bits in this desolate-looking hole was furthest from his desire.

Trusting himself to the horrors of a wilderness hotel seemed about as hazardous an alternative. As for leaving his nephew in such a place, was it not virtually condemning him to a more or less lingering death? And Mr. Wade had grown amazingly fond of him during the last few months, in the companionship which had resulted from their many-times delayed expedition westward.

He was half inclined to make a formal tour of inspection, announcing Hastings as the future owner, and then take him back and let him open his architect’s office at once. But Mr. Wade hated retreat.

“Then I am sure that you have men equally vigilant in repelling any attacks upon property or persons,” Hastings said, smoothly. “However, it doesn’t matter to me. I should have to come to the hotel, anyway, later, when you have gone back, sir.”

“Going to stay with us a while?” Richards asked him.

“Permanently,” said Hastings, pleasantly.

Richards swung a questioning face toward Mr. Wade.

“The mine would have been my nephew’s at my death, naturally, Richards,” Mr. Wade explained, with some dignity. “He is coming into his own a little sooner, that is all. And if he chooses to remain——”

“As he does,” Hastings laughed, genially, “and to learn all about his mine from its competent manager.”

Mr. Richards’ face did not express any extreme joy.

“If you’ll take my advice, you’ll go home with your uncle and leave your mine in my hands, Mr. Hastings,” he said, bluffly. “It’s a rough country, and hard, dangerous work—work that you don’t know anything about, and that it will take you years to learn. And—I beg your pardon, but I’ll speak plainly—while you are learning you’ll want to give orders, and you’ll make bad mistakes—expensive mistakes. They’re easy to make and hard to right. Not that it will be your fault. I should if I tried to run Mr. Wade’s bank. If you want your mine to keep on being a good paying proposition, leave it in the hands of men who made it one. Isn’t that business, Mr. Wade? I’ve satisfied you, haven’t I?” His manner had a certain brusque appeal.

“Perfectly,” said Mr. Wade, suavely.

Then he looked at Hastings. He was standing by the table heaped with books and magazines, and there was something in the alertness of his virile figure, well poised enough for a soldier; something in the lines of his well-cut features, something in the steadiness and frankness of the cool gray eyes, that suggested not only the strength of youth, but the strength of the spirit. It came to Mr. Wade suddenly that he was going to miss him, that the young fellow ought to have a chance to live with his own class.

“And my nephew may suit himself,” Mr. Wade went on, steadily. “The mine is his without condition”—he spoke the words slowly—“and if he chooses to leave it in your hands, and return East with me, he is quite at liberty to do so.”

Hastings smiled at him cheerfully.

“I shall stay, of course,” he said, decidedly. “But I’ll try not to make my mining education too expensive.”

“I’ve got a carriage outside,” said Mr. Richards, rising abruptly. “I s’pose you’d like to drive around town and out to the mine, to look around a little. Then if you’ll take dinner with me at the Raegan House, you’ll have quite an idea what it’s like out here.”

Mr. Livingstone Wade surveyed the landau into which he stepped with scant favor; and the look which he gave to the ragged darky who held the reins was only equaled by the one he bestowed on the two battered equines who were to serve as their means of locomotion.

As they swung into the main street of the little town, Hastings laughed with a perfectly genuine amusement.

“I might open an architect’s office here, on the side,” he said. “They certainly need it.”

Mr. Wade’s eyes were upon an up-to-date trap, drawn by a well-matched, high-stepping pair. The middle-aged man who was driving turned on them a look of amused curiosity as they passed.

“Whom do those horses belong to?” demanded Mr. Wade, sharply.

“Belong to Carrington,” said Richards, shortly. “That was his man. That’s his house at the other end of the street—that big one on the hill.” He jerked his head to indicate that it was back of them, and they turned to see it. It had a large, comfortable, hospitable look, more suggestive of the South than of the North.

“The hotel’s good enough for me,” said Richards, dryly.

Mr. Wade wondered why this sentiment, which had seemed so admirable to him in New York, lost its flavor here on the ground.

As they passed a blacksmith’s shop, the smith was shoeing a Kentucky thoroughbred, who looked at them with an airy unconcern.

“Carrington’s,” said Richards to Mr. Wade’s uplifted eyebrows.

The expression on Mr. Wade’s face was a curious one. Your tourist in Europe now and then wears its twin, on discovering that the United States is renting a second-rate building for an embassy, when other governments own pretentious ones.

“Tell you what,” said Hastings, suddenly. “I think I shall buy a neat little touring car to run around here. Pretty bad grades, but there are half a dozen makes that could take them easily.”

Mr. Wade looked at him with the ever-growing conviction that he was the kind of nephew to have. In spite of his conservatism, he had adopted the auto as he had the telephone.

“Quite right, Laurence,” he said, complacently. “When you order the one you prefer, have the bill sent to me.”

“Going to import a show-fure?” queried Richards, with ironic pleasantry.

Hastings shook his head.

“Never saw one I couldn’t run yet,” he said, cheerfully, “and when I do I’ll send it back to the factory as defective.”

“If he’ll just put in his time running it, it’s all I’ll ask of him,” communed Richards with himself.

* * * * *

At two o’clock of that day Mr. Wade had concluded that all he had ever heard of the enormities of the West was far below the actual fact.

His first grievance had been the dilapidated conveyance; his second the fact that Richards, who for reasons of his own had not tried to make the expedition a bed of roses, had insisted on his getting out a dozen times to see certain offices, the shaft house, and a number of other buildings, about whose use he was extremely hazy. And these pilgrimages had necessitated his walking through fine red dust, which not only reduced his immaculate footgear to its lowest terms, but bordered the bottom of his pale gray trouser legs with a deep red band, which Richards assured him was indelible.

But the crowning enormity came with the dinner at Raegan’s Hotel, which invitation Mr. Wade had felt he

could hardly refuse in courtesy.

At the moment they entered the dining room Richards was called to the phone.

“Take these gentlemen down to my table, Maggie,” he said to the head waitress as he turned away.

Mr. Wade regarded this young woman disapprovingly. The curve of her pompadour and the curves of her figure were too aggressively spherical. That her overgenerous bulk could be compressed to the dimensions of her waist seemed to indicate that whalebone had been unduly overlooked in modern mechanics. It hinted, too, though not to Mr. Wade, of a forcefulness of spirit which, seeing in a handkerchief-sized, knife-pleated white apron a legitimate adornment, adjusted the physical, Spartan-like, to its requirements. But Mr. Wade’s mere passive and impersonal dislike quickened to an active rage in that awful moment when she tucked her arm comfortably in his, and promenaded him the length of the dining room to an untidy looking table already occupied by a portly Hibernian, who was engaged in extensive molar exploration with a diminutive wooden pick. 25

“Friends of Mr. Richards, Mr. O’Shaughnessy,” she said, glibly, and Mr. Wade felt himself released from her muscular arm only to feel the front of a chair pressed with energetic purpose against the back of his knees.

As certain muscles automatically relaxed to enable him to be seated, his stunned sense of propriety recovered consciousness enough to enable him to decide that of all outrages ever perpetrated on a gentleman, this last was the worst.

“Mr. Richards’ friends are my friends,” responded Mr. O’Shaughnessy, cordially.

Mr. Wade looked at Hastings, who was seating himself with outer sobriety and inward hilarity. He comforted himself by taking that sobriety for disgust.

“I suppose you are not out here for your health?” Mr. O’Shaughnessy opined, genially.

“No,” said Mr. Wade, icily.

“What line ar-re you in?” Mr. O’Shaughnessy pursued.

“I fail to understand you,” said Mr. Wade, stiffly.

“What house are you thravelin’ for? What are you selling?” Mr. O’Shaughnessy explained.

That he, Mr. Livingstone Wade, should be taken for a traveling salesman!

“I am a banker,” said Mr. Wade. He felt it due to himself to say as much as that.

“Faro and that face of yours ar-re twins the world over,” said Mr. O’Shaughnessy, genially, closing one eye and looking intelligently at Hastings through the other. Then he cast the toothpick on the floor. “Have a cigar?” he said, hospitably, throwing a couple carelessly on the table as he rose to depart. “Drop in and see me if you get thirsty while you’re here. The palm garden. Two doors up. The house is good for a few yet.”

He stopped to joke with the head waitress a moment on his way out.

Richards, returning, decided that Mr. Wade was pretty well fagged. He had become monosyllabic.

The catsup bottle in the middle of the table, the greasy, lukewarm soup in stone-china bowls, the tasteless profusion of canned vegetables, the dubious-looking water, and the muddy mixture, bitter from long boiling, which the Raegan House called coffee, were only additional affronts to a man already at the limit of his endurance.

His announcement of his intention to spend the rest of the day in the car, and to make it his headquarters during his stay, was delivered with a decision which left no possibility for protest.

What was mere dynamite to such indignities as these!

He stepped into the landau, which Richards had ordered round again, with a sensation of relief, heightened by that gentleman’s statement that he shouldn’t be able to see them again until morning. Richards found Mr. Wade rather exhausting, on his side.

“If you see a fellow in freak clothes on your way back, you can know it’s that son of Carrington’s,” he observed, as he stood on the sidewalk.

Hastings had his foot on the step of the landau, but he wheeled.

“Is Ned Carrington here?” he demanded.

“Been here all summer. Father broke his leg in a runaway and sent for him,” Richards growled. 26

“Then I think I’ll walk over and see him,” Hastings said promptly, “if you’ll excuse me, sir.”

He smiled confidently at his uncle.

“You shan’t go near him,” said Richards, fiercely, “with that shark of a father of his trying to swindle us every way he can.”

“Whatever his father is, Ned Carrington is a gentleman and my friend,” said Hastings, quietly.

“Tell him he can’t go,” Richards demanded of Mr. Wade. And his insistence was fatal. Mr. Wade would not have influenced his nephew at Richards’ dictation just now if Hastings had announced his intention of going to perdition.

Moreover, he trusted Hastings. And—this is an awful anti-climax—he wanted a nap.

“I hope you will find your friend home, Laurence,” he said, suavely. “Business quarrels can safely be ignored between gentlemen.”

Richards, watching the erect old figure disappearing in the landau toward the station, and the athletic young one striding off in the direction of the Star mine, hated them with an equal intensity.

* * * * *

John Carrington, dozing away on the great wicker divan on his broad veranda, in the warmth of a September afternoon, opened his eyes at the click of the gate.

The young man coming rapidly up the graveled walk was a stranger.

“Mr. Carrington?” he said, pleasantly.

“Yes, sir,” Carrington replied.

“Your son and I were friends in Paris, Mr. Carrington,” he went on. “My name is Hastings. I hope he is at home.”

Hastings! Paris! This was the young fellow whom Sarah had written about—who was so attentive to Elenore.

Carrington looked at him critically, and was pleased.

“Sit down, Mr. Hastings,” he said, cordially. “Ned just went in to order the horses for a little later. He will be out presently, and will be glad to see you.”

“I was surprised to hear that Ned was here, Mr. Carrington,” Hastings went on, seating himself. “He was to start for the East with Velantour the day I left Paris, and I supposed he was painting away for dear life somewhere in the Vale of Cashmere.”

“I didn’t even know he intended to go,” said Carrington, quietly.

“What!” said Hastings. “He hasn’t told you that Velantour asked him to go? It was the greatest opportunity he could ever have!” Then he thought. “Of course your illness was first with him,” he said. “I hope I haven’t been telling tales out of school.” He smiled frankly. Then “He’s a genius, though.” The praise burst out spontaneously. “They expect great things of him in Paris, Mr. Carrington.”

John Carrington did some rapid thinking. So the boy had put aside the biggest opportunity in his life to come back to him. Put it aside cheerfully. To gratify—John Carrington was hard on himself now—his father’s selfish pride. The need had not been imperative. He could have written him all the questions it was advisable to ask him. But he had been in pain, and harassed, and he had sacrificed the boy to it. Well, he should go back soon. He, John Carrington, was not so near senility that he couldn’t manage his own affairs. His jaw set squarely.

“I’m glad you told me, Mr. Hastings,” he said, calmly. Quick steps were coming through the hall. “Before he had a chance to head you off,” he concluded, smilingly. The eyes he turned toward the door were very proud. “Here’s a friend you’ll be glad to see,” he said, cheerily. Yet it seemed to him, and to Hastings, that the lad’s first impulse was toward recoil.

He certainly paled a little. And Hastings said to himself that Ned had, in some subtle way, changed indefinably, but certainly. His eyes did not carry out the comfortable familiarity of his attire. It appeared to Hastings that they were making some demand upon him—a demand that he could not understand.

But the next second young Carrington came forward with at least a surface cordiality.

“How did you find me out—Hastings?” he said, with a slight hesitation before the name, as perplexing as the characteristic grasp of his hand, familiar and unfamiliar at once, and the tinge of formality that obtruded itself unmistakably.

“I had no idea you were here until I heard it just now from Richards,” said Hastings, struggling with a vague sense of rebuff.

The name might have been the Medusa head.

Then “Richards?” John Carrington queried. Hastings flushed.

“My uncle, Mr. Wade, has given me the Tray-Spot mine,” he said, and his voice became formal in turn. “We lunched with our manager to-day.”

In spite of his annoyance, his lips twitched at the memory of it.

“It seems that there is war between the two mines, Mr. Carrington;” he turned to the older man. “I don’t know anything of mining, but there must be some way out of it which would be just both to your interests and to ours.”

For John Carrington had impressed him indelibly as an honest man.

Hastings’ tone was both dignified and frank. John Carrington liked it. But could good come out of anything connected with the Tray-Spot? It had always been a thorn in the flesh.

Ned had crossed the veranda quickly, to seat himself behind a book-laden table. Once so ensconced, he drew a long breath of relief. Then he began to look amused.

“We have suggested a way, but it did not meet with your uncle’s approval,” said John Carrington, quietly.

“I quite agree with my uncle that we do not care to sell,” said Hastings, calmly.

“Nor, I assume, do you care to discharge your manager,” John Carrington went on.

“No,” said Hastings, frankly again; “my uncle has always considered Richards an invaluable man.”

“He certainly has been,” Carrington commented, ironically. “Then, I think we can cut out mining as a topic of conversation, Mr. Hastings. You and Ned can gossip about Paris.”

“That’s where I differ with you, dad,” Ned broke in, spiritedly.

Hastings, stung, started to rise, but “Don’t be silly,” the lad said, impatiently, but with more friendliness than he had yet shown. “We may have a thousand pleasant things to say about Paris, but this is the important

thing, and we had better keep at it.

"Laurence"—Hastings gave a little start; Ned had never called him Laurence—"is quite as much of a greenhorn about mines as I was a few months ago. It's only fair to tell him just what our position is. He will at least hear a story of our grievances that hasn't been garbled." His tone was spirited.

"I should like that," said Hastings, quietly.

Ned leaned forward eagerly. Then he settled his cravat with a peculiar twist, which Hastings recognized as Ned's characteristic preliminary to discourse. He and Elenore had laughed over it many times together.

"Ours is the older and deeper mine," Ned began. "That's the first thing. And all the mines here strike the big bodies of water in sinking. That's the second. Your manager has hit on the economical plan of doing without large pumps; and when you strike water, he lets it seep through to us, and we raise it for you. It increases our dangers and expenses and your dividends. How would you like it in our place?"

John Carrington watched him with a look of mingled pride and amusement.

"In the case you have stated, I shouldn't like it at all," Hastings stated, coolly. "But Richards has assured my uncle that this grievance of yours is imaginary; that the water you get comes from your own sinking. Isn't there a possibility that may be so?"

"No," said Ned, positively; "there isn't."

Hastings hesitated. That Ned believed what he was saying was obvious; but, after all, what did he know about it? Wasn't he, save in his art, the most impractical soul living? Why shouldn't it be quite as likely that Carrington's men deceived him as that Richards deceived his uncle? 28

"There ought to be the simplest of ways of settling that," he said, slowly. "Let a couple of your men go down our mine and satisfy themselves that we're doing what's right."

John Carrington's laugh was ironically amused.

"You might suggest that to Richards," he said. Then his tone changed. "He won't even give us a map of your workings," he said, sharply. "As for letting anyone from the Star underground, he has announced pretty clearly that the man who tried it wouldn't come up again. And though Richards' word hasn't any par value, I am willing to believe that for once he meant what he said."

"Aren't you painting Richards in rather too black a color?" Hastings protested. "Aren't you unduly prejudiced against him? Premeditated murder, now?"

"Accident, my dear sir," John Carrington said, ironically, "and underground accidents are almost too easy."

Hastings hesitated. He looked at Ned.

The lad made a Gallic gesture that sent his hands far apart. "What would you?" it signified.

There was a tinge of mockery in his friendly smile. Yet something of confidence, too.

"My dear Hastings," he said; "it is decidedly up to you. Our word or Richards'."

Hastings flushed.

"My dear Ned," he said, steadily, "that I should doubt your good faith is impossible. Nor," he flared, "do I think you doubt mine. I have been thrust suddenly, through the great generosity of an uncle to whom I am as loyal as you are to your father, into a situation that I know nothing about. I have a manager in whom my uncle, a cautious man, has believed implicitly. You tell me this man is a rogue. But you may be wrong. I can't condemn him unheard. One thing is certain," he went on. "I shall find out. And if there has been anything crooked about our management, it shall be righted." The line of his lips straightened. The muscles of his jaw grew tense. It was impossible to doubt that he meant what he said.

Both listeners believed him. Both admired him. But John Carrington looked his admiration frankly, and young Carrington dropped his eyelids satisfiedly over his.

"That is all we could ask," said John Carrington, approvingly. "Now let me hear you youngsters chat about Paris."

But Hastings was impatient to be off now.

"I must get back to my uncle," he said, lightly. "It has been a hard day for him, and I suggested that I would serve as secretary for once."

"Then, order the horses round for Mr. Hastings, Ned," said John Carrington, and as the lad disappeared, and Hastings protested: "They are standing harnessed in the stable," he said, decisively. "You mustn't insist on our being too inhospitable."

And as Hastings capitulated, John Carrington followed out a sudden impulse.

"You will explain to your uncle that this half-mended leg of mine will prevent my calling on him," he stated, feeling suddenly that Hastings' uncle must have some good points, "but I shall be glad to put my horses at his disposal while he is here. Ned will come over to your car in the morning, and say so gracefully."

He smiled confidently at the returning lad.

There was a queer, contented look lurking in the lad's eyes. "As gracefully as he can," he laughed, lightly. "I'll walk down to the gate with you," he added.

It was on the way to the gate that Hastings asked the question which was really the mainspring of his call.

"Where is your sister now? Did she go to Brittany?"

Young Carrington seemed amused. 29

“Elenore’s plans were rather upset this summer,” he said, lightly, “as well as mine. She’s far from Brittany, in a curious little place you never heard of in France.” He was rather proud of the way that sentence was turned. “She’s with a friend, and enjoying herself, though she says it’s all queer.”

Hastings had a mental vision of Elenore in some far-off corner of France, making gay over all its out-of-the-way absurdities in that companionable way of hers.

“I wish she were here,” he said, suddenly.

“Oh, well, I dare say she’d rather be where she is than anywhere else,” Ned rejoined, carelessly.

Which was cold comfort to Hastings.

“By the way,” he said, turning, as he was about to step into the trap, “I suppose we’re perfectly safe to make our headquarters in the car here?”

“Safe as the Waldorf, if you’re on a siding,” Ned laughed. “If you stay on the main track the cars will hit you.”

Hastings mentally swore at himself. The question had sounded idiotic.

“See you in the morning,” Ned called, as Hastings drove off. But he walked back to the house rather slowly.

“Pretty tired, dad?” he asked, cheerfully.

“Ned,” said John Carrington, slowly, “when you children were little I’m afraid I loved Elenore best. But no daughter can be to a man what his son is.”

There was a little silence. John Carrington lay with his eyes closed. He was tired.

“Do you think Elenore was interested in that young fellow?” he asked, finally.

“If she was, she never said so,” young Carrington replied. He was looking off in the direction of the Tray-Spot.

“If I were a girl, I’m inclined to think he could have me,” John Carrington announced.

Young Carrington’s laugh was lightly amused.

“If I were a girl, I’d lead him on a bit, myself,” he announced.

CHAPTER V.

When Hastings had returned to the car the afternoon before, he told his uncle the story of his interview with the Carringtons quite simply. He was too wise to urge action upon a tired, out-of-temper man; nor did he wait for Mr. Wade’s comment. He shifted conversation to pleasanter things, and by the time Joseph had served them a nice little dinner Mr. Wade’s outer man bore the visible signs of gastronomic peace. A few games of cribbage, which he won, yet not too easily, were also a soothing influence. When Hastings said good-night, Mr. Wade opened the subject of his own accord.

“How did this claim of Carrington’s strike you, Laurence?”

“It struck me that we must satisfy ourselves about it as a matter of personal honor,” said Hastings, firmly. “Of course you will know better than I how and when to take the initiative.”

There was nothing that urged or insisted in his tone. It was quietly assured.

“Good-night, sir,” he smiled, and disappeared. Disappeared to dream that the car was a balloon, and that he was sailing swiftly through sunny skies to Elenore.

Mr. Livingstone Wade, over-fatigued, was jolted through dreamland by that unbridled nocturnal equine who bolts from one disaster to another.

The horror-stricken Mr. Wade found himself lunching at Sherry’s with the head waitress from Raegan’s. She had tied that knife-pleated apron around her neck, like a bib; and she told him things were “elegunt,” and he could call her Maggie.

She insisted on his drinking catsup instead of claret, and ordered the salad compounded with soft hematite instead of paprika.

All the directors of the bank were seated at a table near them; and they looked quite as appalled as Mr. Wade felt *he* would, had he seen any one of them in his place.

How he came to be in this awful predicament, he had no idea. He only knew that he was riveted to his chair, and that his face, in spite of his inward horror, *would* wear a pleased smile. And speech, though he strove desperately to articulate, was an impossibility.

Then Hastings appeared, and said seriously: “This, sir, is a matter that affects your personal honor.”

It was in a grim determination to escape from this purgatory at all hazards that Mr. Wade finally jumped himself awake; and though every muscle in his body ached throbbingly, he gave a sigh of contentment as he stirred his face on his pillow.

* * * * *

Trevanion, coming up to the house on a summons from John Carrington, found young Carrington coming down the steps, looking a bit more of a swashbuckling dandy than ever.

“Morning, Trevanion,” he greeted him, buoyantly.

Then he nodded toward the waiting trap.

“I’m going to pay a morning call on the owners of the Tray-Spot,” he announced, genially.

“Confound ’em!” muttered Trevanion.

The lad looked him straight in the eyes, in the way Trevanion found so remarkable.

“Oh, I think they’re square,” he said, lightly, “and that Richards’ day is about done. It will decide itself in a few days now, anyway.”

Trevanion watched him with a curious expression as he drove off.

* * * * *

Mr. Wade had wakened not only refreshed but in a mood which a certain irreverent clerk had once characterized as his “dusting off the earth day” and a good time to lie low. Hastings greeted the morning sun joyfully, because it shone on the little town where Elenore had spent her childhood.

Richards came in just as they were enjoying their after-breakfast cigars.

“Well,” he said, dropping into a chair without preliminary greetings, or waiting for Mr. Wade to request him to do so, “what’s the program for to-day?”

Then his eyes fell on Mr. Wade’s trouser legs.

“Told you it wouldn’t come off, didn’t I?” he laughed, boisterously.

Mr. Wade resented Richards’ unceremonious entrance, and resented still more this direct allusion to his sartorial disfigurement, which had resisted the most zealous efforts of Joseph. He considered that, under present circumstances, the legs should be considered as analogous to those of the Queen of Spain.

And that phrase of Hastings, “a matter of personal honor,” had hit the bull’s-eye.

Mr. Wade prided himself first that the family fortune had been made honestly, by the rise in Manhattan real estate; and last, that the Wade name stood in the business world to-day as a symbol of integrity that erred, if it erred at all, on the side of over-scrupulousness.

“Mr. Richards,” he said, a trifle stiffly, “when I inquired into the matter, you wrote me that Mr. Carrington’s grievance had no foundation in fact, did you not?”

The bluffness faded out of Richards’ face and left ugliness disclosed.

“He brought that old yarn back with him from Carrington’s yesterday, I suppose,” he sneered, jerking his head toward Hastings.

Hastings had that rare faculty of knowing when to let the game play itself.

“Very naturally, Mr. Richards,” said Mr. Wade, with dangerous smoothness; “but that is not the question.”

Richards’ face darkened.

“I’ll tell you what the question is, Mr. Wade, and you can settle it right now,” he snarled. “It’s whether you are going to take the word of the man who has made the mine, or the word of the man who’s trying to blackmail it, so’s he can buy it cheap.”

It was a good issue, so good that Richards himself was proud of it. He leaned back in his chair with something of a swagger.

“That you are still in charge of the Tray-Spot is the best proof of my confidence in you,” Mr. Wade said, in a more gracious tone, “but I propose to place the Carringtons in a position where they will have to admit that they are in the wrong, as you say they are. We will tell them that they may send a representative through our mine at any time, and that he will be accorded every courtesy.”

“Not on your life, we won’t!” said Richards, fiercely.

“That,” said Mr. Wade, serenely, “is a matter where we differ.”

“Do you suppose,” Richards went on, working himself into a rage, “that anyone they sent down would come up and tell the truth? He’d say just what he was paid to say, and he’d find just what he was paid to find.”

Joseph entered with two cards, and thereby effected a diversion.

One of the cards bore the name of Mr. John Carrington and the other that of Mr. Edward Carrington.

The gods fought on the Carrington side.

“Show him in,” said Mr. Wade, suavely.

Young Carrington, debonair as a certain Monsieur Beaucaire, made his entrance with an easy grace. The delicate deference of his manner toward Mr. Wade, the pleasant *camaraderie* which he showed to Hastings, the impersonal politeness with which he recognized Richards’ existence, were all points in his favor.

So, too, were his punctiliousness in making his father’s excuses, and the quiet courtesy with which he placed his horses at Mr. Wade’s disposal.

His manner was so free from embarrassment or assertiveness, so evidently inspired by a nice sense of proprieties, that he might have been the ambassador of one king to another.

Richards, retiring to one of the car windows, his back toward them all, his fingers beating a nerve-racking tattoo upon the glass, was his direct antithesis.

“My nephew tells me you have distinct ability as an artist,” Mr. Wade said, when, the preliminary interchange of courtesies over, the three were comfortably seated. Mr. Wade thought it was likely, too.

“Then, I may tell you that we expect him to be one of our best architects,” young Carrington returned, gracefully.

“The rising architect of Yellow Dog,” Hastings said, with a wave of his hands. “I think I shall begin by building a little bungalow here for myself.”

“A very good idea,” said Mr. Wade, decisively.

Hastings’ first phrase had smitten him with a sudden contrition. He felt, too, that if he was going to come out to Yellow Dog himself, and if his nephew stayed there he should, of course, come out once a year, at least, a cozily built bungalow, where he might be made comfortable, was in the line of a necessity. “I should get about it at once,” he declared.

“Perhaps you would like to drive about this morning, and select your site for ‘A Bungalow for One,’” said young Carrington, laughingly. There was a slightly mocking emphasis on the last word.

“I shouldn’t have it too small,” said Mr. Wade, firmly.

Richards was whistling between his teeth now, a performance which always enraged Mr. Wade.

“But we will have to let the site go for this morning, at least;” and there was a precise distinctness about Mr. Wade’s words now. “Mr. Richards has just been arranging to take us down the mine this morning.”

Richards wheeled round, surprised.

Young Carrington rose with an unhurried ease.

“Then, I must not detain you,” he said, calmly.

“And why would it not be a good idea for you to send one of your men, in whom you have full confidence, down with us?”—Mr. Wade’s tone was entirely urbane. “He would, perhaps, be able not only to assure himself of actual conditions, but to explain your contention to us in the workings under discussion.”

Richards held himself tense.

“I should like to send our shift boss, with your permission,” said young Carrington, quietly, though inwardly he exulted. “I will have him meet you at your shaft house whenever you say.” 32

“Mr. Wade,” said Richards, and the effort he made to control himself made the veins in his face distend purplingly, “when Mr. John Carrington is well enough to go down our mine, I shall be glad”—how the word choked him—“to take him down myself; but Trevanion, their shift boss, is at the bottom of the trouble. He’s tricky and dishonest. I’d rather resign than take him down the mine.”

For in the time that would elapse before John Carrington was able to take such a jaunt much could be done.

There was a moment’s pause, in which Richards’ claim and Carrington’s were equi-balanced. The very fact of Hastings’ personal bias held him inactive.

Then young Carrington spoke.

“I will answer for Trevanion’s honesty with my own,” he said. There was an emotional note in the voice he tried to hold steady.

“Off the same piece, *I* guess,” sneered Richards, nastily.

The scales swayed down on the Carrington side.

Mr. Wade’s code did not permit his guests to be insulted by his subordinates.

“My dear Mr. Carrington, you leave us no option when you take that stand,” he said, suavely. “Whenever your man is ready, then.”

“I think he is still at the house with my father,” said young Carrington, unsteadily. “I can telephone from the station here.”

Mr. Wade looked out of the window. Beside Carrington’s trap stood the landau of yesterday. “If you will drive home and bring your man over, we will go directly to the mine with Mr. Richards,” he said.

* * * * *

Young Carrington, bursting in upon his father and Trevanion, told it all in a breath.

Trevanion rose with the last word.

“The sooner I’m there the better,” he said, phlegmatically.

“It’s queer business,” said John Carrington, frowning. “Keep your eyes open. What do you think of it?”

“I’ll tell you when I come up,” said Trevanion. “If I don’t come up, you’ll look after my boy?”

John Carrington nodded.

“Keep close to young Hastings,” he said, tersely. “Don’t let Richards get behind you alone. I’m inclined to think, though, that the whole thing will be a farce. He’ll take you into a few levels where there couldn’t be any question, and that will be all. Wade and his nephew won’t know. And that will be all there is to it.”

“I’ll drive you over,” said Ned. His eyes were bright with excitement.

Trevanion grinned as he settled himself in the trap.

“I’m going to get my swell ride before I go down,” he said. “Mostly they take ’em when they come up—in a box.”

* * * * *

The others were waiting, garbed in oilskins, candles in their caps—precautionary measures which inclined Mr. Wade to feel that there was something wrong in the management of a mine that was neither lighted nor heated.

Hastings was struggling not to chafe under his rôle of masterly inactivity; he comforted himself with the thought that it was causing things to move in the right direction, at any rate.

Richards' expression was sardonic. As Carrington had surmised, he proposed to tire out the greenhorns by an exhaustive progress through workings which would be of no possible interest to Trevanion.

He calculated shrewdly about how long it would take before they would be glad to come up. If Trevanion remained behind them, or if he went down without them later—Richards shrugged his shoulders. It was easy for a man to fall down an uncovered winze in a strange mine. And the fall would explain any bruises.

As they started for the cage, he turned to young Carrington. His smile was distinctly disagreeable.

"Sorry you don't feel like coming, too," he said, "but you might catch cold or get your clothes dirty."

Whatever faults there were to young Carrington's credit, cowardice was not one of them. Not that foolhardiness is not almost as reprehensible. 33

"If you'll lend me a cap and a pair of boots, I shall be delighted," he answered instantly.

"No, Mr. Ned. You're not in this," Trevanion remonstrated.

Young Carrington was pulling on his cap composedly now.

"You've never been down the Star, even. You won't be of any use," Trevanion insisted. Young Carrington was getting into an oilskin coat. Richards had not thought he would.

"I'll telephone your father," Trevanion declared.

"Then I'll go down without you while you're doing it," young Carrington declared, willfully.

Trevanion followed him into the cage without more ado. But he didn't like it.

As the cage dropped into the blackness of the shaft, Richards thought with malicious pleasure that he would outwit them all. Trevanion, holding it everyday work for himself, was uneasy over the boy; Hastings was impatient at his own ignorance—he hated to feel so out of his sphere; Mr. Wade, reviewing each successive stage of the proceedings which had placed him in his present situation, called himself what he would have slain any fellow man for thinking, a silly old fool; and Carrington—ah, a curious tangle of thoughts was young Carrington's brain, with a curious after-vision of a bright blue sky.

Up in the big house on the hill, John Carrington was wondering if it was not time for Ned to come home.

* * * * *

It is a curious experience—this going underground for the first time.

The chill and the dampness, the change in the air pressure, and the darkness—that vague, depressing darkness, on which the candle in your cap makes so vague and flickering an impression that it seems nervous and palpitant at its own temerity in attempting so gigantic a task.

Above all, and above you, as you clearly realize, for an eighth of a mile, perhaps, the huge impending weight of earth and rock, against whose menace timbering a foot and a half thick seems like trying to bolster the basement of a tottering St. Paul's with matches.

It is like finding oneself in some gigantic letter press, the screw of which the hand of fate may choose to turn—perhaps now; pressing downward with pitiless, relentless, inanimate mechanism until the Parchment of the World bears the dull red mark of these unwilling witnesses to its deed.

These are all terrors unconfessed. Farthest of real menaces you find—whose vague terror is made dormant by the real necessities of the moment, the constant strain of the eye to distinguish—now to avoid the direct peril of an uncovered winze underfoot, now to notice how closely the "lagging" roofs in the drift, this indefinitely long hole, seven and a half feet square, in which you find yourself.

Then comes the strain of the novice brain to comprehend the reasons and the logic of it all.

Richards showed his native shrewdness in the way he managed the expedition. The humor of its personnel was quite within his comprehension. Three men, ignorant of every detail of mining, Trevanion of the Star, and himself.

It was grotesque enough for comedy.

And, too, Richards had at last taken Mr. Wade's measure—or thought he had.

"You have to sling softsoap to suit the pig-headed old sissy," he phrased it.

And he assumed a bluff heartiness which actually became genuine at times, as he explained carefully and clearly the A B C's of things.

For Richards loved the mine he had made, loved it after the fashion of his nature, with an intensity of possession.

Fought for it fairly when fairness served best, and trickily when trickiness seemed more profitable. Took a man's genuine pride when he had forced it to obey him. Abused its future for the present good if he felt like it. Slaved for it fiercely in reprisal. It was the only way Richards knew how to love anything.

That these two men whom the accident of fortune had placed in actual ownership of the mine should interfere with him had roused first his rage, and now his determination to placate them, to hoodwink them. He showed a good-natured tolerance of their ignorance, and an indefatigable patience in explanation. 34

“That’s it; now you’re catching on fine,” he encouraged them, as they grasped some elemental principle of mining. He led them over a good deal of ground during these explanations. He piloted them with a rough carefulness which even included young Carrington. The boy’s being there at all amused him rather than otherwise. But Trevanion was guarding young Carrington with as wary an eye as he was watching Richards.

Mr. Wade decided that for the first time Richards was appearing to advantage.

Aboveground his crudities of manner might be repellent; here he was in his native element, shrewd, practical and zealous.

Mr. Wade began to feel that Trevanion the Taciturn was quite as likely to prove the villain of the piece.

To be sure, it appeared that they had embarked on a tremendous undertaking. Mr. Wade felt that the mine was larger than he had supposed, but, as Richards said, they might as well understand it thoroughly. On this Mr. Wade, with legs that threatened to drop from his hip sockets, plodded on.

Young Carrington turned white more than once, but shut his teeth and went on defiantly; and Hastings owned to himself that he was desperately tired. Trevanion was as unwearied as Cornish patience, but Richards was not trying to tired out Trevanion—physically.

It lacked five minutes of the noon hour when they saw the cage ahead of them, waiting at this, the seventh and lowest, working level of the mine.

Below, as Richard told them, was the development level, to which the cage did not descend.

“We can’t go down now,” he said, looking at his watch. “They’re just going to blast, and it will take an hour afterward for the smoke to clear. We’ll go up and have our dinner, and come down again this afternoon to finish up, eh?”

Lunch, up on the earth’s surface, with sunshine and first grade air. The words were as welcome to Mr. Wade as though an archangel had spoken them.

Young Carrington, too, shared his feeling; shared, too, though unknowingly, Mr. Wade’s calculation that his legs would just about carry him to the cage.

Richards, with an inward grin, assured himself that those two, at least, would attempt no afternoon expedition.

This farce of investigation would soon be ended. It would be quite safe to urge them to come down again. They had had quite enough. He looked forward with amused anticipation to making the suggestion after lunch.

Trevanion hesitated about declaring an intention to remain without the others through the noon hour. No, he would see young Carrington safely out of it first; then——

They were almost at the cage now.

Richards was showing them the bell at the side of the shaft, the signal to the engineer to hoist the cage.

“All the men but one get in,” he explained. “He touches the bell and races across to get in the cage. The engineer allows him so many seconds to make it. No, you can’t stop it after it starts.”

Mr. Wade, who had arrived at that stage when he recked not how the cage went up, as long as it went, continued an unlistening way to that haven.

There was a detonation from the development level.

“Blast,” said Richards, to young Carrington’s look. “They’re in rather dangerous ground, and so we have them leave it until just before the noon hour, in case——”

A man shot up from the ladder-way. Another. And another. The ladder-hole spouted them out like a volcano.

They ran toward the cage panic-stricken, sweeping Mr. Wade into it before them. With an instant comprehension of the disaster that placed them all in a common peril, Richards turned swiftly to the others.

“Get in!” he shouted. “They’ve struck water!”

He caught Hastings by the arm, and rammed his way through the press like a great machine.

“You —— fools! There’s plenty of time!” he railed at his men.

Trevanion, guarding young Carrington with his right arm, thrust his mighty bulk through the struggling mass just behind Richards.

They were almost at the cage door when a terrorized Finn fought his way past them, striking out blindly at everything in reach.

One elbow thrust sent young Carrington spinning from Trevanion’s protecting arm to the ground, and the next instant the Finn dropped his full weight between Richards and Hastings, and leaped past them into the cage.

He shouted triumphantly to his fellows. It was jargon to Mr. Wade. But Richards knew, and raged, and the other miners knew, and rejoiced, that he had given the signal to hoist. Trevanion was lifting young Carrington in his arms.

Richards stepped into the cage, with an oath.

“Come!” he said, fiercely, to Hastings, jamming a few inches of space free in the cage with his bulk. “Room for one. You haven’t a second to lose!” he shouted.

Hastings put his hands in his pockets, coolly.

“I stay with my guests,” he said. And with his first word, the cage started upward.

As he turned toward the others, Trevanion, one arm round young Carrington, caught hold of his sleeve.

“We maun run for it!” he shouted.

For out of the great black hole beneath them rose the water, spreading across the bottom of the shaft.

From above, and suddenly faint, they could hear Mr. Wade calling that they must stop, that they must go back for his nephew, and his voice was the voice of a very old man. Trevanion instinctively led them running back into the drift. Young Carrington wrenched himself free. “I’m all right,” he said. “Took the breath out of me for a minute. I won’t hinder.”

Back of them the water followed silently, gaining gradually up the grade of the drift.

“Not time to make that first rise—the one we came down,” Trevanion said, as they sped along. “Ought to be another—here it is!”

He swerved into a black air shaft, but swept them back into the drift the next instant.

“No ladder. Stripped!” he said, laconically, and on they hurried again.

The water was a thin encroaching line thirty feet back now. Now the rise in the level hid it from sight.

And finally another rise. Stripped.

And on again.

Young Carrington was getting tired. Even peril was losing its spur. He stumbled a little.

Trevanion caught him round the waist, lifting him along with a strong gentleness; looking at him with curiously wondering eyes, but eyes that never lost their look of fealty.

“Why are the ladders gone?” young Carrington asked, and he kept his voice resolutely free from fear.

“Economy,” said Trevanion, briefly. “Wanted to use them somewhere else. We’ll find one after a bit.” Which might or might not be so.

“And if we don’t?” said Hastings, swinging alongside.

“They’ll send the cage to the level above, and your men will be hallooing all over the place for us,” Trevanion told him. He thought with a certain grim humor that Richards would not make any wild exertion to save him. Hastings’ presence was their best hope, if the ladders failed.

“If it should take them a long time to find us?” It was young Carrington now.

“Water may stop altogether,” Trevanion stated. “Depends on the size of the vug. Anyway, it rises slower the more ground it covers. We’ll have time enough.” But no one could tell that.

Disappointment. Hope. Then the end of the drift stared them in the face—rock and dirt as a final blast had left it.

But “Here’s our raise,” said Trevanion, bluffly, turning off.

And the raise was ladderless: a vertical opening, whose hard rock walls were too slippery for even a Cornishman to climb. Trapped!

They looked at the place where the ladder should have been, as though it must, perforce, appear. Young Carrington ran a finger rapidly round inside his collar, as though it had grown suddenly tight. The air seemed close. Then he pulled himself together sharply. Say what you will, blood will tell.

“And now what?” he asked Trevanion, cheerfully.

Hastings’ eyes were looking the same question.

“Wait,” said Trevanion, stoically.

To wait, inactive: it is the real test of courage.

With any kind of activity, hope plays an obligato; but when there is no struggle to be made, fears tries a tremolo first on one heartstring and then another.

“You should have gone with the others,” said young Carrington to Hastings, reproachfully.

“Never!” said Hastings, decidedly. “There’s that drop of comfort in the whole thing, anyway.

“How do you suppose I should feel,” he flashed, “if I were safe on the surface, and you were here? I should feel as though I had decoyed you into it.” He turned to Trevanion. “Can’t the pumps get the water under control?” he demanded.

“If you had enough of ’em,” said Trevanion. “That’s another place where Richards economized. The Star’ll pump it out for you after a while.”

“Richards will have his day of reckoning if I get out of this,” said Hastings, furiously.

“Does he know that?” asked Trevanion, dryly.

And Hastings saw the point. So did young Carrington. The cards were Richards’ now, to play as he chose. Hastings turned to his friends.

“Ned,” he said, “I’m mighty sorry. Sorry I interfered at all. I’d give my life to have you and Trevanion safe on the surface.”

“Don’t worry about me,” said the lad, quickly.

Trevanion’s eyes watched him curiously.

“I want to talk with you about Elenore,” Hastings went on, quietly. “I suppose you know that I love Elenore, Ned?”

Trevanion stepped back a few paces, but he listened intently.

“Do you?” said the lad, simply.

“Do I?” said Hastings, impetuously. “The hardest thing I ever did was to leave her without telling her I loved her. But you can’t ask a girl like that to wait indefinitely, you know. Then, when I found out where I was coming, it seemed as though it might have been meant, after all. And I wanted to patch up the trouble between the mines, so that I’d have at least a fair chance.”

“And then?” said young Carrington, softly.

“Then,” said Hastings, recklessly, “I hoped—I was daft enough to dream—that she might not think it a hardship to come back to the little place where she was born—to her father—to me. To *me*! And when I talked of building a bungalow, I thought what it would mean to bring my wife home to it.”

There was silence. Then Hastings shrugged his shoulders.

“I may not have the chance to tell Elenore,” he said, bruskly, half-ashamed of the emotion he had displayed. “It’s not quite the same thing to tell you, old man. I’m afraid there’s small chance of our ever being brothers-in-law, but you wouldn’t have objected to me as a brother, would you?”

“Whatever Elenore wished, I should have wished,” the lad said, calmly.

Hastings laughed a short, impatient laugh.

“I suppose we’re all egoists,” he said. “But I don’t mind confessing to you that it would be easier to face the music if I knew what Elenore *did* wish—whether *she* cared.”

There was silence again. Trevanion’s figure in the background grew tense. Then the lad laughed lightly.

“You hadn’t asked her, you know,” he said, “and Elenore isn’t the kind of a girl to wear her heart on her sleeve. But I know Elenore pretty well, and I think she cared—really.”

Hastings flung his arm in front of his face with a gesture that was almost boyish.

“Elenore!” he whispered to the cold comfort of his coat sleeve. For virile youth loves strongly, humanly.

Young Carrington’s eyes watched him with a wonderful light. Even the flickering candlelight showed Trevanion that.

Then Hastings rammed his hands in his pockets and drew a deep breath.

“Thank Heaven, she’s on the other side of the ocean! It will be easier for her, after all. Harder to realize,” he said, fervently.

Young Carrington drew a quick breath, a breath of relief. “I thought you’d feel that way,” he said, quietly.

Trevanion stepped out into the drift.

“I want to speak with you a bit,” he nodded to young Carrington.

The lad followed him. Hastings, left alone, gave himself up to thoughts of Elenore. The other side of the rock wall, young Carrington faced Trevanion, and knew that he knew. Every detail of their surroundings stood out in the light of that, with sudden distinctness. The great timbers that walled in the drift, the flickering light of the candles in their caps—all seemed but the setting for Trevanion’s eyes. The hand he laid on young Carrington’s arm was almost reverential in its touch.

“I’ve held you in my arms to-day twice,” he said, hurriedly. “I don’t understand why it’s you, but it’s all right.” He looked at young Carrington as one of Jeanne d’Arc’s soldiers might have looked.

Young Carrington faced him very quietly.

“I thought ’twas queer, the way you held the child that time,” Trevanion went on. “And you ride just as you did as a youngster. Will he come back now if——” he demanded.

Young Carrington nodded gently. “Yes, and he’s a splendid fellow.” If the young voice broke for a second, that was all. “He’ll help dad to bear it. It was best for me to come. Best, above all, if this was to happen.” The voice was steady now. “I’m sorry you know, but it would have been safe with you, anyway.”

It was that same confident charm that had conquered Trevanion at the outset.

“You won’t tell *him*?” he questioned, jerking his head toward the raise.

Young Carrington’s head shook a slow negative.

“Not unless at the very last I turn weak and womanish;” and there was a whimsical touch in the last word.

Then the young figure straightened up with a quick decision.

“And I really think, Trevanion”—young Carrington’s voice was light now—“that I shall make a nice, plucky, manly finish.”

Trevanion, following back into the raise, would have cut his heart out to save that buoyant young life, but his devotion was the pure fealty of a serf for his sovereign.

They played at bravery after that, each abetting the other.

Young Carrington coaxed Trevanion into telling them mining stories, wheedled Hastings into all kinds of reminiscences of his boyhood, assumed their ultimate escape so confidently that Hastings thought it a genuine hopefulness.

Not so Trevanion. He knew what the spring was that moved young Carrington to play up to a buoyant part. And he helped, with anecdotes of wonderful rescues, of escapes just in the nick of time.

He was in the midst of one of the best of these when a little lapping sound stopped him.

A thin little line of water pulsed gently into the entrance of the raise.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Wade had shouted his fruitless commands, in the ascending cage, all the way to the surface, raging at Richards and his management, and unconvinced, in spite of a united and profane assurance, of his inability to 38
stop the cage and go back; furious at him for having installed such a defective system, and threatening him with dismissal at the earliest possible moment.

His nephew and his nephew's friend left to danger, while these brutes were being brought to the surface! He had never suffered such helpless frenzy in all his neatly adjusted life.

At the surface the cage cleared with magical suddenness. Mr. Wade, breathless with rage, was fairly dragged out by Richards, and in so short a time as a signal may be given and obeyed, the cage had again started downward.

Mr. Wade leaned back against the timbers of the shaft house, with the exhaustion of relief.

But it was a relief that Richards did not share. This particular kind of disaster was so frequently recurrent that he knew its possibilities all too well. And he raged that it should have come just now. It was such a routine danger that he had not thought of it as a special menace in taking them down. Casualty, with Mr. Wade involved or witnessing, had been furthest from his thoughts or desires.

"How long before they will be up?"' Mr. Wade asked, faintly.

Richards, tensely alert, made no answer. The cage had reached the bottom of the shaft now. He waited a minute—two—three. There was no sign from below. He himself gave the signal to hoist.

"Are they coming?" demanded Mr. Wade.

Richards shook his head. "I can't say, sir," he said, "but they've had plenty of time. Either they got in the cage and forgot to give the signal"—and with Trevanion below this was an unlikely contingency—"or——" he hesitated.

"Or?" said Mr. Wade, sharply.

"Or the water has cut them off," Richards finished.

"Then——" said Mr. Wade, faintly.

"Reach 'em from the level above," Richards answered. But he thought of certain contingencies—thought of a good many important things.

There was a crowd of miners now, watching for the cage to appear. The jargon of Finnish comment sounded to Mr. Wade like the buzzing of bees. Then the cage came in sight. Empty and dripping wet.

The next second everything was action, and Richards its mainspring. His orders pelted down like hailstones. Men, tools, paraphernalia, filled the cage. Other men went racing off on surface errands.

Mr. Wade, paralyzed by his complete ignorance of conditions or remedies, seemed crushed under the consciousness of casualty. Richards caught him by the arm and shook him into attention.

"We'll bring them up, if they are alive," he shouted to him, as though he were deaf.

Then he stepped into the cage, and down it went again. Mr. Wade leaned back against the wall, motionless, his eyes fixed on the hole where it had disappeared.

But over all the little town the news was spreading like wildfire.

* * * * *

John Carrington had spent a horrible morning. When the trap came back, and the stable boy Ike, who was driving, announced that Mr. Ned had sent him home, John Carrington promptly demanded why.

"I dunno," said the boy. "He said, 'That's all,' so I come."

It couldn't be possible that Ned had gone down the Tray-Spot! Ned, who had never shown the slightest eagerness to go down the Star. But what—— And why——

John Carrington fumed, fretted and finally telephoned—to find to his consternation that Ned was underground. What under heavens had Trevanion been thinking of, to let him go? John Carrington raged at him. And what was Ned thinking of? He knew absolutely nothing of underground conditions. Had Richards decoyed him into it for some reason? Any reason of Richards was not a good one.

John Carrington hobbled along on his crutch from the divan on the veranda to the couch in his bedroom, and back again, in a nervous unrest which made all places equally distasteful to him. 39

He raged at his own stupidity in letting Ned drive Trevanion over. He raged at this miserable leg of his that had held him prisoner so long. He raged at the strength which came back so slowly.

He sent Mrs. Kipley, who came up to remonstrate with him on this exhausting promenade, back to her kitchen in short order.

"He's fairly beside himself, worrying over Mr. Ned, who ought to have had more sense than to do such a thing, anyway," she scolded to Hemmy, feeling that she must vent her own nervousness in wrath upon some one. "Now what's the matter with you?" she demanded, exasperatedly, for Hemmy's face was assuming a chalk color.

"To think that *he* may be in danger!" said Hemmy, with a gulp.

"The only danger you need to worry about is spoiling those doughnuts," said Mrs. Kipley, severely.

And Hemmy, condemned for the next half hour to drop little doughy circles in boiling lard, wondered, as she

choked back a sob, why even the luxury of grief was denied her.

Carrington found solitude fast becoming unbearable.

He sent for Mrs. Kipley. He ordered her to tell Kipley to have the trap over at the Tray-Spot, and when Ned came up at the noon hour, to tell him he was needed at home at once.

Kipley had no sooner started than Carrington thought of the lad's dignity. He would not make a baby of him. He dispatched Ike on Ned's saddle horse, to tell Kipley to place himself at Mr. Wade's disposal, to tell Ned to bring Hastings and Mr. Wade back to luncheon, if he chose; but to telephone him at once from the mine in any case.

He hobbled out on the veranda to wait for noon. He told himself that he was getting to be an old woman; that Ned was young and strong, and able to take care of himself anywhere; that Trevanion would keep his eyes open for any deviltry on Richards' part; that Richards would look after any party which contained Mr. Wade and Hastings.

Then the sound of galloping hoofs came ominously. Ike, fairly hanging on the Colonel's neck, came flying homeward.

Disaster was stamped on his terrorized face.

Carrington swung up on his crutch as the boy ran stumblingly up the walk.

The clatter brought Mrs. Kipley and Hemmy to the door.

"What is it?" Carrington called, sharply.

"Water!" the boy choked. "The Tray-Spot is flooded, and they're down there."

"Who's down there?" Carrington's words cut.

"The young fellow—Trevanion—and Mr. Ned," Ike sobbed.

Carrington's ashy face worked curiously.

"And Richards?" he demanded.

"Come up and left 'em," moaned the boy.

John Carrington wheeled, strode limpingly, and for the first time without a crutch, into the house, snatched something that glistened from the drawer of his desk, and came running rapidly in that uneven, limping way toward the saddled horse.

"For pity's sake, what are you going to do?" Mrs. Kipley called out, as he managed, by the aid of the horse block, to get into the saddle.

The face that turned toward her was distorted with fury, but the twisting lips spoke only two words in a hoarsely guttural cry: "My boy!" But in them was anguish and revenge.

The Colonel shot forward like a shell from a gun.

* * * * *

Kipley, mingling with the crowd around the shaft house, picking up every shred of information heavy-heartedly, saw with consternation the bulky figure pounding toward them on the Colonel. He was beside the horse's head when John Carrington drew rein.

"They've gone down for 'em," he said, swiftly, and his voice was weighted with pity: "They're going to get 'em on the level above."

John Carrington gave no sign of hearing him. He was trying to dismount.

"Give me your shoulder," he said, sharply. "This cursed leg——" He groaned as he came awkwardly and heavily to the ground. Then, steadying himself by Kipley's shoulder, he hurried in that lunging, uneven way to the shaft.

He had flung the bridle automatically over the Colonel's head, and that sagacious animal, well trained as a cavalry horse, stood motionless, waiting.

Kipley told all he had learned of the story, tersely, as he steadied him along.

Mr. Wade, waiting numbly by the shaft, found himself confronted by two men.

"You," said a deep voice, strangling with rage, "came up and left my son."

Mr. Wade raised his tired eyes to meet John Carrington's bloodshot ones.

"They," said Mr. Wade, mechanically, "came up and left my nephew."

Then the consciousness of who this man was, and what Hastings had done, awoke in him a sense of pride of blood which restored him in voice and bearing to some semblance of himself.

"My nephew," he repeated, with a touch of arrogance, "who refused to save himself and leave your son and your workman." He straightened himself up with a dignity whose assumed calm hardly covered its pathos.

"As he would, naturally," he finished.

John Carrington's eyes softened.

"I thought he was that kind," he said. "I like him."

Mr. Wade's heart warmed to a man who appreciated his nephew.

"Then my son would have done the same thing for him, in his place," John Carrington added, proudly.

Young Carrington was a splendid young fellow, Mr. Wade thought. His sympathy swept out to his father.

“I’m sure of it,” he said. And the two men’s hands met.

When Mr. Wade spoke again, it was with a feeling of placing reliance in John Carrington.

“Are they doing all they can?” he said, simply. “You ought to know.”

Carrington’s mind swept like a microscope over the details of the rescuers’ plans, as Kipley had given them to him. “Tell me your side of it,” he said.

Mr. Wade told him mechanically.

Carrington pondered it.

“I’m inclined to think they are,” he said, at last.

For the conviction forced itself upon him that Richards would do his best to rescue Hastings. And if there was safety underground, Trevanion would find it. Time was the uncertain factor. If there was time!

Kipley brought a rough bench, and the two men sat down.

If there was silence between them, there was also the bond of a common anxiety.

* * * * *

From the moment Richards had seen the three men left on the seventh level he had seen several other things clearly.

One was that it would be no longer possible to parry the question of pumping apparatus with Mr. Wade.

Another was that the only thing which could make the possibility of his continuing as manager of the Tray-Spot worth a straw was the quick, well-planned rescue of the three men. In the reaction of relief from casualty, resourcefulness now might plead for him.

And the last was that if Trevanion did not have time to get them up the first raise, they were caught in some one of those other raises, from which he had had the ladders removed only the week before.

Everything depended on the progress the three had been able to make, and the rapidity with which the water was coming.

When the cage dropped to the sixth level, Richards knew from its solitude that they had not been able to make the first raise, and Richards’ men understood that they were to do their best.

They ran to the second, calling down as they uncovered it: no answer. And the third: to hear only the hollow reverberation of their own voices; to see by the light of a falling candle the glint of water in the bottom. And the fourth: Richards himself, hurrying along in advance of his men toward the final raise to the south, acknowledged that this was a last and very slender hope.

As he hallooed down the raise the answering cry came back as swiftly to his ears as the sight of the three twinkling lights to his eyes. If the candle in his cap was a star of safety to them, those three lights were relief to him.

With swift brevity he ordered the ladders, then called down: “We’ll have you up, all right.”

And up the blackness came Hastings’ voice: “Hurry, for God’s sake; it’s ankle deep!”

The first ladder dropped swiftly to the position, to be nailed in place by the fastest man the Tray-Spot had. Three minutes. The second one sped down after it. Men stood by with ropes, if ladders should prove too slow.

Seven minutes, and the third ladder started down. This was rapid work, but the ropes slid down, as well. The fourth ladder touched the bottom of the hole.

The water was at their knees when they saw it come. Trevanion had begun to knot a rope around young Carrington’s waist. He flung it off now, to swing the slight young figure to his shoulders, to set the stiff feet firmly on the ladder. “I maun take him! ’E can’t do it alone!” he said to Hastings, as he swung himself up after the lad, supporting him.

And it was, in truth, fidelity to young Carrington, not hurry to save himself before Hastings. Nor did Hastings misunderstand. He would have gone last, anyway.

But it seemed a long way to the top. He was terribly stiff and wet and chilled, grateful to the strong hands that lifted him out at last.

He saw Trevanion ahead, half carrying Ned, refusing to let anyone else touch the lad.

It seemed to him that he followed more because he was led along than because of any will of his own. They were in the cage now, going up, and the cheers of the miners with them rose before them.

It would mean but one thing to those on the surface; a thing that made two haggard-faced, gray-headed men stand shaken with emotion as the cage came in sight.

To Mr. Wade the other faces were but a blur around Hastings; to Carrington nothing was clear but his son’s face, chilled blue-white, as the lad leaned in utter weariness against Trevanion.

Neither man saw Richards, nor heard his bluff “All safe!” But the waiting crowd, heedless of old animosities for the moment, took up the cheer. It served as chorus when John Carrington, catching Ned’s icy hands in his, said, hoarsely: “Thank God!”—when the lad, striving to smile his wonted brave smile, answered: “I do, dad;” when Trevanion, crying: “’E must keep movin’!” swept young Carrington along to where the Colonel stood patiently waiting, and, lifting him into the saddle, held him with one hand as he ran alongside, urging the animal into a gentle trot; when John Carrington, impatient to follow, and turning for Kipley’s shoulder to steady him, saw Mr. Wade, his face pinched with suspense and fatigue, resting rather heavily on Hastings’ arm, saw

Hastings, gray-drab with fag, looking about for a vehicle of some sort.

If John Carrington's heartstrings pulled tenaciously toward home, it was not visible in the cordial insistence with which he drove Hastings and Mr. Wade to their car.

"I count on you both for lunch tomorrow," he called, as he left them at that haven of refuge.

Then he gripped Kipley's arm.

"Drive like the devil!" he whispered, hoarsely.

* * * * *

The ride had shaken the chill from young Carrington's blood, but Trevanion refused to leave him until he saw him safely in the house.

At the door young Carrington turned and laid his hand lightly and firmly on Trevanion's arm.

"You're splendid, Trevanion," he said, gently; "I shan't forget."

And Trevanion, turning away, would have given his heart's blood for just that.

Mrs. Kipley bore down upon them, bustlingly energetic, a glass of whisky in one hand and a telegram in the other. Hemmy, red-eyed, lingered in the offing.

Young Carrington tossed off the whisky, tore open the envelope, and, calling to Trevanion, who was halfway down the steps, sped to him and spoke low and rapidly.

Trevanion nodded. Young Carrington, coming back, was smiling rather tremulously.

"Not a thing, thanks," he said, to Mrs. Kipley's offer of assistance. "All I need is a bath and a rest. In the morning I shall be quite—myself."

He laughed an odd, gay little laugh.

"You don't feel any bone ache?" said Mrs. Kipley, anxiously, as he went up the stairs.

Young Carrington looked down gleefully.

"I feel—relieved," he said.

"I don't wonder," said Mrs. Kipley, to Hemmy, who was altering a determination to enter a convent into a desire to be a trained nurse.

But Mrs. Kipley and young Carrington were not thinking of the same predicament.

For the telegram read:

> Shall arrive Yellow Dog nine to-night; your trunk with me.
> E. CARRINGTON.

John Carrington, his abused leg stretched out on a chair in front of him, was smoking a final cigar for the night, in the big downstairs bedroom.

He was resting one elbow on his desk; and the head that leaned upon his hand was full of plans for his son's future. He was safe upstairs, thank God! He was snug in bed and sleeping when his father got home. And he left him to sleep off his fatigue, though he was impatient to talk with him.

The clock over the fireplace chimed the half hour after nine. There was the sound of quick steps on the veranda, then in the hall. A murmur of voices. One was Trevanion's. "The room at the head of the hall," he heard his undertone. Some one ran up the stairs, and some one closed the hall door gently and went down the steps.

John Carrington was out in the hall the next instant. He heard the door of Ned's room open. He stumped up the stairs.

Light came through a half-opened door. A murmur of voices and laughing greeting came to him.

Ned, fully dressed, as though he were the newcomer, had his arms around some one who was sitting up in bed.

"Dear old girl! What a brick you are!" Carrington heard Ned say. "Trevanion told me."

"Ned!" he cried, uncomprehendingly.

The boy swung round joyously.

"Dad!" he shouted, and there was glad greeting in his tone. "You bully old dad!"

He caught his father by the hand and shoulder with both his hands, but John Carrington held him off mechanically.

For the figure sitting up in bed, flushed, mischievous and laughing at his bewilderment, was Ned!

The hands that grasped John Carrington's arm and shoulder gripped him, shook him slightly.

"She's been ripping, perfectly ripping, dad, and I'm four months late, but be a little glad to see me," this Ned's laughing voice went on.

"She——" John Carrington stammered.

Ned waved a genial hand toward the figure in the bed.

"Miss Elenore Carrington, the most successful self-made man in history!" he announced, with a flourish.

CHAPTER VII.

When Miss Elenore Carrington opened her eyes the following morning, it was to gaze contentedly from her bed at a large, square, hotel-placarded object in the center of her room.

Objectively, it was merely an uncommonly good-sized trunk, but subjectively, it stood for Femininity, sweetly personal and newly reincarnated.

"But what do you suppose he put in?" murmured Miss Carrington. And uncertainty became unbearable. 43

She shook her fist gayly at a masculine-looking bathrobe hanging over the back of a chair. "I won't put you on again, even to *look*!" she announced, with a gayly menacing flourish.

She caught the coverings of the bed around her, and was out in a great white splash on the floor, fumbling with the key in the lock.

The trunk lid flew open, and she knelt, looking like a boyish little novice, in the plain white night garment, with the big splash of white spreading all over the floor about her.

She had that floor strewn with her treasures. Lovely frilly feminine garments, dainty slippers all buckle and heel, dear little everyday frocks and lingerie blouses, and gowns for occasions in the big trays beneath. She laughed and blessed Ned as she delved down.

And hats—actually all her hats! But alack-a-day! She clutched her shorn locks with a grimace. And that square package—toilet things; useless hairpins and unusable jeweled shell combs; and here, in tissue paper—oh, the forethought of Ned!—the very locks of hair of which she had shorn herself so recklessly, bound together by the hairdresser's skill into a lustrous coil that had distinct possibilities.

She looked at it with an admiration such as she had never felt when it was growing on her own head.

She swathed herself in the laciest and swirliest of pale blue silk negligées, and sped to the mirror to experiment.

* * * * *

An hour later. Miss Elenore Carrington, daintily fresh as a morning-glory, brown hair coiled closely at the back of her head and pompadoured loosely around a face worthy of its best efforts; garbed in a fetching little morning frock of white linen elaborately embroidered, and short enough to permit the eye of man to rejoice over the well-shaped *chaussure* which supported a high-arched instep in a deliciously restful way—Miss Carrington, in short, not only in her right mind but in her right clothes, stood looking out of her window at a world glowing with the glory of the September sun.

Her lips curved smilingly as she thought of many things: of her father's surprise the night before, of the long, long talk and the flood of explanations which had lasted far into the night, and brought them into a completeness of understanding which had meant happiness to them all.

Ned had told them what those months in the East had done for him, not only in technique but in inspiration; how, returning to Paris, he found that his salon portrait had brought him a commission to paint a certain crown prince that coming winter; how Velantour, pleased as he was himself, had shouted "*Déjà!*"—a much prettier "*déjà*" than the famous one—and had added: "Now you will paint his soul in his face, his responsibilities in his clothes, and his destiny in the background."

How, too, returning to Paris, he had found Elenore's letters, telling him that things were going on successfully in her imposture; and how, getting her things together as hastily as possible, he had come to relieve her on the fastest greyhound afloat, determining remorsefully to give up even the crown prince if his father needed him.

Needed him! John Carrington was so proud of his talent that he would have cut off his right hand before he would have kept him.

Then they had discussed the exigencies of the present; how the thing was to be played out. Elenore insisted that no one should know; Ned that everyone should; he wanted no more credit that didn't belong to him. John Carrington, considering it the cleverest thing that had ever happened, would have blazoned it on the stars.

They compromised: first, that the Kipleys should be told, a plan which had everything in its favor; second, that Hastings and Mr. Wade should know. This was the battleground.

Even when Elenore had yielded the question of Hastings, she objected strenuously to Mr. Wade's enlightenment. He wouldn't understand. But easygoing Ned turned dogged. 44

"If you had only *seen* him, you'd know how appalling he'd think it," Elenore had defended.

"When I see him to-morrow, I'll meditate on the best way to break it to him," Ned had retorted.

"But you'll wait a little," she coaxed.

"Oh, I'll give you time to get in a bit of work," he conceded.

Miss Elenore Carrington, looking out of the window, grew suddenly dreamy-eyed.

Over on the far hill, a branch of hard maple had turned brilliantly scarlet. But it could hardly have been its reflection that brought the delicate stain into Miss Carrington's cheeks. Oddly enough, it was on that particular hill that Hastings had planned to build his bungalow.

* * * * *

It was a morning of merriment, of buoyancy, of stupefactions.

Mr. Kipley was fairly swamped by the last emotion. He sat on the steps of the side porch, and only a medical

expert could have told that his condition was not merely comatose.

All that saved Mrs. Kipley was the urgency of preparing a suitable lunch for “those New York folks.”

Even then she discovered herself doing the most remarkable things. “I’ll bake the ice cream next,” she remarked to Hemmy. Hemmy, used to the startling changes of romance, adjusted herself to the situation with apparent ease—and a new dream of bliss.

For had not Mr. Ned said, jubilantly: “Jove, this air is pure ozone! I want to paint everything in sight. You, too, Hemmy, in that pink-checked gown.”

Painters fell in love with their models sometimes.

* * * * *

John Carrington fairly basked in happiness. Only one thing troubled him, and when he caught Elenore alone for a moment that came out. He took her hands in his and looked into her blue eyes lovingly.

“I told you once,” he said, gently, “that no daughter could be so dear to a man as his son.”

“Yes, dad,” she said, frankly.

He bent and kissed her forehead.

“I was wrong,” he said.

Then they spoke of other things.

* * * * *

“How is young Mr. Carrington this morning?” said Mr. Wade, stepping into the trap, to Mr. Kipley, driving. “None the worse for yesterday, I hope?”

Mr. Kipley’s face contorted, as though he were about to sneeze.

“He’s lookin’ about the same,” he replied, and his voice sounded muffled. He seemed to derive such inward satisfaction from the phrase that he repeated it: “He’s lookin’ about the same. I don’t think it hurt him none.” And immediately gave his attention to his horses.

John Carrington was on the veranda to receive them.

“This is a gala day,” he told them, as he grasped their hands in warm welcome. “My other child came home last night.”

Hastings’ heart leaped.

“Your daughter?” said Mr. Wade, politely. And with his words Elenore came forward to meet them.

She had doffed the linen gown of the morning for the delicately elaborate one she had last worn at that farewell tea in Paris.

There was the faintest suggestion of shyness in the gracefully smiling welcome she gave Mr. Wade, which suited that particular old gentleman to a T.

“You have every reason to be proud of both your children,” he said, affably, to John Carrington.

“I am,” John Carrington replied, and he meant it.

Hastings, wordlessly happy to feel Elenore’s hand resting lightly in his, pressed it tenderly as he tried to look into the eyes he had so longed to see.

Her long lashes veiled them distractingly.

Then she raised them to his with a certain laughing mockery which was delicious but baffling.

“Have I changed much?” she demanded, lightly.

“I shall have to look a long time to find out,” said Hastings. His voice shook a little.

She laughed with sweet spontaneity.

“I shall not waste myself on anyone with such a disgracefully bad memory,” she said, with mock reproach. “I shall devote myself to your uncle.”

She turned to Mr. Wade and proceeded to make her word good.

Mr. Wade found himself sitting on a broad, shady veranda, talking to as pretty a girl as he had seen in years; talking, as he felt with a commendable thrill of pride, his very best. What a listener she was! How graceful! How super-feminine! How ready-witted!

She agreed with him, and Mr. Wade felt even more agreeably conscious than usual of his own good judgment. She disagreed daintily. It was exhilarating to show her where she was wrong.

“If I were twenty years younger!” said Mr. Wade to himself, which was a little more than half the number he should have stated, but what elderly gentleman is exactly accurate in such statements!

He looked sharply at Hastings, and something in the divided attention his nephew was giving John Carrington seemed to please him.

There was a flutter of Hemmy’s apron in the doorway.

“Ned will join us in the dining room,” said John Carrington, genially.

Ned was, in fact, standing on its threshold.

He greeted them with gay good fellowship.

“I’m glad to see you looking so well after yesterday,” Mr. Wade assured him.

Ned flashed a frank, bright smile at him.

“I’m as fresh as though yesterday had never happened,” he said, gayly, “and we’re going to keep conversation on pleasanter things through luncheon, on Elenore’s account.”

Mr. Wade nodded. “Of course,” he said, “we must not alarm the young lady with what might have been.”

And the chatter that ensued was, in truth, gay and bright and full of reminiscences of the life the three young people had enjoyed in Paris.

If Mr. Wade had ever tasted better fried chicken, he had forgotten where, and he praised it with an emphasis that turned Mrs. Kipley, who was helping Hemmy wait on table, a deep magenta with suppressed pride.

He approved highly, too, of the champagne cup, and when Elenore confessed its concoction, declared gallantly that that explained its excellence.

“Indeed, I imagine that you succeed in whatever you do,” he added, as the string to his floral bouquet.

They were at the coffee-and-cordial stage of proceedings now, and Mrs. Kipley and Hemmy had disappeared on their laurels.

“She does, Mr. Wade,” said Ned, gayly, “and she attempts appallingly difficult things at that. Would you like to hear about her star performance?”

“I would, indeed,” said Mr. Wade, heartily.

And Elenore, with a look at her brother, knew that the moment had come.

“Then I shall leave you to your cigars,” she said, lightly, pushing back her chair, in the instinct to escape.

For back of the lightness, excitement, altogether too insecurely barred, was making a dash for liberty.

But Ned was on his feet as well, and caught her firmly but lightly around the waist as she tried to pass him.

“You’ll have to stay and help me out,” he said, with mock reproach. “How do you expect a man who only arrived last night to tell it straight?”

Even then they thought he must have mis-spoken himself.

But Elenore turned with her hand on his shoulder and faced them buoyantly.

“There was once a Rising Genius, who had one great, glorious opportunity,” she began. “He had, too, a sister whom the gods hadn’t dowered with talent of any kind; and a father——”

“Who not only fractured his leg,” John Carrington broke in, “but got fractious in other ways as well. And, not knowing of the opportunity, insisted on his son’s coming home.”

“So the sister, who was perfectly bully, and the pluckiest girl——” Ned began.

But Elenore interposed.

“He was perfectly willing to come,” she insisted to them. “Don’t forget that.” She slipped from his arm and swept them the daintiest of courtesies.

She touched the elaborate chiffon quillings of her skirt with daintily approving fingers. “I never knew the sustaining and soothing influence of feminine attire until I was bereft of it,” she assured them, laughingly. “I shall be distractingly fond of frills all the rest of my life. Wasn’t it horrid underground!” she flashed; and they heard the swish of her retreating skirts.

Hastings gripped Ned suddenly by the arm.

“You weren’t down the mine with me yesterday?” he demanded.

“Pullman, Lower 8, from Chicago,” said that young gentleman, serenely.

“Then I *shall* be your brother-in-law,” he ejaculated, and vanished like a shot.

Mr. Wade’s expression approached imbecility.

“Do you mean to tell me——” he began, numbly.

“That I only came last night, but my sister has been here all summer,” said Ned, concisely.

* * * * *

The air came in refreshingly through the opened windows. Elenore was standing, one arm on the back of a chair. She smiled slightly as Hastings came toward her impetuously.

“It was quite a composite speech, wasn’t it?” she said.

He covered the hand on the back of the chair with his own.

“I can’t realize it,” he said. “You—all that time.”

“It seemed quite a long time, too,” she confessed.

“You underground!” he went on. “I should have died of anxiety if I had suspected it.”

“I wanted to tell you dreadfully,” she murmured. “There’s no harm in owning now that I was afraid.”

The hand that held hers closed over it more tightly.

“There’s no harm now,” he said, tensely, “in telling me if you meant what you said: that you thought Elenore cared for me.”

“There’s no particular harm now,” she parodied, daringly, with downcast eyes, “in your telling Elenore now what you told her then.”

He swept her into his arms with a tender forcefulness. “That I love her. Elenore! Elenore!”

The full red lips that his own found, breathlessly, were mysteriously, maddeningly sweet. And those deep blue eyes—what marvelous things they confessed to him!

“The dear little bungalow!” he whispered. “But we needn’t wait for it, Elenore. Marry me soon, and we’ll build it afterward.”

She laughed deliciously.

The sound of steps in the hall came to them, and Hastings drew her to the vantage ground of a corner as Mr. Wade and the Carringtons, *père et fils*, came in view outside the windows to seat themselves comfortably in the big veranda chairs.

“And,” said Mr. Wade, in high good humor, and evidently continuing a conversation begun at the table, “it shouldn’t be difficult for you and your son-in-law to arrange the management of the two mines amicably between you.”

“Aren’t you getting on rather rapidly?” John Carrington demanded, with a twinkle in his eye.

“Not as rapidly as Laurence would like to, I’ll wager,” Mr. Wade said, with confidence.

Then he polished his eyeglasses with his handkerchief. “I have always had a great admiration for the heroines of Shakespeare—*Rosalind*, in particular,” he said, with a hint of pedantic precision; “but I consider Miss Elenore more charming still.”

“My idea, exactly,” murmured Hastings.

“As long as you’ve settled it all for them, you two,” said Ned, with confidential raillery, “perhaps you’d better hurry up the great event, so it can take place before I go back to Paris. Everything has to be sacrificed to my career, you know.”

He spoke with light mockery.

Hastings’ arm tightened around Elenore, and his pleading lost none of its force because it was silent.

The head on his shoulder gave a sudden gay, bewitching little nod.

“We consent to sacrifice ourselves,” Hastings called, jubilantly.

And the sound of applause drifted in through the open windows.

THE SONG

IN her castle by the sea
  Dwelt the daughter of the king;
Sweet and beautiful was she
  As a morn in Spring.

Lovers had she, young and old,
  Princes foolish, princes wise,
Lured by all the love untold
  In her tender eyes.

By her window in the tower
  Once she sat and listened long—
Fairer she than any flower
  That inspires a song!

Far below her, in his boat,
  Sang the poet, and her name
Soaring in a silver note
  Through the window came.

Just a simple lyric, yet
  Fashioned with such perfect art
Nevermore could she forget
  How it thrilled her heart.

She will never wed a prince,
  Though the king’s own choice he were;
Life holds something dearer since
  Love’s self sang to her.

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN.

WHAT makes the boom go sheering up in the air in that silly way?" Mrs. Massingbyrd asked me.

"It's trying to gooseneck," I told her. "And if you would like me to take the tiller——" Now, how foolish this suggestion was, I ought to have known.

"Not at all," Mrs. Massingbyrd briskly cut me short, pulling the tiller smartly toward her to emphasize her refusal.

The boat jibed, and the next thing we were both in the water. Mrs. Massingbyrd's shining head came to the surface a few feet from mine. She shook the water from her eyes, gasped for breath once or twice, and then with a magnificent affectation of composure:

"Something told me I ought to wear my bathing suit," she remarked, reflectively.

"It was vanity told you," I replied with irritation. Nothing had told me I ought to wear mine. It was just like Lydia Massingbyrd to wear a bathing suit to get capsized in. I've never known a woman who so infallibly landed on her feet.

"I think," she continued, complacently, as we struck out for the shore, not far distant, "I chose a very nice place for spilling us. I know women who would have been capable of doing it in the middle of Long Island Sound!"

"It would have been still more considerate if you'd chosen a spot near the mainland to show your seamanship," I suggested, with polite sarcasm.

"I thought that all wrecks always took place near Huckleberry Island. I thought that was one of the things one *did*." Her voice was a trifle aggrieved, she smiled at me, a smile like a little flickering flame.

"She needn't," I thought, "try to put the comether on me." Suspenders are in the way when swimming, and my heavy, rubber-soled shoes helped to spoil my temper.

"Of course," I gloomily returned, "our lunch is now at the bottom of the Sound." I knew that would fetch her. I have never seen a woman who has so retained a child's unimpaired appetite. Mrs. Massingbyrd turned an uneasy eye on the catboat, which, buoyed by its sail, was floating on its side like some great, awkward, wounded bird.

Mrs. Massingbyrd's feet struck the sandy beach off Huckleberry Island.

"But we can't sit here all day, you know, on a desert island, with nothing to eat," she remonstrated, as she made her way to the shore. "You must do something about it, Bobby. I call it tragic, simply tragic, to think of all that good lunch put out of our reach."

She was by now quite on dry land, and with great expedition pulled the shell pins from her lovely and extraordinary hair.

The jealous say that Mrs. Massingbyrd's strength, like Samson's, rests in her hair. It is that meek, silvery gold color that usually has neither kink nor curl, but in her case it curled riotously, broke out at the nape of her neck in absurd babyish ringlets and at her temples.

"So that was why you upset us?" I asked, irritably. "I would have taken your word for it that it did."

"Did what?" she queried, rising promptly to the bait.

"Come down to your knees, I mean."

"You might know that not for anything in the world, with hair as thick and as hard to dry as mine, would I wet it unnecessarily!" she flashed.

"It's a mercy it's so fine," I quoth, maliciously, "or you would never get it up at all." Mrs. Massingbyrd is notoriously vain of her wonderful hair.

"You might have spared yourself all the trouble," I continued, cuttingly, as I took off my collar, and began on my shoes. "It's not nearly as nice a color all soaked and wet; in fact, it's rather unpleasant and seaweedy!"

"Wait until it's dry," she triumphed, radiantly. "You may in the end be glad you came. But *I* won't!" she continued. "There's nothing in it for me! *You're* not going to present a sight for sore eyes now or at any other portion of the day! And there's nothing to eat!"

"You're a vain and greedy woman, Lydia Massingbyrd," I said, severely. "And it would serve you right if the lockers of Mason's boat were empty instead of being garnished with cans of soup and meat, as I suspect them to be." And I started forth to rescue the capsized boat, but the tide had carried it on the reef, the mast caught between two rocks, and, already strained as it was, it cracked and broke.

And I was due to meet my wife and some other friends off Rye in a couple of hours. That's what comes of

going off on a lady's sailing party, each man to be sailed down by a girl. A foolish idea, and hatched out, you may be sure, in the crazy pates of Felicia and her friend, Lydia Massingbyrd.

I did what I could for the poor boat. It's a light little thing, an eighteen-foot cat, and, as I've often told Mason, heavily oversparred. I got her on the beach without much trouble, while my companion inquired anxiously, from time to time, as to the state of the larder.

I found I was right. There was soup, and shortly I was warming it by means of a wire cleverly slung around it and a wooden handle. For, luckily, my match case was watertight.

"Necessity is the mother of invention," said I, taking my companion into favor again.

"Necessity is the mother of indigestion!" she retorted, and I saw her mind was back with our shipwrecked flesh-pots. "I can't bear canned things!"

She spread her long, wet hair around her like a mantle; the corners of her mouth drooped with a pathetic quiver, changed their mind and flickered out into a radiant little smile, which in its turn gave way to a long chuckle.

"I never quite understood about jibing," she remarked. "But now I understand perfectly. It's about the suddenest thing I know. I've a very objective mind. A thing has to be put before me actually, in the flesh, for me to comprehend it. That's what I shall tell the reporters."

"Reporters?" I wondered.

"Reporters, of course," she repeated. "And the longer we're out here, the more there'll be! They won't begin to hunt for us until to-night. It's a good thing Felicia is my lifelong friend;" and Mrs. Massingbyrd laughed again. The situation had none of the serious aspects to her that it had to me. Of course Felicia was Lydia Massingbyrd's friend, but no woman cares to have her husband absent and missing with another woman, and what with the anxiety and reporters and all—no, I didn't look forward to the next two or three days.

Mrs. Massingbyrd's spirits rose during lunch.

"After a swim canned things aren't really so awful," she conceded. "I suppose they'll tell the police and get out searchlights. I've had most things happen to me, but this is quite brand new."

"One would think you were a popular actress," I complained.

"Well, so, in a way, I am," she philosophized.

Her hair was drying fast, and hung about her a dress of living gold. Her black silk bathing suit fitted her closely in all the places it ought not to. I marveled that so slender a little creature could be at the same time so deliciously rounded. Her face, ever so slightly tanned, had all sorts of delicious golden tones, her eyes were surprisingly blue and as candidly innocent as those of a delightful child. In her short skirt and her golden hair, so meek in its color, so wayward in its curls, she looked like a little girl.

"Lydia Massingbyrd," I found myself saying spontaneously, "I forgive you everything! And it's a lucky thing for me I'm deeply in love with Felicia."

"I told you you'd be glad you came," she said, joyously.

"It was worth the price," I generously conceded. "Your lovely mane is all you have pretended it was. 'It's all wool'!"

"A sail!" cried Mrs. Massingbyrd, pointing to a yawl that even as she spoke had rounded the island.

"It's the Phillips' yawl," I agreed.

"Conscientiously, I don't suppose we can stay shipwrecked any longer than we can help. We'll have to give up the reporters!" There was a note of disappointment in her voice. "Shout, Bobby!"

I shouted.

"They don't hear us. What we need is a flag of distress. Wave, wave your coat!" Then catching her long hair in both her hands, she held it far above her head and waved it like a golden banner. The wind caught it and played with it; in her eager abandon she looked like some Mænad, some fire spirit—choose your own simile for her, but in that moment out there in the full sunlight she had I know not what touch of the superterrestrial.

I believe at that moment it was given to me to see her at the highest point of her somewhat amazing beauty. As she stood there her hand was holding her wonderful hair above her head; she was for a moment outside the pale of everyday womanhood. She was, I tell you, something to commit follies for.

They saw us. The boat put about. Mrs. Massingbyrd let fall the most original and the most beautiful flag that ever waved distress.

"They've recognized me," she remarked with satisfaction. She held a strand of hair high above her head and let it fall. "There isn't anyone who could have done that."

"Or who would have done it if they could," I added, severely.

"Or who would have done it if they could," she agreed. "Not all women are so conscientious as to what they owe mankind."

"Indeed they are not," I put in, sarcastically.

She was on her knees, gathering her hairpins and combs.

"Let your light so shine before men," said she, cheerfully. "A city that's built on a hill cannot be hid. Don't put your candle under a bushel."

I was putting on my shoes—now fairly well dried—and my ruined collar, just to show I had one.

"I suppose you're the vainest woman on the seacoast," I scolded. I am the only man in all Lydia

Massingbyrd's acquaintance who never flatters her, and who from time to time gives her the great benefit of hearing the whole truth about herself.

"I suppose I am, and good reason, too;" and there was some heat in her voice. Her back was toward me; all I could see of her was a mass of silvery gold.

"Now, what shall I do?" she asked. "There's plenty of time to put up my hair any which way—it would look horrid—I look so nice like this—now, what would you do?"

"You ought to put it up," I conclusively told her. "It's an indecent exposure. One would think, to look at you, that you were playing tableaux of Lady Godiva."

"I shall never get such another chance," she implored.

"Put up your hair, Lydia Massingbyrd," I commanded.

"I've always wanted to do this," she moaned. "And now just as there's going to be any good in it you bully me." Her mouth dropped again, she looked at me with appealingly candid eyes.

"Oh, have it your way," I growled. "Show off before Phillips, and Almington, and little Cecilia Bennett, and Mrs. Day, and the Drake boys!" 51

"Almington!" exclaimed Mrs. Massingbyrd. "That settles it!" and she resolutely shook out her hair again.

"Almington!" I exclaimed, in amazement. "Why does Almington settle it?"

"I can't bear the man!" cried she, stamping her foot.

"Oh, well, if this is by way of punishment——"

"Cecilia Bennett's sister is one of my dearest friends." Apparently she thought this was an explanation.

"And so you want Cecilia to see you with your hair down," I sneered.

"Men are *too* dense!" was all she vouchsafed me. "He's a popinjay of a professional heart-breaker."

"I suppose you'll know what they'll say about you?" I tried another tack.

"I know what they'll think," she told me, with her inimitable calm.

"If you have the nerve, it's no business of mine," I conceded.

"Felicia'll be so busy scolding me that she'll forget all about you," she suggested, naïvely.

"There's something in that," I was manly enough to confess.

The boat now lay-to in the shallow water. Phillips hailed us.

"You'll have to put your hair up," I told her. "They've got no dinghy. We'll have to swim for it."

"And wet myself all over again? No, indeed; you'll have to carry me," she calmly announced. "They can come inshore as far as that."

"You'll have to square me with Felicia," I muttered.

Laughingly Lydia Massingbyrd made a rope of her hair, to keep it safe from the water, that she might the better blind the poor wretches in the boat with its radiance. So carry her I did. As we were well out in the water I heard the snap of Almington's camera.

"Won't Felicia be in a wax?" the incorrigible woman giggled in my ear.

"It's lucky for you it's me," I said to her, critically. "Even as it is, it's most imprudent!"

She looked at me, an impudent gleam in her eye.

"I'm mighty careful in choosing my company when I'm cast away on a desert island," said she.

II.

"I don't understand women at all," I rather rashly confessed to Felicia.

"That's all the better for us—I mean for me," she threw back at me.

"But I do understand you're all a matchmaking lot," I continued, severely.

"Oh, we're a matchmaking lot, are we?" Felicia's tone was one of flattering interest. She was arranging a bit of vine that had somehow gotten torn down. She now turned toward me, the picture of innocent surprise.

"You like matchmaking for the fun of the thing—just as a man likes shooting," I went on. "You'd marry any person to any other person, regardless of age, position or——"

"Sex?" suggested Felicia, politely.

"Suitability," I amended; "just for the sake of having a wedding."

"You're talking now in the manner and tone of a husband," Felicia accusingly told me. "Anyone who heard your voice afar off would know you were one." I paid no attention to Felicia's interruption.

"If I'm not right, kindly tell me if Lydia Massingbyrd wasn't matchmaking when she got you to ask Almington and little Cecilia Bennett down here; and if you weren't matchmaking when you consented to ask them."

"Undoubtedly it's because Lydia is anxious to arrange a marriage between them she wanted them here." Felicia's tone was so guilelessly axiomatic that it made me uncomfortable.

"Has she told you?"

“She’s told me nothing,” Felicia assured me. “If she’d told me her reasons I couldn’t, as she very well knows, have asked them.”

“And that’s why I say,” I concluded, “that I don’t understand women. First Lydia Massingbyrd told me she couldn’t bear Almington. Then she did her little Venus-rising-from-the-sea act for his benefit. And then, I tell you, Felicia, if ever a mortal woman flirted, it was your little golden-locked friend. And, Jove, she was pretty!” 52

“What Lydia Massingbyrd needs is a husband,” Felicia declared, “who would keep her from tampering with other people’s! You’ve been utterly ruined ever since you went around that day carrying Lydia all over the place. You talk about her hair in your sleep.”

Again I ignored Felicia and her unjust accusations. “Poor little Cecilia Bennett! Between admiration and fear she was almost frightened to death.”

“Cecilia is a nice, upstanding, decent little girl,” Felicia asserted, aggressively.

“So she is, so she is,” I hastened to agree. “And that is why—she being only two months out of Farmington—you want to marry her to a man like Almington!”

“What’s wrong with Almington?” asked Felicia, still in her most guileless manner, which I have learned to know is the most finished form of impertinence.

“What’s the matter with Almington?” I exclaimed. “Oh, nothing at all! He’s the stuff perfect husbands are made of. He’s ripe, is Almington, for a little, innocent flower of a girl like Cecilia.”

“Almington’s lots of money,” said Felicia, reflectively; “and Cecilia’s mother’s keen for it. You know there’s no end to the Bennett girls, and they’re poor as anything.”

I maintained a disgusted silence, for I had an inkling that Felicia would have been charmed with an outbreak from me about the iniquity of sacrificing young girls on the altar of Mammon. I therefore resolved to commit myself no further.

It was at this moment that Mrs. Massingbyrd arrived.

The two ladies embraced. Then Felicia held her friend at arms’ length.

“Remember,” she warned, “no Croquemitaine! I’ve done two things for you—what you wanted me to—and I’ve asked no questions. So go ahead, but no Lady Godiva here under my roof-tree. No, nor any coming out shrieking burglars at two with your hair down, Lydia Massingbyrd!” And Felicia gave her friend an affectionate shake.

I had the sense that there had passed between the two women intelligences far beyond what appeared on the surface; a feeling that there were in the air all kinds of things—and that these things had passed over my head. In fact, I felt hopelessly at a disadvantage, as a man so often does in the presence of his wife and his wife’s intimate friend; in a word, I suppose I felt like a husband, and I was glad enough to join young Drake, who had come up in the same train with little Cecilia Bennett.

As we strolled off together—

“There’s something awfully nice about a really fresh young girl, when one’s been knocking around with older women a bit,” he confided to me.

“There’s nothing as charming as an unspoiled girl,” I agreed. “And Cecilia is that.”

“I don’t know but the French way is the best. I hate a young girl who’s too darned knowing.”

Now, I knew that Ellery Drake had made calf love to Felicia when Felicia herself had been a young girl of the kind he so eloquently described as “too darned knowing”; and that he had in vain followed the fascinating wake of Mrs. Massingbyrd. So it was not without malice I replied:

“Oh, the less a little, young girl knows the better; give me a *tabula rara* any time.”

Ellery Drake looked at me sharply. “I shouldn’t go as far as that,” he said. “But I like them like Cecilia—so awfully interested in things you know, and a little bit shy, and all that. Gee! Did you see her stare when you toted Mrs. Massingbyrd into the boat the other day?”

“No wonder,” I said. “You don’t see things like that every day.”

“She’s a wonder, Mrs. Massingbyrd”—Drake was full of enthusiasm—“but almost *too* spectacular for a quiet man. I think Cecilia was really a little shocked.” 53

I had noted poor little Cecilia’s what-have-we-here-and-whatever-is-the-world-coming-to expression.

There’s nothing quite as conventional as your properly-brought-up young person; and Cecilia was as perfectly turned out a specimen as a wise mother and a good school could accomplish. She was, in fact, the beau ideal of the young person for whom we keep our magazines spotlessly pure, and in whose behalf we cry aloud when a play is not better than it should be.

“She said afterward,” Drake told me, “that she felt as if she’d been reading one of those society papers that haven’t the best reputation in the world.”

“I didn’t know she was up to that,” I remarked.

“Oh, you don’t know Cecilia. She’s really very funny when you get her alone,” Drake protested. “I’ve known her ever since I was knee-high, so, you see, she’s not a bit shy with me. When she was a little kid, I’d no idea she’d turn out so pretty. The trouble is, they get spoiled so soon,” Drake gloomily went on—“spoiled and knowing and worldly.”

“You can’t expect a flower to keep in bud forever.”

“But you can train it to be a nice, sweet, modest, homekeeping plant, or an exotic thing trained for the

flower show."

He puffed at his cigarette. I saw he thought he'd gotten off a good thing. When I'm with Drake I understand only too well the kind of amusement I so frequently afford Felicia. He enhanced the resemblance by now saying:

"I don't understand women at all!"

"No?" I encouraged him.

"What the devil is a sweet little thing like Cecilia Bennett doing messing around with a fellow like Almington?"

"He'll soon take off the bloom," I said.

If the women were going to match-make, it occurred to me I could do a little work of the kind off my own bat, and I was pleased with my dexterity when Drake enthusiastically snatched at the bait.

"You bet he will," he said. "He's not the man for a young girl like Cecilia; nothing more than a baby, you know, who doesn't know how to take care of herself. Though I've nothing against Almington. He's all right for married women."

"A perfect companion for Felicia and Mrs. Massingbyrd," I sarcastically threw in, but my sarcasm didn't touch Ellery Drake, for he said, simply:

"Oh, he's all right for *them*!"

"So," I said, magnanimously, "let them take care of him. He's coming down to-night, and you keep Cecilia out of his clutches."

Roars of mirth, in which I distinguished the voices of my wife, Mrs. Massingbyrd and Cecilia, now interrupted us, and they all came running across the lawn like a troop of charming, grown-up children.

Indeed, Felicia and Mrs. Massingbyrd seemed younger than their little companion. I've told you that Lydia Massingbyrd has the youngest, most candid eyes I've ever seen; and she and Felicia ran down the lawn with the abandon of those who know their world.

Spontaneity is one of civilization's most perfect flowers, and Cecilia wasn't as yet civilized enough to have acquired it. She followed the others with a certain dry rigidity that I found perfectly charming for her age and the time she had been in the world.

"No, no; you can't come," said Mrs. Massingbyrd, waving us back. "You'll know soon enough. Don't tell, Cecilia;" and she caught the child by the arm and carried her along, as they made for the stable.

There was something preposterous in the air. I have known Felicia long enough to recognize a certain irresponsible little laugh as a danger signal. Presently the children came back, Mrs. Massingbyrd with Cecilia still tucked under her wing.

"Yes, it's the strangest thing," she was chattering, "the impression I produce on strangers! First they always call me *Miss* Massingbyrd, then, later, they always ask where Massingbyrd is! Not one person in a thousand will believe I'm a real, bona-fide, dyed-in-the-wool widow!"

Cecilia's eyes were open wide. I could see in her attitude that she didn't think it good taste to joke about being taken for a divorcée. Nor did I, and I wondered what my friend was up to, for generally Mrs. Massingbyrd adapts herself to her company with all the flexibility in the world.

I followed them into the house, and I was in time to see as pretty a little tableau as ever was presented on the stage.

Discovered on the piazza was Almington, and at sight of him my little *ingénue*, Cecilia, hesitated, and was lost in a sea of blushes.

Mrs. Massingbyrd ran forward and greeted him gayly and gladly. Mamma's training came to Cecilia's aid; she gathered herself together and, in spite of burning cheeks and very bright eyes, advanced to meet Almington in good order.

He greeted her pleasantly but indifferently, and turned eagerly to Mrs. Massingbyrd.

"You're none the worse for your shipwreck, I hope," he asked.

"I never had a pleasanter day," Mrs. Massingbyrd assured him. "It's not often I get a chance to display my only beauty free and unrebuked."

"Your pictures came out well," said Almington. "I couldn't wait for the film to be through. I had it developed at once;" and he felt in his pocket.

Mrs. Massingbyrd held out her rosy palm, then drew it back.

"No, not here," she decided. "Come down to the rose garden and show them to me there. After all, they're just for you and me." And it was with a self-satisfied air, the air of a conqueror, that Almington unfolded his long legs and followed Mrs. Massingbyrd.

I looked at my companions. Cecilia's cheeks were still hot. I saw she was a little bewildered, but she acted like a little thoroughbred, and made pretty, perfunctory, young-girl talk with Felicia, whose face told me nothing; and with Drake, who looked profoundly pleased.

Mrs. Massingbyrd and her cavalier were strolling up and down in the rose garden at the foot of the terrace. Coquetry was in every movement of her little blond head. Conquest was written large on Almington.

In pursuance of my own little policy, "There goes a lost man," I remarked.

"He's been lost so often and won so often that it doesn't matter much, does it?" said Felicia, lightly. "So if it's only he that's lost, we won't have far to look for him."

“I thought Mrs. Mass. had turned him down,” remarked Ellery Drake.

“It hasn’t apparently prevented his turning up again,” Felicia replied, pertly.

I looked at Cecilia. Mamma’s training held good; there was a visible strain about her attitude, but she did her best to seem natural. It was Cecilia’s first time under fire, and she did her superior officers credit. But there was that about the still babyish lines of her mouth which showed me that she longed to be away by herself and have a good cry. Drake couldn’t stand it any longer.

“Come on, Cecilia, let us go for a walk, too,” he suggested. And while I blessed him for his kindness I thought the “too” unfortunate.

When they were out of earshot I turned severely to Felicia.

“I don’t consider the Torture of the Innocents a pretty game,” I told her.

“Tell that to Lydia,” was all I got out of my wife.

“I thought Cecilia’s sister was a great friend of Lydia’s,” I asked.

“Exactly,” Felicia assented, dryly.

III.

“For a spotless child of heaven, Cecilia’s playing the game pretty well,” I mused, as I watched her at dinner. During the hour of dressing she had pulled herself wonderfully together. She held her little round chin high in the air and devoted herself to Drake with all the aplomb of a Felicia.

The cup of bitterness held its touch of sweet to her. Even if one must suffer, one was out in the world, one was living, was what I read in her attitude. But as I have said, I don’t pretend to understand women; still, I’m much mistaken if, during dinner, at least, she didn’t have a good time. 55

She ignored Almington as much as she could in a general conversation.

“Mrs. Massingbyrd can have you,” her attitude seemed to say. “I fight for no man.”

I looked at Drake. If he wanted to keep his rose in the bud, he had better carry her away quickly to a fresher atmosphere.

At the end of dinner the ladies exchanged nods and smiles. I saw that an explanation was forthcoming for the mysterious visit to the stable.

They had been preparing what to me seemed not unlike a little amateur Walpurgisnacht.

It was, of course, Lydia Massingbyrd’s idea. Nobody else, not even Felicia, could have been wrong-minded enough to want to slide downhill in summer. My coachman’s children have a species of roller sled on which they daily endanger their lives by coasting down the steep macadamized road which leads from my house.

“I saw them on my way from the station,” proclaimed Mrs. Massingbyrd, triumphantly; “and saw at once their possibilities.”

“Will you steer me, Mr. Curtis?” asked Cecilia, turning her back on Almington, and giving poor Drake a killing glance; and I thought I surprised a glance of malicious intelligence pass between Mrs. Massingbyrd and my wife.

Now, I know that, told in plain words the morning after, most of our maddest fun seems flat and puerile enough. I know that a decent married man of my age and a lady killer of Almington’s ought to have poohpoohed this childish sport, and sat with our cigars and our whiskies and sodas on the piazza.

I suppose you think that’s what you would have done. But I can tell you, if you had dined with Felicia and Mrs. Massingbyrd, you’d have been caught up in the fire of their folly. It’s contagious, more than anything I know. In the glamour of their lovely nonsense sliding downhill on the coachman’s children’s roller sled would have seemed an appropriate and delightful thing—or sliding down the banister or the cellar door, if it had been their mad whim to do that.

Haven’t you ever been a kid since you were grown up? Did all your fooling stop before you were out of college? I’m sorry for you if it’s so. I hope, for my part, that Felicia and Mrs. Massingbyrd and their like will make me forget my years for a long time to come. And I hope often to wake up in the sober light of the next day wondering just what magic it was that had turned back the hand of time for me, that I could find merriment in sliding down a macadamized hill on a roller sled.

The night was cold, with a bit of a breeze; there was a moon, and the glow from Felicia’s gayety and Lydia Massingbyrd lasted my little companion on our first swift, delirious slides.

It wasn’t coasting, but it was exciting enough, as one went very fast. And coming up we piled into a cart to be drawn up the hill. But after a few slides the flame of my little friend’s gayety flickered out, and as the others were piling into the cart, “Let’s walk,” Cecilia suggested. Youth is ever selfish in its distress, and what did Cecilia care whether my legs were tired or not climbing that hill? Her little flock of conventions had come fluttering back to her. Her doll was sawdust, and there was a bad taste in her mouth.

Now, of course, you know that there’s nothing more revolting than the folly of others when you yourself are serious. Haven’t you been annoyed time and again by the senseless and meaningless good spirits of the people next door? I’m sure you have. And just as often you’ve felt a certain compassion for the people who give you sour looks and grim glances when you’re having the time of your life.

So it was with ever-increasing disapproval of my wife’s merriment and Mrs. Massingbyrd’s abandon that Cecilia walked up the hill with me. 56

“I think,” she confided to me, sadly, “I was born old!”

“There are some people who stay babies forever,” I encouraged her.

“They are the fortunate ones,” Cecilia said, gloomily. “I never have been able to enjoy things long at a time. Even our good times at school used to seem childish to me. And I thought when I came out and was among grown people——”

“That things would be different,” I supplemented. “And you find it’s just the same.”

“Just the same,” she agreed, in a gratified tone. “I feel as old as I did at school!”

“Some people are born with a realization of the futility of pleasure,” I went on, trying to voice Cecilia’s mood.

“I suppose it’s that,” she sighed. “When I was at school I thought of the world as a playground where I could amuse myself with the others.”

“And instead, you find that you’re only learning a different kind of lesson, and play is as uninteresting as ever?”

“Yes, it’s just like another kind of school, and the lessons harder to learn—and of less use when you’ve learned them!” There was a pathetic note in her voice.

“You’re very different from other girls, Miss Bennett,” I felt was an appropriate and comforting thing to say.

“I know I am, and it’s a great misfortune to be so,” she acknowledged, with becoming modesty.

“But it has its compensations.”

“It’s very lonely,” she said. “No one has ever understood all I think and feel. Mamma never has, nor the girls.”

“And since you’ve been out?”

“Since I’ve been out I met some one—once”—the once threw the time of meeting in the remote past—“some one I thought understood me—but I was disappointed.”

I murmured something sympathetic.

“Because I’m young in years people think I can’t see things,” she cried, with a little rising temper.

“You have the best possible vantage, then, to observe the world as it really is.”

“And I do see things as they really are, and many things!” and she clinched her little fists under cover of the darkness. Things were getting somewhat strenuous for me, so I brought our conversational boat to smoother waters.

“You make me think a little of Ellery Drake,” I said. (Machiavelli to the front!) “Because he seems so simple and direct; shallow people don’t take the trouble to understand him. But you’ve seen, of course——”

“Yes,” she assented; and I saw she was interested.

“What a lonely time he has of it, and under his apparent simplicity how much depth there is.”

“I’ve known him all my life—but I’ve never really known him—that is, what *I* call knowing a person.” There was a great deal of intensity in Cecilia’s voice. “Ah, how hard it is to really know any—and so few realize it.” The atmosphere was getting a little rarefied, so I was glad of the diversion caused by the two roller sleds whiffling by us.

“We’re racing,” called Mrs. Massingbyrd. “If we win, I’m to grant a boon to Jack Almington.”

“He’ll probably ask her to take down her hair,” said Machiavelli. “Men always do.”

“Oh, if that sort of thing amuses him”—contempt spoke in Cecilia’s tone—“let him have—his hank of hair!”

“There’s a remarkably happy man,” I said. “No still waters in his; a perfectly delightful fellow, only spoiled by women!”

“Is he?” asked Cecilia, indifferently.

“He’s been so immensely liked, you know, that what he really needs is a snub. He thinks he’s only to look at a woman for him to like her.”

“Wouldn’t one call that just a trifle conceited?” Cecilia’s voice dripped sarcasm.

“Not in his case,” I returned, cruelly. “For, you see, it’s generally so. I’ve never known a more fatal man than Almington.”

“He’s not *always* fatal,” Cecilia gave out, dryly; and she shut her little mouth with a firmness that even in the dim moonlight made itself visible.

We stood at the top of the hill in silence for a moment, waiting for the cart with the others in it. They came up laughing. How vain and empty their laughter was, I was sure Cecilia was thinking. Her deep knowledge of the world and its iniquity were fairly bowing down her young shoulders.

IV.

The laughter and nonsense grew louder, and I descried, standing upright in the cart, a vision, spirit or woman I couldn’t tell.

My companion stared a moment and then remarked:

"*Mrs. Massingbyrd's hair has come down!*" Into these simple words was packed all the quintessence of disapproval that Cecilia had learned from her various advisers. There were echoes of her mother's shocked tones, haunting accents of her offended teacher, all welded together by the cool disapproval that was Cecilia's own.

I am sure that if my delightful little guest could have heard the awful, the chilling, contempt of "Mrs. Massingbyrd's hair has come down," she would have veiled her face with it in abject shame.

I gathered by her attitude and that of Felicia and Almington that these silly creatures were playing at tableaux, the cart serving as a *Mi-carême char*.

Mrs. Massingbyrd's hair, more miraculous than ever in the moonlight, fell down to her knees. Her eyes looked seraphically heavenward. Almington held her hand, kneeling before her, while Felicia, a little shawl disposed as drapery about her, was pointing dramatically out into the night, giving an admirable impersonation of those statuesque young ladies who, in tableaux, have no *raison d'être* save to round out the composition and look pretty.

Later I learned that the name of this impressive tableau was: "The Triumph of Virtue."

At that moment I was too occupied with the attitude of my little companion to pay attention to Mrs. Massingbyrd's foolery.

Cecilia had just caught sight of Almington as he knelt, holding the hand of Virtue, his lean legs bent like the blade of a knife. Almington generally cuts a fine figure, through a certain sense of the fitness of things. His air of secret melancholy wins half his battles for him, and he is one of those men who must at any cost hang on to the last shred of dignity, as they are nothing without it. In his present situation I have no hesitation in saying he looked fatuous and grotesque.

How he came to lend himself to the crazy whim of the two girls I can't tell. I suppose he was carried away by the flood of their high spirits, as many a wiser man has been before him and will be after him.

But if I had excuses for him, Cecilia had none.

It may be heartbreaking to have your first "serious young man" leave you at the smiles of a pretty widow with blond hair; but, after all, by showing how truly noble you are, you may some day crush your rival and bring your suitor to your knees, crying, "Peccavi!" It's bad to learn he's a heartbreaker, but, after all, then there's all the more incentive to break his heart. You can, whatever happens, bear your suffering nobly, and at the worst you have lots of things, heaps simply, to tell the girls.

But to have your first hero of romance make himself ridiculous—that is the end of all things. Sorrow has then no dignity. A broken heart for a man like that is out of the question. Oh, it's a bitter thing to think the drama of one's life a tragedy and have it turn out a low comedy!

Cecilia saw her hero exactly as he was, at that moment, stripped of all adornment.

Glamour died, romance withered away; in the clear fire of her uncompromising young scorn.

She was proving again that man's only unpardonable crime toward the woman who loves him is to make himself ridiculous.

It was really quite a dramatic little moment. The late hero, now turned mountebank, descended and helped out Felicia and Lydia, radiant in her white and gold attire—and it was only then I saw Drake, who had been sitting stiffly in the back of the cart. 58

He had taken no part in the pageant. If his temper was impaired, his dignity wasn't. Sliding downhill was all right, his rigidity seemed to say, but no play acting in his. His mood and Cecilia's jumped together. Her eyes met his. "I know you now," her grateful glance seemed to say.

Meantime Mrs. Massingbyrd, lovely as an angel, drifted along the white road.

"It's breaking the rules of the game," Felicia said to her, "for you to have taken down your hair."

"It fell down itself," answered Lydia the unashamed.

"But you looked so entirely lovely," my wife went on, "that I forgive you. It's worth the price."

And I guiltily hoped that Mrs. Massingbyrd would refrain from saying, "That's exactly what Bobby said."

She stood pensive a moment in the moonlight. Drake and Cecilia, drawn together by the feeling of superiority they shared in common—and which I had helped to point out—wandered off together. Almington was absorbed in an open and impertinent admiration of Mrs. Massingbyrd's beauty, and Felicia and I gazed at her, and again Felicia said, approvingly: "It's an unfair advantage to take—but it's really worth it!"

Then the dreamy look in lovely Mrs. Massingbyrd's eyes deepened, and she opened her lovely lips and said:

"Felicia, I'm so desperately hungry that I wouldn't coast down that hill again—not for anything! Did you say you had something good for supper?"

"And at supper I shall ask my boon," Almington answered.

"Boon?" said Mrs. Massingbyrd, as she watched Cecilia and Drake vanish together in the moonlight among the flowers. "Boon? You greedy person! Isn't it boon enough to have seen me with my hair down by moonlight! I wonder at your graspingness, Jack Almington!"

* * * * *

After we had said good-night to our guests, after Cecilia and Drake had at last come in from an interminable talk on the piazza, after Mrs. Massingbyrd had stuffed herself—in the face of her ethereal loveliness I hate to use such a word, but I know no other; indeed, she applied herself to supper with such a fair, frank and honest appetite that she had neither eyes nor ears for Almington's compliments—after all this was over, Felicia turned

to me with a look of satisfaction.

“You played up nobly that time, Robert,” she said. “I’ve never known you to catch on so quickly and without a word from anyone.”

I gained time with remarking, pathetically, “You’ve always underrated my intelligence.”

“I call it a thoroughly artistic performance,” my wife said; “and the beauty of it is that there was no talk, no nothing, but each one doing his work.”

I looked at Felicia, to see if by any chance she was making a pitfall for me, but there was no danger signal. I thought it safe to give out, “I’m glad you liked my little share in it.”

“You were splendid,” she cried, cordially. “And if Miss Bennett only knew it, we deserve a vote of thanks from her.”

“Yes, don’t we?” I took care not to commit myself.

“It isn’t as if we hadn’t provided Cecilia with another suitor, and I’m sure Ellery Drake, from any point of view, is far more desirable than Almington.”

“I should say he was,” I cordially assented.

“And then, who can tell if Almington was really serious? And for a young girl to be *affichée* with Almington her first season is nothing short of tarnishing,” Felicia went on, virtuously.

“That’s what I’ve said from the beginning,” I put in.

“And you certainly played up nobly. We couldn’t have put it through so quickly without you,” my wife was generous enough to confess. “But did you ever see anything as splendid and self-sacrificing as Lydia?”

“Self-sacrificing?” I wondered, feeling my way.

“Why, she made herself odious—simply odious—in Cecilia’s eyes, so Cecilia would feel furious at having Almington like her.” Sometimes Felicia is anything but lucid.

“Like whom?” I naturally wanted to know.

“Like Lydia,” replied my wife, impatiently. “A girl can stand anything but having a man she likes fall in love with a woman she doesn’t. It’s queer,” she said, suspiciously, “clever as you are sometimes, how dense you are others. *Did* you understand——”

But at this late date I wasn’t going to have my laurels snatched from me. So I hastened to assure her. “Of course,” I said, loftily, “I understood Mrs. Massingbyrd intended to interfere!”

AUTUMN

SCARLET her cloak, her lips all scarlet too,
  Her cloudy hair as golden as the leaves
Of the sun-mellowed hickories, her voice
  The rich, low whispers of the brooks that please
By hinting Autumn mysteries, her eyes
Witch-lights of laughter and of mad surprise.

Oh, gypsy prodigal, who gives and gives,
  Till penury in winter strips you bare,
Cover me with the splendor of your locks,
  Let your eyes challenge me from dull despair—
Wake me and sting me till I, too, shall sweep
Round in the revels that your whirlwinds keep.

CLINTON DANGERFIELD.

CHAPTER I.

GERTRUDE Warrener was twenty-five years old on the day she went into the back library and, seated in a rocking chair, a newspaper and a box of candy-kitchen chocolates in her lap—began to live.

Hitherto the boundaries of her lifeline had been limited by a wooden fence circling a few feet of coarse grass and two frame houses like her own. To the rear, in the yard, four poles formed a square with peculiar precision, and on washdays the level lines of a cord, stretching cat's-cradle-wise, supported the household laundry.

She had taken for eight years the front rooms of the house for her point of vantage, and when she had mentally stated "Mrs. Felter's just gone into the Perches'," or "Pearl Exeter does her marketing in the afternoons instead of the mornings," she had nothing further to say. One day she caught herself in the middle of some such banal reflection, and, going to the back of the house, took her place in the window of a microscopic library.

Gertrude Warrener did not remotely dream that she on this day passed the Rubicon lying between existence and life.

When the mind is sensible of inertia—the eyes catch sight of living forms, and the soul yearns toward something which it has not—it may be taken for granted that a life-breath has blown over the valley of dead bones.

In the case of Gertrude Warrener, it was indeed a tomb in which she awakened, and she did not know that she had been immured.

In her seventeenth year, George Warrener, just received into a subordinate position in a New York banking and broking firm, began to pay her his bashful attentions. With no spoken words on his part that she could remember—nor could he for the life of him have recalled the formula—there was an engagement. She married him before her eighteenth birthday.

As she sat in the library, all image of the youthful lover was completely effaced from her mind. He was now like hundreds and dozens of other middle-rank business men. Of medium height, stocky, his hair and short, stubby mustache nondescript, his eyes blue, wide apart and rather small, he was a successful type and entirely sacrificed as an individual. He often said:

"I look like a prosperous Wall Street man, and that is as near as I shall ever come to it—to look like it."

But in spite of his dapper appearance, Warrener was an overworked drudge. He worked so hard and so long, his daily trips on unhealthy ferries and hot cars sapped his vitality to such an extent, that all his life had been spent and lived by the time he crossed at night the threshold of his home.

Gertrude in the little library opened the pages of the *Slocum Daily* slowly. She read the town gossip, a local weather prediction, an account of the hospital fair; and as she rocked and ate one after the other the chocolate marshmallows she had a feeling of freedom, whose cause was due simply to the fact that she had changed her point of view—due to the humble novelty of her transposition.

George's library smelled of stale tobacco. She had sensitive nostrils, and was beginning to find the dead odor unpleasant, when at this point she fell upon an item in the *Slocum Daily* which held her attention:

> We are glad to learn that the McAllister homestead has been opened. After the long absence in Europe of the family, Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy have returned, and Slocum welcomes them back with much pleasure.

"Slocum!" She spoke aloud, and there was scorn in her tone. "Well, I guess they'll laugh at that. I don't believe *they* care for the *Daily*!"

Old Mrs. McAllister at once took form for her. She had come to their wedding, and Gertrude remembered her as tall, and that her dress and hat became her. The young, light-minded bride had remarked the difference between this guest and other Slocumites.

Kept in state on the buffet downstairs was a silver pitcher, the sole real silver in the house. Mrs. McAllister had sent it to the Warreners as a wedding present.

Gertrude got up and went out in the hall. "Eliza!"

"Yes, ma'am." The maid of all work appeared at the foot of the back stairs.

"Say—just go and get that silver pitcher off the dining-room buffet and clean it. I guess it hasn't been cleaned for three years."

The maid looked at her in astonishment. “Why, we haven’t got a mite of cleaning powder in the house, Mrs. Warrener!”

Mrs. Warrener came slowly down the stairs herself, and, going to the dining-room buffet, looked at her wedding gift—or what she could see of it through a thick layer of dirt and discoloration. Then she carried it to the bathroom, and, with nail brush and tooth powder, shone it up as well as she could. It was a tribute of welcome to the return of the Bellamys.

CHAPTER II.

After a week or so of the new atmosphere of the tiny library she summed up her life as follows, and was able to state that the routine of her days never varied: She rose at seven and dressed. George’s train went at eight, and she sat with him at table through a breakfast of hot bread, meat, potatoes and coffee. Then her husband put on his coat and hat and took his leave without even bidding her good-by. She felt lonely when the butcher and the grocer had gone. When she had given her directions to Eliza, it was never more than ten o’clock. In days past she had been used to walk out to the library and get a book, or wander into a neighbor’s “and sit a while,” but of late there commenced from the early morning a period of rocking and reading in the library. In the evening George returned from New York only in time to come to the table without the formality of washing his hands.

These were her interests. Too timid to go to Town Club meetings, too simple-minded to be of any great importance in the different Slocum circles, she kept to herself. Her sole interest would naturally be her husband; him she saw from seven P. M. to seven A. M.; or, rather, she slept beside him during these hours—for directly after dinner he would throw himself down on the lounge in his library and smoke and read till at nine o’clock she roused him and sent him to bed in their common bedroom, in their common bed.

George, tired and devitalized by his strenuous life, absorbed by his own and his employer’s affairs, fell asleep at once. But his companion, more alive than she knew, would lie awake until long past midnight, her body unfatigued, her mind restless, her wakeful eyes staring into the dark which had for her no emotion and no mystery.

One afternoon she found she had read through a whole book without stopping, and for the first time in her life had been absorbed. She got up and turned off the steam heat and opened the window.

“It must be ninety here with these radiators! You either freeze or stew.”

The air came in bluffly, its unfriendly edges met her cheeks; before they could be refreshed she was cold in her thin muslin shirt-waist.

She had risen in expression of a sudden need of air, a sudden sense of suffocation, but she thought only that she was “nervous,” and would go out and take a walk. A little later, a golf cape over a short coat of material known as “covert”—short-skirted, a gray felt hat on her head—Mrs. George Warrener was seen by her neighbors to be going “uptown.”

Not until she had left the village, keeping steady pace up the hill toward the Golf Club, did she feel that she had “let off steam.” The quick motion set free the tension of her nerves, and she almost forgot the acute sensation that drove her from the house. At the golf links she approached the course and stood by the fence, near to one of the last bunkers.

The field was sparsely dotted with the golfers. A red dash in the distance, a green dash, indicated the players who bent in bright sweaters over their sticks. Two men came across the ground close to her—strangers—she saw that instantly, and regarded them with the curiosity of a resident. The man who was playing, his club swung over his shoulder, his driver in his hand, was short and stout, with smooth, red cheeks and bright eyes under shaggy brows. His shoes were large and heavy, his golf stockings thick, and his fustian clothes rough and well made. His companion, a younger man in a loose-sleeved overcoat, had a soft felt hat on his head and a lighted cigar in his hand. The older man said to him, laughing:

“There you are, old man! If you’re really caddying for me, you’ll have to ferret the ball out of that ditch by the fence. I saw it roll down.”

The other lazily nodded, took a puff at his cigar and came over in the direction indicated. Mrs. Warrener leaned on the fence watching the gentleman, who poked about in the grass with his cane.

“Let me give you a fresh ball out of my pocket; I’ve got three left,” he called.

The older man laughed. “Oh, go on, look for it; it’s right under your nose. You’ve given me a ‘fresh ball out of your pocket’ every time one has rolled fifteen yards!”

Mrs. Warrener stooped down; she saw the golf ball on the other side of the fence. She put her hand under through the railing and picked it up; she handed it to the gentleman.

“I think this is your ball.”

He took it with a swift, quick look at her, lifted his hat with cane and cigar in the same hand and thanked her. Taking the ball, he returned to his friend.

Mrs. Warrener watched the older gentleman prepare to drive—then the two men follow the direction indicated by the sharp, momentary flight of the little white ball, the golfer tripping briskly along, the other dark figure following slowly. She had never seen either of them before; who were they? The distant rattle of an incoming train—the one before her husband’s—warned her of the time. She would barely reach home before George came in. “Although,” she reflected, “I may just as well be late, for all *he* will notice, he is so tired, anyway.”

She walked, nevertheless, mechanically toward home, so slowly that when she reached the village street George's train had been in some time.

At this time of night a little crowd was gathered, as a rule, for the trolley, and Mrs. Warrener decided to take the car and anticipate her husband's arrival by several minutes.

While she stood with the others who waited, the strangers of the Golf Club joined the crowd. As the car appeared the gentleman in the black coat helped her in and sat opposite her. When he threw back his coat to get out his fare from his pocket, she observed that he wore a gray waistcoat of soft material—it looked as though it were "knit," she thought, or "worked"—a bright red tie and—unusual elegance among the men of Slocum—gloves—gray gloves, as soft in color as his waistcoat. Very much struck by his dress, she ventured, with a certain timidity, to look him in the face. The vivid color of his cravat made him seem very dark; all she could observe was a dark face, dark mustache and eyes, for he was looking at her, and she met his eyes directly. Their interested curiosity rendered her uncomfortable, and she removed her glance, which traveled down the 63
line of colorless passengers, tired men in dusty, careless dress; unbrushed derbys, linen far from immaculate, gloveless hands. Each man had his bunch of evening papers, some carried parcels from the city for suburban use. A woman she knew, an inveterate shopper, nodded brightly to her.

"Been in New York all day. Just too tired. Never saw such a crowd in the stores; why, I thought I never *would* get waited on. Say——" There was a vacant seat by Mrs. Warrener, and the lady came over and took it, continuing a description of bargains, and a tirade against crowds. "Been up this week, Gert?"

"No, I hardly ever go in."

"Well, it's a change, but I always say when we get to Slocum I'm glad I don't live in New York, it's so wearing. Been up to the Golf Club?"

"Yes, but not to play."

The conversationalist was conscious of a change in her well-known neighbor's tone, an accent, just what it was she could not imagine, but it was sufficiently marked to give her food for thought.

As Mrs. Warrener left the car at her corner, Mrs. Turnbull puzzled over her. Perhaps she was offended with her? But she had no reason for such an idea! Perhaps George Warrener was losing money? As money to the unsentimental, commercial American mind is the source of all bliss and the cause of all unhappiness, the slide down which all spirits fall and the height to which they rise, she reached a sad conclusion in this, and dropped her wonderings.

* * * * *

Warrener and his wife arrived at the same moment on the steps of their two-story frame house.

"Well!" he said. He took out his latchkey and entered the door. The hall was hot and full of the smell of roasting meat and soup herbs. The dinner puffed out to meet the diners with damp, pungent warmth. George put his batch of papers down on the hall stand.

"Well," he repeated, absently, took off his dusty derby, hung it up and got out of his overcoat.

He looked for no response to his greeting. Mrs. Warrener understood this, and made none.

Warrener went upstairs to his study.

"Gracious, Gert, some one's left the window open in my den! It's like ice here!"

"It'll get hot enough. Turn on the steam."

Mrs. Warrener followed her husband upstairs into the cold little room. The smell of stale smoke seemed to have frozen on the air, but over it the smell of the cigar the gentleman had smoked, a peculiar aroma, as new to her, as delicious, as would have been a priceless perfume, came to her nostrils. She went to her chair where she had sat for hours reading, and picked up her book, which she kept in her hand.

"What have you been doing all day, Gert?" he asked at dinner, after he had eaten his tepid soup and drunk an entire glass of ice water.

"Oh, I don't know—nothing much."

"Nothin' doin'? Well, you are in luck! I feel as if something was doin' in every inch of my body. I'm tired out. Harkweather kept the clerks down to-night—they won't get out before nine o'clock; but I said 'not tonight for me. I'm goin' home.' And I'm goin' right to bed. I guess I'll sleep twelve hours, all right!"

As they went upstairs, he first and she slowly following, she suggested:

"How would you like me to sleep in the spare room, if you're so tired?"

"Why?" he asked, jocularly. "Do I snore so?"

"Yes, but that's not it. It may feel good to have the whole bed to yourself."

"Well, I believe it would."

In the spare room, close to the springs, on a narrow, single bed, Mrs. Warrener crept alone. She drew the adjusting electric light close to her and took her book up again to re-read, her elbow in the pillow and her cheek on her hand. She followed the printed lines with dawning interest on her face, and a growing intelligence, until 64
all of a sudden the dead stillness of the hour and time struck her. The fireless room—for there was no steam heat in it—gave her a chill. She put out the light and drew the coverlet about her and settled down to sleep.

CHAPTER III.

The business interest of which George Warrener formed a humble part had no picturesque traditions. Like everything else in New York, the corporation had even during Warrener's time boasted several different addresses. When especial advantages presented themselves in the shape of higher buildings and higher rent, Harkweather & Fulsome moved. The unstableness, the constant transition, had an effect upon him which he did not appreciate. Warrener, with his firm, was restless; and restless with his eighty million fellow Americans.

Harkweather & Fulsome's last move had been to a twenty-two-floored steel structure, from whose tenth story were visible the roofs of the buildings not yet razed to make room for other giant office honeycombs. Money, at Harkweather & Fulsome's, superseded everything else in the world, extinguished the lights of pleasure, destroyed even the capacity to enjoy. Everything else was crowded out of the question. Harkweather & Fulsome were "strictly business," strictly getters of wealth; and they squeezed dry every sponge that came to their hands.

Warrener, in the office, had drifted into the position of confidential clerk, very much used when wanted, and shifted off into a little, stuffy room, where he had a desk and typewriter, when his services were not in active demand. Here he copied, filed and noted; added, opened and docketed mail; and read the financial news in every available sheet in the city. To his own thinking, he was an authority on stocks and bonds. He heard innumerable tips thrown out; saw them acted upon, and prove either valuable or worthless; followed the rise and fall of fortunes near and far; assisted at failures and successes; and during the hours of his routine in the office had the sensation of being himself a millionaire! But when he left the ferry, the bondholders and "big men" hurried to their more important trains and more important stations, and Warrener hustled himself, with his evening papers, into the short train of the Slocum local, he then distinctly felt the difference between his bank balance and his chief's! He lived in the atmosphere of money, but he had never been ambitious. Of average intelligence, common school education, steady-going and trustworthy, he had no intentions further than to pay his bills, earn his salary and keep at the business.

Were he asked what part of his life he recalled with most pleasure he would have unhesitatingly answered: "Getting engaged and going on our honeymoon." The sentimental period—which had come into his unimaginative life with the imperiousness of that passion which at least once during a man's life changes his existence for a time, short or long—had for Warrener left behind it a memory which the cares of the world, the moth and rust of vulgar routine, trains and ferries, quick lunches and elevators, common surroundings and abasing ideals, overlaid but never destroyed.

Eight years before he had asked the prettiest girl he knew to marry him, and she had said yes. His vacation falling at this time, they had spent two weeks in August at Far Rockaway, and from there went directly into the rented house on Grand Street, and the newly married man began his bi-daily pilgrimages on the train.

He would have been ashamed to have anyone, above all his wife, know that as he crossed the ferry, one of a thick-packed crowd on the front part of the boat, standing there close to the running waters, near the bow, he often gave himself a mental holiday; then the image of Gertrude in a pinkish dress and picture hat came to his mind as he had seen her on the boardwalk at Rockaway eight years ago. It was a species of revel for him to recall those days. He was not unhappy or even discontented; he was too commonplace to be capable of either sensation. He was numbed, pinched hard by life.

"I am indispensable to Mr. Harkweather," he repeated, with pride, and passed the time with his hand on other people's grindstones, all the gold dust flying into other people's bags.

CHAPTER IV.

One especial Sunday he awakened after a refreshing sleep, stretched his arms and yawned aloud, then lay pleasantly conscious of the well-being of his condition—half asleep still, and it was far into the morning! Belowstairs he could hear the heavy footsteps of Eliza, and fancied the early presage of dinner. Warrener listened, knowing he should soon hear another footstep lighter than that of the maid-of-all-work.

"Gert!"

Mrs. Warrener came in.

"It's twelve o'clock," she said, "and you'll just about have time to get up, take your bath and dress for dinner."

"All right," he responded, cheerfully, but did not move. Instead, putting his hands up behind his head, he watched his wife as she fetched out his clean clothes and laid them with his Sunday suit over a chair. As she moved quietly about the room, the man's feeling of content grew, added to by the feminine presence and the evidence of care and wifely attention. The little room was bright with the sunshine of a mild November day. The chromos, the glaring wall paper, the cheap oak bedroom set, the thin lace curtains touched with the light, appeared lovely in their master's eyes. Before him was the prospect of a long day of repose, spent in perfect, tranquil laziness, a day in the fresh country air. There would be no office or telegraph calls, no duties, no sounds to disturb the hard-earned hours. His relaxed nerves and body rejoiced in the holiday. He was as happy as he could ever be—did he know it, would ever be. Years afterward Warrener looked back at that especial Sunday with something of the same affection he bestowed upon his marriage memories, and with keener regret.

As Mrs. Warrener went out of the room, he called her:

"Say, Gert!"

She paused at the door, clean towels in her hand. She was going to get his bath ready.

"Well, what?"

He wanted to call: "Give me a kiss." But her manner rather distanced him. So he said: "What'll you give me if I guess what we're going to have for dinner?"

“Nothing,” she laughed. “I should think anybody with a nose would know. Eliza leaves the kitchen door open all the time.”

“It smells good,” he sniffed. “And it’s away ahead of sandwiches and a glass of beer; that’s my noon meal, as a rule.”

She warned him he wouldn’t get any dinner at all if he didn’t hurry up, and in a few moments he heard the running of his bath; the sound, to his good humor and contented frame of mind, was one more pleasant, luxurious, agreeable part of the day.

Later, shaved and washed, dressed with great precision and care, he sat in the parlor, the multitudinous sheets of the New York daily papers around him.

Gertrude rocked idly in the window, her eyes on the deserted street. Eliza washed the dinner dishes and put them rattling away, then tramped up the front stairs, and in gorgeous magnificence went out the back way, emerging into Grand Street. At the sight of her Mrs. Warrener said: “I’m going to give you a cold supper, George, some salad and tea—she’s made biscuits, I guess.”

“Oh, that’s all right. It seems as if we only just got up from dinner.” He threw his paper down. “Want to take a walk, Gert? It’s nice out, and I don’t think it’s cold.”

“Well,” she said, indifferently, “I’ll get my hat and coat.”

When she came down Warrener had been walking about his tiny parlor and dining room, and was still under the spell of householder and in love with his possessions.

“You’ve got the McAllister wedding present cleaned up fine.”

“It’s the only real silver we’ve got; it makes the other things look common.”

Mrs. Warrener regarded the display on her buffet with some discontent.

“Oh, I don’t know,” returned the husband. “It’s as good as you can get anywhere for the money.”

“The McAllisters have come back to Slocum,” his wife mentioned.

“Yes,” he nodded. “Mrs. McAllister used to go to Uncle Samson’s church. I don’t see why you shouldn’t go up there to call some day.”

Mrs. Warrener had opened the front door and gone out on the stoop; George, getting into his overcoat, followed her. Side by side they went slowly down the front steps of the little wooden stoop.

“I shouldn’t know what to say.”

“Oh, she’ll say it all; besides, perhaps she’ll be out—leave a card—got one of mine?”

“Yes, I guess so.”

“Well.”

As they turned into Grand Street and hesitated a moment as to their direction, Warrener suggested:

“Might as well walk along up toward the McAllister place; it’s as good a walk as any.”

As they started off in the fresh, crisp air, refreshing and sweet to the man’s nostrils, stimulating and revivifying after his close confined days, a sudden impulse to have the woman by his side nearer him overcame him; he drew her arm through his.

“Let’s walk arm in arm, like old married couples.”

But Mrs. Warrener held back and took her arm away.

“No,” she demurred; “I think it’s common.”

In the following days Mrs. Warrener took up her life, or, more accurately, began it, standing on the threshold of an abyss—the flight of steps before her that led to the new. As she had never been particularly interested in anything, she did not know that she was an invalid with a fatal malady, a malady whose term is too commonly employed by people whose reason for the state is less apparent than this woman’s in a country town. She had never heard the word “boredom” used.

There were half a dozen village friends of Mrs. Warrener’s whose status was on a higher plane than hers, whose houses had more square feet of land around them, whose “help” was more efficient. In their parlors now and then she took an inadequate hand at euchre, and of late she had been trying to learn bridge. These ladies made the town library and the little hospital, the Children’s Home and the church interests, run more or less smoothly; they had a hundred busy, useful interests. They were good wives and good mothers and good citizens. She had never heard any of them use the verb “to be bored,” and if she had, she would not have known what it meant! She suffered under a complaint which, like many maladies, is less fatal so long as it has no name; but the disease was too acute to be ignored. It had engendered too many complications.

At the town library the librarian from among the rows of school books one day handed down to Mrs. Warrener a French dictionary. From the novel she had read a few days before she had copied out this phrase:

> *Ennui* is like the unseen worm in the wood, that slowly gnaws the good, clean substance until his parasite presence is declared by innumerable interstices that finally destroy the wood and proclaim it rotten to the fiber—*ennui* had eaten into her, devoured her. There was not one inch of her that did not ache from desuetude, from moral inertia.

Gertrude found the word “*ennui*” in the dictionary, and the following definition: “Listlessness, languor, tedium, lassitude, tiresomeness,” compared it with her scrap of paper, puzzled her pretty brows until their lines looked like pain. As she put up the book and left the library, she said to herself: “Well, I guess that’s what’s the

matter with me.”

CHAPTER V.

When Slocum was scarcely a village Edward McAllister, after his retirement from the Supreme Court, purchased sufficient land in the State to establish a model farm. Here his children, Paul and Agnes, were born, and before they had time to know they were Americans McAllister accepted a foreign embassy and lived with his family abroad until his death. His daughter, Agnes, had married in Rome, and after a few years of wandering and continental life, with her husband, Mr. John Bellamy, and her brother, Mr. Paul McAllister, she returned to Slocum. 67

They had come back in order that Mrs. Bellamy should see just how much she could stand of American life and manners; in order that their children might have enough of their native soil on their hands as they played, and enough of its education in their heads, to entitle them to the self-sufficiency of American citizens.

Little Bellamy was immured in Groton, hard at the American part of it, and Mrs. Bellamy sat this morning in a charming room furnished in Colonial style: continental taste and the accessories that make living a luxury and pleasure combined to make her a charming environment. Mrs. Bellamy was teaching her little daughter the gentle art of making a long rope of useless wool by means of a spool and a row of pins.

The mother’s head bent close to the little girl’s was as golden as the child’s. Her hands, with their flashing rings, played in and out among the pins with a skill nothing short of miraculous in the eyes of the little girl, who took up the spool between her own tiny fingers, the worsted twisted hard around her thumb.

By the table, in a luxurious leather chair, the other occupant of the room was almost lost to sight. His presence was, however, indicated by the film of cigarette smoke that rose curlingly around his head. The yellow cover of a French novel was just visible above the table.

“Paul,” his sister asked him, “how do you like America?”

“*America?*” he repeated, and, although he said no more, she knew by his quizzical drawl what he meant.

“Well, Slocum, then, and the old place?”

“Immensely!”

“Absurd,” she laughed. “You have only been here a week, and except for ridiculously caddying a couple of times for John at the Golf Club, you have not been out of the house.”

“In which case, how could I fail to like it?” he said, with mock politeness. “You’ve kept me company! *You* don’t seem to be tempted to explore the old scenes any more than I do! Perhaps, like me, you’re afraid of the shock. You know how luxurious I am. If it were not for the extremely swell gentleman and lady servants, I should feel very much at ease.” He had not put down his book; he still smoked and appeared to be reading what he said from it. “I was most amused the other day as I stood on the piazza; did John tell you? I saw going around the road two very attractive-looking girls—they recalled the Gibson pictures as much as anything else. They wore, of course, short skirts and those bodices that you see everywhere. They had a bicycle, each of them, and they were walking along, their arms around each other’s waists. I said to John: ‘By Jove, what a stunning pair of girls! I should like to know them.’ And he said: ‘They are living in the same house with you, my dear fellow—*they are my cook and my laundress*.’”

Mrs. Bellamy laughed appreciatively. “Tell me, Paul, how *does* America strike you?”

McAllister reluctantly laid his book down, crossed his legs and prepared to answer.

“I’ve been out more often than you think. I took a turtle view of the town; I mean I sauntered up and down it and out of it, and it gave me as complete a sensation as I have had in twenty-four years. A better sensation, *ma chère*, and I am not likely to have another.”

Mrs. Bellamy listened, as she always did when her brother gave himself the trouble to speak more than one sentence at a time to any woman with whom he was not in love.

“It is all new-born, honorable, progressive and decent. Everybody seems to have a certain disdain for me. I believe it is because, if you will permit me to say so, I dress so well.” 68

His sister laughed.

“Not that *they* do not dress well! They do—astoundingly well; but they all dress alike, and you cannot tell, as in the case of your own servant, a lady from her cook, or a butcher boy on a holiday from the millionaire’s son, if he happens to come through town on foot or in a motor. Let’s agree, then, that I do look different. ‘The drug-store man’—that’s what you call him, isn’t it?—looked at me as if he hated me and my clothes when he gave me some calisaya. He thought I was a foreigner; they don’t like foreigners. If anything could put me on the same footing with my country people, this town street did, as far as it was able. By the time I got to the grocery I had forgotten that I had not seen America for thirty years, and that I was so different. Nothing remained but that *country school feeling*, that boy feeling. If you ask what I mean: There was a barrel of apples outside of the grocer’s door. I wanted to sneak one! I would have given fifty dollars for a glass of cider—for anything, in short, to keep up the game. I went in and asked him if he had such a thing as ‘sarsaparilla.’ He had it, and, in spite of my ‘difference,’ he pulled his cork and I drank the whole glass of that stuff. Pah! don’t ask me about it! It was all right, I don’t doubt; but when I left the corner and started up the hill, that wonderful sentimental feeling had entirely left me! There was only a wretched nausea—a complete sense of how far away I had gone from the simplicity of the whole thing, and I don’t say that I congratulated myself. Now, will you let me read, Agnes?”

But Mrs. Bellamy had turned to a servant who entered with a card—with two cards. “‘Mr. and Mrs. Warrener,’” she read aloud. “Oh, dear me, have you let them in?”

It appeared there was only a lady: “Mrs. George Warrener.”

“Heavens! I suppose that a lot of these people will call, and I must be more or less civil. Show Mrs. Warrener in—there is time to escape for you, Paul, by way of the dining room.”

CHAPTER VI.

The brightness of the room, the effect produced by the brilliant color of the decorations, and the atmosphere of livableness and charm did not dazzle the guest who entered—because she simply could not see! Her excitement was such that it caused a sort of blindness to fall on her, although she had never thought herself bashful or shy.

A lady, younger than herself, rose and welcomed her in a soft, quick voice, with a difference so marked in speech to any Mrs. Warrener had ever heard that she thought it was a foreign accent.

“How do you do? This is very good of you; won’t you sit here? We feel very much like strangers, coming back to Slocum after so many years. Fanny, darling, take your spools and wool and go to nurse. There—first say: ‘How do you do?’ to Mrs. Warrener.”

Gertrude had a vision of a small creature with a head like a chrysanthemum flower and the wide, round eyes of a child. The little hand that met her glove with frank politeness gave her a pretty greeting. Mrs. Warrener was obliged to break the hard tension of nervous fright that clutched her throat, and to speak to her hostess, who, in a chair near her, represented a world of civilization and education so unlike her own that a bird of paradise and a barnyard hen might have had more points in common.

She breathed out: “I used to know Mrs. McAllister; she used to go to my husband’s uncle’s church.” There was no elder lady present, and Mrs. Warrener looked for one.

“Oh, yes,” her hostess answered. “I am very sorry my mother is not here. She is at Cannes; she never comes north before spring. It is nearly twelve years since she’s been in America.”

“Yes,” Mrs. Warrener was forced to speak. “I guess it was just at the time of my wedding. That was eight years ago. I remember they said she was going to Europe then. She came to my wedding; she was at the church.”

Mrs. Bellamy, who keenly, although with perfect politeness, was studying the village lady before her, wondered very much for what reason her mother had attended the Warrener wedding.

“Slocum must seem small after Rome,” Mrs. Warrener ventured into the conversation with more ease.

Her hostess laughed. “Slocum! Why, I haven’t seen it yet, do you know! I came at night—we drove up from the train in a storm. But”—she raised her eyes to the other part of the room—“my brother can tell you how it seems; *he* has lots of ideas about it! My brother, Mr. McAllister—Mrs. Warrener.”

Paul McAllister had returned, to his sister’s great surprise.

“Mrs. Warrener thinks Slocum must seem ‘small’ after Rome.” She did not italicize the repetition which she carefully made, sure that it would appeal to her brother’s humor as it was.

* * * * *

Mrs. Warrener gracefully, if unnecessarily, rose to the presentation, and found her hand in that of the gentleman of the long black overcoat, who bowed, meeting her eyes with a smile very like one of recognition and friendliness.

“Slocum is not small to me. I was born and brought up here. The place one comes from always seems the most important in the world. Of course it may strike me as small before I get through with it, but I have not found it so yet.”

Entirely unable to cope with the conversation, ordinary as it was, carried on by the quick, soft voices in enunciation so new to her that the language seemed scarcely English—Mrs. Warrener looked at the speaker with less embarrassment because he put her at her ease. Dark, brilliant and distinguished, he did not, nevertheless, awe her as did Mrs. Bellamy’s beauty and pose. McAllister took a chair and sat down directly in front of the guest.

“I have seen Mrs. Warrener already—at golf. You were there yesterday? Didn’t you give me my ball?”

“Yes, I just walked up for a little exercise. It’s nice playing there in the afternoon now, since the snow has gone.”

“I don’t play, myself,” McAllister said, “but, as you say, it’s a nice walk.”

Mrs. Bellamy, after a word or two, leaned back in her chair with relief, and left to her brother the amenities, watching him and the guest.

After Mrs. Warrener had gone—and McAllister had seen her to the door and returned with his indolent step—as he stopped to light a fresh cigarette, his sister said:

“Well, had you any recollection about a village beauty such as your boyhood and sarsaparilla memories? And did Mrs. Warrener recall it—and is the result the same?”

McAllister turned his handsome, careless face to his sister.

“You think her a stupid little provincial, don’t you, Agnes?”

“I? Why, I asked you your opinion.”

“You don’t deny that you think that.”

“Her boots are frightful, and her hat was appalling.”

“Oh, come,” laughed her brother; “be fair!”

Mrs. McAllister gathered up her work—a piece of tapestry.

“You are unable,” she said, with some asperity, “to see any landscape without a woman in it, even for five days.”

“It’s a great compliment that you pay your sex. Let my weakness pass. Won’t you confess that this little village nobody has more good looks than we have seen in Rome for two winters?”

“Beauty—*Paul!*”

McAllister shrugged: “Decidedly. A face like a Greuze, perfect eyebrows—so perfect as to be almost suspicious; that inimitable droop of the eyes and the corners of the mouth—at once childlike and mature; and her coloring!”

“You are always finding the most impossible women, and telling me how paintable they are. Do you want to paint this little bore?” 70

“Somebody has painted her, and to perfection,” he said, with authority. “I will show you her likeness in the Louvre when we get back.”

He had thrust his hands in his pockets and begun to stroll up and down the room. As she watched him a shade crossed his sister’s face. The worsted ball Fanny had let fall her mother picked up and turned over in her hands.

“As you sat and talked to the poor little woman I watched you; she was fascinated by you—no, really! Her entire expression altered! She has never seen anyone like you before.” (“That’s what the drug-store man thought,” murmured McAllister.) “And I hope she won’t take to frequenting the Golf Club and other local festive places where she can see you.”

“Thanks, Agnes.”

McAllister laughed, and, taking from her hands the red worsted ball, idly unwound it.

“Don’t be foolish! If we are here for any purpose under heaven, let’s amuse ourselves and some of these people, too! I don’t intend to shut myself up like Noah in the ark, with only the passengers I took on board at Rome. Let’s have Mrs. Warrener to lunch; she’s a nice little creature; she’s immured in this hole, and she’s probably bored to death.”

“If she *is* immured,” murmured Mrs. Bellamy, “don’t let’s bring her out.”

McAllister had almost unwound the ball as he talked, and what was left of it rolled down under the table.

Here Bellamy came in, and McAllister took his indolent self away. “What have you been doing?” Mr. Bellamy asked his wife. She gathered up the worsted and said, impatiently: “I’ve been talking to my idle and destructive brother.”

CHAPTER VII.

It was six by the time Mrs. Warrener reached her own door. The aspect of Grand Street had changed. In the early twilight of the November afternoon the wooden houses bordering her street stood out clear-cut and fearlessly ugly. All the Felter children were playing in the yard, their piercing screams over their games of pleasure welcomed her ears. The little things, with red tam-o’-shanters on their heads, tore about hither and thither, calling in loud, penetrating voices.

Fanny Bellamy had said, “How do you do, Mrs. Wawenner,” in a voice like an angel bird’s. As Gertrude went up her steps she saw the *Slocum Daily* on the mat. Usually she seized upon the paper eagerly, but to-night she did not even lift it from the stoop.

In answer to the bell, the maid-of-all-work, Eliza, ran to the door. It was washday, and she exuded soapsuds. In her uncombed and dusty hair, little flakes of soapsuds still clung; she wore a gingham apron, with which she wiped her steaming face as she let her mistress in. For the first time Mrs. Warrener saw Eliza with eyes from which the scales of custom had fallen, and the cordial smile extended by one maid’s mistress who is conscious that she is just so little better because she has as much to spend a week as the maid has a month, did not this evening light the lady’s face.

“Eliza, never go to the door again without a white apron.”

The woman stared blankly, and her silent astonishment further aggravated the mistress.

“And fix your hair,” she said, severely, “and keep the kitchen door shut.”

Dinner smells which for years unremarked had greeted Mrs. Warrener’s nostrils, odors of kitchen and soapsuds, sickened her to-night; but before she could turn to go upstairs her attention was forcibly called to account by Eliza, who, with arms akimbo, cried to her:

“If you ain’t satisfied with me, Mrs. Warrener, you can get another girl. I ain’t no common, ordinary servant to be spoke to like that.”

Mrs. Warrener turned about at the lower stair. “What are you, then?” she asked, sharply.

The woman drew a breath of rage. “*What am I?*” she shrieked. “Why, I’m *help*, that’s what I am! And I’ve got better clothes than you have upstairs.” 71

“You can go and put them on,” her mistress said, “and get another place.”

Too excited to realize what the predicament of being without a servant meant in a suburban town, Gertrude did nothing to propitiate, and Eliza left.

From the opposite windows the neighbors watched the departure with astonishment and much interest, for Eliza had been with the Warreners eight years. Her red face shone under her feathered hat at the hack window, and her eyes, when flaming passion was subdued, were full of tears.

As Gertrude, indifferently, and without a word of good-by, paid her her money, Eliza sniffled: “I’d of liked to say good-by to Mr. Warrener—*he’s* a gentleman.”

When he came in finally to a dinner kept hot on the stove for him, and served by his wife, she informed him:

“I’ve sent Eliza away.” He was stupefied, and could not believe his ears.

“Good gracious! What for?”

“She was impertinent.”

Too amazed to speak, he ate his soup in silence; saying at length, sympathetically: “You’ll have to go up to town to-morrow and get somebody.”

“I guess I will.”

“I’m sorry for you, Gerty. It will be work for you, and it’s no easy job to get servants for the country, especially general houseworkers.”

“That’s just it,” she agreed, meditatively. But the idea of going to town was an excitement to her for the first time, and she had a scheme already in her mind. If she could find them she would get a cook and laundress and an upstairs girl. She would economize somehow or other, and she guessed George wouldn’t mind.

CHAPTER VIII.

The stagnant pool of Slocum was very considerably stirred by New York during the days when Mrs. Warrener was obliged to go in and out to look for her servants. For she had decided that Eliza should be replaced by two maids, one of whom should be dressed in apron and caps such as those worn by the trim person of whom she had caught a glimpse as she waited in Mrs. Bellamy’s drawing room.

When her husband came home one night, Gertrude was waiting for him in the window. She had had a hard day. Timid and abashed before the new and autocratic ladies for whom she felt no room in the house was good enough, she had vacillated on the verge of temper and tears. One of her characteristics was the complete control of her features and a passive exterior which hitherto no excitements had disturbed.

“George”—she drew her husband into the parlor—“I’ve got two girls.” She put her hand on the lapel of the overcoat he had as yet not taken off.

“*Two* girls!” he echoed.

She was flushed and pretty—very pretty. He vaguely thought she was dressed up more than usual.

“I’m tired out!” she exclaimed. “Those intelligence offices are enough to wear you to death. I got two because—the work here is too much for any one girl.”

George looked around the microscopic room, and mentally saw, as well, the microscopic second floor.

“Eliza got through all right.”

Mrs. Warrener exclaimed: “Don’t talk to me of Eliza. She wasn’t fit to be seen.”

With the hope that the two servants together might not cost as much as one, he asked:

“What’s their wages?”

She hesitated.

“Why, I’d rather make it up some way—on a dress or a hat. They’re high. One twenty and the other twenty-five a month.”

“Gee whizz!” Warrener staggered back. “Why,” he gasped, “you’re *crazy*, Gert!”

Her hand fell back from the lapel of his coat. Tears of vexation and fatigue sprang to her eyes.

“Hush! *She’s* there, in the dining room—she’ll hear you. I’m *not* crazy, I’m sick of living like a tenement house.”

The master was prevented from saying anything further by the entrance of a pert-faced girl in cap and apron, who said briskly:

“Dinner’s served.”

Standing there in Eliza’s place between the cheap portières, she represented a convulsion in the clerk’s household. He had never been thus invited to a meal in his own house before. He got off his coat and followed his wife in to dinner.

The little, cozy room possessed for the first time an element of unrest. In eight years it had not altered so much as this. At first Gertrude, with a washerwoman, did her own work; then Eliza came blithely and good-humoredly on the scene. She had grown to be like a friend. Warrener liked her. In her oven, which she had at length triumphantly overcome, she baked him certain favorite little breads much to his taste. She ironed his collars and shirts “just right.” He could say to her:

“Look here, Eliza, just run down to Pearce’s and get me a couple of cigars.” He could never order this bustling individual in cap and gown in this manner. “A tenement!” The word touched his contented pride in his little household; already the golden sunlight was beginning to slip from the wall. Change and progression were following the tired man close on his heels to his very door.

A fortnight went by after her call at the house on the hill before the event reverently hoped for by George Warrener’s wife transpired.

Mrs. Bellamy in her French automobile drove up Grand Street and called on Mrs. Warrener.

Gertrude was out, and when she came home and found the bit of pasteboard lying on the hatstand and realized that Mrs. Bellamy had been—and had gone!—a feeling of desolation swept over her such as might attack a lonely occupant of a desert island on rushing to his island’s edge to see a ship slip over the horizon.

The disappointed woman could think of nothing to follow this occurrence, no future after it. She felt deserted and very miserable.

The waitress who answered the bell her mistress rang appeared now to be superfluous—the extravagance this splurge represented occurred to Gertrude for the first time. What was the good of the servants after Mrs. Bellamy had been and gone! Since Mrs. Bellamy would never come again, Eliza might just as well be there with her blowzy hair, her blue apron and her kind, smiling face. Gertrude felt a homesickness for her as excitement died out of her limited sky.

Katy’s manner was less flaunting and insolent than usual. Mrs. Bellamy in her handsome clothes and the automobile had impressed her.

“When did the lady come?”

“About half an hour ago.”

“Was there anyone else?”

Mrs. Warrener would not let herself think just who there might have been.

“There was only a little girl in the motor car.”

“She didn’t leave any message?”

“No, ma’am.”

Well, it was all over, and she might as well make the best of it. She had got on all right enough before the Bellamys came; she guessed she could live without them, anyhow. She would keep the girls till George’s summer vacation, and then they could get another place. That this provision would leave them stranded in a bad season did not disturb her.

She “just couldn’t” go upstairs to indolently sit down and contemplate at once the stupid days to be! There were George’s socks to mend, but she turned about where she stood, gratefully remembering that there was also the meeting of a card club of which she was a member. It would at least keep her doing something, and she went out again and started toward Mrs. Turnbull’s.

Her feet were clad in shoes then in vogue, with thick, projecting soles and stubby ends. As her foot was ridiculously small, it looked less like a man’s—which masculinity it seems this heavy gear is intended to simulate —than like a sturdy little boy’s. Her short-length skirt showed a slender ankle in coarse black stockings, the skirt itself falling smoothly on her rounded hips; her coat lay smoothly across a flat back and shoulders, the small, supple waist was held in by a leather belt. Her collar, neither stiff enough nor high enough to be “smart,” was low enough to leave visible the back of her neck and the close growth of her hair. Men have been known more than once to follow a woman for the charm of the nape of her neck; that soft, pretty turn, the lovely part of the form where the head with more or less beauty—according to type—joins the shoulder and body.

Before Mrs. Warrener was within two blocks of her destination, she heard some one walking fast behind her, and not unnaturally turned to see who followed her with a step so decided in the lonely street.

It was Mr. McAllister.

The unexpectedness of this appearance on the afternoon when she had given up the idea of coming in contact with his like and circle again—the fact of meeting him in the open street, where there was no one but himself to critically observe her manner—gave her a shock of pleasure. She stammered: “How do you do?” and held out her hand to him with the *gaucherie* of a child.

“What a dreadfully fast walker you are!” McAllister was out of breath. “And it’s not the first time I’ve noticed it. You don’t know how I ran down the hill behind you that night at the Golf Club.”

He had never spoken to such a painful blush before, as surprise and flattered pleasure deepened in the woman’s cheeks.

“It’s a splendid speed,” he approved, “and it’s given you a most glorious color.”

As he walked along by her side she managed to say:

“Your sister called to day, and I was out.”

“That’s too bad!” he exclaimed heartily. “She will be so sorry. She wanted to take you out in the automobile —I lent it for the purpose. Where are you going, and at such a pace—may I know?”

“I’m going to a card party at Mrs. Turnbull’s—it’s right here.”

Her companion showed plainly his disappointment. “I thought you were out for a good walk, and that perhaps I might join you.”

More sorry than he, and thoroughly regretting having told her stupid errand, she slowed her pace.

“Can’t I come in with you—and play as well?”

She smiled nervously. “Oh, no, there are only ladies in the club.”

“Only!” he repeated. “What better could one want? But I should prefer it in the singular. Can’t you seriously take me in under your protection and introduce me? What do you play? Bridge? I can play bridge. It would amuse me hugely.” He saw that she did not understand his use of the word and changed it. “Entertain me—do, please.”

Mrs. Warrener had not much imagination, but she could imagine the faces of Mrs. Turnbull and her fellow club members at the sight of Mr. McAllister and herself together under any circumstances. He looked so tall—so laughing and at ease—his attitude as if he had known her all his life bewildered her; her embarrassment was not yet relieved, although her pleasure was growing.

“Oh, no, I couldn’t, Mr. McAllister.”

“Do you like cards?” he demanded, with abrupt change of topic.

“Not much; I don’t play well.”

“I hate them, personally,” he admitted. “Why, then, do you go?”

As she made him wait for an answer he urged: “It’s a crime to sacrifice this afternoon in a hot, stuffy room before a lot of painted pasteboards. I don’t believe they expect you—do they?”

“Well, I don’t believe they do. I don’t often go. I just pay fines all the time.”

“Pay one this once, won’t you? Is this the house? Why, it’s a box, nothing more. Don’t go and be shut up in it!” 74

Gertrude thought with a pang that Mrs. Turnbull’s was twice as large as her own house—she had envied her.

“Don’t you want to show me one of the walks around here? There must be lots of nice tramps. It will do you good.”

She had never been spoken to in her life like this before. Strange as it may seem, it is, nevertheless, true that she had never exchanged half a dozen words with any man but her husband in her life—that is, any man save the tradespeople, whom she always talked to as long as she could. She had once acknowledged to herself: “I guess I like men better than women—I’d rather talk to the grocer than to any of the stupid Slocum women. It’s common of me, but it’s true.”

McAllister’s voice was like a cradle—she seemed to rock in it.

“He’s perfectly elegant,” she said to herself; “so handsome and polite.”

She would have suffocated at the Turnbulls’; the same atmosphere that had latterly pervaded all of her own surroundings began to surround the unoffending little house whose porch and front gate were reached.

She nerved herself to look up at Mr. McAllister, and with some assurance met his smiling eyes.

“I’ll go along a little further; there’s a pretty walk over along the old Lackawanna Station.”

CHAPTER IX.

When she turned into Grand Street at nearly six o’clock she scarcely knew whether it was her own gate through which she passed or whether the house was in its right place or had vanished with the old associations; whether she walked up the wooden steps to a familiar door or floated on air to the portal of a castle in Spain.

Warrener had telephoned that he would not be home before midnight; she received the message with relief, although the name sounded with as much indifference to her as though she heard it for the first time that night.

She sat musing over her dinner, ate a little of it, left the table as soon as she could, and restlessly wandered through the rooms from one to the other, then upstairs to the “den,” where in the dark she threw herself full length on George’s hard leather lounge.

The walk of several miles must have caused these excited feelings, this glow; but she was conscious as well of a kind of suffering agitation. She had walked many miles in her life with no such exhilaration as this.

To natures such as hers, by temperament sluggish, an awakening is dangerous, and means revolution. She never had thought of love—that is, in connection with herself or anyone she knew. The idea that a married woman, a nice one—of course there were bad ones—could care for another man had never occurred to her. The word “love” she had never heard mentioned that she could recall. Men like Warrener do not talk of love; they avoid the word and its chaotic consequences. She had never said “I love you” in her life. Her wooing had consisted of a timid kiss or two, a decorous marriage into whose ceremony the word “love” had slipped unobserved, close to “honor” and “obey.” “Love,” in that sentence, meant that she submitted always with a sort of shame and humiliation to be a wife; “honor,” that neither of them would do anything criminal, of course—how should they? “Obey,” that she would keep house for George. These, had she been capable of pigeonholing her ideas, were the grooves into which she would have slipped her conceptions of wedded life.

It is not strange that a woman with a hostility to the laws of whose mysterious passion she knows nothing should refuse to linger in her thoughts on love when it is so mentally surrounded. Love stories she rarely read; she thought them silly and little less than sane. She couldn’t understand them—once or twice they had given her unhappy, lonely feelings, and she had not sought their pages again.

On the sofa, in the dark, after the first dazzling force of the feeling which suffused her and which she did not understand, she thought of her clothes! She wished she had worn another dress, her new *beige* and a pair of new boots. As she had nothing but Mrs. Bellamy’s afternoon dress with which to compare her wardrobe, she 75

could not construct in her mind any new costume fitting to such an occasion. Her coquetry had not before been aroused. George did not care what she wore. “You’re all right in anything,” she could hear him say.

No, she didn’t believe she was all right. Mr. McAllister was, though. How elegantly he was dressed! His suit, his cravat, his hat and cane and gloves! She was astonished at the vividness with which his image came to her. He seemed to stand there smiling at her. It made her uneasy to think of him so clearly. George dressed nicer than most men, she had thought, but beside Mr. McAllister—why, he looked—he looked common! The word was growing to be very useful to her.

After a little the effect of the open air and the excitement overcame her reflections. She grew drowsy and fell into a light sleep. Her subjective self, more keen and sensitive than her objective, was released, and she dreamed, for a rare thing, dream after dream. Strange, unrestful visions. Mr. McAllister was wound in and out of them, tangled in their maze. She was trying to run away from him. He was beside her, and she was trying to push him away. Out of the indistinct and broken figures of sleep he became clearly defined—he put his arm about her and kissed her. As Gertrude felt the unwonted and confusing touch on her lips—the confusion of her senses—she sprang up with a cry. There was some one in the room.

“Don’t be scared, Gerty; it’s only me.”

“Oh!” she shuddered. “How you frightened me, George! What did you do it for?”

He turned up the light.

“Why, I couldn’t find you in our room or the spare room, so I came in here. Fell asleep waiting for me, did you?”

He stood there, tired and grimy, his hair mussed, his collar lacking its freshness.

“Well, you frightened me like anything,” she said, petulantly. “What did you do? Did you shake me?”

“No, I didn’t—I kissed you.”

She got up without reply and went past him into the spare room.

Warrener said nothing until his preparations for the night were made, then calling out: “Aren’t you coming to bed, Gertrude?” he went to the spare-room door. It was locked.

Used to little petulant exhibitions of temper whose pricks he had felt with no serious wound, tired out and rendered indifferent by the unremitting brain and nerve tension of his life, Warrener yielded passively, and, going into the other room with a sigh of fatigue, sought his deserted bed.

TO BE CONTINUED.

OCTOBER

IN trails of fire across the land
October flings with lavish hand
The glowing bittersweet.

With gems and gold the trees are brave,
While spices that the East might crave
Float up beneath my feet.

ROSALIE ARTHUR.

THE Dancing Assemblies of Philadelphia and the St. Cecilia Society of Charleston, South Carolina, are the two oldest subscription balls in the world. Their invitations for this winter mark three centuries in which the elect of the Quaker and the Huguenot cities have been invited to dance and to pay the fiddler.

The South Carolinians contend that their famous dance is older than the Philadelphia one. Both began in the middle of the eighteenth century, and the invitations went out through the rest of the century, the whole of the nineteenth, and through a half decade of the twentieth century.

The exact date of the first St. Cecilia is not quite authenticated, because the great fire which swept over Charleston in 1865 destroyed St. Andrew's Hall, where the records of this dance were kept. The flames also melted the magnificent silver that had belonged to the society for over a hundred years.

The date of the first Dancing Assembly of Philadelphia is precisely fixed as 1749.

It is remarkable that two such exclusive and elective balls, bound by such rigid rules, and so opposed to new members, should exist so long in the whirling change of American life.

In Europe limited subscription balls have not continued. Almach's in London was the most famous, but it was swept out of existence by the rising tide of wealth and new people.

The Patriarchs' of New York, while being governed by the same rules, and of the same character as these two existing balls, was not of great age, and was abandoned years ago without a murmur by a society that had outgrown anything so provincial as the subscription ball.

The St. Cecilia Society has continued its dances since the beginning, but the Philadelphia Assemblies were discontinued through the Civil War.

Many have prophesied the dissolution of both societies, but no one has seriously considered it. That these two balls continue to exist under the present status of society, with its moneyed kings buying admission everywhere, is a curious and contradictory phase of American life.

The fact that it is as difficult to enter each of them now as it was in the latter half of the eighteenth century is never comprehended by the newly rich or by the other millions of Americans who have not come in contact with the aristocratic exclusiveness of these two social institutions.

The St. Cecilia is more exclusive than the Assemblies for the reason that Charleston has had her social lines arranged since the first century of her existence. Wealth, power, genius, ambition, in a great horde are not knocking at the doors of that ultra-refined Carolina city for admission; but in a great city like Philadelphia unknown men become captains of industry overnight, and their wives wail for admission into the most fashionable function.

Tales that are told in broad social centers like New York, London and Berlin, of the exclusiveness of these two dances, are laughed at as the exaggerations of those with a gift greater for narrative than for fact.

In Charleston, when the St. Cecilia was begun, many years before the Revolution, the first subscription list almost settled the question of admission for the following centuries. On it were names more powerful in the seats of the nation's mighty then than now.

Many were of Huguenot origin, others of the first English blood. Among the managers were signers of the Declaration of Independence, and names which still govern the social register of to-day in Carolina, such as Ravenel, Prioleau, Pringle, Drayton, Rhett, Huger, Middleton, Fraser, Legare, Porcher, Miles, Calhoun and Pinckney.

These are not even a quarter of the names that before and after the Revolution were an open sesame to American and European society.

As near as possible, the sixteen managers of the St. Cecilia have borne the same name as the original managers. When one died, another of the same name was put in his place, if he could be found in the United States. No innovation has been permitted in the management regarding admission, rules or customs of this delightful ball since its inception.

The person who is not on the list of the St. Cecilia is not "in society" in Charleston, and the rest of America accepts this judgment of the arbiters as regards Carolinians.

The aristocracy of the most exclusive city in America is on that list. By strangers, it is said to be the best managed ball in America. Everything moves like clockwork, because nothing is theoretical, nothing is experimental. It was arranged in the early days of elegance, when manners were supreme.

No one tries to break the rules, which are unique. Possibly the most peculiar one is the refusal of the managers to allow women to sit outside the ballroom with men. Stairway flirtations, cozy-corner *tête-à-têtes*, are simply not allowed. The rest of the civilized world may consider these elegant, the St. Cecilia does not. From this verdict there is no appeal.

One woman, known throughout American society as one of the potential leaders of the smart Newport set, thought herself above the traditions of the Carolina ball. She was a guest at this dance when in Charleston, and began the evening by sitting out dances in secluded corners outside the ballroom. Comment ran rife. The sixteen managers consulted together. The president, a man of great manner and unfailing elegance, took upon himself the duty to correct the New York woman.

Finding her in a secluded corner, as usual, he kindly informed her of the comment she brought upon herself by breaking the best-known rule of the society. She was inclined to be ungracious about it, and intimated that the managers were old fogies, and that any ball with such a tradition would be unbearable.

“It is done in London and New York,” she defiantly said.

“But not in Charleston, madam,” answered the president, as he offered her his arm, which he never removed until she took it. He then led her back to the ballroom and offered her a chair.

The St. Cecilia gives three balls each winter, and the men subscribers pay the expenses. It would be impossible to make them understand or approve of the method of the Philadelphia Assemblies, which charge women subscribers the full price of the ticket. In Charleston this would be considered not only ungallant, but, frankly, an exhibition of inferior breeding.

It is unlike a Southern ball in the fact that the young women arrive, enter the ballroom and return home with chaperons. No other method is considered among society people in Northern cities, where girls are not allowed to go alone with men to any place of entertainment, but in Southern cities this rule is transgressed with the full approval of society.

The reason for this is easily explained. Southern cities are small, and the aristocratic community really goes 78
together to any social function, and there is no reason for surrounding a young girl with the conventions necessary in a city of millions of people and miles of crowded streets.

Before each dance the orchestra gives the signal for every girl to return to her chaperon. She cannot leave the man with whom she is talking to join the man to whom she is promised the next dance. This partner must go to her chaperon and await her return.

It is there he must claim the engagement. This is not optional. It is imperative. It would be considered the greatest breach of good behavior not to do it. In truth, no one thinks of its being unique, or of not doing it instinctively, because it is a tradition that has governed the dance since before the Revolution.

Surely there is not a man in the world who does not see its advantages. It prevents the possibility of being cornered with a girl through two or three dances, or being compelled to find her a partner in order to free himself to dance with some one else. In the slang of the day, it saves the man from being “stuck.”

The instant the orchestra begins this preliminary canter to the dance, every couple rises, and each girl expects her escort to leave her the moment she reaches her chaperon. For him to remain would be an exhibition of social awkwardness. A man can make as many engagements on one girl’s card as she will let him, but they must not follow each other.

Dozens of men have sighed for this rule at other balls, but so far the St. Cecilia is the only one that had the courage to start it and the conviction to retain it.

Chaperons sit around the dancing floor on a slight platform on which are comfortable chairs. As all the girls return before each dance—not after it, mind you—the women rise to receive them.

The young women make supper engagements for the balls as the Northern girls do.

The president always leads the march to supper with the newest bride. Supper is served promptly at midnight, and the ball opens at the early hour of nine o’clock. The men arrive earlier, for the social conditions are such in the South that there are more men than women, and if they indulge in the foolish Eastern habit of arriving just before midnight, they haven’t a chance of finding a single partner through the evening.

The society owns its present napery and silver, which it bought with the first ready money that came in after the desperate financial straits of the terrible reconstruction.

It is as handsome as their splendid plate of antebellum days, which was destroyed by fire.

Both silver and napery bear the monogram of the society, and the linen was especially woven in Ireland. This gives the table an aristocratic air impossible when supper and silver are left to caterers.

The cook who prepares the supper is a gingerbread-colored genius. His cooking of wild duck still brings water to the mouths of those who have been asked to the feast.

The stranger might notice that the managers and a few older men are absent for some time after the guests have returned from supper to the ballroom for the two round dances. If they investigated they would find that the chosen few were regaling themselves with supper made up of even more epicurean dishes and rarer wines than the many had enjoyed.

This is the time for the colored cook to prove what he can do. Many a *bonne bouche* is served that goes into gastronomic history.

The most exciting moment of the supper room is the scramble of the men for a sugar figure which is placed on the top of a huge fancy structure of spun sugar. Each man tries to secure this souvenir for his partner.

No matter how large the list of the St. Cecilia has grown, the invitations always have been delivered by hand. This custom is a tradition that has come down since the days before a mail service was ever thought of. As 79
all other traditions were kept up, so was this.

Edmund is the name of the darky who possibly for half a century has delivered these invitations from door to door. He has been almost as important as the St. Cecilia. He is a social register for Charleston “quality.” He is as proud of his descent, his position and his social superiority as though his ancestors had landed in the bay

under the sturdy Lion of St. George or the Flying Fleur-de-Lys in the seventeenth century.

The society has never permitted the german to be danced at this ball, although it was introduced in other Southern cities several years before the Civil War. This is a prejudice well known to the Charlestonian, and ignorance of it once tripped up a social aspirant who talked too much.

A certain man of wealth made many an inducement for those in and out of power to have him invited as a guest to one of these balls while he was an usher at a fashionable wedding in Charleston. He did not succeed, but that did not prevent his talking glibly in his own city of the charm and defects of the St. Cecilia as though he had been there. A Charleston girl visiting in that city stood his criticism of her beloved St. Cecilia until he spoke of the *cotillon*.

"Strange," she interrupted, "that you should have danced a german there. No set of managers has allowed this in one hundred and sixty years."

During the hardships of the Civil War and privations of the reconstruction the men abandoned dress suits for these dances. They wore what they could find. Purple and fine linen had disappeared, and if the men who hadn't patched gray uniforms could get whole suits of unbleached Macon Mills cloth, with buttons of gourd seeds in some cases, they were gay about it.

They danced as eagerly as they fought, and tripped the measures of the quadrille as cheerily as they charged under the stimulus of the rebel yell.

They carried their swords at their sides and their hearts on their sleeves, and as willingly offered their sentiments to the prettiest girl as they did their bodies to Federal bullets.

A part of the rare charm of the St. Cecilia dances lies in the presence of the grandmothers and grandfathers of the young set. Delightful old people are present who do not attend other entertainments. What would the St. Cecilians do without Mr. Smith? "Turkey-tail Smith," as he has been called for decades; a nickname to which he does not object. Genial and kindly, he is a part of the atmosphere, always fanning himself and his partner with a turkey-tail fan.

Many a lovely bride treasures his gift of such a fan. Sad, sad the ignorance of the East and West where the people know not what love and laughter, what limpid eyes and charming mouths, are suggested by the turkey-tail fan of Dixie.

It is natural that around the Philadelphia Assemblies there should have gathered an atmosphere of anecdote. Its exclusiveness is so well known that it is an honor for the man of millions to belong to it, and his efforts, vain or successful, to enter this social sanctuary, have given the elect many a happy moment.

When the demure little group of worldlings gathered together at Hamilton's Wharf to dance, they had no idea of the sorrow, the heartaches, the Titanic struggles, they were bequeathing to posterity.

In 1749 a few married men and fewer unmarried beaux subscribed forty shillings apiece for a series of dances to take place every Thursday night during the winter. In those early days the men paid all the expenses, and each subscriber had the privilege of taking some lady to each dance. Charming belles of the day went down to the wharf on the Delaware River on horseback, with riding habits over evening gowns.

The dancing began promptly at six o'clock and ended at eleven. The invitations were printed on the backs of playing cards, as these were the commonest bits of pasteboard in the Colonies. With the first Assembly distinct social lines were drawn, but, of course, nothing could equal or compare with the rigid rules that have governed the Assemblies for the last century, which, if they were not taken so seriously, might be absurd.

In those days no mechanic or tradesman of any line of work was allowed to be a subscriber; and no young man was allowed to bring a young lady out of the prescribed set.

After the Revolution an exceedingly keen social blow was given these exclusive little dances by President George Washington.

The Virginian, whose blood was of the finest in the land, was invited to dance at this Assembly on the same night that he was also invited to a dance given by the tradespeople. He chose the latter, and led the minuet with one of its prettiest young women.

A premium was put upon promptness in these old days by the managers, who gave to the women arriving first the distinction of dancing in the opening set. Those who came afterward were put in the second set, and so on.

They had another plan of letting the women draw numbers and dance in the sets which corresponded to the number they held. This was an unhappy way to manage a ball. Historians of the city life tell us that both of these customs were broken up through the rebellion of lovely young Polly Riche, who, with the man of her choice, insisted on dancing in any set she pleased.

The managers protested, but the young men sided with her, and the result was that the Assembly took on more freedom and, therefore, more pleasure.

These little dances had their serious troubles even then. The Quakers had nothing to do with them, of course, but did not make any serious comment upon them. Presbyterians loudly disapproved, but the Episcopalians, even the clergy, lent not only tolerance, but cordial indorsement.

The tiny list of subscribers has reached nearly a thousand in the twentieth century. Instead of the little room lit by wax candles on the Delaware River, and possibly filled with the fruity and salty odors from merchants' ships, the dancers now gather in the gorgeous salons of the great new Bellevue Stratford Hotel. Instead of a few fiddlers, there is one of the greatest dancing orchestras in America. Instead of beginning at six o'clock and ending at midnight, the ball begins at twelve o'clock and ends at dawn.

It may be of interest to those who care for the cakes and ale to read the comparison between the "refreshments" served then and now.

In 1749 and throughout the next decade the supper consisted of nine shillings' worth of milk biscuit and five gallons of rum, added to two hundred limes for a punch. And, mind you, this punch was served to only a few people.

The supper served this last winter was as follows:

CHAUD
Bonne Bouche Assembly
Gumbo Passe
Terrapin
Poulet de Grain Supérieur
Pommes de Terre Nouvelles Rissoles
Jambon de Virginie
———
FROID
Chaufroix de Grouse
Cœur de Laitue
Filet de Bœuf
Salade de Chapon
———
Pudding Montrose
Croquants Marrons Glacé
Bonbons
Café

Instead of forty shillings for eighteen dances, each subscriber now pays ten dollars for two. These two balls are given after New Year's and before Lent, and because of their exclusiveness, remain the most unique function in Philadelphia life.

Old families who take admission into the Assemblies as a matter of course will tell you how stupid they are, how tiresome, how foolish the rules of admission are, and that really everybody can get in now; but you would almost have to take their own invitations away over their dead bodies.

As in Charleston, one sees at these balls men and women who rarely put on evening clothes except for these affairs. It is a witticism attributed to the dashing captain of the First City Troop of Philadelphia that when asked why he didn't like the Assemblies, he responded: "I never could stand the smell of camphor and tar balls." 81

If the rules were always consistently kept, there would not be such a happy fund of anecdote around the Assemblies. The five managers, who are called "czars" by the irreverent, do their best through the decades to use judgment and consistency for the admission of new members, but it is also true that some "queer" people have been admitted and that some of the most delightful, with pedigrees as old as the hills, have been kept out.

New rules have been constantly made in the attempt to meet new emergencies. Everything tends to the same aim, which is to keep out all new members except the children of parents who are already subscribers. And it is also true that peculiar rules, which in many cases are only known to the "czars" themselves, are made as an excuse to drop those who for certain reasons may not be considered desirable.

The inner Philadelphian will tell you that a number of "peculiar" people got in about fifteen years ago, when there was a year of laxity regarding admission. It was just after this epoch that some of the most influential financial powers in social life resigned from the management because they frankly said they could not withstand the pressure brought upon them by men closely associated with them in business who wanted invitations for their wives.

Most of these men who clamored for membership threatened to "squeeze" the managers of the Assemblies unless they could "pull the ropes" for these admission cards.

Even now there are many embarrassing situations between men of millions and poor men of social power. It is known that ambitious millionaires have gotten young men clerkships in their offices and then held over their heads dismissal or raise of salary according to their failure or success in obtaining for their wives and daughters the coveted prize.

Scandal after scandal has arisen in this way, and dozens of men have felt too nervous over such gossip to be seen much with their superiors in wealth who are well-known social climbers.

The newcomers are usually the most blatant about the rules and the traditions of the Assemblies. A certain couple in Philadelphia, who have lived much in the great centers of Europe and been presented at foreign courts, have been embittered for two decades because of the refusal of a succession of "czars" to allow them the privilege of the Assemblies.

Each new batch of managers were deftly and luxuriously entertained by the millionaire couple. Their palates were tickled, their financial interests promoted by subtle methods. But all was of no avail until a near relative of the couple, a man of national power, arrived home, bearing in his official cornucopia gifts for younger sons. In return, his relatives were finally invited to become members of the Assemblies.

At the first ball the lady went to the man in charge of the supper room, who was entirely new to the traditions of this dance, and between them they reserved a table.

In true hotel fashion he tipped the chairs over on a round table in the supper room. When two of the managers went to look over the arrangements an hour before supper, they found the chairs in this position. There was an indignant colloquy, and the head man was ordered never to do it again. But as his bribe was probably worth while, he fixed it so that when the grand march was over and the guests had arrived in the supper room, the newcomers were at once placed at the table for which they paid, although dozens of people

who had belonged to the Assemblies as a matter of course had to await their chances.

Another story is told of this same couple. On their entrance to the ballroom, at their first appearance, they saw another couple, also from up the State, who were their rivals for exclusive Philadelphia favor, and also possessed of millions. 82

Putting up her lorgnon, the lady remarked in a voice that could well be heard by the other couple: “How in the world did those people get here?”

The managers were fearful of dozens of intruders finding their way into the social sanctuary this winter, when the balls were transferred to the magnificent Bellevue Stratford, instead of being held in the old Academy of Music. A hotel has a dozen entrances, and they feared the “unwashed” might secure an entrance into the ballroom, or, what was worse, go into one of the boxes that surrounded the dancing floor and look on. This being suggested, there was tremendous commotion and confusion among the elect. Orders were given right and left, and the tortures of the Inquisition promised the doorkeeper if such a thing happened.

A certain well-known couple who are anxious not to mix with those who do not belong to the Assembly set were among the most ardent in their endeavors to impress upon all men that no strangers should be allowed through any entrance to boxes. The lady, wishing to see the scene from an elevated position, went up to one of the boxes during the ball and sat slightly back to get a commanding view, so she was not recognized at the distance. Suddenly she was discovered by the managers. Her husband was among the chief of those who insisted that peremptory action must be taken. The doorman was sent to eject her from the box or ask for her passport. He went with great hesitation, for the duty was not a pleasant one. To give him courage the husband of the lady followed, and he entered the box just as the colored man was ejecting his wife!

The five managers who are at the head of these balls do not assume the personal responsibility for the guests’ pleasure as do the sixteen managers of the St. Cecilia.

There is no one person of any especial force or command who is looked up to for detail.

When the late Ward McAllister, of New York, creator of the “Four Hundred,” which, among other trivialities, gave him fame, was a guest at one of the Assemblies, he was as pompous as usual and quite interested in the social mechanism of this famous ball, the like of which he had tried to create in the Patriarchs’, but couldn’t succeed.

He was walking with one of the well-known wits of Philadelphia, who was a power in Assembly affairs.

“I would like to meet the man at the head of everything,” said Mr. McAllister; “the one, you know, who has charge of the details. The Patriarchs have such a man.” He referred to himself, of course. “And I suppose there must be some one here who really takes charge, don’t you know. Have I met him? You have such a one, I suppose?”

“Oh, yes,” answered his companion; “I think I know whom you mean. We have such a man. It saves us all the trouble of detail. He is Holland, the colored caterer. He is out in the supper room now.”

Mr. McAllister was more fortunate in getting into the Assemblies than some other people who come from New York’s most distinguished families. An incident illustrates the extreme indifference to any rules outside of their own that the managers of the Assemblies have.

A beautiful Philadelphia girl was about to be married to the son of one of New York’s social leaders. The mother of the bride-elect was one of the most exclusive and aristocratic social figures in Philadelphia. Three days before the ball was given she was in New York at some of the pre-nuptial festivities, and when her prospective son-in-law’s family became interested in her stories of the Assemblies and expressed a desire to see such a ball, she cordially invited them over.

Eight of them came, with maids, valets and trunks of finery. The Philadelphia hostess wrote a note to one of the managers, asking for invitations, as these courtesies are extended to a few strangers each year who are the guests of a subscriber. The lady’s request was politely but firmly declined. She and her husband were amazed, indignant and puzzled. In all her experience as an exclusive society leader, she had never been “turned down” before. For generations, on both her own and her husband’s side, members of their families had served as managers of the Assemblies. Her husband went at once to his intimate friends on the committee and explained the situation. It was not necessary to explain who the New Yorkers were, for they also were among the exclusive families in America. 83

Nothing had any effect. Persuasion won over four of the managers by nightfall, but one remained obdurate, and one black ball is sufficient to veto anything.

The eight New Yorkers repacked their finery and returned home, absolutely turned down like the merest social adventurers by men who wouldn’t break a rule in order to be courteous.

And the sole reason of it all was this: The list of guests had closed on a fixed date, and no emergency could reopen it. The request was presented too late.

It is not against the rules to invite strangers, but they can’t be invited offhand. It would be like bestowing the Order of the Knight of the Garter casually. Each name presented by a subscriber must be investigated by the five managers, and then voted upon. The subscriber must guarantee to the committee that the stranger is not living in Philadelphia, or, if so, that the period of residence has not extended over two years. Philadelphians who are born and have lived here for generations, who go intimately with the smartest set, are declined admission while they are here, because their ancestors were not subscribers, but all they have to do is to move away for a year to any other city, and their friends here can get them invitations at once as “strangers.”

A woman who is not a subscriber may become one if she marries a subscriber. If she is a subscriber when unmarried and weds a man who is not a subscriber, she must forfeit the privilege of going, and not one of her children can be admitted, except a daughter who remarries into the subscribing set.

An outsider who can prove direct descent from an original subscriber and then has a “pull” with the

managers can be admitted for membership. In the old days a man who married a woman subscriber could share her honors and go with her. The custom prevailed until one of the most popular girls in the Assembly married a man who, while personally liked, belonged to an ordinary family, whose financial ways had not been approved by Philadelphians for decades. The bridegroom came to the ball with his bride, because a rule was a rule; so the managers met and abolished the rule, but not the man. The groom, however, was not one of the strugglers who want to kick down other climbers. He is a man of humor as well as good sense, and he convulsed those who laugh at the pretensions of the Assemblies by his response to a discussion regarding the admission of another man who was not of the elect.

"Why can't *he* get in?" said the groom. "I'm in."

Unfortunately for the managers, this new rule, which seemed so satisfactory, gave them a bad quarter of an hour for the next ball. The daughter of the chief and most distinguished manager married a man who was not a subscriber. The couple were at once refused an invitation for the next Assembly. This was quite too much for the father, who was willing to turn down some one else, but one of his own family—why—such a thing was never heard of. And so, in confusion and dismay, the managers had to secretly break their new rule, and invite this bride and groom, who have been going ever since.

When a male scion of one of the really great families married the daughter of an all-too-well-known sporting man, he and his wife were refused a subscription to the following balls.

"If he can't go, neither can we," wrote one hundred members of his family. This was too much for the managers again, and they meekly consented to let him enter.

When a girl who has not been able to go, no matter how charming and attractive she is, marries a subscriber, the one comment that sweeps over the church is: "Well, she can go to the Assemblies now."

One mother, who all of her life had been ruled by this social law, wept when her daughter told her that she was going to marry a man out of the list. The girl was a healthy, straightforward, American type, who did everything athletic and copied the field and turf when she talked. The man she was to marry had every desirable quality, except his name on the Golden Book.

"You will break my heart by such a marriage," wailed the mother; "the first of all our family to be denied the Assemblies. You must give this man up."

"Give up a bully man for a stupid ball? Well, I guess not," was the final answer of the frank daughter. And she married the man.

One of the momentous questions that cost the managers sleepless nights was a question of ancestors, caused by two débutantes. They were children of a couple who had married the second time. One, the wife's daughter, was by a former husband, who didn't belong to the Assemblies. The other was a daughter of the husband by a first wife, both of whom belonged to the Assemblies. The girls had been brought up together from childhood, and when they came out in society, the father asked for their invitations together. This precipitated one of the most momentous emergencies that the managers ever had to meet. This exact question had never come before the Assembly. All kinds of advice, social and legal, were asked, and the question convulsed society. Everyone debated it, and everyone took sides. After many meetings by the managers, the decision was reached that the stepdaughter of the father couldn't be invited, but that the stepdaughter of the mother could.

And such a hold have the rules of the Assembly on Philadelphians, that nothing about this was considered unusual. Had it been a question of admittance by descent into the House of Peers, it couldn't have been more important.

But if it were not for the peculiarity of these rules and customs which govern the two oldest balls in the world, it is doubtful if they would have become famous, or if they would have preserved, through the centuries, their unique charm, their peculiar social aroma.

We are a restless, easily wearied, ever-changing people. It is delightful to know that in the hurly-burly these two social affairs live out the traditions of our ancestors.

May they always copy their manners!

COUPLETS

’TIS strange that Youth himself the task would set
To learn the very things Age would forget!

We labor to possess a world of things,
And lose them through the toil their getting brings.

Who would but hold the earth in sober wit
Must never try to hold too much of it.

LEE FAIRCHILD.

THE house stood in the corner of a quiet square, a little south and west of the Green Park, and the room in which most of his evenings were spent was on the balcony floor. The balconies had blossomed. They burst in a wreath of color round the grim quadrangle in festal imitation of the spring, when the newer beauties and the May buds were coming out; but before Jim South's windows were only a few green shrubs, which died hard through the summer. He always admired his neighbors' decorations, without noticing the deficiencies of his own; yet that garland round the old dark fronts often seemed to him like roses on a faded face; there lurked a sort of shame behind the sweetness; it was almost a trifling with age.

The square was a kind of back eddy to the Palace Road, and held a strained hum from the traffic round it. The silence, which raised the rents, had attracted South; he used more of it, he said, than most of those who paid them, farming it himself.

He meant that he was less often an absentee than those about him, but his phrase suggested an alternative of occupation which did not exist; for never was a man with less of harness on his back. He lived solely for his own amusement; cropping life's greenness in a slow, easy, ruminant fashion, and on a modest income. A cousin was his nearest relative.

He had a fire this evening, though half May was past, and his book had dropped from his hand, when the man who was owner, factotum and, with his wife, comptroller to that small household of bachelors, announced:

"Miss Rosamond Merlin!"

It was a girl who entered; a girl with a woman's buoyant movement and pose; a woman with a girl's footfall. She wore a cloak which was somewhat oppressively magnificent, and held out a hand to South, laughing, as he rose.

"Surprised?"

"Delighted!" he said.

She sighed as she dropped into his seat.

"I don't suppose you are."

He pushed a chair to the further side of the fireplace, and watched, while she drew off slowly her long gloves, with the flicker of curiosity which was always lambent on his face. It was like a color there.

The girl bent down, and spread out her arms to the glow. She let them fall on the front of her skirt, pressing it back from the little pink and gold slippers on the grate stone.

"What a man you are for fires!" she said.

"I like warmth."

"In coals," was her retort.

She looked up at him sideways, smiling.

"Why don't you ask to see my frock?"

"Because I want to," he said.

Her eyes brimmed with unbelief.

"You know you don't care tuppence," she said; but she threw the cloak at last from her shoulders, and leaned back in the chair, drooping an admiring eye. She was on her way to the great costume ball of the season, and forced from South a hazard at her masquerade.

"Apple blossom?" he ventured, and was complimented.

"Ah, you should see it standing up; but you're not worth that. Look there!"

She spread out the phantom of a fan, shaped and painted as a tuft of its tinted bloom.

"Veynes gave it me," she said.

"Oh, did he?"

"Ye-es, he did. Are you sorry for Veynes?"

"I!—why?"

"Oh, do be sensible!—you're not that much of a fool;—because I've got him, or he's got me, whichever you like. Don't you think it's bad for him?"

"It might be worse," South said.

"Thank you. It might, you know; 'specially with Veynes. Oh, I say, do you mind my coming here?"

"I can mind nothing else for days," he laughed. "Why?"

"I thought your man looked a sort of piled-up disapproval when he let me in."

"For us all?"

"Yes; and for himself."

“For himself! Why?”

“Oh, he’s probably seen my face too often in shop windows to care to see it here. You’re all deadly respectable, aren’t you?”

“The whole square is; we’ve taken life policies in propriety. Money, art and titles, and all of it married.”

She gave a little wince at that, but asked if he would offer her some coffee. South was famous in a small way for making it, and his friends, when out of humor with the world, would come and watch the brown liquid bubble through the valves of some strange machine of copper and nacreous glass he had picked up in the East, and regain their “values” over a cup.

He pushed a hanging kettle across the flame, and knelt down by his visitor to stir the fire.

“Turkish?” he inquired.

“That’s the gritty stuff, isn’t it? No, the other; and black. Why is your hair so long?”

“Is it? I’ve forgotten it. What is this on your shoe?”

“The gold?”

“Yes.”

“Letters.”

“What?”

“R. E. V.”

“A monogram?”

“Yes.”

“Whose?”

“Nobody’s.”

She swept her train across her little feet and laughed at him.

“Are you learning to be inquisitive?” she inquired.

South did not say. He lifted the kettle from its crutch, and set the *cafetière* in action.

Rosamond screwed her chair round to the table, and spread her arms upon it, resting her cheek on one of them to watch his proceedings.

“Why do you want to know?” she asked, presently.

The bubbles in the dim glass tubes ran to and fro half a minute before he replied.

“To know what?”

“About my slippers.”

“Oh, curiosity,” he shrugged.

She tilted her face further over on her white forearm, and her eyes came round to his.

“I thought you hadn’t any?” she said.

His “Only about trifles” was meant unkindly; but she refused to take offense.

“I suppose that’s a compliment to my number threes,” she smiled; “so I’d explain the letters on them if I could; but they came from Veynes with the fan, so I can only guess—perhaps they stand for the motto of his house.”

“Probably,” he assented, grimly. “*Regina ex vulgo*, or something of the sort. Are you going to adopt it?”

“To adopt what?”

“The motto of his house.”

She rose without replying, and walked to an antique mirror which covered a corner of the room. She faced it with a sigh of satisfaction, and then turned slowly round upon her toes till her shoulders were reflected. Her head was flung back out of the lamp light which yellowed her breast, and the gold of her coiled hair floated over her in the darkness like a misty moon.

She stood, poised doubtfully for some time, pinching her little waist downward with both hands.

“Do you think it shows too much?” she inquired, presently, without moving.

South looked up from the table.

“For what?” he said.

“For what do you mean?”

“For my taste, or for yours, or for Veynes’, or for modesty—or what?”

“For yours, if you like.”

“For mine, yes! I don’t mean that I see too much of you, but it’s so tremendously announced; it’s squeezed into one’s eye.”

“And for modesty?”

“Oh, modesty doesn’t depend on clothes, any more than purity did on fig leaves. Eve only began to sew when she had lost hers. Come and drink your coffee.”

She came, after some further observation, and sipped in silence from the cup he handed her. He had a dozen questions on his tongue, but could not or would not put them; the girl seemed too independent. He mentioned finally the current report that they were to see her in the new piece at the Variety.

“Well, you’re not,” she said. “It’s a dancing part, and I’m going to *act* when I go back to the boards.”

“Why?”

“Because I can.”

“That would seem to be as good a reason the other way.”

“*You* know,” she scoffed.

“I do; I saw you three times.”

“Three!—some men saw me thirty.”

“I dare say. I couldn’t afford it.”

“The price of a seat?”

“No, the solace of one; the one you’re in; it’s almost a housewife in its economies.”

“Economies?”

“Yes, economies of content. It guarantees *that* while I stay in its arms. I think I buy it cheap.”

“Content! I wouldn’t take it as a gift; it’s a despair with a trousseau, a sort of bridal and sanctified kind of funk. Oh, content’s a miserable thing.”

South laughed.

“Well,” he said, “it’s not often offered with a ring. Will you take another cup?”

She pushed hers toward him and asked if he had any brandy in the house.

South nodded at a liquor stand, but suggested *crème de menthe*.

“It’s not for me,” she explained, “but for my driver—he’s got an awful cough; I’ve been listening to it up here all the time. Could you send him a glass?”

South laid his hand on the bell.

“What driver?” he said.

“The man on my hansom; he’s been waiting for me.”

“Why do you keep him?”

“I don’t. Veynes does.”

“Is Veynes in the cab?”

“No, no, silly!—it’s Veynes’ hansom; he sent it round for me. The driver of Veynes’ hansom has a cough, you have some brandy, and I want you to send it down by your man to the driver, that his cough may be stayed. Now do you understand?”

“No, I do not,” he said; but he did as she desired.

“I suppose that is a fresh indiscretion,” she remarked, as the man retired.

“I suppose it is,” he replied, “but the freshness need not count for much among so many. Is Veynes coming here for you?”

“Mercy, no!” she laughed. “He wouldn’t quite understand it; it doesn’t occur to him that a girl who kicks her skirts about at so much a week can ever want anything of a man but flattery and new frocks. A good deal of dullness goes with a title, you know.”

“If by dullness you mean bewilderment, I might be a duke. Will you explain?”

“Why I’m here?”

“Oh, no, I understand that; you’ve tried to make me envy Tantalus before; but why you’ve forgotten your prudence and your promises—I used to believe in both—and what has become of your chaperon; and how deep Lord Veynes is in it.”

She left all but the last question unanswered, and said, looking from him toward the fire:

“He wants me to marry him.”

She missed the quick spring of his eyes to her face, but she met them the next moment.

“Am I to congratulate you?” he inquired.

“You might have said *him*,” she remarked; “however, it’s good of you not to jump—but you always could sit still. I know you’re saying something nasty inside of you; mayn’t I hear it?”

“I don’t think I am,” he replied. “I was wondering precisely where I came in?”

“You come in here,” she laughed, with halting mirth; “you’re the oracle; you roll out the future in a hollow voice; you say what you think.”

He shook his head.

“No, I forgot,” she ran on, “you never do; you say what you think some one else will think of what you wouldn’t say if you thought it; isn’t that it? You explained it to me once, but it wasn’t clear. Well, say that! Say something! You’ve known Veynes longer than I have; say he’s not good enough for me!”

“Oh, that’s understood,” he murmured.

“By Veynes?”

“By Veynes just at present, probably. I meant by you and me.”

“Oh, you!” she flouted. “You mightn’t think yourself good enough.”

It was a curious challenge for a man’s matrimonial amen. The woman thirsting for love and eager to drink it; the man thirsty and afraid. She did not see the sudden change in his eyes, as though a flame went through them. She was looking the other way. But she heard the parry of his low “I should not” to her thrust. It pierced like the white pinch of frost, it ran cold even into her voice.

“Ah, you’re too modest,” she rallied, so briskly that he did not notice the shiver in her throat. “Besides, you’re rather cowed by my frock; but how about the family?”

“Veynes’?”

“Yes.”

“There’s only Lord Egham.”

“Only Lord Egham! No sisters, mothers, aunts—nothing? Oh, come, that’s better. And what is he like?”

“He’s a dear old gentleman who dotes on his son.”

“Then he’d take me badly?”

“I fancy so.”

“Why?”

“Ah, that’s a big question. Perhaps his education was defective.”

“I dare say. He’s an earl, isn’t he?”

“Yes, the Earl of Egham, sits as Viscount Alderly.”

“I see; and some day I might be a countess?”

“You might.”

“That’s a bribe; I like the word awfully; it sounds *good*; it’s like a stare to say it—the countess!—but I fancy it would be rather dreadful being one—that is, if you weren’t born to it—in the cast all along, don’t you know. Of course, then you could do what you liked; but if you’d only been made one, and made from a dancing girl, you’d *have* to be proper, just to show how easy it came! And I think it would be dull,” she drawled. “What do you say?”

“Nothing,” he affirmed.

“Not even to save poor Veynes from his fate? You could save him.”

He looked slowly across at her face, which lay back idly under the yellow light, and she held her eyes squarely to his, as a maid holds a mirror to her mistress. He might search them for reflections, but he would see nothing more. In point of fact, he looked for some time without troubling their surface.

“Marry him,” he said.

“And the earl?”

“Oh, you must treat him kindly, and show him what an excellent countess you can make.”

“Shall I?”

“I fancy not. You’re too human, you see; this warm, kind world is too near your heart. The great lady has nothing there but her corset; and the world—her little cold world—at her fingers’ ends, in a descending scale of chilliness. Besides, you’re too pretty.”

“To be a countess?”

“No, to be made one. You can’t melt beauty for new molds without breaking the old, you know; something goes.”

“And yet you say—marry him.”

“Well, I won’t say it,” he replied.

She had turned her head away, and was stretching over her shoulders for her wrap.

“I’m going,” she said.

He rose to put it round her, and caught the reflection in the glass of her averted eyes. They were shining with tears.

She held out her hand, shook his shortly, and went toward the door.

“You needn’t come down,” she said, as he followed her.

“No, but I will.”

“No, you won’t; I don’t want you.”

There was something more imperative in her decree than its tone—a sob; that stopped him at the open door.

The sound of her feet ceased from the stair, the front door slammed, and he walked across to the window, waiting there till the noisy motion of her hansom ebbed into the dull roar of the streets.

He stayed even longer, and the May sky had lost its last memory of the day ere he sat down again before his dying fire.

The girl's gay audacity seemed to linger like an odor in the room; made pungent, as it were, by that sob. He had not noticed it before. Conscious audacity it was not; for she wore her beauty as a sort of decoration, the star of some regal order, which sanctioned the fine animal magnificence with which she had set the obligations of nobility behind those of good looks, and doubted if the charmed circle of coronets might not prove too dull for her endurance; putting, without a tinge of affectation, nature's creations before those of dead kings.

But it was not of her vivid exuberance that South was thinking; he had inhaled that before, and the intoxication of it was dissolved. But those sly touches of humility, too faint to be felt through the written record of her words, dropped lids, and looks, and pauses, so unlike her, pressed still as a hand upon his lifted arm. Yet he told himself he had understood them, without the compulsion of her tears.

At least he understood this: that she had thrown the weight of her beauty without avail against the ease and freedom of his unwedded days. Yet it left him with a pricking sense—not of repentance—but that repentance might confront, might even confound, him.

II.

Some five months earlier in the year Lord Veynes had returned from a voyage round the world.

It was to have completed his education, which included, besides some Greek grammar, the use of a cue, a little Cavendish and the racing calendar. He was five-and-twenty, a gentleman; dressed well, looked well and lived well; on the whole, a nice fellow, deeply attached to his father and devotedly to himself.

The former was becoming an old man, having married late in life; was short, had a stoop, a halo of whitened hair, and a face that was a mask of merriment. His kindliness and humor were bywords, and his stories always made a widening silence in a room, to which fresh listeners drifted. He would laugh at them himself, yet his laughter seemed their best part, their sincerest compliment; it was like humor itself holding its sides.

He had filled every county dignity in turn, but they made no mark on him nor he on them; he bore them dutifully, but he was glad to be rid of them; they added something to his tales, to the fullness of his humor, to the softness of his heart; perhaps to public knowledge of his incompetence. Yet he was liked none the less for his failures; his blunt honesty thrust out of them obtrusively, as an elbow through a ragged sleeve.

Veynes was the one relic of his married life, having cost his mother her life; and he was adored as things may be that are made so ruinously unique. He was a good boy, and stood a great deal of spoiling; but he had argued, naturally, his own adorableness from so much adoration, and would have honored his father's encomiums to any amount.

His home-coming had all the decoration of triumphal entries—flags, festival arches and singing children; afterward a tenant dinner, tenant humor and considerable drowsiness.

When it was all over, and the two men sat together by the log fire in the hall, which burned red splashes on the armored walls, the earl opened the subject nearest his heart—an heir. 90

"I want to see him here before I'm gone," he concluded, with a kind of ruefulness which was a part of his pathos and of his humor; "and, by George, my boy, if you don't marry soon, I will."

"Oh, I'll marry, I'll marry," laughed the other, "but you must find me the girl."

Love, however, did that, though the earl was assiduous, surrounding the young man for the betterment of his choice with half the eligible petticoats in the county; a mistake, seeing that iteration and propinquity in affairs of the heart are of more assistance than variety.

Yet it was, in the end, variety which succeeded, in the person of Miss Rosamond Merlin.

She had come to lend terpsichorean relief to an amateur performance of burlesque in the neighborhood, and her appearance transformed Veynes, in a single night, from a conscientious brigand to a distracted and distracting piece of stage furniture; though it is but fair to add he was not the only one affected; for none of his brother bandits were, when slain—while Miss Rosamond was upon the stage—as stiff as their previous rigidity had led one to expect.

Miss Merlin attended but three rehearsals; yet ere the night of the performance, Veynes had decided, as he put it, that they were made for one another—a phrase which has not, in a man's mouth, all the reciprocity that it conveys. He offered the idea to Miss Rosamond while applying some powder to her cheek.

She laughed, knocked the puff out of his hand, and ran on to the stage; but she found him awaiting her exit, deaf to cues and stage directions, in a kind of tragic calm.

"I mean it," he protested.

She widened her eyes.

"Well, mean it a little later," she said.

He took the hint and waited till, having found her some food, they were sitting in the deserted supper room, in an atmosphere of exhausted hilarity, among the ruins of the waiters.

"Have you thought it over?" he asked, impressively.

"I, no!—do I ever think anything over but a new step? Besides, such a simple little thing!"

"Simple!" he stammered.

"To say no to. Do you think I'd have the cheek to marry you?"

"Wouldn't you?" dropped the young man, feebly.

He was innocent of having conceived, still less suggested, so tremendous a contingency; indeed, her contemplation of it, even in dismissal, appeared unseemly. For he had been strictly brought up, and had added, “Thou shalt not wed the name of Veynes in vain,” to a decalogue somewhat abridged, and, as his, father put it, “edited by Debrett.”

But neither his decalogue nor his delicacy prevented him from sketching airily the insignificance of wedding symbols in an aristocratic connection when the heart was involved.

“People talk such nonsense, you know,” he said.

She smiled with engaging innocence, and he edged a little nearer to his meaning, hoping she would meet him halfway.

It was like laying a wash of color beside another which might be wet; he was horribly afraid of a smear; he thought she might have assured him, figuratively, that she would not run. But she only helped herself to another *meringue*.

He made pauses and filled the silence with his eyes; but she met them with a pensive examination through the prongs of her fork; and the smiles he fancied ambiguous seemed, reflected on her mouth, to be merely inane; so he was driven back upon words and impersonal allusiveness. He groaned, in explanation, over the austerity which would tie all love knots to a wedding ring; suggesting that some people were able to conceive of them apart.

“Couldn’t you?” he inquired.

She gleamed with malicious coquetry.

“Couldn’t and wouldn’t,” she said, decisively. “Love and marry and trust to luck, that’s my sentiment; but don’t marry if you can’t love; and don’t love if you can’t marry; and don’t do either——” 91

“Well?”

“If you think you’re going to do both.”

“Poof!” he pouted.

“Oh, no, it’s not; it’s the very sober fact. Love’s a fever, you know, and no better than most of them—contagious and malagious and infectious and—and——”

“Go on!”

“But that’s the truth; it’s carried in frocks, pretty ones; and it’s caught by touching, and it’s regular poison to breathe! Then it must be in the air, because people take it in clumps, perfect epidemics; and the best way to catch it is to let yourself get low and dumpy. When you’ve got it, the only thing to cure you is marriage—and it does generally—a ring dissolved in syrup night and morning; kind of quinine, you know; takes away the shivering and gives you a headache.”

His face was whitening with disapproval, and she burst, as she caught a glimpse of it, into a gust of laughter.

“Shocking, isn’t it?”

“Well, it’s a matter of taste,” he remarked, with a further twist of his nose, to indicate that its flavor, at least in his mouth, was nasty. It is never the hangman can joke when he is hung.

She looked at him, with her head tilted over her plate, and a slow, broad smile.

“You’ll do!” she said. “But you know even your eight pearls won’t run to quite all that—every time.”

He moved impatiently on his chair as she raised her champagne glass and peered mockingly at him across its yellow brim.

She set it down with a laugh.

“My!” she exclaimed; “what a row they are making upstairs! Come along, I believe they are dancing.”

She went up three steps at a time, but Veynes followed more slowly. He feared he was sickening for the fever.

III.

The woman’s orbit—in a civil state—is, like that of other celestial bodies, either annular or elliptic.

Those of the circle are orderly satellites, turning an eternal sameness to the attraction they patrol, and as incapable of suiting themselves to a suitor, or of varying their reflection of his passion to a man’s requirements, as of coyness with its quoted sunlight is the cold face of the moon.

And the moons are many. They rise, wax, wane; are new, old and eclipsed; pass by progressive phases of the familiar to the lean crescent of contempt, with a constancy in decrepitude—speaking amorously—which cannot only be followed, but—foretold.

And those of the ellipse? They, too, revolve, but come, enkindled, from the unknown night, torn with fantastic splendors toward their sun—drawn into him, it may be, by his spell, or past him with unsolved desires, yet bent to him still—dying out, darkened, into the empty way, spent, speedless, splendorless; a danger to orderly patrollers of an orbit, and a possible acquisition for any new system of superior attractions; being, at their ebb, but weak and idle wanderers—inconstant, easily attached; though at other times superb, imperious; yet malign portents to the thatched propriety that lives in fear of sparks.

Such divide the sex, the passive and the passionate; the reflectors and the inflamed. Men love the second, but they wed the first—moon, not comet, and they do well. For men prefer comfort to coronation, and like the

easy sense of lordship which a satellite confers; for there is something soothing to mortal vanity in centripetal rigors when oneself is the center sought; and, though men disparage the sameness which they wive, they would be but ill content with its reverse.

Veynes knew as much; or, rather, knew that as much was known. He had, morever, warning in the fate of a too recent ancestor, who, allying himself to one of the comet kind—the frame of her picture still hung empty, in 92
evicted memorial, at the court—came to unrecounted grief. So, fearing his desires, and the failure of his desires, and the outcome of either, he told himself, shaking his head with that unvalorous and how-to-perform-I-wot-not wisdom of youth, that his refined perceptions had been estranged by Miss Rosamond's too candid lack of quality. Which may have been; for our refined perceptions are so often only an injected opiate, in spite of which our heart still beats and sickens. Yet he shook his head sadly. He had his father to consider; he had the estate to consider; he had his name to consider; but, firstly and finally, he had himself. And, alas! it takes more than honor, piety and pride together to make a man forget that. And a young man in especial. For we are very practical when young, and only fight the good fight for a substantial share in the plunder; we ask what a man will *get* in exchange for his soul.

Veynes fought it, there is that to his credit; and it is pleasant to remember that, of all his obligations, duty to his father died the hardest; sheer tenderness for the old man's hopes often wringing from him a resolve to conquer passion and wed a pedigree. But the resolutions of the young are, happily, impermanent; and this kind beyond the rest, being written in acid, eats its way out—through the stuff of our wills.

So it was that, in spite of this clamoring chorus of expediencies, the small voice which claims in every man the justice of joy made itself heeded, and Miss Merlin received an offer of marriage; which, stung by South's indifference, she allowed herself to accept.

After that, of course, the deluge!—and, thinking to float it out the better on a certificate of marriage, Veynes took Miss Rosamond to the registrar.

Then, with Lady Veynes in her prettiest frock, they went down together to the court, and crossing, with a sense of diplomacy, from the station by a field path into the French garden, which lay behind the western wing of the house, Veynes left his wife and advanced alone.

He was some time gone, and the lady, tired at last of the flowers, the reflector, and the mossy sundial, and tempted by the cropped turf, turned to her ancient consolation for leisures that were too long; so that the first thing which met Veynes' eye on his return was her lithe figure, in fawn and gold, doing a little melancholy dance between the scarlet flower beds.

The sight did not sweeten his temper; it emphasized too loudly reproaches which hummed still against his ears. Even those red blossoms, which had lived in their mute livery so many years about the court, might have been too surprised to recognize, by the swift, small feet that brushed their petals, a future mistress.

As Veynes drew near, the dance became a little more flamboyant, still further ruffling him; the spaces of dainty petticoat seemed to enlarge his grievance.

"Well?" she inquired, loftily, as he approached, dropping into an attitude.

"Well," he echoed, gruffly, "you needn't fool about for the benefit of the gardeners. He won't see you."

His tone sided with the rebuff, and brought a flush of color to her face. She had been his wife only a night and a day.

"All right," she replied, simply. "I will see *him*; and meanwhile the gardeners are very welcome."

He flung himself into a seat. "Just as you please," he grunted; "only he doesn't know you're here."

She took no heed to the hint, but walked in her deliberate fashion to the edge of the lawn; then she turned and came back more slowly.

"What did you tell him?" she asked her husband.

His arms were stretched along the top of the seat, and he was staring gloomily at the house. He did not look up.

"I told him I was married. He nearly bucked out of his chair, and looked as frightened as if he'd heard I was dead. So I said: 'To an actress,' and he put his face into his hands and cried."

"What a soft!"

"Oh, anything you please! He said some other things that were a bit harder." 93

"About me?"

"About the whole sickening concern. Said I might go to the deuce my own way, but it shouldn't be through the Court; and that while he lived—which wouldn't be for long—the old place should know only its own sort of people."

"What sort is that?"

"People of birth and breeding, I suppose."

"I see! Like Lord Egglesham, for instance, who shared the honeymoon with his fond parents; or Aubrey Beauthair, who gets fuzzy before ladies. Well, I'm going to show your father what a person is like who has been neither born nor bred; I dare say it will interest him. Shall I say that you'll dine here?"

"Say what you like," he growled.

She turned again toward the long west wing of the great house, which glowed above the box hedges, warm and red with sunlight above its clinging roses.

Her heart was not so brave as her words, but it carried her past the powdered footman with the air of a

duchess, as she gave her name, though she read doubts in his curdling face as to her reception, and shared them herself. But therein she wronged a man too proud to let any woman suffer a slight in his own house; and in due time the heavily curtained library door was opened, and the earl entered and bowed.

"I am Lady Veynes," said his visitor, quietly. She felt a sudden kindness and pity for the frail, bent old man, who was still as white as his son had reported.

He bowed again.

"I was waiting in the garden when my hus—your son was in here," she went on, simply; "he came out and told me all about it. I'm very sorry. I mean I'm very sorry it is so bad for you. Your son said you'd wish him better dead. I hope you won't. He's an awfully good son; he thinks no end of you; and he's outside now tremendously cut up."

Lord Egham made no sign, but he was looking in the woman's face.

"I've never thought about it," she continued, naïvely, "but I didn't suppose there was such a difference between people as—as there seems to be. I thought if a man's wife was pure and true to him, and loved him, he got all his change—I mean all he stood to; isn't that it? You don't think so, but I didn't know that. I didn't know anything about you, you see," she explained, with warming sympathy; "you were only the Earl of Something, and it didn't seem to matter much what an earl felt; he didn't seem quite human; it really didn't seem as if he *could* feel so very much. But you see you do."

The earl bent his head gravely, but there was the ghost of a smile about his drawn lips.

"Sir," she said, with a little gesture which opened her arms and seemed pathetically to expose herself, "I am sorry to be here to trouble you; I didn't come for that. I suppose you think I was very glad to catch your son, and his title, and money, and things; but I wasn't. I didn't want them; I don't know what you do with them; but I wanted to belong somewhere. I'm all by myself, you see," with a little isolating wave of her hand, "and that's dreary enough at times, especially for a woman."

She waited a moment to allow the earl to fill the gap, but he did not. He was watching her intently.

"I came down here with my husband," she continued at length, with an air of embroidering the interval; "he didn't want me to come in to—to bother you, but I felt I must. I don't want you to fall out with him; you haven't had him back so long, I know; it seems pretty rough on you every way; but if you can't take us both on, I'll go. Of course I can't go for good, but it'll seem good enough, I dare say; I can keep out of the way, and you can have him to yourself; and you won't have to apologize to all your friends for his making a fool of himself."

There was some gentle irony in her voice, and it wavered as she concluded:

"I've been pretty lonely before, but it was never anything like this; and if I'd known how bad you'd take me I'd have stayed so."

Her nervousness and her desire for simple expression soaked her speech in a kind of sweetened slanginess, from which, usually, she was able to wring out her thoughts into very clean English. Slang was, in fact, the charcoal outline of most of her talk, but it was generally concealed by the color. The latter she supplied on this occasion in person. She was a very pretty woman, and seemed able to look her prettiest at will; the need for beauty painting it freshly on her face. She had the dancer's trick, too, of seeming to float above her anchored feet, like a butterfly with folded wings.

There were tears in her eyes, which aided the apparent sincerity in her tone, though, indeed, she was sufficiently sorry for the silent man before her to make it a very solid counterfeit of the fact; but the tears were come of disappointment and hurt pride.

However, to a man, the tear in a woman's eye is always a tear, a salt tear; and in such eyes they looked well enough, and ill enough, to warm a colder heart than was in Lord Veynes' father; for age is tenderer to beauty than youth, being a wayfarer among flowers which the other wears; besides, it sees at sundown, and lips seem redder and eyelids sadder when they face the sunset.

Lord Egham made a step forward, and offered her a seat. And Rosamond murmured to herself: "I've come to stay!"

IV.

But she had not; at least not so speedily as she supposed. She returned that evening to town with her husband, and crossed the Channel the following day for a honeymoon, which was rather endured than desired. But the earl proved, in the end, gentleman and philosopher enough—synonyms for gracious acceptance of the inevitable—to make his bow to necessity, and take fate and the prettiest lady in London on his arm.

South had heard from her twice, from Venice and Corfu; long, trivial, ill-spelt letters, lined with a secret wistfulness he had not perceived, under the brave talk of travel.

He received the second while away from town, and only learned, on his arrival in the end of October, that Lady Veynes and her husband had called some weeks earlier, and had inquired the date of his return.

He was puzzled by their presence at that time in London, and a telegram which came from the Court a few days later did not aid his enlightenment. It ran: "Please be at home this evening.—R. E. V." He had indulged in the unusual extravagance of a box at the Variety for the amusement of some country friends who were doing London in the dull season, and was most anxious to entertain them; yet he provided a substitute and an excuse without a murmur, and dined early by himself. Then, the day having been close and warm, he pushed his chair beside the roasted greenness on the balcony and sat looking down idly, in the early evening, from behind the thick stone balusters upon the square.

The sky was clear above the mulled October mist, and a few pale stars had appeared already, weak and white as city children; there was a reek of heated brick, and an odor of brown leaves drifted from the park with the damp smell of its autumn water.

The roar of traffic had died down; it was always quieter there in the fall, and a piano-organ in the Palace Road seemed to play in an exhausted air. A clatter of wheels crushed through its tune as a hansom shot round the narrow entry and rattled across the quad.

The panels clanged, and South could hear the click of small-heeled shoes upon the pavement. The pause which might cover a payment, the long wheep of the whip, the sudden clash of hoofs, the thin clang of the bell below—all seemed borne up to him with abnormal clearness.

He sat where he was till the door opened and Lady Veynes was announced; then he rose, outlined in the open window against the sky, and called, as his landlord retired, for the lamps. Rosamond walked across to the balcony and stood beside him, gazing absently into the square; then she turned her head quickly and looked up into his eyes. There was an urgent smile in hers which was almost an appeal, but his in return seemed to satisfy it, for she stole out her hand and caught his arm lightly above the elbow.

“What does it mean?” he inquired.

She looked over his shoulder as the man entered and placed a lamp on the table; and when he had retired she stepped across the room and snapped it out.

“I don’t know why you called for it,” she said. “Was it to tint the proprieties?”

“I suppose so,” he replied, regarding her, “but I’m afraid it won’t.”

“No, it won’t. I’m going to sit in your seat here by the window; pull another beside it.”

He did as he was told, and she laid her arms limply along those of the chair, leaned back and sighed.

“Don’t you know why I’m here?” she asked.

“No,” he said.

“I’m going away.”

“From what?”

“From the Court, and my husband, and his excellent father, and everything! I’m sick of it all.”

“Why?”

“Can’t you guess? Because I’m not one of them. I’m a kind of curiosity in the house; people come to stare at me, they do, really; possibly they think I’ll kick their hats off at afternoon tea, or pass them the bread and butter on my toe; I don’t know. But I don’t mind that so much, it’s the feeling that I mustn’t do these things because I can. If I was a real lady I might do anything; but because I’m not I must do nothing. Smile, sigh and say good-by; and be a pretty piece of furniture to decorate the rooms and support my husband. But I won’t. I wasn’t made on castors.”

“Well?” he smiled.

“Well, I’m going to run—on wheels!”

“Are they unkind to you?”

“No, they’re not; they’re kind, rather too kind. I mean they make you feel it’s a moral obligation to treat such an outsider humanely. Of course they can’t help it, and it’s nasty of me to mention it, but I can’t help feeling it, either, and it makes me mad. Everything does down there, from morning prayers, with half a squadron of bluey-white servants on red chairs, to the candles at ten o’clock, and to bed with what appetite you mayn’t. And I’ve *got* to do it! If I suggest anything fresh and sensible they look at me as if I were a sort of missing link. So I shut up and scream inside me and wish for something to bite. Put your hand here.”

He smiled at the sudden change, but laid his hand on the arm of her seat, and she closed her gloved fingers over it.

“Do you want it to bite?” he asked.

“No. Jim!”

“Well?”

“Do you think me a fool?”

“No; I understand.”

There was a breadth in his tone which comforted her.

“You said: Marry him,” she pleaded.

“Yes, I did; perhaps *I* was the fool; but I didn’t say ‘for three months.’”

“Three? Six!”

“Never!”

“Five, then; I *ought* to know.”

A certain sharpness in her registry seemed to give it claims to be considered calendar. South looked up at her quickly, and she flushed scarlet.

“Well, five,” he said; “hardly time for a very exhaustive study of the married state.”

“Oh, it’s not the married state,” she explained, slowly, looking out over the square. “I shouldn’t mind being married—married to a man. I’m married to a house.”

“It’s a very good house.”

“I dare say it is; but I’m not a snail, and can’t stand having it on my back;’ I wasn’t born under family bricks.”

“And what are you going to do?”

“I’m going to leave them.”

“And why did you come here?”

She turned her head and flashed a shy glance across his eyes.

“I thought you might be leaving, too.”

She looked away as she said it, and he did not immediately reply. Presently she loosened her fingers from his, and laid her hand in her lap. She broke the silence sharply.

“I don’t understand you,” she said; “why do you suppose I’ve come here, ever? Do you fancy it’s for the pleasure of a little talk? Why, I’ve gone home sometimes clinching my hands to keep from crying, and hating you fit to kill you.”

South sighed.

“Have you?” he said.

“Yes, I have! It’s horrid of me, I know, because you’ve tried to be kind, mostly; but being kind is worse than anything, sometimes.”

She turned toward him, and through the shadow upon her face her eyes glowed molten, as lead grows red in the ladle.

“Well,” he said, “you may forgive me; I haven’t tried to be kind. I thought all the kindness on the other side. Your very coming was a concession.”

“To what?”

“To a man unknown and immaterial; to the genius of futility.”

“Genius of fiddlesticks! Why did you suppose I came?”

South swung his head in pendulous ignorance.

“Oh, you needn’t mind my blushes, it’s too dark to see them. And when I startled you with Veynes’ proposal, and bored you to admire my figure, and my frock, and everything *he* might be master of, was that a concession?”

“To my stupidity?” he parried.

“No; the genius for futility—a woman’s!” she said, with drawn bitterness. “All the same, if you guessed?”

“Oh, guessing!” he shrugged.

“No! You’re no such fool. Are you?”

She leaned somewhat away from him with a suggestion of disdain.

“No,” he replied, slowly, rising, “I did not guess; I knew.”

She heard him pacing in the dusky room behind her, and stop at last before the fireplace. He laid one hand over the other and pressed them with his forehead against the mantelpiece.

Cries, shrill and hoarse, drifted in with the darkness from the Palace Road; the evening’s pennyworth of print in shouted headlines, the details draining incoherently into the night.

“Won’t you say you’re sorry?” she inquired, presently.

“For you?”

“No, for yourself. Mightn’t we both have done better?”

“I’ve done nothing,” he murmured, between his arms.

“It’s not a fine confession,” she laughed, curtly; “but you chose.”

“Between what?”

“Between these arms and mine,” she said, slowly, tapping the chair; “between horsehair and flesh and blood. And you chose the horsehair.”

“It’s permanent,” he retorted, somewhat piqued, “and it hasn’t a pulse.”

“Oh, no,” she sighed, “it’s a ‘dead-sure thing’—dead and sure, they’re about the same; you can’t reckon up things that live; and, as for a pulse, it beats faster for other things than fever, you know, and it’s not only the doctor who feels it.”

“Feels it flag?” he queried.

“Oh, bother you!” she exclaimed. “If all men were such chickens, who’d ever marry?”

“The women,” he suggested.

“No, I think they’d be too wise,” she said.

He laughed, an echo of hers; there was not much mirth between them.

“That last day I came here,” she continued, presently, with a musing air, “you might have said more than you did.”

“More?”

“Yes, more for me; something to pretend you couldn’t see me; I felt stripped.”

He smiled at the fire-dogs, remembering her dress. 97

“I didn’t know it,” he said.

“No, a man never does. Some men, you know, lie to a woman to be rid of her, lie about their love and about their life; say it’s heartbreaking, but impossible; one forgives that—it’s craven but it’s kind; but one can’t forgive the men who lie by saying nothing, merely to be rid of her the sooner, when she might go comforted, and only a little slower, by just one whisper of the love they have.”

“You don’t understand,” he said.

“Oh, no,” she sighed, “we never do, we women. We pray not to sometimes; pray to be kept blind, dull, doting.” She laughed abruptly. “Well, I wish you’d said you loved me then, Jim; even though I might have hugged you. Couldn’t you say it now?”

“It’s not lawful.”

“Oh, no,” she sighed again, but reminiscently, “it’s not lawful; but it would be kinder and better than many things that are. Besides, you might rise in my esteem.”

“Thanks,” he said, smiling, pushing himself erect. “I think I’ll stay as I am. I’m high enough now to feel dizzy sometimes when you commend me. The question is, where are *you* going to stay?”

“To-night at the Grand; my things are there. To-morrow I shall be across the Channel.”

She swung her chair round toward the room.

“Am I going alone?”

“No,” he said, decidedly. “I want you to wait a day.”

“With you?”

“No, but for me. I’m going down to the Court.”

“To give me away?”

He had been staring at the dark mirror. He turned his face slowly toward her with a smile.

“I suppose I need not deny that,” he said. “I shall not give you away, even for your good; you know that.”

“Then for what are you going?”

“You’re making a mistake,” he said, ignoring her question. “If you must leave your husband, you should go by the front door; it’s a higher class of exit, pleasanter, more modern, and more effective; besides, it prevents the good man running after you with a posse of detectives.”

“Do you think he’ll do that?” she groaned.

“Doubtless; perhaps offer a reward. Now, to avoid that and live secure, you’ll grant me a day’s grace, won’t you—and wait?”

“I shall be trusting you,” she said.

“And now you’d better go. I have to catch the nine-fifteen, isn’t it? And I’m very certain you’ve had no dinner.”

“Besides, appearances!” she mocked.

“Yes; or non-appearances, as at present,” he replied, unruffled. “If you’ll wait I’ll call a hansom.”

But she said she would go down with him; and after a glance at her frock, a traveling one, before the mirror, opened the door as he relit the lamp. He followed her along the dusk of the passage to show her the way, but she stopped abruptly on the edge of the stairs, throwing back her head so that it nearly struck him.

“Kiss me,” she whispered.

“No,” he said, quietly; “you’re not mine to kiss.”

She bent her right arm back with a quick movement behind his head, and drew his lips down to her face.

“Ah! if it were only a question of possession,” she sighed, as she pressed them to her own.

She turned on the stairs and looked back at him.

“You don’t resent it?” she inquired.

“Why should I?”

“Oh, because you’re not mine to kiss, I suppose.”

“Ah! that’s your affair,” he smiled.

At the hall door she suggested that, being bound for Waterloo, he might accompany her.

“I’m afraid of you,” he said.

“You needn’t be,” she murmured. “I’m done.”

In the end she waited while he packed a bag, and they drove together under the withered planes through 98
the park to her hotel. But she declined to alight.

“You promised to be good,” he reminded her.

“I’m good—good as gold—I wouldn’t touch you for the world, but I’m going to see you off. Jim, do let me! I’ll

come straight back and eat no end of dinner; I will, really! But I must say good-by to you there!”

“Why?”

“Oh, you wouldn’t understand; it’s a presentiment.”

“Presentiments are all stuff.”

“Yes, I know; so are women; but one has them both in—hansoms. Jim!”

“All right; but only to the station, not inside!”

She assented, and they parted, finally, with a feminine complexity of farewell, under the glass-roofed entry; South arriving on the platform to discover that the nine-fifteen had been advanced ten minutes since the first of the month, and that, thanks to Rosamond’s presentiments, he had lost the last train to Veyne St. Mary’s by a few seconds.

V.

Vexed as he was with the woman who had barred the way, he was almost minded, driving back, to acquaint her with his failure.

The inclination was perverse and not in his sanest manner; but her presence had overpowered him that night as an inhaled narcotic; something diffusive in her strong, warm beauty, filling his room, had numbed him as he breathed it.

But his senses came again in the night air, and he kept on, after crossing the river, by the abbey, and his homeward way.

He had left his key behind him, and learned, on entering, that a gentleman awaited him above.

“Who?” he inquired, and was told Lord Veynes.

“Said as ’e couldn’t afford to miss you, sir; so ’e’d wait, and take ’is chance.”

South always faced trouble, but he went more slowly upstairs. The door of his room was ajar, the lamp had been relit upon the table, and soused in its shaded dome of light was the figure of a man, stretched along the big chair before the fire. Veynes did not respond to his host’s hail of welcome; his eyes were staring into the shadowy mirror; and his face reflected there was like a ghostlight on the glass.

Knowing something of his visitor’s moods, South took no notice of his silence, but, drawing a chair beside him, brought his hand down on the other’s fingers with an exclamation of abusive kindliness.

One speaks of words frozen on the lips, but those seemed frozen in the air, ringing with an awful icy vibration in the silent room, as South started back, dumb with horror, for the hand upon which his had fallen was damp with the grip of death.

* * * * *

Of the days which followed, South could never give a complete account. A stranger to sorrow, almost, indeed, to every ruinous emotion, the scenes he witnessed seemed to alter the spacing of the hours so that no two were of a length.

The noise and crush of daily life were suddenly muted, as though death had closed a door and shut them out; and within, behind the bolted silence of despair, were tears, sad talk, mourning darkness, and the melancholy business of the dead, haunted, as with pale marsh lights, by the pitiful inquisition in the dead eyes which he had closed.

His consolation, in that dreary time, was that he bore half the burden of its grief.

The earl knew nothing of his son’s death but what the doctors could tell him, for Lady Veynes, with a curious, but to her a natural, discretion had kept the motive of her movements a secret even from her maid.

So the two chief agents in the tragedy carried the weight of it between them, and alone heard the inquest verdict of “an overstrained heart,” with the desolate knowledge of all it meant—South with dry eyes, so dry that their color seemed faded, and hers so wet that they seemed mixed with their tears.

He had feared once, only once, that she would forget the righteous necessities of her secret, and admit another, with cruel penitence, to its miserable pale.

It was on her first entry to the room where the body was lying, the earl sitting by it, his face almost as gray and sharp as that of the dead. One of his hands was on his son’s, the other crept presently to Rosamond’s golden hair. She had dropped on her knees beside the bed, her eyes buried in the coverlet, her arms flung out across it, moaning an inarticulate torrent of useless tenderness, and penitence, and despair. Her head was shaken by its sorrow like a yellow leaf, but the old man’s grief ran silently, as a stream that dries upon its stones.

That was the one occasion when South had distrusted the charity and shrewdness of her discretion; after that his doubts were at rest. She was everything a woman could be who would not sink her duties in sorrow, and South often wondered what the earl would have done without her.

He had beside ample reason for surprise. Her delicate little performance as a woman of affairs for the benefit of the lawyers, her equally fine and far more difficult personation before the family as lady paramount, were revelations of an ability he had been indisposed to admit.

He called it mummery to himself, but there was a dreary earnestness and effort in it which gave his slight the lie. He would not see the whiteness of her face, or the sorrow in her clouded eyes; and for a curious reason,

because her grief left him, and it seemed with deliberate intention, in the cold.

She bore it with a certain stiffness of control as a burden she was too proud to share, yet which bent her into measured steps.

But South, who felt himself almost an accessory to her fate, could better have endured complaint; he would sooner have been hated, so he told himself.

So, since that memorable morning when she had flung a crumb of toast across the table at the gravity on his face, gray as it was with its news, and, afterward, in anguish and self-contempt, laid her sobbing head among the breakfast things, South had doubted everything about her but her charm.

Yet her sorrow proved, as he was finally to discover, exceedingly sincere; it outlasted even his demands upon it; but it lived, as all her clouds, in a windy sky; and broke, and blew over.

Ere that, however, or the lightening of her widow’s crape, a fresh link was welded from her life, which gave the sad earl a joy in his old age, and a despot to Veynes Court.

South used to run down, sometimes, on the summer evenings, to watch Lady Veynes, the earl and his grandson playing like three children in the dappled sunlight on the lawn.

Or, at least, if there were other reasons for his appearance, he was not on thinking terms with them.

Lady Veynes was. She thought, moreover, that his visits were far too few.

THE RIVALS

STRANGE when you passed me with him in the crowd,
  That twixt us two the selfsame thought should be:
“So this *was* she!” your long glance spake aloud;
  And I, to my own heart, “So this *is* she!”

THEODOSIA GARRISON.

IT is delightful to talk to a bishop," smiled Egeria; "it immediately becomes a serious duty to be frivolous."

"And why, pray?" The bishop looked slightly bewildered.

"To afford you the pleasures of contrast. To convince you from the start that one woman does not seek priestly counsel, nor intend to bore you with the vagaries of her soul."

The bishop smiled benignly, deprecatingly and yet comprehendingly. He even shook his head in paternal and playful admonition.

"Oh, I know us," Egeria assured him. "A woman, if she is young, is always either occupied with her heart or her soul. When the one absorbs her the other doesn't. When she's in love she forgets all about her soul. When she's out of love she turns to it again. Then she yearns for incense, altar lights and a pale, young priest, who is willing to devote time and prayer to assuaging her spiritual doubts. She doesn't care in the least to be spiritually directed by any well-fed, commonplace parson with a fat wife and a pack of rosy children. No, no, a wistful young ascetic, with hollows under his eyes—wan and worn with fasting and vigils. She is perfectly aware that he has ultimately not the ghost of a show; but she is entirely willing that he shall have a run for his money. In fact, she hopes that the struggle may be keen and prolonged. To play a game fish which is putting up the fight of its life is infinitely more exciting than to languidly reel in the line and secure a victim which has not made the least resistance."

The bishop smiled tolerantly, tapping his finger tips together. "Doubtless correct, doubtless correct. Your astuteness and intellectual acumen have always elicited my admiration."

A sparkle of annoyance brightened Egeria's eyes.

"Checkmate," she murmured, with a little bow of deference.

The bishop raised his brows innocently.

"Oh, you know," continued Egeria, resentfully, "that there is one compliment a woman never forgives, and that is a tribute to her intellect at the expense of her power of attraction. If the lure the serpent taught her is vain, then is her destiny barren, her desire unfulfilled."

"You deserved it," laughed the bishop; "but, dear lady, have you ever paused to consider what a debt of gratitude the world owes us? When I listen to the outpourings of overcharged feminine hearts, and read the diaries, confessions and novels of innumerable women, I am forced to the conclusion that the church thoroughly understood one of the first needs of a woman's heart when it established the confessional. Then man, with his restless, protesting conscience, did his best to estrange you from the consolation, and, in consequence, some eccentric, undisciplined creature now and again voices to the world the disorganized, hysterical feminine emotions which should have been discreetly sobbed into the ecclesiastical ear, decently entombed in the silence of the confessional."

There was a faint wrinkle of displeasure in Egeria's brow. "Admitted, admitted"—hastily—"and thank you kindly, dear bishop, for your little criticism of us. It makes it quite possible for me to discuss the clergy if I wish. Now I can ask, without being impertinent, a question which has long puzzled me. Why is it that you prelates and the princes of the church are almost invariably tolerant, delightfully broad-minded and free from bias, while the rank and file are so frequently strenuous and discomposing? For instance, last summer I was thrown, through force of circumstances, with a sallow-faced, stoop-shouldered preacher, who always spoke of himself as 'a minister of the gospel.' Whenever his dyspepsia was especially severe he informed his parishioners that he had girded on his armor and was prepared to rebuke evil in high places, and that he would be recalcitrant to his trust if he did not lift up his voice to condemn civic rottenness and social degeneracy. His wife was 'an estimable lady,' with the figure of a suburbanite who only wears stays in the evening, and a pronounced taste for the clinging perfume of moth balls. No children having blessed their union, they decided to adopt some definite aim in life. They were talking it over once when I was present.

"'There are the sick and the poor; I am sure there are plenty of them,' suggested the lady.

"Her husband looked at her scornfully, and coldly remarked that *that* field was full of reapers.

"'Oh, you mean to stand up openly in the pulpit and rebuke the rich men who make their money in queer ways!' she exclaimed, excitedly.

"'And offend half my wealthy parishioners by branding them as thieves on insufficient evidence?' he thundered. 'Are you insane?'

"Finally, however, being a shrewd creature, he solved the problem and incidentally won for himself a great deal of gratuitous advertising. They organized a society for the suppression of bridge—aware that the public loves sensational details regarding women of position; the insidious cocktail—the public delights to know that the social leaders look too often upon the wine when it's red; ostracising divorcées—women thus having the sanction of Heaven for attacking their own sex. Oh, it was a holy crusade in a teapot, and made him quite famous; and, bishop, what do you think was the motto of the organization?"

The bishop shook his head. Mild curiosity was in his eyes; but the shake of his head was distinctly reproving.

"The watchword chosen," chuckled Egeria, "was, 'Neither do I condemn thee.' Now, bishop, tell me, please, what makes the difference between his type of man and yours?"

A humorous twinkle shone in the bishop's eye, then he leaned forward and whispered one word in Egeria's ear: "Money."

She laughed, and then returned to her muttons. "But, really, quite under the rose, do you not become fearfully bored sometimes by the various manifestations of the feminine temperament?"

"It may be a trifle self-conscious, a little inclined to regard itself pathologically," admitted the bishop, with caution.

"It is frequently yellow," said Egeria. decisively. "Why don't you clergymen and novelists occasionally tell us the truth?"

"We must fill our churches and sell our books, I suppose," returned the bishop, half whimsically, half regretfully. "What would you say, Lady Egeria, if we put you in orders, and disregarding St. Paul's advice, let you occupy the pulpit? Would you thunder denunciations at poor, defenseless women?"

"I'd have a fine time," cried Egeria her eyes alight. "I would do what you sermonizers and novel writers haven't the courage to do—just tell them the truth about themselves. Chide them for their frivolities and extravagances and vanities? Not I. They don't care a straw for that. No, no, I should have a new evangel and a new text. It should be: 'Play the game gamely, and don't whine if you lose.' Now, bishop, confess that you never 102
meet a strange woman that you do not observe a speculative gleam in her eye which long experience has taught you to interpret as: 'How soon can I tell him my troubles?'"

"Poor ladies! You have so many," sighed the bishop, sympathetically.

"Of course we have, we multiply them by three. To sedulously observe all tragic and harrowing anniversaries is a part of our religion. 'It's just five years ago to-day since Edwin left me for another,' she says, mournfully, and then, shrouding herself in gloom, lives over each poignant, past moment. If anyone ask the cause of her dejected demeanor, she murmurs, in a sad, sweet voice: 'It is an anniversary. Would you like to hear of my grief?'

"But what does a man do? He says: 'Jove! It's just a year ago to-morrow since Jemima was run down by an automobile. I must keep myself well amused or it may be a depressing occasion.'

"Seriously, bishop, if I were you, I'd have a phonograph in my study, and the moment a woman set foot within the door it should begin that good old hymn: 'Go bury thy sorrow, the world hath its share.'"

"But what can the poor things do," asked the bishop, "if they may not turn to their clergyman for consolation and comfort?"

"Twang on Emerson's iron string: 'Trust thyself.' Why always twine about a pole, like a limp pea vine, and flop on the ground the minute the upholding stick is withdrawn? Imagine the emotions of the pole, if it were sentient! At first it would say: 'Delicate, dainty pea vine, lean on me, the clasp of your myriad tendrils fills me with rapture. How sweet is your adorable dependence!' But in time: 'Oh! stifling, smothering pea vine, I am suffocated by your deadening passivity. Would I could tear myself free from your throbbing tendrils.'"

"You evidently believe in the dead burying their dead," said the bishop, meditatively.

"No sounder philosophy was ever enjoined on a living world. Let the dead—dead pasts, dead lives, dead loves, dead memories—bury their dead. Ah, bishop, the great art of life is the art of forgetting."

"You, Madame Egeria, are inclined to philosophize."

"Sir, do not remind me of it! When we offer sacrifices at the altar of laughter, you may look for gray hairs and crows' feet. Tears and passion belong to youth: that season of fleeting and exquisite joys, of tragic and fugitive griefs, of tempestuous and restless longings. Youth, with the passionate voice of Maurice de Guerin, cries eternally: 'The road of the wayfarer is a joyous one. Ah, who shall set me adrift upon the waters of the Nile?'"

"And in maturity we learn to fold our hands and stop our ears and take refuge in the commonplace." The bishop's tone was tinged with bitterness.

"Ah, no, no!" Egeria was vehement. "We learn that the Nile, with its dream-haunted shores, flows by our door; that wherever a patch of sunlight falls is beauty, wherever a morning-glory blows is art."

The bishop fell in with her mood. "That is it. Maturity is nothing if it is not expansion.

"'Tis life of which our nerves are scant.
'Tis life, not death, for which we pant,
More life and fuller life."

He loved to quote.

"Yes," exclaimed Egeria, "'more life, fuller life, more work, more play, more experience, more of the dreams that scale the stars, more of the splendid, inexorable life of earth. But"—looking at him doubtfully—"we are getting horribly didactic and prosy, and we are a thousand miles away from the feminine temperament."

"Is there anything left of it?" inquired the bishop, mildly.

Egeria ignored him. "You have only expressed yourself guardedly, while I have talked and talked," she complained.

"I shall be equally fluent." The twinkle shone again in his eye. "But my opinion is given in confidence. I 103
throw myself on your discretion."

“Assuredly,” murmured Egeria.

“Very well, then”—lowering his voice—“I am like the old Englishman who said: ‘I have always found a most horrid, romantic perverseness in your sex. To do and to love what you should not is meat, drink and vesture to you all.’ And I also know that—

> “Every day her dainty hands make life’s soiled temple clean,
> And there’s a wake of glory where her spirit pure hath been.
> At midnight through the shadow-land her living face doth gleam,
> The dying kiss her shadow, and the dead smile in their dream.”

IN THE GARDEN

THE lily lifts her bridal whiteness up,
And leans a list'ning to th' impassioned rose,
The dewdrop answer trembles in her cup,
Shines on her silver lip and overflows.
They lean and love for all the world to see,
But thou, my love, thou leanest no more to me!

Oh, mocking-bird, that bosomed in the height
Of yon magnolia, warblest all alone
Thy liquid litany of heart-delight,
While the pure moon steps slowly tow'rd her throne.
Lo! Thou hast lured all joy to soar with thee,
And thou, my love, thou sing'st no more to me.

Oh, one white star in all the blue abyss!
Oh, trembling star that lookest on my pain!
So shook my soul beneath his parting kiss,
So waits my heart, alone and all in vain.
Oh, Night, sweet Night, I bare my grief to thee—
Oh, world, far off, give back my love to me!

MARGARET HOUSTON.

BEFORE I went away from Agonquitt I was not, even by the most egotistic stretch of my imagination, a very important or an overwhelmingly popular person in the community. The girls from the village did not swarm out to the farm to see me; they did not hang upon my words with reverent attention. Even during the two years when I was at college, my holidays were not periods of public rejoicing; my clothes were not copied or my style of hairdressing regarded with imitative admiration.

But ever since I went to New York the attitude of my acquaintances has changed. At first I was touched and flattered by the interest which all my old companions took in me when I came home; gradually, however, it glimmered upon my consciousness that it was not myself, but the glamour of the great city, which drew them—as though the atmosphere of New York were a tangible thing, and shreds of it clung to me through the long journey down into this remote country. I think I was a little more touched, though not so flattered, when I learned this; there is something pathetic to the initiated in the eager wonderment and awe of the neophyte.

Sometimes the girls have asked my advice, confiding to me their yearnings to leave home, to make "careers" for themselves in the world. And when I try—as perhaps I too often do—to discourage them, they look at me reproachfully, mutely accusing me of a selfish refusal to share with them pleasures and glories. They talk of the theaters, the opera, books, pictures, the glittering press of life, as though a ticket to New York insured one these things. I talk of loneliness and discomfort, of the pinch of poverty. They speak of enlarged horizons; and I of the hall bedrooms which would bound the outlook of most of them. They glow with the thought of new friendships; and I dash their ardor with tales of isolation, of snubs in the effort to escape isolation, of tawdry relationships begun for the sake of mere companionship. But their eyes are always full of incredulity. And sometimes, remembering the delights which were no less a part of my life in the big city than the depression, remembering the wholesome joy of work, the natural pride of feeling oneself an integral part of the great onward-pressing stream of life; yes, and remembering the sweet and the bitter-sweet that came to me there, I wonder if my prohibitive wisdom is not a little hypocritical. Would I myself forego any of my New York experiences?

Sometimes it has seemed to me that my own adventures—or lack of adventures—set down as plainly and truthfully as I can recall them, might be of more illuminating, perhaps—perhaps—of more deterrent, effect than all my spoken generalizations. For though my existence had its peculiar features, rose to its individual climaxes, yet in the main it was typical—the duplicate in most essentials of that of thousands and thousands of young women, not greatly gifted, who come to New York to seek their fortunes.

I shall never forget how the whole thing came about. I was in the poultry yard, doctoring some of my chickens for the pip, when I heard a great puffing and chugging in the road. It was the Hennens' automobile, and instead of dashing past the house, scattering terror before it, it snorted itself to a standstill before our old carriage block. I knew that mother's annual ordeal was before her, and I half laughed as I went on forcing the broilers' throats open.

Mother hated the yearly visitation of Mrs. Hennen with all the intensity of her very gentle, very proud nature. Thirty-five years before she and Letitia Bland had been the rival belles of the Agonquitt region, and the legend was that Letty Bland had taken to her bed for three days when mother's engagement to father was made known, and that she went to visit relatives in Eastport at the time of the marriage. After a triumph like that, no wonder mother hated the magnificent summer descent upon her of Mrs. Letitia Hennen, widow of the oil-field king, mother of George Hennen, the banker, broker, yachtsman and what not; of Mrs. Letitia Hennen, owner of the feudal castle on the shore three miles from the village, whose splendors put to utter rout the modest opulence of all the rest of Agonquitt's summer colony. I was always sorry for mother at the season of her recurrent Nemesis, and yet I was always amused at the thought of time's revenges.

To-day, when I had finished doctoring the broilers, I strolled into the house and greeted the great lady. She was a kind, stout, motherly soul—very gorgeous in raiment, very imposing in a white pompadour; her good-natured, round face always looked forth half bewilderedly between the effort of her dressmaker and that of her hairdresser. This time her eyes were frankly wet as she took my hand and patted it.

"And so you've lost your dear father," she said. "And you've come home from college—what a pity, my dear! And you've been down to Bangor and learned stenography—what a brave girl you are, your father's own daughter—and you're selling broilers to the hotel; why not to me, my child?"

Mother's cheeks were pink with badly suppressed mortification, her eyes sparkled, her lips were on the quivering point.

"Thank you ever so much, Mrs. Hennen," I interposed, hastily, before mother could say anything, "but the Agonquitt House contracted for them all. Next year——"

"But I must do something for you," the dear, kind lady blundered on. "It's all too sad; it's too like your dear father's own case. You've heard how he had to come back from college to take charge of the farm when his

father had the stroke, and he—your father, I mean, dear, not your grandfather—had so wanted to be——”

“Of course Ellen knows all about that,” interrupted mother, icily. “And I would have done anything to spare her the sacrifice”—her voice grew human again—“but——”

“I’m sure she knows everything there is to know already”—Mrs. Hennen beamed, benignly. “And stenography! My, my! Doesn’t it make you feel ignorant, Marietta? And so you’re going to get a position in Bangor or Portland, your mother says, in the fall?”

I nodded. Mrs. Hennen looked at me with an air of silly, puzzled admiration. Suddenly she clapped her hands—the fingers were like little bleached sausages in the tight, white gloves.

“The very thing!” she cried. “You shall be George’s private secretary. His Miss O’Dowd is going to be married in October. The very thing! I’ll speak to him to-night.”

She puffed up, the kind lady, and kept saying, “Not a word, not a word; I won’t hear a word against it; not a word, Marietta, not one, Ellen, my dear.” And she panted off, leaving mother on the verge of tears, and me quivering with excitement.

“A favor from Letty Bland I will not endure!” mother proclaimed. “I will not endure her patronage.” Then she broke down entirely and sobbed: “Oh, I can’t stand in your way, my poor little girl, and I can’t bear to let you go so far from me.”

The end of the whole matter was that the close of September found me on the way to New York, warmly clad in the clothes over which mother had reddened her pretty eyes and pricked her pretty fingers, an emergency 106
fund of a hundred and twenty-five dollars—those blessed broilers!—in a chamois bag between my excellent woolens and my stout muslins, a room in the Margaret Louisa Home engaged for me for any period up to a month. Our clergyman’s wife had recommended that refuge, and mother’s premonitions of battle, murder and sudden death for me grew a little less insistent when she had been finally convinced that I could go almost without change of cars from the safety of Agonquitt to that most evangelical of shelters.

Oh, the tremors, the breathlessness, the excitement, of that journey! Oh, the fairly dizzy rapture and pain of it! I had a vision of streets brilliant with lights, of a press of carriages, of shops, flowers, buildings; of unknown faces, each one the possibility of interest, the invitation to adventure, and I exulted. Then I saw the big, square house where I had been born, shabbily in need of paint; the lonely fields sloping away from it, the woods of yellow birch and pine, the lonely blue reaches of our Northern bays, and my mother sitting in her poor black frock alone by the fire in the early evening. Then I strangled sobs behind my clinched teeth.

My journey from Agonquitt had been broken by one night’s stay in Portland with our second cousins. Mother regarded a sleeping car as an unpermissible atrocity—and wider experience compels me to share her views—and I made the trip by daylight stages. No one had paid any particular attention to me; no adventure had paused by my chair in the car. Nothing happened until I emerged from the train into the murky, glittering evening at the Grand Central Station. Then for a few minutes I was really dazed.

I had spurned the assistance of porters, being forewarned of tips, and I carried my bag through the yard toward the street. There I gasped and nearly reeled. Never had I heard such a clamor, or seen such a whirl and tangle of lights, such recklessness of darting figures, such insistent greed of beckoning fingers and whips.

“Keb, keb, keb, keb!” The maddening din rang in my ears. “Keb, keb, keb, keb!” The arms, the eyes, all echoed the cry. “Keb, keb, keb, keb——” Beyond the barricade of that shout there was tempest, turmoil, clatter; I turned and fled backward toward the train yard, which seemed to me calm and sane now, though a few minutes before it had been a smoking, roaring understudy for Purgatory. Never could I breast that tumultuous tide of madness without.

Another train was unloading. I was jostled by a great many persons who had evidently determined to reach the bedlam on the sidewalk in less than half a second. I dodged. I looked for a uniform which might remain stationary long enough for me to reach it. I saw one—baggage man, carriage starter, train announcer, I didn’t know or care what—I made a sidewise dash for him and collided violently with a dress-suit case, whose owner towered several feet above. He muttered an apology, I muttered an excuse, and then we both stopped, to the damming of the torrential haste behind us.

“Ellen Berwick!”

“Bob Mathews!”

Never had human face seemed to me so friendly as this one. Never had words sounded so honey-sweet as my name ejaculated by a voice which, if not lately familiar, was at least friendly and recognizable. The Agonquitt stamp was already the hall mark of worth, of excellence, in my mind. And Robert Mathews was Dr. Mathews’ son; no amount of Beaux-Arts-ing it, no amount of rising-young-architect-ing it, could alter that blessed fact.

“Where are you going? Why are you here? Where is your mother? Oh, you are, are you? To the Maggie Lou! Why do I call it that? It’s a pet name for an excellent institution given by its intimate admirers. The George Hennens—you——”

Questioning, answering, tossing information back and forth as a Japanese juggler might balls, he somehow managed at the same time to deposit me and my bag in a cab. I breathed a sigh of relief to think that it was the 107
driver’s problem and not mine safely to cross the noisy flood in front of the station.

Sometimes since then I have marveled at the chance which caused me, just down from Maine, to collide with Bob Mathews, just in from New Rochelle. But I have learned that it is a miracle of frequent occurrence that newcomers to Babylon should run upon acquaintances. It is only the old residents who go abroad day after day and see no familiar face.

Should I have gone back to Agonquitt in despair of Forty-second Street if I had not met Bob? I suppose not. But how meeting him simplified the problem of reaching the Margaret Louisa!

“I’ve a dinner engagement with a fellow at the club to-night, or I should carry you off to dine with me,” said Bob, as the cab drew up in front of the brownstone building between the home-rushing roar of Broadway and the early evening glitter of Fifth Avenue. “But I’ll tell you what I’m going to do: I’ll cut away early and see you before bedtime. I know some girls who keep bachelor’s hall in a Harlem flat, but they used to live in boarding houses, and I’ll telephone them for a list of addresses and bring it around to you.”

The door of the evangelical shelter swung open before me. I am not a timid person, but a chill crept up my backbone. There was something depressing in the air of prim rectitude that pervaded the hall. But Bob was gone, and my bag—by the way, it had looked old-fashioned and shabby beside his in the cab—stood within the portals.

I don’t know why I should have expected the woman at the desk to beam upon me, or to have a brass band ready with a pæan announcing that Ellen Berwick had come to town to conquer fortune. But her politeness was so impersonal, her civility so thinly cloaked her *ennui*, that I had difficulty in controlling the quiver of my lips. How friendly and dear the Agonquitt station suddenly seemed, with the neighbors clustered on the platform with their little last gifts!

“Oh, yes,” said the lady at the desk—“Berwick. Your pastor and Mrs. Hennen recommended you.” I felt that I was being weighed for a housemaid’s position, and the blood tingled behind my ears, but she went on indifferently: “Your trunk must be sent to the trunk room within twenty-four hours.”

“It—it can’t have reached here yet,” I murmured.

“Within twenty-four hours from the time when it does come.” I felt that I had been guilty of levity.

“I thought,” I faltered, “since this is only a temporary—er—stopping place, that I wouldn’t entirely unpack ——”

“Within twenty-four hours. You need not unpack entirely. If it is ever necessary for you to get anything out of your trunk while you are here, you may be admitted to the trunk room. Jenkins, 44.”

“When is dinner?” My question trailed between the desk and Jenkins, the elevator man, who miraculously preserved an air of jauntiness as he lounged at the door of his wire cage. I made up my mind to ask him how he did it.

“Going on now.” The elevator slammed upon me, and I was borne aloft to a room of exquisite order and freshness. But either I saw double or there were two white beds, two oak bureaus, two oak wardrobes, two——

“This can’t be my room,” I protested.

“Oh, yes, miss,” declared the maid to whom I had now been delivered. “No more single rooms left. A lovely lady has this one with you. You’ll like her.”

“But I don’t want——”

The chambermaid passed lightly over the question of my desires. The door closed firmly upon my protests, and I proceeded to remove the marks of travel from my clothes and person.

Oh, the Olympian indifference of the lady at the desk to my plea for a room by myself! In two seconds it reduced me from a state of angry protest to one of humble gratitude that I had obtained any shelter at all. Oh, 108
the big dining rooms, with the narrow tables, and women, women, women, packed along them! Oh, the hum of feminine voices, the shrill of feminine laughter, the weariness of feminine faces! Never shall I forget how dreary my own sex seemed to me when I had my first sight of it, massed, unindividualized, hard working, poor, tired. I was suddenly appalled at the number of us in New York—homeless, laboring, impoverished; for to dine at the Maggie Lou was tacit proclamation of all these things.

The food was excellent—plain, homely, plentiful. It was handed dexterously over one’s shoulders and planted firmly and noisily on the table. There was danger in unexpected movements while the waitresses scurried up and down the narrow aisles between the tables, as a young woman opposite me discovered. She leaned forward at a critical moment in her discourse to emphasize the statement that “the fleece-lined cotton were quite as warm as the woolen”; and she jarred the waitress’ busy arm by her vivacity, receiving a stream of yellow squash down her back as penalty.

At a desk, commanding an excellent view of both exits from the dining room, a lady sat with the same somewhat morose expression of countenance which I was beginning to believe the universal New York badge. (Later I corrected this opinion. It is only the women doomed to constant dealing with their sisters in the mass who acquire it.) This particular woman had the presumably pleasant task of receiving the money of the diners. In return she gave them cards, without which egress would have been impossible, for other disillusioned persons guarded the doors, and only the surrender of the oily piece of pasteboard enabled one to escape. During the whole period of my incarceration—I was about to say—in the Margaret Louisa I used to linger about the dining room hoping that some day some reckless, abandoned soul would attempt to flee without the delivery of her card. But it never happened. Meekly, automatically, we all paid, received the token of payment, and slipped out into the wide halls.

The parlor was a most inviting room, mellow in tint, comfortable in the cut of the chairs and sofas, and inviting with magazines and pictures. I wandered into it after my first dinner in New York. I turned the pages of the magazines, I looked at the pictures on the walls, and I wondered with all my powers of bewilderment why every other woman who entered the apartment should immediately sit stiffly down, clasp her hands in her lap or against her stomach, and gaze at me reprovingly. As the number of these women grew, I became convicted in my mind of indecorous conduct, though I was only turning the pages of the *North American Review*. The rustle of the leaves sounded noisy, blatant even, in the ominous stillness. Suddenly I understood why.

A stout lady in widow’s weeds cleared her throat twice, warningly, and the after-dinner prayer meeting was upon us. The *North American Review* slid from my guilty fingers, and I almost lost my balance as I stooped to recover the magazine. Then I composed my features, folded my own hands and listened to the leader of the

meeting. Once I raised my eyes, and through the door that led into the hall I saw Bob Mathews standing. He was staring into the parlor with an expression of arrested protest and strangled mirth upon his nice, homely face. At that precise moment the worthy leader was besieging the throne of grace with intercessions for “the one new come among us,” and I felt vulgarly prominent.

It did not last long, that prayer meeting, and when it was over there was a little gentle conversation. The leader had just advanced to me with a smile of professional kindness when Bob bore down upon me. She withdrew, disapproval squaring her shoulders. My unfortunate caller and I retired to the remotest corner of the room and conversed in guilty whispers, alternated with sudden trumpet blasts of sound as we realized that our 109
subdued manner was unnecessary and open to suspicion. All the others sat around and looked at us. They were all quite sure, I think, that the list of boarding houses with which Bob furnished me on departing was a document of very sinister import.

The next morning, armed with this list and with one furnished by the uninterested lady at the office, I set out in search of a permanent abode. In Agonquitt I had seemed to myself a person of the furthest reaching prudence because I had left for New York a whole fortnight earlier than my engagement as Mr. Hennen’s stenographer required. The two weeks were to be devoted to “settling comfortably” and to “learning the city thoroughly.” By the end of the first forenoon I asked myself bitterly if a year—if a lifetime—would suffice for either of these results.

I had told six landladies that the hall bedroom I sought was for myself alone, and I had been banished at once, without further parley, from their presences. I was discouraged to learn that spinsterhood, which we in Agonquitt regard as a state normal, admirable and even a little high-minded, was frowned upon here. The number of front doors that closed upon me because I could lay claim to no husband!

I have never satisfactorily solved the problem of the average landlady’s dislike for the single woman. Is the married boarder less addicted to bathroom laundry work? Does she consume less gas in the front hall and the parlor? Is she not so apt to keep the wearied purveyor of her meals and lodgings from the folding bed which adorns the front drawing room with a pretense of being a curio cabinet during the day? Or is it merely that even in these strenuous days of wage-earning women, a husband seems to the mediæval-minded landlady a guarantee of payment securer than any number of salaried positions? I don’t know. I only know that my first forenoon’s search for a habitation was rendered uncommonly difficult because I could not assure six gimleteyed landladies in rusty black that I was “wooed an’ married an’ all.”

There were other ladies—a considerable number of them, too—who gave one look at my cloth turban, made by Miss Milly, our Agonquitt milliner; and at my reefer, which Miss Keziah, who goes out by the day, had helped mother to make; and smilingly shook their heads. These informed me, interposing their plump persons between me and their stairways, as though they feared a forcible entrance on my part, that they had nothing which would suit me—nothing under twenty dollars a week. At first this abashed me, for ten dollars was the utmost which I could allow for lodgings and meals; and I departed, gurgling apologetically in my throat. Later, anger began to stir my pulses, and I gave these haughty ones level glance of scorn for level glance of scorn, and said: “Ah, I am looking for a suite of two rooms and bath; breakfast upstairs, of course; you have nothing of that sort?” And we separated in mutual incredulity and respect.

During that day and the soul-racking, foot-blistering days that followed, I gained a fairly clear idea of what I might hope for in a boarding house for the small sum which I was prepared to spend. The cheaper places were, of course, the least attractive; the halls seemed dingier, the odor of dreary, bygone dinners more pervasive in them; the servants were more slatternly, the landladies themselves more rusty, dusty and depressing. There were innumerable parlors furnished in upholstery that made up in accumulated dust and aroma for what it had lost in freshness of color during the years of its service; there were folding beds of every sort; there were lace curtains, and there were pier glasses between the long front windows. Then, somewhere up on the top floor, there was a hall bedroom without a closet, without heat; but “the last lady”—marvelously adaptable female!—had always found the hooks under the cambric curtain on the door an ample refuge for her gowns, and as for the temperature, she had been compelled to keep her window open during most of the winter before, so intense 110
was the heat from the hall. She had moved, apparently, in search of a harder spiritual discipline than she could obtain among such comfortable surroundings. Certainly there was no other reason for her leaving.

Sometimes, departing from the lists furnished me, I stumbled upon wonderful places where “cozy corners” greatly prevailed, and where the landladies wore trailing negligées of soiled pink or blue instead of the tight-fitting black uniform of the other houses. Whenever such a meeting inadvertently occurred, the gorgeous landlady and I were always as eager as civility would permit to see the last of each other.

Then there were other places—airy, clean and bright, with parlors guiltless of any suggestion of the folding bed, with graceful furnishings, efficient servants, cheerful landladies. But these were always either “full”—I don’t wonder—or what they had left was far beyond my humble means.

I wandered through the unhomelike splendors of the woman’s hotel, by and by. Here at least there would be no question of boarding house parlor etiquette—there were successions of charming, big, airy, handsomely fitted-out parlors; there were tea rooms, there were libraries and writing rooms. The bedrooms themselves—simple, sunny, clean—- were charming, with their chintz-frilled cots and their substantially made wooden pieces. Here I could live, by a pretty rigid system of economy, for nine dollars a week—four for my tiny bedroom, five for my breakfasts and dinners. I would have to share the sparkling white and nickel bathroom with only two others.

I was not one of those haughty souls who revolted at the rule forbidding masculine callers above the parlor floors; in the first place, I had not been long enough in New York to know that young women ever did receive callers save in drawing rooms of some description, and in the second, I didn’t expect any callers for a long time. Once Robert Matthews saw me safely settled, I knew that his neighborly kindness would dwindle; and he was my only possible visitor at present. No, one might be very comfortable at the woman’s hotel, I was sure—if one could overcome a prejudice against being one of a mass. I had been long enough at the Margaret Louisa to

know that I abhorred whatever savored of an institution, and all women in bulk, so to speak. Even a dingy hall room in a dreary boarding house, with the fumes of old dinners wrought into the very web of the carpets, and a lackadaisically suspicious landlady, seemed better and more homelike to me than the comforts and luxuries of a big feminized institution. At least, in the boarding house, one could be an individual, something more than a number.

However, though I had made up my mind to the boarding house, I did not come to it. And that was because of the unwelcome other occupant of the room at the Margaret Louisa. She had proved to be a wholesome, graceful, rather tall woman of thirty-three or so. She had none of my rustic air of sullen doubt when she met strangers. She was polite, uninquisitive, even uninterested. Her attitude was the perfection of civil indifference; she would have been an ideal woman to occupy the opposite section on a transcontinental train, or the other berth in a transatlantic stateroom, for she was perfectly considerate, unfamiliar and impersonal. She told me that she had just come from a summer abroad—she was a teacher of some handicraft in a trade school for girls—and that she was staying at the Margaret Louisa until "the doctor was through redecorating the house."

"Of course everyone makes fun of the Maggie Lou," she said, "but I find it an admirable refuge. It is in the center of the town; it's clean, cheap and respectable; it charges a fair price for the accommodations it offers, so that there's no taint of philanthropy about it—though sometimes the managers seem to forget that. One doesn't come here for society. Once one knows its little red-tape rules, and how to keep them from interfering with one's personal liberty, it's a very comfortable place." 111

It developed that a woman physician of Miss Putnam's acquaintance had a small house on West Eleventh Street, the upper floors of which she let to women lodgers.

"Of course she knows us all," said Miss Putnam. "It's really very convenient. There aren't more than six of us; we are absolutely independent, without being brutally isolated. Dr. Lyons serves us all with breakfast in our rooms, and leaves us to solve the luncheon-dinner problem for ourselves. It's a charming, old-fashioned house, and she has furnished it in character."

I sighed bitterly. Dr. Lyons' six lodgers paid her five dollars and a half a week for their rooms and their simple breakfasts—as little as I should have to pay at the huge caravansary which I was even then considering—and they had a home! I could have wept over the inequalities of life.

Later I wept in very truth. Robert had sent me a note inviting me to a glee-club concert. I had accepted the invitation. Then I had rubbed my aching body with witch hazel—it's no small athletic feat to climb to the top of twenty-seven New York houses in one day—and I had lain down to rest. A little before seven I bethought me of clothes. The black silk which mother had made for me, with its pretty chemisette and cuffs of real Val and Indian mull, and my black net hat with white roses, lay in the trunk in the trunk room. I made up my mind to swallow a hasty dinner, invade the cellar and carry my poor little finery upstairs after dinner, so as to be ready for Bob at eight. At seven-fifteen, having eaten all that I could in the banging, crowded, steaming dining room, I approached the office and made known my wish to go to the trunk room.

"Trunk room closes at seven," snapped the waitress of destiny.

Nor could any tale of my needs, any indignation concerning the high-handed retention of my property, move her from that statement. I went to my room and wept with rage. Bob impressed me nowadays as a stylish youth. How would he like taking me to a musicale in a short black skirt, a reefer and that dumpy turban?

Upon my fit of pettishness in came Miss Putnam. She was politely absorbed in her own chiffonier for a while. Then she turned to me with a comical air of balancing the fear of intrusiveness against a friendly desire to help.

"Is it—can I do anything for you?" she asked finally.

"You can tell that wretched martinet downstairs what I think of her, if you have sufficient command of language," I rejoined, wiping my eyes furiously. Then I told her my tale of woe. She laughed. Then she hesitated and blushed.

"I'm just home from Paris, as I told you," she said. "I'm not going out tonight. And I knew the Margaret Louisa well enough to unpack for an emergency. We're about of a height—would you think me desperately impertinent if—if——"

And she actually offered to lend me some clothes. And I—I, Ellen Berwick, of Agonquitt, where all borrowing is regarded as criminally unthrifty, and where the borrowing of finery would seem degenerately frivolous as well—I went to that musicale at the Waldorf in an absolute confection of heavy black lace over white silk, and a hat all white tulle and roses and jet! Robert whistled rudely as he saw me.

"Is this the way they do things in Agonquitt now?" he asked.

And from something I overheard him saying to a lovely young matron-patroness in a peach-colored crêpe, I gathered that he had somewhat apologetically prepared her to be kind to a nice little rustic from his old home. Thus clothes, as adornments and not merely coverings, made their first distinct appeal to me; it was the voice of New York, if I had only known it.

I blessed Theresa Putnam that evening, but how much more did I bless her when toward the end of the fortnight she burst into our joint abode with something less than her usual calm of manner, and cried: 112

"Clorinda Dorset isn't coming back to the Medical School this year. Do you want to meet Dr. Lyons? For if you do, and you like her and she likes you——"

I did not let her finish.

"Do you mean that there's a chance for me in the Eleventh Street house?" I demanded. I had been to seven boarding houses in furthest Harlem that day and had heard seven boarding house keepers declare that the time from One Hundred and Eighteenth Street to Wall was twenty minutes!

By the next morning my trunk had been rescued from the cave of the trunks, and stood, unstrapped and

unlocked, in my sloping-roofed, attic room in the old-fashioned house of Dr. Lyons. The sunlight poured in through two dormer windows. There were dimity curtains at them. There was a blue-and-white, hit-or-miss rag rug on the floor. There was a fireplace; there were old-fashioned chairs that might have come out of an Agonquitt attic; there was a plain table, with blotters on it and bookshelves above; there was a cot covered with an old homespun blue-and-white cover. There were potted geraniums and primroses on the wide window shelves. I sat down and fairly rocked in my delight.

"An attic!" I exclaimed. "Oh, I didn't believe there was one in all New York. And a rag carpet——"

But the language of jubilation failed.

Well, my fortnight of grace was ended. I was housed, by a kindly miracle and no skill of my own, comfortably, charmingly, not expensively. I was a lucky young woman!

I polished my boots to the highest pitch of brilliancy, I set my stock on at the most accurate angle, and I proceeded to Mr. George Hennen's office to gladden his heart with the information that I had arrived.

He received me with some embarrassment—a good-looking, slender, boyish man with an inattentive manner.

"I had meant to write," he murmured. "Really, it has been unpardonable. But I didn't know until last week, and—it is really unpardonable."

A cold chill gripped me. Was I not to have the position, after all? I sat very rigid, my fingers frozen in their stiff calfskin gloves.

"What is it, Mr. Hennen?" I asked. "Please tell me quickly."

"Oh, of course it can be arranged. I had meant to ask you to defer coming until the first of December. Miss O'Dowd's wedding has been postponed until Christmas. But——"

Returning waves of warmth lapped me. After all, I was not to go penniless and positionless back to Agonquitt.

"Oh, is that all?" I cried, in relief. "I think I can put in the two months to excellent advantage, Mr. Hennen."

"Do you, really?" He brightened. "Are you—er—prepared—er——"

"Oh, quite," I said, stiffly, though the emergency fund on my chest no longer seemed the oppressive weight it once had.

"If not——" he floundered, evidently groping with some idea for my relief.

I felt the color tingle in my cheeks. My mother's hatred of "Letitia Bland's" favors seemed to stiffen my neck.

"Oh, but I am," I declared. Then the door opened simultaneously with a rap. From the Axminster and rosewood splendors of the outer office a man entered—tall, broad, lithe. His eyes, even in that first flash of them upon me, I knew to be gay, and his smooth-shaven lips had lines of laughter about them. He glanced at me with a momentary pause in his entrance.

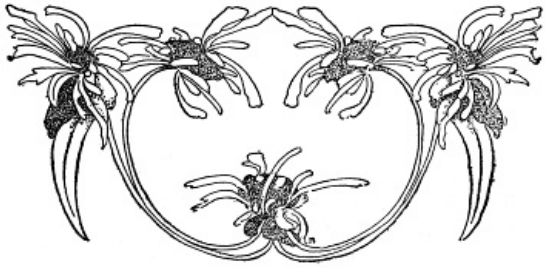
"Beg pardon, George. Ferritt said you were alone."

"It's all right. Don't go, Archie. I want you to meet Miss Berwick. Miss Berwick, Mr. Charter—the other member of the firm. Miss Berwick's going to take Miss O'Dowd's place, you remember, Archie?"

"Very much more than that, I think," said Mr. Charter, smiling. And though there was something in the cool appraisal of his manner, in the implied familiar compliment and criticism of his words, which made me flush with displeasure, yet when I met his mirthful, amused regard, I could not but smile in answer.

There was a little more talk, and I went out, leaving my address with Mr. Hennen. There was an agreeable sense of buoyancy and exhilaration in the air. I could not fix my mind upon the gloomy fact that I was to be without employment and without salary for two months; I was only very sure that I should like the work in the office of Hennen & Charter, when I was admitted to it. Meantime, I had a hazy recollection of all sorts of tempting advertisements which I had seen in the papers, asking for the services of just such able-bodied, well-educated young women as myself. To be an adventurer in industry for two months might be amusing; it might be profitable. And at the end of it there was the office of Hennen & Charter glowing like a comfortable beacon for me.

It was fortunate for my peace of mind that I could not forecast the future, and had no premonition of my initial experience as a laboring person. I was profoundly convinced of my ability to "take care of myself"; I had a high respect for my own judgment. Had anyone suggested to me that my arrogant self-confidence would nearly land me in court and almost cover me with notoriety, I should have dismissed the suggestion with a laugh.



THE TWO RAPTURES

TWO raptures are there; one is of the spring;
  Life leaps down all her sources and is glad
With gladness that enfolds each humblest thing.
  Furrows teem fragrant, trees with buds go mad;
    Music and color and a sunbright glee
    Turn sullen earth into sweet Arcady.

The autumn’s rapture is a soberer wight,
  But deep in tender dreams and rich in rare
Designs, and mellow harmonies of light.
  The hills lie steeped in memories most fair,
The forests blaze with visions, and the year,
    Two-minded, mingles elegies of dearth
    With hopeful hymns of yet triumphant birth,
When May returns, when Spring again is here.

RICHARD BURTON.

IN order to understand this story there are a few points of information concerning "Lonesome Huckleberries" with which you ought to be acquainted. First, his nationality: Captain Jonadab Wixon used to say that Lonesome was "a little of everything, like a picked-up dinner; principally Eyetalian and Portygee, I cal'late, with a streak of Gay Head Injun." Second, his name: To quote from the captain again, "His reel name's long enough to touch bottom in the ship channel at high tide, so folks nater'lly got to callin' him 'Huckleberries,' 'cause he peddles them kind of fruit in summer. Then he mopes round so, with nary a smile on his face, that it seemed jest right to tack on the 'Lonesome.' So 'Lonesome Huckleberries' he's been for the past ten year." Add to these items the fact that he lived in a patchwork shanty on the end of a sandspit six miles from Wellmouth Port, that he was deaf and dumb, that he drove a liver-colored, balky mare that no one but himself and his daughter "Becky" could handle, that he had a fondness for bad rum, and a wicked temper that had twice landed him in the village lockup, and you have a fair idea of the personality of Lonesome Huckleberries. And, oh, yes! his decoy ducks. He was a great gunner alongshore, and owned a flock of live decoys for which he had refused bids as high as fifteen dollars each. There, now I think you are in position to appreciate the yarn that Mr. Barzilla Wingate told me as we sat in the "Lovers' Nest," the summerhouse on the bluff by the Old Home House, and watched the *Greased Lightning*, Peter Brown's smart little motor launch, swinging at her moorings below.

"Them Todds," observed Barzilla, "had got on my nerves. 'Twas Peter's ad that brought 'em down here. You see, 'twas 'long toward the end of the season at the Old Home House, and Brown had been advertisin' in the New York and Boston papers to 'bag the leftovers,' as he called it. Besides the reg'lar hogwash about the 'breath of old ocean' and the 'simple, cleanly livin' of the bygone days we dream about,' there was some new froth concernin' huntin' and fishin'. You'd think the wild geese roosted on the flagpole nights, and the bluefish clogged up the bay so's you could walk on their back fins without wettin' your feet—that is, if you wore rubbers and trod light.

"'There!' says Peter T., wavin' the advertisement and crowin' gladsome; 'they'll take to that like your temp'rance aunt to brandy coughdrops. We'll have to put up barbed wire to keep 'em off.'

"'Humph!' grunts Cap'n Jonadab. 'Anybody but a born fool'll know there ain't any shootin' down here this time of year.'

"Peter looked at him sorrowful. 'Pop,' says he, 'did you ever hear that Solomon answered a summer hotel ad? This ain't a Chautauqua, this is the Old Home House, and its motto is: "There's a new sucker born every minute, and there's twenty-four hours in a day." You set back and count the clock ticks.'

"Well, that's 'bout all we had to do. We got boarders enough from that ridic'lous advertisement to fill every spare room we had, includin' Jonadab's and mine. Me and the cap'n had to bunk in the barn loft; but there was some satisfaction in that—it give us an excuse to git away from the 'sports' in the smokin' room. 115

"The Todds was part of the haul. He was a little, dried-up man, single, and a minister. Nigh's I could find out, he'd given up preachin' by the request of the doctor and his last congregation. He had a notion that he was a mighty hunter afore the Lord, like Nimrod in the Bible, and he'd come to the Old Home to bag a few gross of geese and ducks.

"His sister was an old maid, and slim, neither of which failin's was from ch'ice, I cal'late. She wore eyeglasses and a veil to 'preserve her complexion,' and her idee seemed to be that native Cape Codders lived in trees and et cocoanuts. She called 'em barbarians, utter barbarians.' Whenever she piped 'James!' her brother had to drop everything and report on deck. She was skipper of the Todd craft.

"Well, them Todds was what Peter T. called 'the limit, and a chip or two over.' The other would-be gunners and fishermen were satisfied to slam shot after sandpeeps, or hook a stray sculpin or a hake. But t'wa'n't so with brother James Todd and sister Clarissa. 'Ducks' it was in the advertisin', and nothin' *but* ducks they wanted. Clarissa, she commenced to hint middlin' p'inted concernin' fraud.

"Fin'lly we lost patience, and Peter T., he said they'd got to be quieted somehow, or he'd do some shootin' on his own hook; said too much Toddy was givin' him the 'D.T.'s.' Then I suggested takin' 'em down the beach somewheres on the chance of seein' a stray coot or loon or somethin'—*anything* that could be shot at. Jonadab and Peter agreed 'twas a good plan, and we matched to see who'd be guide. And I got stuck, of course; my luck again.

"So the next mornin' we started, me and the Reverend James and Clarissa, in the *Greased Lightnin'*. Fust part of the trip that Todd man done nothin' but ask questions about the launch; I had to show him how to start it and steer it, and the land knows what all. Clarissa set around doin' the heavy contemptuous and turnin' up her nose at creation gin'rally. It must have its drawbacks, this roostin' so fur above the common flock; seems to me I'd be thinkin' all the time of the bump that was due me if I got shoved off the perch.

"Well, by and by Lonesome Huckleberries' shanty hove in sight, and I was glad to see it, although I had to answer a million more questions about Lonesome and his history. When we struck the beach, Clarissa, she took her paint box and umbrella and moskeeter 'intment, and the rest of her cargo, and went off by herself to 'sketch.' She was great on 'sketchin',' and the way she'd use up good paint and spile nice clean paper was a sinful waste. Afore she went, she give me three fathom of sailin' orders concernin' takin' care of 'James.' You'd

think he was about four year old; made me feel like a hired nuss.

“Well, James and me went perusin’ up and down that beach in the blazin’ sun lookin’ for somethin’ to shoot. We went ’way beyond Lonesome’s shanty, but there wa’n’t nobody to home. Lonesome himself, it turned out afterward, was up to the village with his horse and wagon, and his daughter Becky was over in the woods on the mainland berryin’. Todd was a cheerful talker, but limited. His favorite remark was: ‘Oh, I say, my deah man.’ That’s what he kept callin’ me, ‘my deah man.’ Now, my name ain’t exactly a Claude de Montmorency for prettiness, but ‘Barzilla’ ’ll fetch *me* alongside a good deal quicker’n ‘my deah man,’ I’ll tell you that.

“We frogged it up and down all the forenoon, but didn’t git a shot at nothin’ but one stray ‘squawk’ that had come over from the Cedar Swamp. I told James ’twas a canvasback, and he blazed away at it, but missed it by three fathom, as might have been expected.

“Fin’lly my game leg—rheumatiz, you understand—begun to give out. So I flops down in the shade of a sand bank to rest, and the reverend goes pokin’ off by himself.

“I cal’late I must have fell asleep, for when I looked at my watch it was close to one o’clock, and time for us 116
to be gittin’ back to the port. I got up and stretched and took an observation, but further’n Clarissa’s umbrella on the skyline, I didn’t see anything stirrin’. Brother James wa’n’t visible, but I jedged he was within hailin’ distance. You can’t see very fur on that point, there’s too many sand hills and hummocks.

“I started over toward the *Greased Lightnin’*. I’d gone a little ways, and was down in a gully between two big hummocks, when ‘Bang! bang!’ goes both barrels of a shotgun, and that Todd critter busts out hollerin’ like all possessed.

“‘Hooray!’ he squeals, in that squeaky voice of his. ‘Hooray! I’ve got ’em! I’ve got ’em!’

“Thinks I, ‘What in the nation does that lunatic cal’late he’s shot?’ And I left my own gun layin’ where ’twas and piled up over the edge of that sand bank like a cat over a fence. And then I see a sight.

“There was James, hoppin’ up and down in the beach grass, squealin’ like a Guinea hen with a sore throat, and wavin’ his gun with one wing—arm, I mean—and there in front of him, in the foam at the edge of the surf, was two ducks as dead as Nebuchadnezzar—two of Lonesome Huckleberries’ best decoy ducks—ducks he’d tamed and trained, and thought more of than anything else in this world—except rum, maybe—and the rest of the flock was diggin’ up the beach for home as if they’d been telegraphed for, and squawkin’ ‘Fire!’ and ‘Bloody murder!’

“Well, my mind was in a kind of various state, as you might say, for a minute. ’Course, I’d known about Lonesome’s ownin’ them decoys—told Todd about ’em, too—but I hadn’t seen ’em nowhere alongshore, and I sort of cal’lated they was locked up in Lonesome’s hen house, that bein’ his usual way when he went to town. I s’pose likely they’d been feedin’ among the beach grass somewheres out of sight, but I don’t know for sartin to this day. And I didn’t stop to reason it out then, neither. As Scriptur’ or George Washin’ton or somebody says, ‘’twas a condition, not a theory,’ I was afoul of.

“‘I’ve got ’em!’ hollers Todd, grinnin’ till I thought he’d swaller his own ears. ‘I shot ’em all myself!’

“‘You everlastin’——’ I begun, but I didn’t git any further. There was a rattlin’ noise behind me, and I turned, to see Lonesome Huckleberries himself, settin’ on the seat of his old truck wagon and glarin’ over the hammer head of that balky mare of his straight at brother Todd and the dead decoys.

“For a minute there was a kind of tableau, like them they have at church fairs—all four of us, includin’ the mare, keepin’ still, like we was frozen. But ’twas only for a minute. Then it turned into the liveliest movin’ picture that ever *I* see. Lonesome couldn’t swear—bein’ a dummy—but if ever a man got profane with his eyes, he did right then. Next thing I knew he tossed both hands into the air, clawed two handfuls out of the atmosphere, reached down into the cart, grabbed a pitchfork and piled out of that wagon and after Todd. There was murder comin’ and I could see it.

“‘Run, you loon!’ I hollers, desp’rate.

“James didn’t wait for any advice. He didn’t know what he’d done, I cal’late, but he jedged ’twas his move. He dropped his gun and putted down the shore like a wild man, with Lonesome after him. I tried to foller, but my rheumatiz was too big a handicap; all I could do was yell.

“You never’d have picked out Todd for a sprinter—not to look at him, you wouldn’t—but if he didn’t beat the record for his class jest then I’ll eat my sou’wester. He fairly flew, but Lonesome split tacks with him every time, and kept to wind’ard, into the bargain. Where they went out sight amongst the sand hills ’twas anybody’s race.

“I was scart. I knew what Lonesome’s temper was, ’specially when it had been iled with some Wellmouth 117
Port no-license rum. He’d been took up once for ha’f killin’ some boys that tormented him, and I figgered if he got within’ pitchfork distance of the Todd critter he’d make him the leakiest divine that ever picked a text. I commenced to hobble back after my gun. It looked bad to me.

“But I’d forgot sister Clarissa. ’Fore I’d limped fur I heard her callin’ to me.

“‘Mr. Wingate,’ says she, ’git in here at once.’

“There she was, settin’ on the seat of Lonesome’s wagon, holdin’ the reins and as cool as a white frost in October.

“‘Git in at once,’ says she. I jedged ’twas good advice, and took it.

“‘Proceed,’ says she to the mare. ‘Git dap!’ says I, and we started. When we rounded the sand hill we see the race in the distance. Lonesome had gained a p’int or two, and Todd wa’n’t more’n four pitchforks in the lead.

“‘Make for the launch!’ I whooped, between my hands.

“The parson heard me and come about and broke for the shore. The *Greased Lightnin’* had swung out about the length of her anchor rope, and the water wa’n’t deep. Todd splashed in to his waist and climbed aboard. He

cut the rodin' jest as Lonesome reached tide mark. James, he sees it's a close call, and he shins back to the engine, reachin' it exactly at the time when the gent with the pitchfork laid hands on the rail. Then the parson throws over the switch—I'd shown him how, you remember—and gives the startin' wheel a full turn.

"Well, you know the *Greased Lightnin'*? She don't linger to say farewell, not any to speak of, she don't. And this time she jumped like the cat that lit on the hot stove. Lonesome, bein' balanced with his knees on the rail, pitches headfust into the cockpit. Todd, jumpin' out of his way, falls overboard backward. Next thing anybody knew, the launch was scootin' for blue water like a streak of what she was named for, and the huntin' chaplain was churnin' up foam like a mill wheel.

"I yelled more orders than second mate on a coaster. Todd bubbled and bellered. Lonesome hung on to the rail of the cockpit and let his hair stand up to grow. Nobody was cool but Clarissa, and she was an iceberg. She had her good p'ints, that old maid did, drat her!

"'James,' she calls, 'git out of that water this minute and come here! This instant, mind!'

"James minded. He paddled ashore and hopped, drippin' like a dishcloth, alongside the truck wagon.

"'Git in!' orders Skipper Clarissa. He done it. 'Now,' says the lady, passin' the reins over to me, 'drive us home, Mr. Wingate, before that intoxicated lunatic can catch us.'

"It seemed about the only thing to do. I knew 'twas no use explainin' to Lonesome for an hour or more yit, even if you can talk finger signs, which part of my college trainin' has been neglected. 'Twas murder he wanted at the present time. I had some sort of a foggy notion that I'd drive along, pick up the guns and then git the Todds over to the hotel, afterward comin' back to git the launch and pay damages to Huckleberries. I cal'lated he'd be more reasonable by that time.

"But the mare had made other arrangements. When I slapped her with the end of the reins she took the bit in her teeth and commenced to gallop. I hollered 'Whoa!' and 'Heave to!' and 'Belay!' and everything else I could think of, but she never took in a reef. We bumped over hummocks and ridges, and every time we done it we spilled somethin' out of that wagon. Fust 'twas a lot of huckleberry pails, then a basket of groceries and such, then a tin pan with some potatoes in it, then a jug done up in a blanket. We was heavin' cargo overboard like a leaky ship in a typhoon. Out of the tail of my eye I see Lonesome, well out to sea, headin' the *Greased Lightnin'* for the beach.

"Clarissa put in the time soothin' James, who had a serious case of the scart-to-deaths, and callin' me an 'utter barbarian' for drivin' so fast. Lucky for all hands, she had to hold on tight to keep from bein' jounced out, 'long with the rest of movables, so she couldn't take the reins. As for me, I wa'n't payin' much attention to her 118
—'twas the 'Cut-Through' that was disturbin' *my* mind.

"When you drive down to Lonesome P'int you have to ford the 'Cut-Through.' It's a strip of water between the bay and the ocean, and 'tain't very wide nor deep at low tide. But the tide was comin' in now, and, more'n that, the mare wa'n't headed for the ford. She was cuttin' cross-lots on her own hook, and wouldn't answer the helm.

"Well, we struck that 'Cut-Through' about a hundred yards east of the ford, and in two shakes we was hub deep in salt water. 'Fore the Todds could do anything but holler the wagon was afloat and the mare was all but swimmin'. But she kept right on. Bless her, you *couldn't* stop her!

"We crossed the first channel and come out on a flat where 'twasn't more'n two foot deep then. I commenced to feel better. There was another channel ahead of us, but I figured we'd navigate that same as we had the first one. And then the most outrageous thing happened.

"If you'll b'lieve it, that pesky mare balked and wouldn't stir another step.

"And there we was! I punched and kicked and hollered, but all that stubborn horse would do was lay her ears back flat, and snarl up her lip, and look round at us, much as to say: 'Now, then, you land sharks, I've got you between wind and water!' And I swan to man if it didn't look like she had!

"'Drive on!' says Clarissa, pretty average vinegary. 'Haven't you made trouble enough for us already, you dreadful man? Drive on!'

"Hadn't *I* made trouble enough! What do you think of that?

"'You want to drown us!' says Miss Todd, continuin' her chatty remarks. 'I see it all! It's a plot between you and that murderer. I give you warnin'; if we reach the hotel, my brother and I will commence suit for damages.'

"My temper's fairly long-sufferin', but 'twas ravelin' some by this time.

"'Commence suit!' I says. 'I don't care *what* you commence, if you'll commence to keep quiet now!' And then I give her a few p'ints as to what her brother had done, heavin' in some personal flatteries every once in a while for good measure.

"I'd about got to thirdly when James give a screech and p'inted. And, by time! if there wa'n't Lonesome in the launch, headed right for us, and comin' a-b'ilin'! He'd run her along abreast of the beach and turned in at the upper end of the 'Cut-Through.'

"You never in your life heard such a row as there was in that wagon. Clarissa and me yellin' to Lonesome to keep off—forgittin' that he was stone deef and dumb—and James vowin' that he was goin' to be slaughtered in cold blood. And the *Greased Lightnin'* p'inted jest so she'd split that cart amidships, and comin'—well, you know how she can go.

"She never budged until she was within ten foot of the flat, and then, jest as I was commencin' the third line of 'Now I lay me,' she sheered off and went past in a wide curve, with Lonesome steerin' with one hand and shakin' his pitchfork at Todd with t'other. And *such* faces as he made up! They'd have got him hung in any court in the world.

“He run up the ‘Cut-Through’ a little ways, and then come about, and back he comes again, never slackin’ speed a mite, and runnin’ close to the shoal as he could shave, and all the time goin’ through the bloodiest kind of pantomimes. And past he goes, to wheel ’round and commence all over again.

“Thinks I, ‘Why don’t he ease up and lay us aboard? He’s got all the weapons there is. Is he scart?’

“And then it come to me—the reason why. *He didn’t know how to stop her.* He could steer fust rate, bein’ used to sailboats, but an electric auto launch was a new deal for him, and he didn’t understand her works. And he dastn’t run her aground at the speed she was makin’; ’twould have finished her and, more’n likely, him, too.

“I don’t s’pose there ever was another mess jest like it afore or sence. Here was us, stranded with a horse we couldn’t make go, bein’ chased by a feller who was run away with in a boat he couldn’t stop!

“Jest as I’d about give up hope, I heard somebody callin’ from the beach behind us. I turned, and there was Becky Huckleberries, Lonesome’s daughter. She had the dead decoys by the legs in one hand.

“‘Hi!’ says she.

“‘Hi!’ says I. ‘How do you git this giraffe of yours under way?’

She held up the decoys.

“‘Who kill-a dem ducks?’ says she.

“I p’inted to the reverend. ‘He did,’ says I. And then I cal’late I must have had one of them things they call an inspiration. ‘And he’s willin’ to pay for ’em,’ I says.

“‘Pay thirty-five dolla?’ says she.

“‘You bet!’ says I.

“But I’d forgot Clarissa. She rose up in that waterlogged cart like a Statue of Liberty. ‘Never!’ says she. ‘We will never submit to such extortion. We’ll drown fust!’

“Becky heard her. She didn’t look disapp’inted nor nothin’. Jest turned and begun to walk up the beach. ‘*All* right,’ says she; *goo’*-by.’

“The Todds stood it for a jiffy. Then James give in. ‘I’ll pay it!’ he hollers. ‘I’ll pay it!’

“Even then Becky didn’t smile. She jest came about again and walked back to the shore. Then she took up that tin pan and one of the potaters we’d jounced out of the cart.

“‘Hi, Rosa!’ she hollers. That mare turned her head and looked. And, for the first time sence she hove anchor on that flat, the critter unfurled her ears and histed ’em to the masthead.

“‘Hi, Rosa!’ says Becky again, and begun to pound the pan with the potater. And I give you my word that that mare started up, turned the wagon around nice as could be, and begun to swim ashore. When we got jest where the critter’s legs touched bottom, Becky remarks: ‘Whoa!’

“‘Here!’ I yells, ‘what did you do that for?’

“‘Pay thirty-five dolla *now*,’ says she. She was bus’ness, that girl.

“Todd got his wallet from under hatches and counted out the thirty-five, keepin’ one eye on Lonesome, who was swoopin’ up and down in the launch lookin’ as if he wanted to cut in, but dastn’t. I tied the bills to my jackknife, to give ’em weight, and tossed the whole thing ashore. Becky, she counted the cash and stowed it away in her apron pocket.

“‘*All* right,’ says she. ‘Hi, Rosa!’ The potater and pan performance begun again, and Rosa picked up her hoofs and dragged us to dry land. And it sartinly felt good to the feet.

“‘Say,’ I says, ‘Becky, it’s none of my affairs, as I know of, but is that the way you usually start that horse of yours?’

“She said it was. And Rosa et the potater.

“Well, then Becky asked me how to stop the launch, and I told her. She made a lot of finger signs to Lonesome, and inside of five minutes the *Greased Lightnin’* was anchored in front of us. Old man Huckleberries was still hankerin’ to interview Todd with the pitchfork, but Becky settled that all right. She jumped in front of him, and her eyes snapped and her feet stamped and her fingers flew. And ’twould have done you good to see her dad shrivel up and git humble. I always had thought that a woman wasn’t much good as a boss of the roost unless she could use her tongue, but Becky showed me my mistake. Well, it’s live and l’arn.

“Then Miss Huckleberries turned to us and smiled.

“‘*All* right,’ says she; ‘*goo’*-by.’

“Them Todds took the train for the city next mornin’. I drove ’em to the depot. James was kind of glum, but Clarissa talked for two. Her opinion of the Cape and Capers, ’specially me, was decided. The final blast was jest as she was climbin’ the car steps.

“‘Of all the barbarians,’ says she; ‘utter, uncouth, murderin’ barbarians in——”

“She stopped, thinkin’ for a word, I s’pose. I didn’t feel that I could improve on Becky Huckleberries’ conversation much, so I says:

“‘*All* right! *Goo’*-by!’”

MRS. Gueste looked out from the pink shade of her parasol at the cool green curl of the breakers down the beach with an actual frown between her fine brows. Her eyes were full of queries. Her delicate thumb and forefinger nipped a note. It was from her favorite brother. It had been brought to her that morning half an hour after hers had been sent apprising him of her arrival in Santa Barbara. It ran:

> DEAR LIL: Great to have you here. Awfully sorry can't lunch. Another engagement can't break. See you afternoon.
>
> WALLIE.

That *was* a note to have from one's favorite brother, her frown said, as she turned to her friend.

"But if her family is so good——" she began, taking up the conversation where they had dropped it. The sentence seemed connected in her mind with the note, at which she looked.

"Oh, but they can't manage her," replied Julia Crosby, punching her parasol tip into the sand. "Mr. Remi died when Blanche was a baby. Mrs. Remi is a nervous invalid. Blanche has run wild since she could run at all. If she were a boy—well, she'd be the 'black sheep.'"

"Is she *fast*?" said Lillian Gueste, with horrified emphasis.

"Oh, *no*!" Mrs. Crosby hastened. But she seemed to find it difficult to explain to her friend just what Blanche Remi was. "She's—well, she's wild. She does such things—things none of the other girls do. She drives a sulky. She rides in a man's coat and red gloves. It sounds so silly when you tell it," she ended, feeling she had failed to properly impress her friend, "but you can always see her coming a mile away, whether it's golf or a garden party."

"You mean she's a tomboy?" said Mrs. Gueste, doubtfully. Her smile said that Walter would never take that sort seriously.

"Oh, if it were *only* that!" Mrs. Crosby's gesture was eloquent. "Do you know what they call her here?"

"They?"

"Well, everybody. Some man, I think, started it. They call her 'the Wrecker.'"

"The Wrecker?" Mrs. Gueste's inquiring eyes were on her friend.

"Because every man in Santa Barbara," Julia Crosby went on, "has at one time or another——"

"Run after her? Oh!" Disgust was in the last little word. Mrs. Gueste understood it all in a moment. "She's *that* sort. Is she pretty?"

"Stunning! Overwhelming!" said Mrs. Crosby, generously. She herself was little and indefinite.

"M-m-m! So poor Wallie is overwhelmed?" Lillian mused. "Julie, why didn't you let me know sooner?"

"But, my dear girl, it was all so vague! Even now I don't know that there's anything—but there was getting to be such talk!"

"But you think he's serious?" Mrs. Gueste's smile was deprecating.

"I don't know. That's why I telegraphed. I knew *you* would." Her eyes roved anxiously down the beach, and suddenly fixed. "There they are now," she said, with a small, sharp excitement.

Lillian Gueste started, peered under her pink parasol. Some dozen rods distant the plaza and the beach below it fluttered with the moving colors of a crowd. Between the plaza and the bath houses lay an empty space of beach, and down that glittering white perspective came a horse with a light sulky. They could make out two people in it: a man, holding on his hat; a woman bareheaded, driving—driving so that one wheel of the sulky spun the foam of the receding water. The man was Wallie—Wallie laughing, hugely enjoying it.

Still at a little distance the sulky stopped; the driver gave the reins to her escort, and sprang out with the light, certain leap of a cat. An indifferent Englishman, who had noticed nothing before, put his glass in his eye and stared. It may be he had never seen anything so tawny, so glistening, so magnificent, as the undulant masses of hair gathered up on the crown of the girl's head. A long tan-colored ulster, the collar turned up around her throat, fell to her feet. She stood pulling off a pair of red gloves, looking up and laughing to Walter Carter, who got out with his habitual lazy lurch.

The two were near the narrow plank that led from the women's bath houses. Bathers were coming out in bathrobes, which, five steps from the door, they left hanging on the rope, while they hopped, high-shouldered and shivering, down the beach. The girl kicked off her tennis shoes and handed them to Walter, stripped off her ulster, and stood out in a scarlet bathing dress that, covering the knees, left bare legs, slim, brown and dimpled as a child's. She lingered across the interval of dry sand, calling over her shoulder to Walter something that left him a-grin with amusement; then went joyously down the dip of the beach for the rush of the incoming breakers, and launched into it with the swash of a little, launching ship. The lawlessness of it was beyond any words Lillian knew.

"You see, she does things like that," Mrs. Crosby explained in her friend's ear.

“Oh, impossible!” Lillian murmured, watching Blanche Remi’s bathing dress glimmer through the green breakers. “Do you suppose Wallie is going in, too?” she added, glancing down the beach.

The young man was sauntering toward them, unconscious of his sister’s scrutiny, his steps directed, probably, toward the men’s bath houses on the left of where the two women sat. He was as lankly dawdling as ever, but Lillian noted, with a vague uneasiness, his usual air of agreeable *ennui* was supplanted by one of half-wakened interest. The remnant of a smile was on his habitually serious face.

Mrs. Gueste stood up and motioned with her lorgnon. He saw, stared, smiled broadly, delightedly, and hastened toward her.

“I say,” he said, subsiding between them, “this *is* luck! But why didn’t you let a chap know you were coming a few hours before you landed? What started you, anyway? I thought you had planned for Castle Crag.”

Julia Crosby’s telegram was hot in Lillian’s pocket, and she thought, anxiously, that Julia’s face was conscious enough to give the thing away. But Walter was frankly unsuspicious.

“If I’d known just a day ahead,” he reproached her, “I could have lunched with you as well as not.”

“But your engagement?” Lillian hinted.

“Oh, to bring Miss Remi down for a dip. I was going up for you while she paddled ’round, but now I’ve got you here, too, I won’t have to budge.”

Little as she liked the idea of being thus lumped with Blanche Remi, Lillian made it a point to be lovely.

“Miss Remi?” she wondered, sweetly.

“Why, yes. Didn’t you see us?” He was just a little conscious. “There she is at the raft,” he added. “You must meet her, Lil; mustn’t she, Mrs. Crosby? There’s no one in Santa Barbara like her.”

“Really?” Mrs. Gueste looked through her lorgnon at the glinting speck traveling out on the water.

Wallie frowned. He hated his sister’s lorgnon, and her lorgnon manner was his *bête noir*.

“I am afraid we shan’t be able to wait until Miss—er”—she searched for the name—“comes out. We must be 122
at the house by three.”

“Oh, that’s all right. I’ll signal her to come back. Where’s something?” His hand fell on his sister’s parasol, and before she could protest he had it at the edge of the beach, waving over his head. It was probably the first conspicuous performance of that very discreet parasol; and as for the punctilious Wallie——!

“Do you suppose he gets that sort of thing from her?” Lillian articulated.

“I suppose so,” Mrs. Crosby agreed, faintly. She felt a wish to escape being present at the approaching introduction. “If you don’t mind, Lily,” she excused herself, “I really ought to run uptown and see Mrs. Herrick for a few moments. You remember I promised her.”

“Why, of course. Wallie will see me home.” Lillian smiled, remembering how in their school days Julia’s conscience had always precipitated the crisis, and dodged the consequences.

She sat composedly alone in the sand, watching the glinting speck drawing landward. Wallie stood awaiting it, his toes in the water, his sister’s pink parasol held like a saber in his hand.

As the girl came splashing through the shallow flow, dripping, glowing, shaking the drops from her hair, Mrs. Gueste saw she carried a little dog, a terrier, in her arms, and this seemed to put the last touch to her conspicuousness. She came up the beach talking, gesticulating vividly, to Walter. Once she nodded to a loose-lipped, pleasant-eyed man who passed them, but she did not give Mrs. Gueste a glance until she was fairly before her—until Walter spoke his sister’s name. Then, when she gave suddenly the full glow of her face, and the strength and light of her hot, hazel eyes, she was, as Mrs. Crosby had said, overwhelming. The touch of her damp hand to Mrs. Gueste’s delicate glove was the touch of compelling physical magnetism that could be looked at safely only through a lorgnon.

But not the lorgnon, nor its accompanying manner, disconcerted Miss Remi. Her own manner was easy, without freeness.

“You *do* look like your brother, Mrs. Gueste,” she said, seating herself in the sand, and warning the wet terrier away with upraised finger.

“Flattered, Lillian?” Wallie murmured, with cloaked satisfaction.

“Oh, you’re very nice looking, Wallie,” Blanche Remi told him, with a frank, smiling, up-and-down glance.

Mrs. Gueste’s lorgnon rose sharply to this sentence, but her voice was gentle.

“Don’t you find it rather cold going in this morning?” she asked.

The girl’s faint change of expression appreciated the round turn that had been given the conversation.

“Oh, it’s always pretty cold, but I keep moving, so I keep warm,” she said. There was a glint of mischief in her wonderful eyes.

“But don’t you feel cold while you’re out?” Mrs. Gueste persisted.

The girl, sitting unwinking, unfrowning, in the glare, looked like some luxurious creature sunning itself. A faint, fine powdering of freckles gave even her skin a tawny hue. Even down the throat, where Lillian was milk white, she showed a tint like old ivory, with creamy shadows under the square chin. She looked up at Lillian Gueste’s face in the dainty shadow of her parasol.

“Do I *look* cold?” she laughed. “You must let me show you how to keep warm. Do you swim? Oh, you should! It saves your nine lives. You ride, of course?”

“If I can find a horse that suits me.” Mrs. Gueste’s soft reply suggested she was hard to suit.

“You must try my Swallow. She’s perfect. We must have a saddle party, mustn’t we, Wallie?” the girl appealed to him. “But first you may take me to call on Mrs. Gueste. I know she’ll have too many engagements to risk calling on her hit-or-miss.”

Mrs. Gueste’s reply was a murmur, as she rose, shaking out her soft linen skirts.

Walter Carter felt indefinitely uncomfortable. Blanche Remi stood beside his sister, slightly taller, more vigorously, more carelessly, more brilliantly made. She looked rather commanding, as if she were used to having things her own way; which was precisely what Lillian, little as she looked it, was used to having. But now her manner toward Blanche was almost appealing. 123

“I am going to beg your escort away from you, Miss Remi, if you will permit it, just to drive me back to Mrs. Crosby’s. I haven’t seen him for three months, you know.” Her voice and eyes somehow made three months seem interminable.

Blanche did not show by the flicker of an eyelash that she appreciated the cleverness of this maneuver. “Why, that’s a dreadful loss of time for Wallie,” she said.

He thanked her with a glance that made his sister wince.

“Then shall I come back for you—Blanche?” The name came out after a moment’s hesitation.

“Oh, no! Blair Hemming will drive me back.”

Lillian felt a vague resentment that the girl should be so sure.

“And don’t forget about to-morrow,” Blanche warned Wallie, bidding good-by, and left him wondering what had been to-morrow. Nothing had, but the words, as Blanche had wickedly foreseen, lingered in Mrs. Gueste’s mind, and vexed her.

“You have so many engagements, I wonder whether I shall see you at all,” she hinted, as he handed her into the runabout.

He flushed slightly. “Well,” he said, genially, as he took the reins, “you know there are mighty few of ’em I wouldn’t break for you, Lil.”

As they spun down the spongy asphalt of the boulevard, between the palms and electric-light poles, she was asking herself why it was that good, unsuspecting fellows like Wallie were always pounced upon by such women. She felt it was horrid to meddle, but this creature was so astonishingly impossible, and yet so overwhelming, that Wallie could hardly be expected to rescue himself. But she was cautious.

“Did you meet Miss Remi here, Wallie?” she asked him.

“Yes, at something at the country club.”

“Does she go *there*?”

“Why, of course. All the nice people go there.” He looked at her in lazy surprise.

“Oh!” she said, with a falling inflection. It was discouraging to find him so unconscious. “Does she go much?”

“Everywhere. She’s awfully popular. How does she strike you?” He tried to be casual.

“She’s not like anyone else I’ve seen in Santa Barbara,” Lillian replied.

He fairly glowed. She had never seen Wallie so enthusiastic.

“You’re just right, Lil! There *is* no one like her. She makes every other girl look like a dough doll! It’s not only that she’s beautiful—she isn’t afraid of anything, she don’t care how she looks—she’s just crackling with life.”

“Do *you* admire her so awfully?” Lillian said, with such an amazed emphasis on the personal pronoun as brought him up short.

“Why—er—of course. Why not? Don’t you?” The color came up under his brown skin.

“Well,” she said, slowly, “of course I’ve only met her once; but really, Wallie, is she quite—fine?”

“Fine? What do you mean?”

She knew that he knew what she meant. The word was not a new one from her. It was her measure, her ruler by which she judged the world. He was not so unconscious, then, as he seemed.

“I mean what you’ve been so accustomed to in women, you dear, that you don’t know they can lack it,” she said, caressingly. “Is she *nice*? *Is* she a lady?”

Something threatening looked out of her brother’s eyes. “Well, I introduced her to you.”

“I know. You put me in rather a difficult position, Wallie.”

“See here, Lil”—he dragged out his words with slow emphasis—“I don’t know who you’ve been listening to, but you can take it from me that’s she as fine as silk and as good as gold.” 124

“Oh, as to her goodness, I haven’t a doubt, of course.” She seemed to set this aside as a trifle. “But as to fineness, now, Wallie, what do you think of a girl driving through town in her bathing suit, with a man, and jumping out of her coat and shoes on the beach before everyone, as she did? She did it to make a sensation; and do you think *that* fine, Wallie?”

He flushed, but laughed.

“Nonsense. It was a whim—a freak. She thought nothing at all of any effect on the beach. That’s the trouble; she thinks too little of the effect, and so——”

“And so she wears no stockings—and so she’s called ‘the Wrecker,’” his sister added, with inconsequent effect.

His face was grave, even disturbed. “Oh, yes, I’ve heard *that*. But she’s so beautiful, so happy, you can’t wonder at the attraction; and you know there’s always gossip. And then she’s run wild. She has had no one to take care of her——” he left the sentence hanging.

His sister inwardly shivered. When a man talked about “taking care” in that tone, she seemed to see the end.

They were winding up the wide, wandering Main Street, the rose-covered verandas of the Arlington on their left; on the right an old garden ran back to the white stucco fronts and red tiles of the De la Gera place.

“Wallie,” Lillian asked him, softly, “*are* you in love with that girl?”

“Me! Oh, what a question, Lil!” He laughed at her—his nice, lazy laugh she loved so much.

“Are you, Wallie?”

He put up his monocle to meet her lorgnon. “My dear girl, *do* I look pale and sunken?”

“You are dodging the question. But think”—she was light, almost playful, over it—“is she the sort of woman you would care to introduce as your—wife?”

Wallie looked a little startled, but he took her tone. “My dear Lil, I haven’t thought of her in quite that way.” He grew more serious. “I think she’s wonderful. I never saw anyone like her. You must know her better.”

“I don’t see how I can,” Lillian sighed.

“You mean you won’t *see* her?”

“I suppose I must, since you are going to bring her to call. But I won’t go about with her. I can’t. Couldn’t you see there on the beach—she isn’t our kind?”

“She looks nothing like you, certainly, Lillian,” he replied, coolly, “if you insist on judging people by appearances, but it’s hardly a ‘fine’ way to judge.”

“Now, Wallie——” they had turned into the Crosby drive, between the rose of sharon and syringa bushes.

“Of course,” he went on, “you’re always waving that word around as if it were the only thing worth being, and every virtue hung on it. But what about honor, and generosity, and simplicity, and courage? Are they nothing compared to it?”

The runabout had stopped before the piazza steps, but Lillian sat still a moment, frowning faintly.

“When I said ‘fine,’” she answered, “I didn’t mean fine finish, cultivation, which is a surface thing, but I meant fine fiber, which goes deep and counts in every way with everything. One judges the big things by the small ones,” she said, as Wallie handed her out, “and remembering mother, and the way we were brought up to feel and understand, I think you will presently agree with me that Miss Remi is hardly—fine.”

She gave him a smile with the last word; and her look, the movement of her graceful head in the turn, the poise of her delicate body, the fall of her delicate dress, showed forth every shade of meaning which that word could contain.

The memory of her thus was with him all the afternoon. It buzzed like a bee in his brain that night through the dinner at the Crosbys’, though Lillian, ravishing in daintily blended shades of chiffon, referred by no suggestion to the talk of the afternoon. She and her word, he thought, mutually described one another. Lillian was fine, and fine meant Lillian.

Deep down or on the surface, he knew she was the real thing. And the inevitable, following question was, what was Blanche Remi? She was the real thing, too. He was sure of that. Lil was ’way off, he told himself, when she said the big things showed up in the little. He had been bothered all his life by the petty goodnesses of women, and now that he had found one who had the great goodness he was not going to be disturbed by Lil’s scruples. As for being “in love” with Blanche Remi—Lillian had put it to him as he had never put it to himself.

From the first night her marvelous eyes had flashed into his indolent notice, he had felt an inclination to exterminate every other man who talked to her. And there were *so* many. The supposition on the tongues of Santa Barbara that all these men made love to her he had not believed—could not have tolerated. Why he had not made love to her himself was not from lack of impulse, but something in the very greatness of the emotions and passions she roused in him, something in her fine, free ignorance of the trifles that make up the virtue of most women, had made any trifling with her impossible to him. But he felt himself brought down to facts. What was he finally intending toward this girl whom he never saw without wanting to kiss, to carry off? His wife?

Well, Lil was right. Blanche did lack the superficial polish. Strange he hadn’t noticed that before. But that was just the use of Lil. She could be a lot of help if she could only be made to like Blanche, and, of course, all that was necessary was that Lil should know her better. He would, he decided, take Blanche to call there to-morrow.

With a little telephoning this was arranged, and Wallie had it all made out just how beautifully he would direct that interview and carry it through. But the direction was reversed at the beginning by so small an incident as a woman’s hat. Not that the hat was, in itself, so slight an affair. Indeed, when Blanche came out to where he waited her, curbing the most impatient horse in Santa Barbara, the hat was the first thing he saw.

It was wide. It was hung about with lace—too much lace. It was covered with pink roses—too many roses. Walter did not quite know what to think of it, but he had a feeling that Lillian would.

As Blanche sprang into the cart with that vigorous, energetic lift of her body in which the muscles seemed always tense with action:

“Where’s that little white, flyaway thing you used to wear?” he ventured.

“Oh, I don’t know—this is a new one. Don’t you like it?”

“Isn’t it a little—large for driving?”

She flushed but smiled. “Not for calling. Now, Wallie, that’s the first time since you met me that you’ve noticed my clothes. I don’t believe you’ve known whether I’ve had any. Is it because you’ve been having ideals put under your nose? Is it”—she laughed, drawing on a pair of extremely long lavender gloves—“because you are afraid your sister won’t approve of my hat, any more than she approved of my legs?”

It was this astonishing freedom of speech, more than the hat, that made him uneasy of the approaching interview. Of course Blanche could say what she liked to him. He understood. But the very idea of her talking that way to Lillian made him shiver.

But Blanche did not talk “that way” to Lillian. There in the Crosby garden, where the magnolias dropped languid petals on the lawn, she was touchingly like a little girl on her good behavior. She tried, with her anxious sweetness, to make Wallie’s sister like her. But Lillian had seen the hat first, and got no further. It was to the hat she talked, and it seemed to Walter that his sister’s costume, so notably discreet, somehow set off all the daring of Blanche Remi’s gown, the telling blacks of which were touched in at the most unexpected intervals. Was Lillian, instead of helping, trying to put Blanche at her worst? He thrust that thought out of sight as 126
disloyal. He sat, wretchedly uncomfortable, trying to remember whether he had ever seen Lillian wear long lavender gloves, hearing Lillian deftly turn and dispose of, unanswered, Blanche Remi’s suggestions for horseback excursions and “plunge parties.”

He expected, with every covert snub, that Blanche would suddenly, diabolically turn tables on her, as he had seen her do with other women. But Blanche, who had always had what she wanted, now, for perhaps the first time in her life, wanted a woman to like her. And it did not occur to her that she should fail in her desire. But what had been her strength was now her failure. Her compelling magnetism alarmed Lillian Gueste. She had been thoroughly convinced at first glance that the girl was “bad form.” But now she felt her force as something terrible and threatening to Wallie. The very sweetness of the smile Blanche gave her in going seemed too rich.

“But the protection,” Lillian reasoned, going over the interview afterward with herself, “is that Wallie is beginning to see.”

Wallie, bitterly irritated, saw, indeed, many trifles that he had failed to see before, perplexing as so many pricks. Things he had thought amusing in Blanche Remi—her red gloves, her white spats, her man’s hunting coat, the terrier she took to receptions—would they do for Mrs. Walter Carter? Suppose he should put it to Blanche that way, would she take it from him? he wondered. He felt he must put it to her some way now—the questions of Mrs. Walter Carter—for in the background, dimly threatening him, was that aggregation, each one a future possibility—the pasts he would not contemplate—and all villainously responsible for the name gossip had fastened upon her, “the Wrecker.” He knew that Santa Barbara accounted her a “dangerous” woman, but to him, even with her fatal fascination, she had always seemed a child. And now it came to him that it was not the help of a woman, but the protection of a man, Blanche Remi required most.

He felt he could not wait a day, a moment, to tell her; but somehow it was very difficult to find that moment; his time was so unostentatiously but so thoroughly permeated and broken with Lillian’s engagements for him. A week escaped in which, without having seen Blanche less, he had seen her under circumstances that admitted no opportunity.

Lillian had not, as she first threatened, ignored Blanche. She had invited her, if not to dine, at least to a beach tea, to a driving party; had talked with her at the country club; had kept her before Wallie, always at arm’s length, as if to give him ample opportunity for comparison.

Walter could find no flaw in his sister’s attitude of disinterested politeness, of pale cordiality toward Blanche Remi, but side lights on it now and then made him suspicious. He was bewildered—as bewildered as a man tangled in a veil. He felt that the first fine intimacy of his fellowship with Blanche was dulled. He was distressed with a sense of being on a more formal footing with her. At the same time others—men who had been very much in the background—seemed to come forward into her notice. He saw her at the country club dances magnetize the men too bored to dance into an interested circle round her. Dismayed, he saw her first with one, then with another, driving, swimming, sitting on the beach under one parasol in the association so intimate, so informal, that, before Lillian came, he had usurped to the exclusion of the many. Finally, out of the crowd, as the one oftenest with her, he saw Blair Hemming, the man of loose lips and good-natured eyes, to whom Blanche had bowed that morning on the beach.

Walter had thought him a decent enough fellow, but now he was suddenly vile. And Blanche? Her behavior was unreasonable and unfair. But perhaps he had let himself drift too much with Lillian’s plans. A little self- 127
accusing, a little self-righteous, he rang up the Remis’s to make an appointment to ride horseback with Blanche that afternoon.

Her voice reached him, nasal, resonant, with a vibrant quality that touched the ear with a fascination deeper than sweetness. She had a luncheon engagement at the club.

He was annoyed that he had not known of this.

“How about to-morrow?”

“Very well,” came back; “but make it a foursome. Get your sister to come.”

“Of course, if you would rather,” he answered, a little stiffly. “What *has* happened?” he asked himself. He knew he had done nothing. Was Blanche changing? Had he only imagined her attitude toward him differed from her attitude toward half a dozen others? It had seemed different—but how could a man be sure?

Harassed, suspicious, he hesitated over making the proposal to Lillian until the next afternoon at the last moment. He rode over to the Crosbys’ and found his sister, fair and diaphanous in her mousseline gown, crumbling bread to the gold fish in the fountain. The look she gave his proposition, sweet as it was, made him

uncomfortable. Any man would do to fill in the fourth place, he had stupidly said.

"Any man for Miss Remi?" she had asked him. And he had fired.

She heard him with a half smile, softly beating the ground with the dried palm leaf she prettily carried as a parasol.

Well, she told him, she did not care particularly for such an expedition. It was such a time since she had seen him alone! Wouldn't it be much nicer to make it just a *tête-à-tête* dinner at Estrelda's?

He replied, with irritation, that if she did not care to make one of the party, it would not prevent him from taking Miss Remi.

"Ah, a previous arrangement," Lillian said, taking in his whip and his riding boots as if she had just noticed them. "Well, you must realize by this time just what sort of a person she is."

"I am far from being sure, but I intend to find out this afternoon."

She turned sharply. "You mean you are going to ask her to marry you?"

"Well, if I am?"

"After the way she's been running about with this Hemming?"

"Lillian—look out," he warned. His sister's smile was tight and fine.

"Oh, well," she said, with a little shrug, letting her hands drop in a gesture that seemed to make an end of the matter. At the moment her brother appeared to her no less than a monster. But she watched him down the drive with a revulsion of mood. She felt he was leaving her forever, her Wallie, her little brother! He was a year younger than she. She had let her sense of personal injury get in the way of his happiness—and he was going to that woman.

She stood, the palm leaf fallen from her hand. He must be stopped, interrupted somehow. He should not do a thing in a heat to regret forever. Calling his name, she hurried down the drive to the gate, but he had already turned out of the side street, and was beyond both sight and call. She fairly ran across the garden, over lawns and borders, her gown streaming, regardless of dust or wet. Had anyone seen her running, flushed and breathless, across the piazza and up the stairs, he would scarcely have recognized, in her abandon, Mrs. Cornelius Gueste.

She hurried into her habit, trying to remember whether Wallie had said they would go down through Monticito and come back by the beach, or whether it were just the other way about. Where could she hope to catch up with them? It would be a humiliating affair enough for her; but she was not in the least thinking of herself, but only of Wallie, and some way by which she could avert his catastrophe.

Walter had departed with the responsibility of what he was about to do heavily upon him. His sister's look had not failed to affect him. He felt he was adventuring, risking, going to deal with unknown quantities.

He was to meet Blanche in town, where she had told him she had some shopping to do. Halfway down the wide, wandering Main Street he saw her mare fastened in front of the confectioner's. Riding up, he could glimpse through the glass door Blanche, a tall habited figure, strolling here and there, sampling the sweets. He sat waiting, scowling in the glare of the afternoon sun on white awnings and sidewalks. He saw Hemming jump out of his cart a few doors down, in front of the saddler's, with a broken bridle over, his arm.

"Hey, Carter!" He came and leaned on the flank of Walter's horse, his hand on the back of the saddle.

"Beastly familiar," Walter thought.

Hemming's good-natured, sensual face was vivid with animal spirits. "Where were you last night?" he said. "You *did* miss it!"

"What?" drawled Walter.

"Mrs. Jack Castra's dinner dance. Great!" Hemming's eyes narrowed. He shook his head. "I got Blanche Remi a bid. You know she wanted one like the devil. Mrs. Jack is a terrible stickler, but we're great pals, and she let me have it."

"Miss Remi went?" Walter's voice was very lazy.

"Did she go?" Hemming laughed. "I'll tell you what it is," he said, "the Wrecker's a wonder! She's such a wonder that most of the women say, 'Hands off.' But between you and me, she makes every other woman look like a Dutch doll."

Walter had an impulse to strike Hemming. His own words had been flung back at him, but he failed to recognize them.

"Oh, I had a good time," Hemming repeated, significantly, but unmalicious. "So long." He sauntered into the saddler's.

Walter watched the confectioner's door opening. So Blanche was under an obligation—such an obligation—to Hemming! He had not thought Hemming such a bad lot, but now—— Things Lillian had said crowded back to him. And Blanche's attitude lately? The color thickened in his sallow cheeks.

Blanche came out of the door with a swing. She was eating a chocolate. As she stood under the rippling awning, pulling on her red gloves, he saw she was glowing with excitement. The weight of her splendid hair under her man's hat, the play of color in her eyes, the slight backward fling of her figure as she poised—each detail proclaimed eloquently how fully she was a conscious, vital force, stupendous to reckon with.

"Where's Mrs. Gueste?" was the first question she tossed at him, with a straight, studying look.

"Er—she had a headache—and—er, another engagement," he added, lamely.

Blanche laughed. “One would have been enough,” she said; but the curve of her lip quivered. She stopped his reply with a second question.

“Who ran away as I came out?” she asked, settling in her saddle.

“Blair Hemming.” He looked at her sharply, but she showed no consciousness; only a smile, as though Hemming were something funny.

“Did you have an amusing time last night?” he asked her.

Some vague reminder of Lillian Gueste’s voice startled her. The color deepened in her cheeks. “Oh, lovely! Hemming”—she never gave a title to a name—“took me to the Castras’.”

“Did he get you the invitation?”

She looked at him in surprise.

“I didn’t *ask* him for it. He offered it.”

“But you took it?”

“Why not? Everyone does it.”

Walter looked at her uneasily. He knew well enough that everyone didn’t. He said stiffly: “I don’t like the idea of your being under obligations to a man like Hemming.”

She looked at him with a quick flush. It might have been anger or pleasure. But then her lashes lowered over her eyes to cover the secret.

“*You* don’t!” she said. “And how do you suppose Hemming likes my being under obligations to you?”

He was aghast. “What has *he* got to say about it?”

“What have *you*?” She let it fall gently.

“Good heavens!” he burst out. “Do you lump *us*? I thought that you and I were—were——”

“Friends?” she filled in without a quaver. “We were. But you’ve changed, Wallie.”

“Since——”

“Your sister came.”

“What nonsense——” he began, eagerly.

“No”—her eyes were somber, smoldering—“she *hates* me!” Blanche emphasized the word with her whip on the mare’s flank. “She thinks I’m awful! Hasn’t she said that to *you*?”

“She has said nothing of the sort. She has nothing to do with it.”

“She has everything!” Blanche said, suddenly, passionately. She jerked the mare’s head fiercely.

They had turned out of the dazzling street into a softly sprinkled side way, where the pepper trees wept their tassels in the dust. Blanche kept her eyes on the bit of blue sky that seemed to close the end of the street like a jewel in a setting.

“Before she came you took me for just what I was. You believed in me, Walter. But ever since she said things, I feel—oh, I don’t know! As if you were a long way off, watching me, and wondering about everything I say and do.”

He broke in: “Because once or twice I criticised some trifle!”

“Oh,” she cried, “don’t think I wouldn’t take criticism from you! I’d take a lot. I’d even wear the sort of hats your sister does!”

“Oh, confound the sort of hats! You know that’s not it. It’s—I—love you, Blanche.”

He brought out the little isolated sentence breathlessly, with a jerk. His sallow face was flushed.

Blanche was very pale. The horses took five steps while there was silence. Then:

“It’s sweet of you to say that.” The girl’s voice was shaken. “But you know, Walter, as *she* does, I’m not her kind.”

“But I don’t want you to be!”

“Don’t you, Walter?” She looked at him earnestly. “And I’m not your kind, either. I mean, I’m not like the women you’ve known. *She’s* made me feel that—your sister. It’s one reason why I hate her. Oh, I do!” She nodded at him. “You may as well know that. She makes me see what I’ve missed—little things I thought didn’t matter. But now——”

“But, child,” he interrupted, exasperated, manlike, with her self-depreciations, “those little things don’t count! It isn’t that. But if you loved me——”

“If I *loved* you?” She turned large, astonished eyes on him.

“Well, you wouldn’t take things from Blair Hemming. I won’t stand it,” he broke out. “He was talking about you, Blanche.”

“What did he say?”

“That makes no difference. A woman can’t afford to be talked about in any way. She can’t know a man in such a way.”

“In what way?” The girl was breathless.

He seemed to see long perspectives of pasts: the crowds around her at the dances; the men at dinners,

talking to her across the disapproval of the other women; the looks following her down the beach. “Well, you know what I mean,” he answered, sullenly.

“Oh, Walter!” Her arms fell at her sides with a gesture of eloquent despair. She seemed to divine his retrospection. “But I can’t help it! I don’t do it on purpose—though I know people say I do. *You* don’t—don’t think I’m ‘the Wrecker’?” She aimed the word at him like a blow, and while he sought an answer: “You don’t believe me. You don’t trust me. You’re wondering now whether I let Hemming make love to me. Hemming!”—she leaned toward him with a savage head shake. “I may not know a good hat when I see one, but I know a good man!”

The spur pricked. The mare bounded. She was rods away before Walter realized he was deserted. Then he 130
followed. The girl turned and motioned him back.

“Go away, go away!” she cried. There was something at once so imperious and so entreating in voice and gesture that he involuntarily halted, and she wheeled and spurred on at a gallop.

If she had not ridden so headlong she must have shrieked. The tempest in her was too much for expression. She saw, subconsciously, a gray blur of olive trees streaming past, with here and there the richer note of orange orchards, and always the road before her, an intense white line over and around the smooth-topped hills. She did not slacken pace at the passing phaëtons, though these may have contained people whom she knew. She dared not look behind her, through a stifling hope and doubt that Walter had followed. She breasted the last hill crest, where the road lifts out of the gardens and orchards of Monticito to the high, wind-raked bluff above the sea.

Here she reined in and turned and looked back down the long, straight stretch of road she had come. Empty, far as eye could see. She listened, breathlessly, but the interminable whisper of the eucalyptus leaves above her head was the only sound. And she had thought so surely he would follow!

She covered her face with her hands and sobbed—crying like a man, with deep chest respirations that shook her whole body. The mare, feeling a relaxed rein, moved a few steps. The girl’s hands fell from her face. She looked seaward through the slim, swaying eucalyptus trees. The tears rolled down her cheeks to the corners of her twitching mouth. Mechanically she wiped them away with the wrist of her red glove. It left odd, bloodlike streaks on her tawny skin. They gave a menacing look to her despair. She was not thinking of how she looked, but of whom she had left, of how she loved him! She was feeling, with her blind forsakenness, that if Walter gave her up she was lost. If he only knew how little the other people mattered! How good, how awfully, abjectly good, she could be if she had him—the only man who had never made love to her! She remembered, with a stir of pure pleasure, how at first she had been piqued and puzzled that he did not. Afterward, how she had loved him for it! But since this woman, his sister, had come, Blanche did not know how it had been brought about, but she knew that she and Walter, who had been so close, so understanding, were apart and at odds. He had trusted her, and now he suspected her.

She saw Lillian Gueste’s hand in it. Blanche did not reason; she only felt, and hated the subtle and delicate treason. Did Lillian Gueste suppose, she asked herself, that because a woman wore large hats and loud gloves she had no right to the man she loved?

She rode along the cliff edge at a foot pace, her eyes abstractedly on the dancing shadows of eucalyptus leaves the sun painted in the dust. She wondered was this the close of what had been opening out before her as her life? She thought, with her primitive reasoning, were Lillian only out of the way—her mind did not get further than that. But Blanche had felt from the first that Lillian Gueste had come to Santa Barbara for no other reason than rescuing her brother, and that she did not intend to go until she took Wallie with her. “Could she do that?” Blanche wondered in a panic. Had an opportunity offered, she would have pushed Lillian Gueste out of her way as she would have thrust a pebble from her path.

The sun, falling low in the western sky, made towers of tree shadows, and spread an iridescence over the in creeping fog, as she followed the descending road downward toward the arroya, where a bridle path slipped seaward under willows. She had taken that path often before. It met the beach below what was the usual limit for riders, but she loved the long, exciting gallop, the scramble among the rocks, the spice of danger at the narrow turns about the two points when the tide was coming in.

The salt smell of the sea met her, strong with reek of kelp, as she approached its thunder through the 131
willows. The range of sea and sky, the free wind blowing between, gave her release from thought and scope to act. The tide was running in high and full. Where the first bold bluff jutted out, a distance of some six yards, the sliding foam already lapped the rock. Once around the turn of the bluff, the beach lay before her—a long white, empty sweep under black cliffs.

She rode at an easy canter, breathing in the stinging salt air, looking out upon the water, where the dark “seaward line” swung with the swell a mile out in “the channel.” She had lost the choking tears, the despair of her first rush down the Monticito road. She felt not happy, but wildly at liberty. The wind took her hat, and she laughed, seeing it spin down the beach. The tingling breeze in her hair whipped out the short, springy curls. The high animal spirits that had helped her over situations where a less vital woman would have been overwhelmed had begun to reassert themselves in the exercise and open air. She scanned the empty beach perspective. What a gallop to the far point! She touched the mare, then pulled her up sharply in the first bound. The beach was not empty. Some one was riding—perhaps a quarter of a mile in front of her—imperfectly to be distinguished among the scattered rocks.

Her first thought was “Walter!” Trembling with eagerness, she peered under a sheltering hand. The rider was a woman. In the revulsion of her feeling, Blanche’s disappointment was an inarticulate sound. All her misery was back upon her. Who it was, riding slowly down the beach in a direction similar to her own, did not matter. She only wanted to avoid being seen—hatless, red-eyed, wild—by this woman, who, being a woman, was her natural enemy. She rode slowly, cautiously, hoping the other would quicken her pace, and put the next point between them. The sun had fallen into the fog, from under which the ocean thundered sullen, gray, up the shore.

Blanche wanted to get around the next point before dusk. She saw the horse in front—bright sorrel on the yellowish-white sand—drawing slowly near the black shoulder of rock; finally, fairly at the turn of it. In an instant it would be out of sight. No, it had stopped; stood motionless a full minute; then, to the girl's intense amazement, wheeled and came back down the beach at a quick lope. There seemed something of vexation in the sharp turn-about.

Had the woman seen, and come back to speak with her? Blanche wondered. There was no avoiding the meeting. Shaking her hair over her eyes, she rode forward. As the rider drew nearer, with a contraction of heart she recognized Lillian Gueste. At the same instant she knew that Lillian had not seen her.

Mrs. Gueste's face wore a preoccupied, a vexed, a vaguely anxious, look. The sand half quenched the sound of the horse's coming. They were almost abreast before she saw Blanche Remi, and then it was with a start, a stare of keen surprise, of interrogation, that effaced the first expression.

Blanche knew whom the questioning eyes missed. There was about them a subtle, tantalizing suggestion of Walter, and she felt the blood run in her temples as she bent her head in faint recognition.

Mrs. Gueste stopped.

"Where is my brother?" she said. She fairly challenged the other with it. That she did not name him Mr. Carter was a mark of her extreme surprise, alarm; for Blanche Remi, with discolored eyes, disheveled hair, and the red stains across her face, looked wild enough to have thrust a displeasing lover into the sea.

Blanche looked at and realized how she hated this woman, this unruffled perfection. The strength of her feeling frightened herself. But her voice was as cool as Mrs. Gueste's.

"I have no idea," she said, politely insolent, and made to go on.

Lillian Gueste's sharp scrutiny had taken in all the girl's misery, and supposed a scene. Her idea of what had been Walter's part in it made her, with a revulsion of relief, almost amiable. 132

"You can't get around that way," she said, looking over her shoulder at the point. The vexation was back on her face. "The tide is in."

The girl's eye ranged back along the beach. The black cliffs seemed suddenly to have marched seaward.

"Well, you can't get back *that* way," she said. "The water was up to the second point when I came through an hour ago—it's over the quicksand."

"Quicksand?" Lillian looked at her blankly. "Then what can we do?"

"Get around there," said Blanche, waving back to the near point.

"We can't." Irritation and unbelief were in Mrs. Gueste's voice.

"I've done it before. It's easy. Come on." Blanche was nonchalant in the face of the encroaching sea. The gulls were screaming above their heads, the sound of shattering water was in their ears, as they rode forward.

At the shoulder of the point the wind met them, and the inrush of the ocean. Here the beach sloped suddenly. The cliffs came out in a convex sweep of several rods, with a sharp jut of rock thrust out from the midst of it, like a fish's fin. Over it, up to the cliff face, the water fawned and leaped, and in its sucking recoil left bare for an instant a narrow neck of sand.

Blanche looked at the bulging bluff, the sharp rock. That made it bad. One could not make a straight dash—would have to make an angle—out and then back; and a moment's hesitation at the turn—well, it wouldn't do to meet the ebb there. Blanche knew the strength of the undertow.

With her eyes on the rising and receding water, she made a rapid calculation for the best moment to go in. She was excited, eager for the enterprise. She was surprised at the other woman's pallor.

"We can't get through there," Lillian Gueste said, half angrily. She looked small, pale, impotent, among the severities of waves and sky.

"Then where?" Blanche slid lightly from her saddle.

"If we should shout——" Lillian began.

Blanche almost laughed at her. Did this woman expect to be rescued? Blanche's experience had been that people in bad places had to get themselves out.

"Up on the cliff you couldn't hear a cannon fired down here," she said. "We *can* get through, only you must not be afraid." She began loosening the lower hooks of her habit bodice.

"What are you going to do?" Lillian asked, nervously. She felt fearful of what might happen next in these strange, perilous conditions.

"Take off my skirt. Better do the same. Then if a wave gets you you can use your legs."

Lillian looked at her in horror. "Oh, no!" she said, feeling somehow insulted.

"It's dangerous," said Blanche, swinging into her saddle man-fashion. In her boots and spurs, with her wide shoulders and narrow hips, she looked a beautiful boy. "You'd better be astride, anyway," she said.

"I can keep my saddle." Lillian's mouth twitched nervously. "Shall I go first?" she said. Blanche saw her hand on the rein tremble. In her excitement at the trick of the sea she had merged her personal attitude toward Lillian.

"No, follow me, and do as I do. Wait until the wave breaks, and go out with it. Then when you turn at the rock you won't have the ebb against you. You'll go up with the flow. It's perfectly safe. But you must not hesitate a minute. When I shout, dash!"

The breakers were coming in high and quick. The neck of sand next the cliff was seen only momently. The

nose of rock was perpetually in a boil of water.

Blanche waited, let the great seventh wave go by, and in the midst of the surge of its recoil dashed in. She felt the mare stagger as the tow took her. A swift, terrible force seized and snatched her seaward. She was swept along like a drift. Then, almost touching the point of rock, she was relinquished. With the roar of the next breaker sounding fairly upon her, she spurred savagely. The mare plunged with a boil of water to her knees, 133
with a wake of white behind her. She went up the beach with the spray of the driving ocean in her hair. She wheeled and waved to the woman on the other side.

Through flying foam she could see Lillian Gueste's face, a little white, a little strained in its composure. Blanche had felt no fear for herself, but now she had a thrill through her body, a withering sensation in her throat, to see Lillian Gueste waiting there, hanging on her word to make the rush. And the haunting semblance of Walter in the fixed eyes——

"Don't look at the water!" Blanche shouted. "Look at me! Now!" she screamed, to make herself heard above the breaking wave. But the horse and rider hesitated before the recoil of it; came on, seemed to hover on the brink of it.

"Go back!" Blanche shouted, with frantic gesticulation. The ebb was racing out. Lillian wavered, now fairly in; then the sorrel floundered out, belly deep in the surge. Now the girl saw him close upon the point of rock—now suddenly dragged out from it. A yard of fretted water heaved between. Blanche sat as if hypnotized, with the sight of a struggling horse and rider black etched on the green water. It rushed over her all at once who it was the ebb was taking out, and she was motionless. She saw the rider's face turned landward with the stark stare of the drowning appealing to her with Walter's eyes. The next moment she was in deep water. She breasted the current with a rush. She saw a horse, with empty saddle, struggling, swimming, drifting out; saw a swash of black tumble in the twisting tides that sucked it seaward. She made a plunge and seized a skirt. Her fingers held a flow of hair. Threshing hands caught at her stirrup. A body sprang tense to her lift. Then the sea had them again.

Eyes, ears, lungs, full of it. Blanche felt the mare gallantly struggling to keep footing; the steep sand seemed slipping away from under them. Then, with a roar, the dark parted. She gasped in the air. She saw Lillian's face wax white at her knee. She had not strength to lift more than the head and shoulders as she trailed the limp figure up the beach.

Her knees tottered as she slid from the saddle. Her ears were ringing. Or was some one, somewhere, really calling to her? A cart was plunging and bouncing down the grassy tussocks that dip from the coast road to the beach.

"Oh, Blair!" She cried the driver's name in a burst of relief.

"That you, Blanche?" He had jumped out of the cart and was running toward her. He saw the drenched figure on the sand.

"My Lord! Mrs. Gueste!"

Blanche's clutch on his arm hurt him. "Oh, *is* she dead?" she entreated him.

"Not by a good deal." He gave his flask to Blanche, and rolled his carriage robe around Lillian. Then he stripped off his mackintosh. "Here, girl," he said, and Blanche thrust her arms into the sleeves.

"Saw you down there," he said, lifting the unconscious woman's dead weight into the cart. His voice was matter-of-course, but his look said she was magnificent.

"Hurry, hurry!" Blanche implored. "Take her over to the Crosbys', Blair! Oh, quick!"

"Well, come on, then. I'll whirl you over in a jiffy."

"Oh, I'm going home—I'll ride. I'm all right," she said, through chattering teeth. "But she might—and Mr. Carter——"

"But, girl——"

"Oh, go, go!" She lifted herself into the saddle. Weak as she was, her nervous excitement carried her up.

"And mind, Blair, don't say anything—if you love me!" She almost laughed the last words at him. Then she was off.

She chose not to take the boulevard, but cut through the town by lanes and side streets, where in the dusk of gathering night and inclosing fog her dripping horse, her drenched habit, would escape observation. She 134
shook with nervous excitement, but the fast riding kept the blood pounding in her veins. She had no power to think coherently of what had happened. She had seen Blair Hemming lift Lillian Gueste into his cart, but the idea possessed her that Lillian had gone out in the tide, and drowned with that terrible face looking back to land, with Walter's eyes.

She urged the exhausted horse cruelly because the face seemed to stare at her out of the dark street ends. She seemed to look from the surface of things into an abyss of possibility. She felt afraid of herself as something horrible.

But as she turned into the drive between the ghostly acacias returned the little, concrete fear lest she be seen by anyone, most of all her mother. There were lights in the drawing-room windows that looked out on the drive oval, and Blanche cautiously took the far side, to be screened by the feathery palms.

Leaving the mare at the stable, and money in the stableman's hand, she stole tiptoe up the side stair. Once in her room, she stripped, bathed, rubbed her damp hair dry, tossed it up gleaming on the crown of her head, and, still in her glow and shiver of excitement, hooked herself into a black lace dinner gown glittering with jet, fastened a diamond crescent over her bosom, and swept in upon her mother and maiden aunt, who were patiently, resignedly, dining without the belated equestrienne.

“Why, darling!” her mother murmured, in gratified amazement. Blanche seldom bothered to dress for dinner, and to-night she seemed almost too dazzling to be real. She was surprised herself at the extent to which her bravado covered what had happened. Inwardly she was quaking. Her ears were alert for every sound.

“Did you have a nice time?” her mother asked her.

“Oh, lovely!” said Blanche, with a shiver.

“Where did you go?”

“Down the beach.” Blanche started. Her hand poised halfway to an olive. She heard what her ears had been pricking for—horses’ feet on the gravel drive.

With an effort she held herself quiet.

The Spanish maid opened the dining-room door. “Some one to see you, señora.”

Blanche, who had half risen, sank back in her chair.

“Why, who can it be?” Mrs. Remi was murmuring as she went into the hall.

Blanche sat listening, lips apart. She heard her mother exclaim; then a man’s voice exclaimed; she knew the voice; she rose. Her heart seemed beating in her throat. She heard her mother’s voice, perplexed, emphatic: “But she’s all right; she’s very well. There’s *some* mistake!”

Then Walter Carter’s, insisting: “But they were both in the water. Hemming saw her bring Lillian out. He drove my sister home. How could Blanche——” When she burst upon them.

“Walter!” The sight of him, wild-haired, pale, his mackintosh over his evening clothes, his general look of catastrophe, struck her with only one significance.

“Mrs. Gueste?” she gasped. “How is she?”

For a moment Walter could only stare at her, dazed. He had seen his sister—drenched, disheveled, white, unconscious—carried into the house. And here stood Blanche, vital, vigorous, self-possessed, groomed for a function.

“My God, no—it was you!” he stammered. “But—but is there any mistake?”

The soft sound of the dining-room door closing left them alone face to face. He came toward her. She stepped back.

“There’s no mistake. At least, we were in the water, and *she* was afraid.”

“But Hemming said she was washed out of the saddle—and the tow took her out, and you went after her and got her!” He still came toward her. It was hard to look him in the face, for the bewildered eyes reminded her of Lillian Gueste’s look when the tide took her out from the rocks. Blanche felt her bravado running out at her finger ends.

“But I didn’t—— I—I—oh, Walter, you don’t know what I did!” She faltered and sobbed. She leaned against the hatrack and buried her face in the folds of a coat.

“Why, child, you simply saved her!” His arms were around her, and he tried to pull the cloak from her face. “She wants to see you to-morrow. She wants to tell you——”

“Oh, no; I can’t. She wouldn’t if she knew——” Blanche’s voice was muffled on his shoulder.

“Well, what?” he muttered, his lips against her cheek.

The answer reached him, a half smothered, almost contented whisper:

“How I hated her!”

THE BLIND

IN empty days now left behind,
I asked why Love was counted blind.

No answer came until I learned
What every lover has discerned:

The blind—my answer ran—are reft
Of one thing, but how much is left!

Touch, hearing, every quickened sense
Thrills with an impulse thrice intense.

And so when Love has filled the heart,
Dull man awakes in every part;

Undreamed-of potencies are rife
Within him, crying “Sweet is life!”

And if half-blindness be his lot,
What matter—since he knows it not?

M. A. DeWolfe Howe.

A PERUSAL of the daily papers would lead one to the belief that racing, socially speaking, had just been discovered in New York. No account whatsoever is taken by the cheerful metropolitan of the rest of the country, though racing is going on from California to Washington, from Chicago to New Orleans—indeed, it is to the South that we go for both our hunters and our thoroughbreds. All through the Southern States there are little sporting communities hunting a pack of hounds, whose runs, if they took place in the neighborhood of New York, would be reported in all our papers by the *society*, not the sporting, editor.

For our thoroughbreds we still go to Kentucky. It was only the other day that I heard the owner of one of the great stock farms there complaining of the ignorance and extravagance of one of our younger Northern racing men, who sent his trainer South to *buy*, at any figure that he chose.

Washington, though now more cosmopolitan than Southern, gives, from the social standpoint, warm encouragement to racing. In all our cities now there seems to be growing up a young married coterie—parallel to the fashionable circle in New York. Such a characteristic little group is to be found in Philadelphia, in Chicago, in Baltimore and in Washington. This coterie, which is neither of diplomacy nor yet of old-time Washington, gives special attention to the Bennings track. Not but what the younger diplomats are to be found there, on Saturdays, when they are able to get away from their embassies and legations. Miss Roosevelt is an enthusiastic spectator. Oddly enough, in contrast to our Northern tracks, it seems to be permissible for two girls to go alone together to Bennings without escort. Maidens of careful upbringing may be seen stepping from the trolley at the race track as coolly as if it were a county fair.

If the New York papers take no account, socially speaking, of all these tracks, it is scarcely to be expected that their memories should go back as far as Jerome Park. It was a poor course, I am told, with bad turns and obscure corners, but prettier to look at than any we have had since. The lawn in front of the clubhouse—which was separated from the grand stand by the whole width of the track—was crowded by the members of a society smaller but more complete than Morris Park or Sheepshead has ever seen.

The opening of Belmont Park is destined, probably, to make a difference, to emphasize again the social side of the sport. The country club on the grounds—the club within a club, as it were—will draw a different set of people from those whom a mere jockey club can attract. It will be used quite independently of any question of racing by all the little communities of Long Island. If Hempstead and Westbury and Roslyn and Cedarhurst will come there to dine, and use it as the object of an automobile trip or a drive, there will be a well-established social life connected with it before the next race meeting opens.

I do not believe that any nation derives, as a whole, quite the delight from a race track that we do—with our Puritan traditions. To the English it is the national sport; to the French the extravagance of the smartest people; but to us, though both these elements may enter in, it is an intense excitement, which many of us have been 137
brought up to think wicked. The mere word “horse-racing” would have struck terror to the hearts of our grandmothers, and thus a sport perfectly harmless to most of us has acquired a most alluring flavor of naughtiness. It is this feeling, this common sense of emancipation, that holds together a race-going crowd with a general sense of gayety. For as a nation we are not conspicuous for gayety. If we do not take our amusements solemnly, like the English, we at least take them strenuously. In this respect, racing has changed a good deal in the last twenty years. We are a little more serious about it than we used to be. In my recollection of the old days at Jerome Park, the clubhouse—certainly the feminine portion of it—took the sport itself much more lightly. The drive out in somebody’s coach, and the wonderful clothes one could wear and see, were the most important features of the day. You did not find the ladies in the paddock, as you see them now. Nor did they as openly transfer crisp bills from their own pretty purses to the bookies. Mild “pools,” in which one *drew* for one’s number quite irrespective of tips and inside information, were the only ladylike form of betting. There was something quite casual and social in the way in which everybody sat about on the lawn, under, I verily believe, the most brilliant parasols that the world has ever seen; the clubhouse behind us, and on the side a long line of coaches. It was a very long line, yet we could all tell them at a glance.

But this has changed now. Automobiles have driven out coaches. Not but what one still sees them, beautifully appointed, at any track; but instead of being the chosen means of locomotion for the fortunate, they are merely a picturesque way of wasting time. The consequence is that at Belmont Park one notices a distinct modification in the gorgeousness of the women’s clothes. In this country we have never gone the lengths of English women, whose clothes at Ascot and Epsom seemed to me quite as suitable to a ballroom. Still, our best dressed women have always felt hitherto that the races afforded a unique opportunity—especially when approached on the top of a smart coach. At Jerome and even at Morris Park, where New York could pour out in electric hansoms, this was still the rule, but to Belmont Park the trip in an automobile over dusty Long Island roads, or even on the Long Island Railroad, will not permit the same elaborate dressing.

It is not, however, only the chance to see and wear good clothes that gives races their charm to feminine eyes. Perhaps their chief attraction is the flavor of the great world. The penalty of leading a sheltered life is having a limited outlook, and the obverse of being select is being narrow. Women are beginning to see this. Society is unquestionably growing more and more friendly to the successful outsider, the people who are, as the phrase is, “doing something.” So far literary stars have had the main share of notice, but great actresses, great artists, even great scientists, have nowadays much more attention paid to them than the merely well-bred and socially available can hope for. Even the most exclusive of our great ladies no longer take pride in never having

heard the name of anyone outside their own circle. We have not become such lion hunters as the Londoners, but we enjoy very much having pointed out to us, here a great plunger from Chicago, there a dancer never before seen but from across the footlights. The race track is an excellent field for such experiences. Not, of course, that these experiences must be carried too far. It is one thing to see the celebrities of the stage, but quite another to hear them calling our husbands and brothers by their first names. A recent instance of this kind has been brought to the attention, so it is said, of the governors of Belmont Park, with the result that box holders have been implored to be more circumspect in their choice of guests.

But of all our tracks, Saratoga offers the most amusing phases to the observer of things social. Smart New York appears to think that Saratoga ceased to exist from the time when it was no longer the Newport of our 138
grandmothers, until rediscovered in the interests of racing by the late Mr. William C. Whitney. The true situation is infinitely more amusing.

Saratoga, with its enormous hotels, teeming with a society busy and well entertained, has been perfectly satisfied with itself in spite of the fact that smart New York knew it not. The United States Hotel has represented all that was socially delightful to many people who never heard of the “Four Hundred.” And now suddenly into this community comes the smartest of New York’s racing section—the Whitneys, the Mackays, the Wilsons and the young Vanderbilts, and several more of like sort. And not only do they come, but they come under circumstances that render almost impossible the exclusiveness that has been regarded as essential. This year, I believe, the Mackays and a few others are renting separate houses, but hitherto it has been hotel life for everybody. Hotel life, which New Yorkers so scorn! A “cottage”—*i. e.*, a suite of connecting rooms in a great caravansary—was the utmost seclusion possible. After the publicity of the race track, this was the only refuge. Then to meet the crowd again at dinner at Canfield’s (the ladies penetrated no further than the dining room even in the palmy days), and later, perhaps, to listen to the band at the Grand Union. This is a life in contrast to the seclusion of the cliffs at Newport. Verily racing makes strange companions.

There is something particularly gay in the atmosphere of the place. Any serious business other than racing is so plainly lacking. As the meeting is in summer, a great many men choose their holiday so as to take it in. The result is that we suddenly find ourselves in the midst of a class of idle men—at leisure and eager to be amused, almost like a foreign community. No one who has been to Saratoga will ever repeat the worn platitude that American men do not know how to enjoy a holiday.

We must remember, too, that for the feminine element racing is one of the few opportunities for—can we use so ferocious a term as “gambling” for the risking of a mild fiver on a “sure thing”? People are fond of saying that women are born gamblers; meaning, I suppose, that they love it better than men do. But it seems to me that this is only half the truth. The element of chance has charms for all of us, and women have so few opportunities to indulge it. They do not usually speculate in Wall Street; their daily occupation is not a gamble, as so many businesses are; the private wager is almost unknown to them. Until bridge swept over us, women could not, while *spending* as much money as they pleased, have any of the fun of losing it. Perhaps, in spite of all the talk about the intellectual stimulation of bridge, it owes some of its popularity to the same causes that the races do.

Not but what I believe that the interest of many women is a truly sporting one. Feminine love and knowledge of horses have increased wonderfully in the last twenty-five years. Our mothers and grandmothers rode, but took it as an elegant relaxation, or even as a mere means of locomotion. In this country the true sportswoman—the woman who hunts and drives four-in-hand and tandem—is a fairly recent development. In England we have only to go back to the novels of Whyte Melville to see that even in the middle of the last century she was a known type. It is not at all uncommon for women over there to know quite as much about horses as their brothers, to understand the horses and the cattle and the pigs. For Englishwomen to own a racing stable is no novelty, while here the joint experiment of two of our best known ladies was very much talked about, and endured but a short time.

The sport is essentially a sport for men. Women are merely onlookers; and in so far as it has a social side, even that side is controlled by men, serving thus as the great exception to things social.

Naturally we assume that the majority of men who go into racing go into it for the love of the sport itself. Yet 139
we cannot look about us and see the men who have not only no knowledge of racing, but no knowledge of horses, even their own, without asking what is the inducement that has led them to take it up.

There are a good many answers. In the first place, there is the prestige. You buy a racing stable, and your name is known not only to your equals—the other owners, the members of the jockey clubs—but to every office boy who “plays the ponies,” to every great lady who wants a competent guide to the paddock. Mr. Belmont may build subways and conduct gigantic banking operations, but it is as the man who named Belmont Park that he is known to a majority of his fellow countrymen. The racegoing community is an epitome of all society, from the “tout” and the beggar to the multi-millionaire. A real aristocracy can be built on so well organized a foundation, and the owner of a great stable has the flattery of all classes in his little world.

Then, too, it is the sign and symbol of great wealth. Some men prefer to tell you how rich they are; others load their wives with jewels, or endow universities. Others, again, set up a racing stable. It is a process that sets them in a small class apart.

But even in a society as materialistic as ours, the outward symbol is not everything. A house on the east side of the park, a perfectly appointed carriage, a steam yacht—these are valuable instruments to those destined to “get on,” but can by themselves affect very little for those who are not so destined. Cold-blooded as the inter-relations of society seem to be, they are, nevertheless, human relations, and can never be achieved by mere things, however much we may hear to the contrary. Knowing this, women who desire social advancement always seek it through the means of friendships.

But men! The spectacle of a man struggling for social success was rare a few years ago. It was always supposed to be the wives and daughters of our self-made men who waged the combat. But nowadays, as society and business are growing closer and closer, as more of our great financiers take prominent social positions, as prominent social positions become a more and more valuable asset, we find, as we are bound to, that men

desire such positions more and more.

This is the damaging suspicion that clings to men who go into racing after a past ignorant of horseflesh—the suspicion that they are using the sport as a means of social advancement. Many people who ought to know will tell you that no such advantage is offered by racing, and will point to the veterans of the turf whose names have never been heard socially. But the answer to this is that such men had no ulterior motive, and would not have wanted social honors, even if they had come.

Even in countries where the sport is more seriously taken than here, this social element mingles with it. In France racing is the special amusement of the fastest set—not of the *vieille noblesse*, but of Monsieur Blanc of dry goods fame, of that set who has imported its clothes and its slang from England, the set whose men cannot be told from well-bred Englishmen, the set who has invented "le sport." To penetrate this set is almost impossible for a foreigner. Indeed, the only representative of the Vanderbilt family who has gone into racing at all has done so in France. Perhaps even for him some little aid was necessary in that difficult circle.

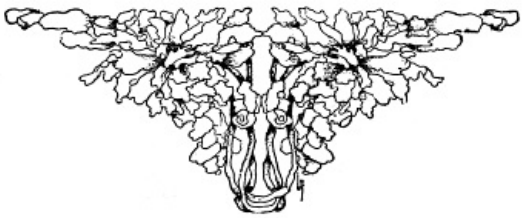
In England, again, the situation is different. The turf is the serious and respected sport of all classes. London is literally empty the day of the Derby. Many of the most honored names in England have been, or are, connected with a great racing stable. It is bound to have also an important social aspect. The winning of the Derby has always been so eagerly desired by Americans that one is justified in suspecting that the social prominence attracts them. Yet here the very seriousness of the English attitude toward their favorite sport is clearly to be seen. The Englishman is quick to detect an unsportsmanlike attitude; and to use the "sport of kings" for social purposes is a thing he finds it hard to forgive.

Over there it is most literally the "sport of kings," for it must, if successfully followed, bring you sooner or later into contact with the king himself. This apparently is not always the most agreeable of experiences, if the story is true that one of our most conspicuous expatriates, who has been racing over there, has been almost forced out of it on account of a breach of etiquette. It seems he bid against the king for the possession of a certain horse, and bid higher than his majesty cared to go. The gentleman who was representing the king was immensely incensed, and has taken steps to prevent such audacious competition. Yet to republican eyes it seems rather hard that the king's bid should of itself preclude all others.

Here the position of racing is so much more ambiguous. It has not the respect of the country at large. It does not make one beloved or even celebrated in the world outside the track. No political capital could be made out of it. As to its social uses, I think it is fair to say that, while no social advantage necessarily follows, it offers an immense opportunity to those clever enough to take advantage of it.

For the main difficulty in the way of the social aspirant is the first step—is in getting to know two or three of the right people—two or three are often sufficient. A large yacht may be a powerful recommendation, but let her owner once fill her with the wrong people, and he were better without her. To make yourself conspicuous is fatal unless your companions are those whom the world envies. To advertise yourself is, alas! too often to advertise your undesirable friendships. Many men seem to think that a coach is the safe road to success, and will drive round and round the park secure in the knowledge that their appointments are perfect and their horses the best, not knowing that the effect is being ruined by their guests, who are evidently unknown to the world of fashion. The idea seems to be that it is quite safe to begin with "frumps," that they are better than no one. But this is a great mistake. Solitude has its dignity. Common friends have none at all. It is not easy to progress from them to the more exclusive. Once you have identified yourself with the wrong people, the right ones insist on believing that that is the kind you really prefer.

For the rich bachelor there are just two avenues of social ambition. He may become attentive to a smart girl not so accustomed to attention as to be overcritical, or if he is above this sort of thing, I know of nothing so hopeful as racing. Here is a sport in which he may become known without forming undesirable social ties, without proclaiming his acquaintance with undesirable people. There is a chance for him to meet men of the best position in an atmosphere congenial to friendship—a mutual interest in a great sport. At the same time there is no role in which a man may appear better than in that of a straightforward and generous sportsman.



SHE looked up from the fire she was kindling in the small wood heater; a stout, rosy-faced old woman, the sole occupant of the humble little eating house at Socorro Junction. The Spanish name means succor, and probably marks the place where some man or party in dire need was rescued. The man who entered had a muffled feminine figure clinging to his arm, and he glanced about suspiciously as he asked, in a voice which held a sharp note of anxiety: “Is this an eating house—a hotel?”

“This here’s the Wagon Tire House,” returned its proprietor, rising and shaking the piñon slivers from her checked apron.

“Have you rooms—a parlor—some place where this lady can be alone?”

Without awaiting an answer, he turned and whispered to the veiled woman, who shuddered and shrank; but whether from his touch or with fear of publicity was not apparent. “Take off your things—put back that infernal veil,” he muttered, angrily. “There’s nothing here to hurt you.”

The removal of the wraps showed a round, innocent face, with its own pretensions to beauty. Such prettiness as it held, however, was just now stricken out of it by the blanched terror which dominated every curve and line.

“No, sir,” said the old woman, surveying them both. “This ain’t rightly a hotel. I’ve——”

“Why do you call it one, then?” interrupted the man, angrily. He placed his companion in a chair, and stood between her and the proprietor of the eating house. “Who are you, anyhow?” he asked, as he removed his shining silk hat, and mopped his brow with a snowy handkerchief.

“I’m Huldy Sarvice. Most folks calls me Aunt Huldy,” she returned, looking her guest up and down.

The man did not volunteer any return information; but Huldah, who was given to communing with herself in regard to her patrons and summing them up instantly, supplied the deficiency with the muttered statement: “And you’re a gambler. Everything about you jest hollers ‘Gambler.’” Her eye fell upon the little figure behind the tall, black-clad one. It rested a moment on the crude, pathetically approbative countenance which should have been rosy and smiling, “You’re——” she halted in her unspoken sentence. “I’m blessed if I know what you are. You don’t look like no sport’s wife. You sure don’t look like anything worse. I guess you’re just a fool. Poor little soul! I see mighty deep waters in front of your feet.”

Even while these things were flitting through Aunt Huldah’s mind, she had been automatically answering “yes” and “no” to the somewhat heated inquiries of her would-be guest. Now, with a quick patter of little running feet, a small Mexican boy, with half a pie, burst in from the kitchen, followed closely by the irate cook, who was also his mother. Huldah held her plump sides and shook with mirth as the little rascal doubled and turned among the chairs and table legs, snatching a hasty bite now and again from his stolen pie. Nobody knew better than the proprietor of the Wagon Tire House—kind, motherly soul—that the threats the Mexican woman hurled after her offspring were threats only.

At last, when the final morsel was bolted, Jose permitted himself to be caught, and burst into loud conventional sobs as his mother berated him. The slim, pale little woman crouching in her chair, her great furred cloak—painfully new, as was all the rest of her expensive wear—drawn tight around her, watching this scene with wide, horrified eyes, sprang up and, in spite of the man’s restraining hand, ran to the child.

“Oh! Don’t strike him!” she cried, kneeling before the boy, her face bathed in tears. “You’ll be sorry—sorry—if you do! I had a little boy—a baby—and I used to—to forget sometimes and—and be harsh——”

The man caught her shoulder and attempted to raise her. She shook him off almost as though she had not noticed it.

“Louise! Louise!” he said. “This is ridiculous. Sit down. She isn’t going to hurt the child.”

But the kneeling woman went on exactly as though she had not heard. “You mustn’t strike him. If anything should happen——” she hesitated. “My little boy——”

She stole a look over her shoulder at the angry man.

The Mexican woman’s doubled fist came down, unclinched and became fingers, which fumbled at her kitchen apron. “Is your young son dead, señora?” she asked, in an awed voice.

“Louise!” remonstrated the man.

The girl whom he addressed shivered, caught the boy in her arms, and sobbed wildly: “No, no—not dead, I wish he were. I wish I were dead!”

The man leaned down and lifted her bodily to her feet. “Here,” he said, pushing her not overgently back into the chair, “you sit down and get your nerves quiet.” He turned almost savagely to Huldah Sarvice, demanding: “There is surely some place you can give us where my wife can be alone. You see how it is here.”

Huldah nodded, looking at her visitor with shrewd, kindly eyes. “I ’spect your wife”—she put a little stress on the two words, and the girl winced, her pale face reddening—“I jest think she’s better off here among people.”

The man made a muttered objection, but Huldah went serenely on: “My lodgin’ rooms is acrost the street, and I don’t know’s I’ve got a vacant one. They’s a man with a broken leg in one of ’em, an’ a feller that’s been

drinkin' a little too much is in another. Two more of 'em is locked up by the men that rents 'em. Best sit here till I can git you a little supper; mebby that'll cheer her up some."

All the time she talked, Aunt Huldah had been watching the little woman's face and behavior, which were those of a creature under some desperate pressure; and as she concluded and turned back to her fire building, she made her decision. "That man—husband or not—has done something that she's knownst to. He's a gambler; mebby he's knifed some feller acrost the cards; mebby he's gone further. But my guess is that she knows of some crime he's done, an' he's hangin' onto her for fear she'll tell."

She rose from the now kindled fire for another covert survey of her guests, who were deep in a whispered conference. "Yes, and she'd jest about do it, too. She wants to give him away." Again, after a moment of keen observation on her way to the kitchen, she added: "An' he knows it."

As she went on with her supper, aided by the Mexican woman, who was used to her habit of arguing with herself aloud, she muttered: "What next, then?" and answered her own question: "Why, her life ain't safe with him—not a minit!"

Having come to which conclusion, she gave her helper a few hasty directions, wiped her hands on her apron and marched back to the front room, where all day long the dining table stood set out with its pink mosquito-net covering. "I've got a room of my own," she began, abruptly. "'Tain't much of a place, but there's a bed in it, where your wife could lay down."

The two were on their feet in a moment. Huldah laid hold of the cringing little shoulder nearest her, and turned to the door. "It'll be nigh to three hours," she observed, "till the south-bound comes through. I shan't be usin' the room, and she might as well git a little rest there." 143

"I'll take her over, and stay with her," agreed the man, reaching for his hat.

"No—no, sir, that was not my offer," objected the old woman. "My room and my bed she can have—because she needs 'em. But it ain't fixed up, and I'll jest have to ask you to let her go by herself."

The man's pale countenance went a shade whiter; a peculiar trick he had of showing his teeth without smiling became suddenly apparent. It rendered his handsome face repulsive for the moment, as he grasped the arm which was not clinging to Aunt Huldah. "Come back here. Sit down. What do you mean by pretending that you—that I——"

He jerked the girl toward him with such force that she cried out faintly, and Huldah's gray eyes, the one beautiful feature of her homely countenance, narrowed and sparkled. "You go and get us something to eat," he blustered. "Food is what she needs. She isn't well enough to be alone; and you won't let me take her over and stay with her."

"Please go away," begged the sobbing girl, looking pleadingly at Huldah. "You—it only makes it worse. I—I'm all right here. Please go away."

And Huldah went, glancing back to see that the man had seated himself once more in front of the huddled figure, looming above her, bending toward her; and that urgent whispered parley had begun again.

The proprietor of the Wagon Tire House was just turning her sizzling steak in its skillet when the door behind her opened a crack, and the gambler, as she had mentally dubbed him, put his head through.

"Come here," he said.

Huldah grunted. "I am here," she returned. "What is it you want?"

"I want to speak to you"—impatiently.

"Speak," suggested the old woman.

"But I've got something to say that I don't care to yell to every fool on the street." He stared malevolently at the broad, blue calico back and half turned to retrace his steps; but no, he needed a woman's help—he must have it; and he finally began, in an anxious, reluctant half whisper: "What do you think of her? Is she really sick?"

"I think she'll die, all right," answered the old woman, without turning her head or glancing up from her cooking.

"You do!" sneered the man, with a sudden loudness of tone. "You think she'll die! You women are always using that word. I never saw a woman in a tight place yet but what she began whining that she believed it would kill her—that she'd die."

"Well, and they die, too, sometimes—don't they?"

A little sound or movement in the room behind him brought the man's glance around with such a malignant scowl that Huldah, noting it, deemed her time to speak out had come. "See here, sir," she began, turning away from the stove—"Manuelita, tend to that steak, and don't let it burn, for goodness' sake—see here, sir, you know a lot more'n I do about what ails that woman in there. But I know enough to know that she's goin' to die if she's driv' like you've been drivin' her."

"Like I've been driving her!" echoed the man, angrily. "She's the one that's making it hot for me. There's nothing the matter with her."

"All right," returned Huldah, applying herself once more to the cooking. "If there's nothing the matter of her, what did you come out here to ask me about it for?" Sudden rage mastered her as she worked over the steak gravy. She whirled and shook a finger at her interlocutor so sharply that he drew back. "I tell you that little creatur' in the room behind you is a-goin' to die if she ain't let up on," she finished, impressively.

Fear, indecision and rage contended upon the man's face. "Oh, Lord!" he ejaculated, "if one woman can't raise enough row, there's always another to help her. Well, come in here. You can take her over. To your own

room, mind—nowhere else. And let nobody else see her or talk to her. You'll come right back, and not stay with her." He looked at Huldah Sarvice's strong, benevolent face, which smiled upon him inscrutably. "I expect I'm a fool to risk it," he muttered. "But—well, come in."

"Stay with her!" echoed Huldah, tossing up her head with a peculiar, free motion which belonged to her in times of excitement. "Stay with her? *I* don't want to stay with your wife. I've got my work to do. I don't spy on nobody—no matter how bad things looks for 'em."

She had spoken the latter words in an undertone, as she gathered the drooping girl and her belongings upon a capable arm. Now, as a heavy, drumming roar became audible, she added, in excitement: "Land sakes! There's a train. No, it can't be no train; but for sure them's engines out on the Magdalena Branch! I've got to fly 'round and git supper for them train crews. All the boys o' the Magdalena Branch eats with me." She made as though to release her charge, saying sharply: "I guess I ain't hardly time to take your wife acrost—let alone hangin' 'round to chat with her."

"Hi, colonel! That big trunk of yours bu'st open when we tried to get it off the freight," announced a man's voice in the doorway. "Want to come over and see to it?"

This was the help that Huldah could have asked for. The man addressed as "colonel" turned from one to the other with a worried look. "I guess I've got to," he replied to the brakeman. "How bad is it?"

"I didn't see it," returned the other, "but Billy said it was plumb bu'st, and the things fallin' out. It'll have to be roped, I guess."

As the men hurried away in the direction of the station, Huldah turned briskly and tightened her arm about the girl. "Now, honey," she whispered. And they hastened across the straggling red mud road in the face of a shower whose large drops were beginning to pelt down like hail. Aunt Huldah gathered up her petticoats and ran. "I'll have to git them winders shut," she panted. "I hope to gracious Manuelita's got the sense to shut 'em in the other house."

The roaring of engines which Huldah had mentioned as on the Magdalena Branch came more distinctly now. "Looks like there must be three or four of 'em—engines—one right behind t'other," the old woman muttered. "I'll jest git you fixed comfortable over here, honey, and shut them winders, an' then I must run back."

But when she would have done so, the girl clung to her with shaking hands. "Oh, don't leave me!" she sobbed. "Don't let that man know where I am. Hide me."

"He ain't your husband, then?" hazarded Huldah.

"No—no—no!" moaned the girl. "My husband's a freight conductor on this road—Billy Gaines. You've seen him. He told me about you and the Wagon Tire House—about your having a wagon tire in front of it to beat on to call to meals. I expect he's eaten many a meal here. He might come now; and then if he saw me—and that man—and—oh, hide me!"

Aunt Huldah let the head rest upon her shoulder, the shamed face hidden. "Who is this feller they call colonel, child?" she asked, gently.

"He owned—the house we lived in—in El Paso," came the muffled explanation. "He's rich, and—and very refined."

"I know a place that's full of jest such refined fellers," muttered Huldah, angrily.

"Billy didn't seem to love the baby as he—as—and Colonel Emerson is very fond of children—he's devoted to my baby—or I thought he was. And he said that it was cause enough for me to leave Billy. And if I should leave him—if I should leave Billy—if I should get a divorce from him—he said—Colonel Emerson said——"

"Don't tell me what he *said*, honey child," urged Huldah. "What'd he *do*? Where's your baby?"

Oh, then the poor little mother clung with strangling sobs to the stronger, older woman. "I'm so scared," she 145
whispered. "He got me all these nice things—ain't my clothes awfully pretty?—and he promised we'd bring the baby with us. He says he's taking me to his mother, and that I can stay there until I get my divorce—because, you know, Billy has treated me awfully mean, and he don't care—Billy—he don't care a thing on earth about me nor the baby any more."

She reiterated these last words with a piteous look of entreaty into the kind gray eyes bent upon her, repeated them as a little child repeats a lesson which has been laboriously taught to it. Huldah looked at her with infinite pity. "Where's your baby?" she repeated.

"That's what scares me!" cried the wife of Billy Gaines. "He said—Colonel Emerson said—when he met me at the station, and he hadn't sent for the baby like he promised to—that he was going to have some man that he knew go and get the boy and take it to his mother's house, but that it wouldn't do for it to travel with us, because we could be traced by it. I"—the pretty lips trembled—"I never was away from my baby a night in my life. I don't know if anybody knows where to get his little night drawers. He always wears a little sack, extra, at night, because he's a great one for throwing his arms out and getting the covers off them——"

She was running on like a crazed thing, with these little fond details, when Huldah Sarvice's strong voice interrupted her. "Thank God!" said the old woman, heaving a mighty sigh of relief. "If you're a good mother, you're worth savin'. I'm goin' right over now an' telegraft to your husband."

"Oh, no! Don't do that!" cried the other. "He'll be killed. You mustn't. Don't. He'll be killed!"

"Killed!" snorted Huldah. Hers was the rough-and-ready code of the West. "Killed—and serve him right!"

"I don't mean Colonel Emerson," remonstrated the frantic girl. "Sometimes I think he's a bad man—an awful man—anyhow, he'll just have to stand it if anything happens. It's Billy I'm thinking about. The colonel has shot three or four men—he'll kill my poor Billy——"

Huldah smiled to herself in the gathering darkness. The problem was becoming easier and easier. But the

girl's strangled, sobbing voice went on: "And I couldn't bear to see Billy. I don't dare to have him see me when he knows about this. I can't face him. If you say you're going to telegraph to him, I'll run right straight to Colonel Emerson and get him to take me away somewhere."

Huldah puckered her lips—had she been a man she would have whistled. She saw no way but to go with the girl and fight it out with her tempter. "Come," she said, a little roughly for Huldah. "I'll go back with you."

She whom the old woman would have saved turned like a hunted thing, as to elude her benefactress. Huldah clung to her arm, and they struggled thus to the doorway. Here the thunder of engines toward Magdalena once more arrested the attention of the proprietor of the Wagon Tire House. It had increased to a deafening uproar; the rain fell like bullets; and even as they drew back, frightened, there was no street to be seen—only a flood of swirling yellow water, running like a tail race between the lodging rooms and the little eating house. "My Lord!" groaned Huldah. "I might 'a' knowed 'twa'n't engines. Hit's a cloudburst, above—the big arroyo's up."

It was true. The red gash which through nine-tenths of the year lay dry and yawning beside the tracks of the little Magdalena Branch railway was brimmed with the same tide which swept the street. And down it, as they looked, came a wall of writhing, tormented water, nearly five feet high.

There had been a cloudburst in the mountains above, whence came such trickle as fed the arroyo in the dry season. Twice before had this thing happened, and the little eating house stood upon stilts of cottonwood logs to be above the flood line, while the lodging house was on higher ground.

The watching women saw the flood reach the railway track, beat upon its embankment with upraised, 146
clinched hands, tear at it with outspread fingers in an access of fury, wrench up the rails yet bolted to the ties, and fling them forward on its crest as it plunged on. The two little houses, standing isolated from the town and nearer to the railroad tracks than any other, were now in an open waste of water, the current sweeping swiftly between them, an eddy lapping in their back yards.

As Huldah saw Manuelita's frightened face at a window of the Wagon Tire House, she made a trumpet of her plump hands and shouted: "Don't you be scared, Manuelita—hear? Keep up the fire, and make a b'iler of coffee. I'll be over soon's I can git thar!"

Billy Gaines' wife looked down at the water with relief. "He can't come across that," she murmured.

"No, he can't," agreed Aunt Huldah. "An' you come an' lay down on my bed. Slip off your shoes, an' loosen your clothes, but don't undress. This house is safe, I reckon; but no knowin' what might happen."

All that night Huldah Sarvice worked, with the strength of a man and the knowledge of a seasoned frontierswoman. The injured were brought to the lodging house or the eating house, just as it happened. When a hastily improvised boat came to their aid, she went in it over to see that some refreshment was prepared for the workers; and later, when the sullen flood receded to a languid swell, she paddled back and forth on foot, her petticoats gathered in one sweep of her arm, and whatever was necessary to carry held fast with the other.

"You'll get your death, Aunt Huldah," remonstrated the agent, when she had struggled across to the station to send a telegram to Billy Gaines.

"I reckon not," she returned, with twinkling eye. "Seems like you can't drown me. I've been flooded out six times; twict at El Captain, once at Blowout and now three times here; and I ain't drownded yet. This is a good long telegraft that I'm a-sendin'; but I reckon the railroad won't grudge it to me."

"You bet they won't," returned the boy, heartily, as he addressed himself to his key. "I'll add a message of my own to a fellow I know at El Paso, and get him to hunt Billy up if he's on duty to-night."

Huldah beamed. "That's awful good of you," she returned; "but if you had seen that little woman over there a runnin' from one window to another, a wringin' her hands and carryin' on so that I'm 'most afraid to leave her alone, you'd be glad to do it."

As she splashed back to her tired helpers and the injured at the Wagon Tire House, the old woman muttered to herself: "He's a good boy. It's better to have good friends than to be rich;" and never reflected for an instant that no personal benefit had been conferred upon herself in the matter.

With the simple wisdom of a good woman who knows well the human heart, Huldah set poor Louise Gaines to attending upon the worst injured of the flood sufferers, and took her promptly in to see the one corpse which so far had been found floating in an eddy after the waters receded a little. It was that of a young Mexican girl from the village above. The little fair woman went down on her knees beside the stretcher. "Oh, I wish it was me!" she cried. "Why couldn't it have been me? She's young, and I expect she wanted to live—why didn't God take me?"

"Now, now," remonstrated Aunt Huldah, with a touch of wholesome sternness. "I didn't bring you in here to carry on about your own troubles—that's selfish. I brung you to make this poor girl look fit to be laid away. You can do it better'n I can, and there's nobody else for to do it. Likely her folks is all drownded, too."

And Billy Gaines' wife rose up and wiped her eyes, and went to work in something of the spirit that Huldah had hoped.

It was five o'clock in the gray of the morning when the wrecking train from El Paso came through; and Billy Gaines was aboard it. The poor little wife had had attacks of hysteric terror all night long at the thought of his coming; and now she lay exhausted and half sleeping upon the lounge in the dining room. Huldah herself felt a 147
little qualm of fear as she opened the kitchen door to the tall figure buttoned in the big ulster. For the first time, she wondered where the man Emerson was, and hoped that he had taken the one train which left Socorro going northward, just before the flood struck them. But the hope was a faint one; more likely he was up in the town, cut off from them temporarily by the water which still ran between; and when he and Billy Gaines met, she doubted not that there would be another bloody reckoning such as the West knows well.

If she had doubted, her questions would have been answered when she looked into the frank gray eyes of the man who met her, a trifle stern and very resolute. "I've come for my wife," he said, breathing a little short,

“and if Jim Emerson’s in the house, I want to see him.”

“Come in here,” said the old woman, drawing the newcomer into a small section of chaos which was generally known as the pantry. “I remember you now, an’ I guess you’re a decenter man than the run of ’em; but I want to have a word with you before you go in to that poor girl. You see, I want to be sure that you’ve looked on both sides of it. You pass all right among the men—I hear you well spoke of—but how many things can you ricollect that you’ve done that are jest as bad as what she’s done?”

“Plenty,” said Billy Games, almost with impatience. “I understand, Aunt Huldah.”

“Mebby you do,” said the old woman; “but I want to be sure. Where was you when this poor little soul was left to herself—and that scoundrel?”

“I was over in Mexico on a six weeks’ hunting trip.”

“You was! Well, then, after all, who done this thing—who’s really to blame?”

“I am—you bet,” came the deep-voiced answer. “I don’t hold it against you a bit, Aunt Huldah; but you’re working on the wrong trail. You think you’ve got a great big job ahead of you trying to make me see this thing right. But I’ll remind you that it’s eight hours from El Paso here—eight night hours—and your telegram was pretty complete. You left the man out; and so will I—until I meet him.” The firm jaw squared itself heavily; and Huldah sighed as she realized that the law of blood for honor must be met.

The man had carried one arm almost as though it were injured; and she now glanced down at it as he moved it and fumbled in the folds of his big overcoat. His voice softened beautifully. “I’ve got something here,” he said, “that ought to show you that I know and understand, and am going to behave myself.”

He opened his great cloak and showed, lying upon his breast asleep, a baby of about two years old, who stirred, put up a wandering little hand and murmured: “Daddy,” as he settled himself for a longer nap.

“Bless his heart!” murmured Huldah, in the richest tones of her strong, heartsome voice. She wiped the tears from her eyes on a corner of the check apron. “I guess you’ll do, Billy. You seem to have the makin’s of a tol’able decent feller in you. You’ve got the only medicine right there that your poor little, half crazy wife needs.” And she pushed him toward the door of the deserted dining room.

There was a long, agonized cry: “O—o—oh, Billy!” Then the big voice talked brokenly and gently for a time, choking sobs interrupting it; and Huldah could hear, at first, the thin, shrill terror of the woman’s tones, very sharp and pleading; finally an eloquent silence.

She glanced in to see Billy Gaines sitting with what she called “both of his children—for the little woman’s ’most as much of a baby as her boy”—asleep; the mother with her head upon his shoulder, while the child lay in the laps of both of them.

“Lord, but that’s a sight for sore eyes!” she ruminated, as she lifted the coffee boiler from the stove and sent Manuelita to lie down and get a rest.

“But there’s the colonel,” she pursued. “There’s goin’ to be awful times when him and Billy Gaines meets.” Then she smiled at herself and went on: “Jest listen to a old woman like me tryin’ to tell how it ort to come out. We’re all God’s children. I reckon the colonel’s His child”—she seemed to have a little doubt upon this point —“an’ I reckon God’ll take care of him.”

As if in answer to her half-spoken thought, there came the tramp of stumbling feet, somebody beat upon the door, and a voice called: “Mrs. Sarvice! Aunt Huldah! We’ve just found another body over by the railroad tracks. Can we bring him in here, or shall we take it over to the other house?”

Huldah hurried out, to turn down the blanket they had drawn over the stark form and look upon the dead gambler’s face. “Carry him to the lodgin’ house, pore feller,” she said, gently.

God had taken care of the colonel.

ELUSION

CLEAVAGE of sea and sky,
  Ever elusive line,
    Though I follow it far,
      Far as the Ultimate Isles,
Never it seems more nigh,—
  Shifting shadow and shine,—
    Dim as a distant star
      That beckons and beguiles

Dawn-dream of my heart,
  Dusk-dream of my soul,
    Though I follow thee long
      Into the night's deep shades,
Never attained thou art,
  Never I gain the goal;
    Thou art like a song
      That ever and ever evades.

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

LONDON'S STAGNANT THEATRICAL SEASON

BY ALAN DALE

LONDON has begun to howl sensationally about the American Theatrical Syndicate, and to discuss the possibilities of its invasion of London.

Of course this is the warm season, when snake stories and sea-serpent legends are distinctly in order. Therefore the machinations of the American Theatrical Syndicate have made good reading, and plenty of space has been given to the subject. One journalist has suggested that the playwrights of England and the United States form a league, destined to break up the trust, very much after the style of the Authors' Society in France. "Why should they not form themselves into a society," asks this writer, "for the protection not only of their own interests, but of the interests of the theater, of the interests of the actors, and of the interests of the public? As the trust snaps up an actor when once his reputation is established, so it deals with dramatists. Once a dramatist has made a mark, the trust practically buys him up; that is to say, it makes him an offer outright for all his work to come. That is part of the infernal system."

All of which is quite good, and true, and logical. It reads remarkably well, with just the spice of wholesome plaint that one loves to excavate. After a month of continuous theater-going in London, however—from the Strand to Piccadilly Circus, and from Piccadilly Circus to Shaftesbury Avenue—I can't help reflecting that if *the* syndicate or any syndicate had been let loose in London this year, with the option of cornering everything in sight, the fact remains that there is scarcely a production in London worth transplanting. Furthermore, the fear that an American invasion would deal a death-blow to London art seems absurd. I haven't found any art to death-blow.

Nearly everything that London writers have said of the syndicate is true, and, perhaps, not stringent enough, but—with an accent on the "but"—how it could possibly harm London goodness only knows. Never has theatrical entertainment in the English metropolis been at a lower ebb. A few of its features will be done in New York this year, and they will prove exactly what I have said. English playwrights seem to be suffering from too much money, for they apparently lack the stimulus to struggle. That money may, of course, have been contributed by American managers, who buy "pig-in-a-poke" fashion, but if that be so, there are not enough "independent" playwrights to form a society. As for leaguing themselves with American playwrights—well, puzzle: find the American playwrights.

The saddest case of perverted humor I have sampled in a very long time is that of J. M. Barrie's play—or whatever it chooses to call itself—entitled "Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire," at the Duke of York's Theater. Barrie must, indeed, be very "comfortably fixed," for no other condition could conceivably call forth such a miserable guy on the theater-going public as this "three-act page from a daughter's diary." Naturally it has attracted a good deal of attention, for Barrie has done noble things in his day, and "The Little Minister" still lives as a monumentally delightful achievement. But "Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire" is a "satire" built on such a weak and irritating foundation that it is difficult to consider it except with contempt—which is a cruel way of looking at Barrie.

The heroine, or central figure, or point of attack, in "Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire" is a romantic young girl, who has been to so many "matinées" that she has grown to look upon life as a theatrical performance. At first you think that *Amy Grey* is going to be extremely amusing, as she chats satirically of her life, with her boon companion—another matinée fiend. *Amy's* father and mother return from India after an absence of a good many years, and Barrie plunges into a plot.

The stagestruck girl has always heard that when a woman visits a man's rooms at midnight there are illicit relations that should be immediately broken up. She hears her mother promise to call upon *Stephen Rollo* at midnight, and assumes, with much girlish glee, that her mother needs rescuing. The entire motive of "Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire" lurks in Barrie's effort to be funny around this cruelly topsy-turvy, and rather nauseating, idea.

The principal act occurs in the "man's rooms"—with the girl, the mother and the man. Barrie, in a positive ecstasy of ghoulish "humor," allows the mother to understand the girl's idea. She clamors for her daughter's love, and believes that the best way to secure it will be to feign guilt, so that the girl can "rescue" her. This she does. *Amy* believes that she has saved her mamma from a horrible fate—mamma caters diligently to that suggestion—and the play ends with *Amy's* betrothal to the man in the case.

In this play Barrie has violated sheer decency of sentiment. It is all very well to shower satire upon the matinée girl—she can stand it, and has stood it full many a time and oft—but to mix her up in the imaginary adultery of her own mother—and as a joke, saving the mark!—gives one such a disagreeable shock, that recovery from its effects is quite out of the question. To be even more delicately humorous, Barrie might have introduced the grandmother under similarly suspicious circumstances.

It is all very well to write caviare, but the caviare must be fresh and not putrid. Barrie's "humor" in "Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire" has the taint of decay—as it had the germ of acute dyspepsia in that atrocity produced in New York under the title of "Little Mary." Real humor attacks hereditary sentiment with delicacy, and a certain amount of timidity. To completely realize this you have but to study George Bernard Shaw, who, while he flouts

a thousand traditions, and is rarely amusing unless he is flouting, does so with a keen appreciation of what he is doing. The redoubtable George may even scoff occasionally at filial sentiment, but he would never dredge humor from the imaginary sin of a mother, used as a joke to please her own stagestruck daughter. At the close of "Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire" one wondered what *Amy*, after her marriage to the man in the case, would think of the maudlin situation. And this, please your grace, has been announced as Barrie's crowning fantasy! Fortunately, we have "Peter Pan" to hear from in New York. Not having seen that, I pin my faith to it, for I want to hold on to Barrie a bit longer, in spite of "Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire."

This "page from a daughter's diary" was preceded by a sketch, also by Barrie, entitled "Pantaloon," and programed as "a plea for an ancient family." There is no need to discuss this one-act trifle, with its pathos and bathos, in extraordinary blend, and no single salient idea to carry it through. The elopement of *Harlequin* and *Columbine*, with the jilting of *Clown*, and the distress of *Pantaloon* may perchance be a "plea for an ancient family," and as there are all sorts of pleas, you are possibly allowed to pay your money and take your choice.

It was Ellen Terry who played *Alice*, in the "Sit-by-the-Fire" affair. Poor Ellen Terry! To my mind it was sad and disheartening. Why should an actress who has had such a joyous career as that which fell to Miss Terry's lot, elect, in her ultra maturity, to play a bad part in a bad play—and not too well? There is tragedy in this 151
continued, and—I should say—unnecessary service. Probably there are still roles that Miss Terry might acceptably play, but as the forty-year-old mother in this wretched piece one could but feel sorry for her—and sorry for those who saw her. I have heard that Miss Ethel Barrymore plays the part in the United States. I can't believe it until I see it.

Miss Irene Vanbrugh—you remember her in "The Gay Lord Quex"—was the matinée girl, with much force. There are flashes of humor in the part, and Miss Vanbrugh made the most of them. For the benefit of those who may see "Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire" on the American side of the pond, the rest of the cast was made up of Aubrey Smith, A. E. Mathews, Kenneth Douglas, Lettice Fairfax—who was once in Augustin Daly's New York company—Dora Hole, Edith Craig and Hilda Trevelyan.

Always at this time of year there is an influx of foreign actresses into London. They come; they are seen; but they never conquer. They must be awfully tired of it, for history has such a sad way of repeating itself. This year, however, one French actress has made a good deal of a stir, but under such distinctly new conditions that the stir is quite intelligible. This young woman, Madame Simone Le Bargy, of whom I wrote you last year when I reviewed "Le Retour de Jerusalem" from Paris, was brought to London by George Alexander, the actor-manager of the St. James Theater, *not* for a season "on her own," but as his leading lady, and in English, too!

A French actress in English! Could anything be more unusual? Sarah Bernhardt, who has been cavorting around the English-speaking world for portentous yet vulgar fractions of a century, never managed to acquire even a suspicion of English; Rêjane, who has done London and New York pretty thoroughly, would have an artistic fit at the idea of juggling with English, at her time of life; Jane Hading, Jeanne Granier and others are quite willing to play anywhere, but it must be in French.

Madame Simone Le Bargy played the leading rôle in "The Man of the Moment," at the St. James Theater, and was duly and unselfishly boomed by Mr. George Alexander, as "of the Gymnase Théâtre, Paris. Her first appearance in England." The piece was an adaptation, by Harry Melvill, of "L'Adversaire," by Alfred Capus and Emmanuel Arène. The English actor-manager was a wise man in his London generation. He had a weak play, most indifferently adapted, but he had Le Bargy, and for a while she caught the town.

While English leading ladies must have fumed at Alexander's neglect of "home talent," Madame Le Bargy showed that it is quite possible not only to play with grace and facility in a foreign language, but actually to prove more intelligible than a good many London actresses who flatter themselves that they speak good English. Madame Le Bargy's English was an absolute revelation. Naturally it had an accent—a delightful one—and Paris was stamped on everything she said, but compared with Mrs. Fiske in New York, or Miss Ashwell in London, Madame Le Bargy's diction was wonderful. Every word she uttered was intelligible. She rattled off various speeches almost as quickly as she might have done in French, but never once did their meaning miscarry. I've seen all sorts of foreign actresses waylay the English language—Modjeska and Janauschek being in the list—but seldom have such results as those given by this little, thin, nervous Frenchwoman been attained.

Oddly enough, it is said that Madame Le Bargy had never been in London before, and that she had acquired English in France. In which case, I would suggest that half a dozen popular New York actresses—I won't mention names—should sail for France at an early date, and see if they could learn English there. It is as difficult to acquire in London as it is in New York.

"The Man of the Moment" was saved from rapid extinction by the little Gymnase actress. It had four acts, through two of which you could have slept comfortably while various alleged French characters sat round 152
drawing rooms and talked endlessly about nothing whatsoever. Then, in the third act, you learned that *Marianne Darlay*, the wife of *Maurice*, had been lured to infidelity by a dark gentleman named *Langlade*. As she still loved her husband, and didn't love *Langlade*, this little escapade failed entirely to interest. The "great scene" occurred when the wife gave herself away to the husband, and the play ended with a vista of divorce. Divorce, in real life, may be a serenely satisfactory settlement of domestic wrangles, but on the stage its unromantic practicality has not yet succeeded in appealing, except in farce. "The Man of the Moment" had no dramatic action, and no movement of any sort. You were unable to sympathize with the woman, or to feel much interest in the man. In fact, "The Man of the Moment" must have been so-called because he had none.

Capus in French is always exhilarating. The "chatter" is refreshing and genuinely amusing, but translated into English, it seemed extremely dull. Mr. Melvill did poor Capus into the sort of language that is encountered in burlesque at little Mr. Weber's music hall. The result was fatal. Yet, in addition to Madame Le Bargy's very excellent work, there was George Alexander, whose efforts were most praiseworthy. He seemed perfectly satisfied to take what was assuredly second place in the cast. "The Man of the Moment" was beautifully put on, as is every production at the St. James Theater. George Alexander is one of the few London actors who have not been to the United States within the last decade—in fact, he has never been, except as a member of Irving's

forces, many years ago—and the abstinence seems to agree with him. He does more, and he does it more luxuriously, than the traveling English actor whom we have seen so often. Perhaps it is true, after all, that a rolling stone gathers no moss—though I should hate to believe that there could possibly be anything in a popular proverb.

While one little foreign actress was capturing London by her clever manipulation of London's language, others were not as happy. Eleanora Duse's season at the Messrs. Shubert's new Waldorf Theater, in the new street called Aldwych, on the Strand, must have been very discouraging to the haughty lady herself. In fact, it is asserted that she will never again appear in England. Half-filled houses are something that must be distressing to the "artistic temperament," and Duse played to a most elongated series of them. Few people seemed to know that she was in London. In New York we, in our occasionally provincial appreciation of an actress whom we are unable to understand—and probably *because* we can't understand her—go into ecstasies over Duse, and pack the theater to overflowing. London is too sophisticated. Duse made no stir at all this time. Even the critics gave her but merely polite attention. Possibly in English she could charm the English-speaking world. But, save in the case of Madame Simone Le Bargy, nobody seems to think that worth while. Perhaps it isn't.

As for the tireless Sarah—she gets on one's nerves. After a brief season at the Coronet Theater, in Notting Hill, where she produced her own version of "Adrienne Lecouvreur," and Victor Hugo's "Angelo"—which fell flat as a pancake—Sarah rushed through the English provinces with Mrs. Patrick Campbell, in their freak performance of "Pelleas and Melisande." In a manufacturing town, like Birmingham, for instance, Maeterlinck, at advanced prices, seemed like some ghastly joke! Sarah visits England annually, in a veritable desperation of energy, but it is very seldom worth her while. This year she was less interesting than Madame Le Bargy; and the same may be said of Réjane.

I had not been in London very long before I found myself battling with the musical comedy whirlpool. It hedged me in; panic-stricken, I tried to get myself free. A dreadful sensation of helplessness overcame me. In a condition of numbed protest, I was carried along with the torrent, and it was a long time before I finally 153
emerged. My system being impoverished and quite run down by a strenuous musical-comedy dose in New York, I was not in the state of mind to render the continued ordeal endurable.

Yet a very estimable gentleman, Max Beerbohm, who is supposed to write fantasy, whimsicality or oddity, has undertaken to champion musical comedy. The championship of "Max," however, is a sort of "swan song" for musical comedy. He says: "Were musical comedy other than it is, the highest intellects in the land would be deprived of an incomparable safety valve. And what would become of that 'fifty millions—mostly fools'—who find in musical comedy an art-form conducted precisely on the level of their understanding? I have no sympathy at all with the growls so constantly emitted by professional critics of this art-form. Of course musical comedy might be made a vehicle for keen satire, for delicate humor, for gracious lyricism, and what not. But I prefer that it should remain as it is. Let us continue to cry aloud for a serious drama, by all means, but long live mere silliness in mere entertainment."

One could almost regret that this writer had no "job" in New York City as a "press agent." He writes with such *verve* on topics of which he is avowedly ignorant, for at the beginning of his defense, he says: "Nor do I ever see a musical comedy of my own accord." That is it. That is precisely it. It is so easy to speak of an "art-form," or an "incomparable safety valve," when you'd run a mile or jump into anything to avoid it.

There are four musical-comedy productions in London that a sheer sense of duty compelled me to see. Such a list! It was unescapable. No self-deception or hypocrisy could possibly excuse a traveling critic from sampling this quartet. One can always elude a solitary performance, for it proves nothing and makes no point. But four of a kind at one fell swoop! Surely, if four West End theaters can devote themselves irrevocably to this "art-form," one has no right to balk, or to look the other way. The four affairs in question are "The Little Michus," at Daly's, "Lady Madcap," at the Prince of Wales', "The Spring-Chicken," at the Gaiety, and "The Catch of the Season," at the Vaudeville. Three of them are scheduled for production in New York, but I should say that one only has a fighting chance, and that "The Catch of the Season."

It had the usual array of sponsor-meddlers—two for the pieces, one for the lyrics, two for the music; and its aim is higher than that of the conventional brand, for it is a modernization of the Cinderella story—a story that has never shown any sign of age, and probably never will. Nobody has tried to do anything clever with Cinderella. There is no satire, very little humor and nothing in the least skittish. It is just pretty, and at this Vaudeville Theater it is Miss Ellaline Terriss, London's sample Christmas card beauty, who does the Cinderella act. It is not necessary to say very much more about "The Catch of the Season." Its music is trivial, and its book is worse. But its specialties please, and one can sit through this little entertainment without that sense of degradation that the brand sometimes induces. That is a good deal. For New York many alterations will be made—I write in the future tense, though when these lines are read, they can be translated into the past—and I hope a happy one—new music will be introduced, and Miss Edna May placed in Ellaline Terriss' dainty shoes.

Of "The Little Michus," at Daly's, and "The Spring Chicken," at the Gaiety, I am scarcely able to write. Two weeks have elapsed since I saw them, and not a single impression of consequence remains. I remember that I was unutterably bored, but I can't quite recall which was the duller performance of the two. At the time I compared them both with "The Cingalee," the New York failure of which I correctly prophesied last summer. I should like to suggest that even in the musical-comedy line I am still able to scent novelty, whenever the 154
slightest aroma occurs. It is the expectation of this that keeps me alive during a performance. Without that expectation I should honestly stay away, for I have arrived at a stage when I am not courting martyrdom.

The George Edwardes shows have of late displayed a marked tendency to a sort of stupefying monotony. Either the fear of risking a new idea, or the hope that the old ones have not become too abjectly ancient, has kept them in the one groove. It is quite remarkable when you come to think of it. Even the supply of people has comparatively failed. The Gaiety girls have married—some of them have even taken unto themselves peers—and a new stock has neglected to materialize. In "The Little Michus," which is supposed to detail the experiences of two young girls who look precisely alike, but who have been changed at birth, these two prominent rôles were intrusted to Adrienne Augarde and Mabel Green—the latter absolutely unknown. In "The Spring Chicken,"

which, I may add, is just as calamitous as its title, it was Miss Gertie Millar who had to uphold the traditions of the Gaiety. A pretty girl, a bright little actress and a fairly melodious warbler is Miss Millar, but George Edwardes used to do better than this.

"Lady Madcap" was the best of the three George Edwardes shows in London. Probably that is why it has been left untouched by the American manager. I do not say that any of these entertainments are worth exporting. To trot such drivel across the Atlantic Ocean, while the United States still has its lunatic asylums with numbers of patients ready and willing to do just such work, seems to me like the sorriest sort of jest. Yet "The Catch of the Season" and "Lady Madcap" have their good points.

What is possibly the best song in London this season occurs in "Lady Madcap." It is sung by Maurice Farkoa, and is called "I Love You in Velvet." It has pretty music, clever words and much "catchiness," and it is so admirably and artistically sung that it redeemed the musical comedy itself, and made it quite endurable.

The star of the performance is J. P. Huntley, a prime London favorite and one who has been very well received in New York. Huntley, like a good many other comedians, is far more useful for flavoring purposes than for a steady diet. There was such a dose of him in "Lady Madcap" that he grew to be a terrible bore. This young actor is to leave the George Edwardes forces and go to the Shubert Brothers, and I can't help wondering which of the two parties will get tired first. I have my own ideas on the subject, but perhaps it would be advisable not to express them.

So barren is this London season that I have not been able to formulate my plan of dealing with it—you may have guessed as much! There is nothing to wax enthusiastic over, and no one performance that remains, luminous, in the mind. At the New Theater—and isn't that an absurd title for a playhouse, that, with its actors and audiences, is aging daily?—they are playing "Leah Kleschna," which Mr. Frohman advertises in the New York manner by a catchline from Mr. Walkley's criticism in the London *Times*: "It hits you bang in the eye"—or something equally pretty and graphic. I am not at all sure that it does anything of the sort. It is not looked upon as an epoch-maker, and it lacks the charm of oddity and mystery that was given to it in New York by Mrs. Fiske herself.

We all thought when we saw "Leah Kleschna" at the Manhattan Theater that Mrs. Fiske played a non-star part, and subordinated herself to the others. Let me tell you, however, most emphatically, after having seen "Leah Kleschna" twice in New York and once in London, that Mrs. Fiske herself is its mainstay. She is absolutely its very backbone. Without her, at the New Theater, the piece is but a gloomy melodrama, and as such it is received by the London public. Be quite sure of that. Of course the play itself *is* cheap, but it masquerades somewhat successfully under the guise of a study in criminology—and all that sort of thing. In New York Mrs. Fiske, by her eccentricities, and various little intellectualities that you recall when you see Miss Lena Ashwell's tame and bloodless performance in London, helped the illusion. She never quite allowed you to believe that "Leah Kleschna" was outside of her own répertoire of peculiarities.

The play is extremely well acted in London by everybody but Miss Ashwell. She is a weak imitation of Mrs. Fiske's many bad points—notably her indistinctness of diction. Probably Miss Ashwell never saw Mrs. Fiske in all her life, but Mr. Dion Boucicault, who staged the play in London, must have watched Mrs. Fiske attentively, and have given Miss Ashwell full particulars. At times it was quite ludicrous to listen to the English actress positively affecting the American actress' most lamentable demerit. She bit up her words, emitted the fragments in a frenzied torrent, sank her voice at critical moments, and did all that Mrs. Fiske has been implored *not* to do.

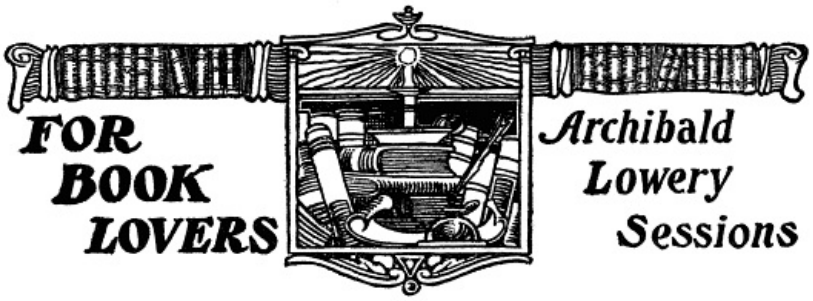
Charles Warner, who played the father, threw himself successfully at the part, but forced us to recall his long continuous service in "Drink." Occasionally *Kleschna* seemed to have "jim-jams," and one could not dissociate Mr. Warner from his well-known, world-played performance. Herbert Waring played *Raoul* extremely well, but the *Schram* of William Devereaux is not to be compared with the capital interpretation given to the part by William B. Mack in New York. All that Mr. Frohman could do for "Leah Kleschna" he did, but the piece needed Mrs. Fiske. Without her it is of little importance—a sort of old Adelphi play in kid gloves.

A piece that seems to have eluded the "American invasion" is "Mr. Hopkinson," which has been running for months at Wyndham's Theater. It is the work of Mr. R. C. Carton, who was responsible, as you may remember, for "The Rich Mrs. Repton," which ran for three nights or so in New York last season. Perhaps the "American invasion" remembered that, for if nothing succeeds like success, certainly nothing fails like failure.

"Mr. Hopkinson," however, would scarcely be possible for American consumption. Its hero is a cockney cad, who would hardly be intelligible in New York. New York has its own brand of cad—a highly accentuated kind—and should not be blamed for shirking the notion of fathoming the motives of the English style of blackguard. Then the part of *Hopkinson* is played by Mr. James Welch, for whom it might have been built. I can imagine no other actor playing it, with the possible exception of Francis Wilson. The piece has simply hung onto the coat tails of little Mr. James Welch.

It is a farce filled with nasty types—all titled, of course. People who nauseate, if taken seriously, are used as the excuse for various farcical situations. *Hopkinson* himself, who is a rich "bounder," becomes engaged to a pretty society girl, and on the eve of the wedding she elopes. The "hero" then marries a woman whom he has jilted, and who, in her turn, has blackmailed him. Nearly all the characters in the piece are of the decadent order. They are the sort that occur seriously in "The Walls of Jericho," at the Garrick Theater. They are, perhaps, better there, but quite unnecessary anywhere, and even improper.

"Mr. Hopkinson" has puzzled a good many people who saw it. They have wondered why it ran so long, and what there was in the piece that held it up, so to speak. Its success was simply due to James Welch, a quaint, freakish little actor—a sort of Louie Freear in trousers. Many plays of the same slight artistic value have succeeded because one actor has seemed to give a new wrinkle in comedy to the public. "Mr. Hopkinson" without James Welch would be a singularly risky proposition—worse than "Leah Kleschna" without Mrs. Fiske. Evidently the "American invasion" agreed with me—which makes it pleasant for me, don't you think?



Literary preferences of well known people. How characters and doings in real life are reflected in fiction. Robert Grant's "The Orchid," William J. Locke's "The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne." The twenty-five best selling books of the month

THE public has passed a few pleasant summer hours in discussing, through the medium of various journals, what people like to read. Very interesting information comes to light regarding the sort of fiction preferred by different personalities, female chiefly, in days past and present. There seems to be no difficulty in getting hold of facts; indeed, it becomes apparently a sort of mania with some successful people to explain their own results by hunting up their early literary likes and dislikes. Perhaps stories have molded some of us more or less—in all conscience let us hope so—since we wander in such a wilderness of them.

But, really, the serious thing to be considered just now is not so much what we like to read as what we have to, if we want to be amused. For that which we write depends upon that which we are, of course, and we reap in fiction what we sow in society. Therefore, being rather commercial, rather frivolous and rather in search of new sensations, we get all our business, and small talk, and scandal back again, faithfully reproduced, from the book sellers' counters, and must go all over it once more with as good a grace as may be.

If taste and idealism are to prevail over hard facts, somebody must see pretty strenuously to it, ere long. In the meantime we may as well settle down to a thoroughly American literary atmosphere, relieved here and there by bits of nebulous romancing which pass for idealistic production. We really don't object. We love ourselves too well to want company. Anthony Trolloppe, and Miss Yonge, and Mrs. Oliphant, William Black and Thomas Hardy could introduce us to scores of pleasant English people, but their heroes and heroines belong to a different world altogether, and are laid on the shelf nowadays, probably never to be taken up by the mass of readers except as refreshing antiquities when American repetition finally palls on us. The best we can do for an occasional let-up is to hunt up odd people or places, now and then, and write them up. Let us hope the supply will remain inexhaustible, and that the batch of novels for this season may give us a view of life outside of prescribed limits.

"The Orchid," by Robert Grant, Scribner's, might be an authentic biography of a twentieth-century society woman, including a faithful delineation of her environment. It is not, strictly speaking, a study of character or society, but rather a photographic reproduction of people and conditions. In this fact is to be found the book's only defect as a literary work. There is no weighing of motives or analysis of character; nothing but a plain recital of facts as they are found to exist.

Lydia Arnold, who marries for money, is divorced, and remarries for love, is cold-blooded and unscrupulous as many a social queen in real life; and her device for securing the means to support her position as the wife of her lover, revolting as it is to sensitive people, is not entirely unprecedented. It may be that the type to which she belongs is an extreme one, but the fact that she shocked her friends and associates indicates that they had not entirely outgrown their natural impulses rather than that her enormities are absolutely unknown.

We can understand the pessimism of Mrs. Andrew Cunningham when she exclaimed: "The only unpardonable sin in this country is to lose one's money. Nothing else counts," but the facts thus far do not justify it; there are some former leaders of society who may be supposed to wish that the generalization were true. They have not found it so.

"Wall Street" has a significance, not merely as the name of a famous thoroughfare, but as epitomizing the forces which produce the profoundest effects upon the industrial and even political and social life of America. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that the activities which it represents should be resorted to for a supply of material for interesting stories.

The latest fiction on this subject is Edwin Lefevre's book, "The Golden Flood," published by McClure, Phillips & Co. The author, who has to his credit quite a list of short Wall Street stories, is thoroughly familiar with his ground, and possesses, besides, a genuine gift of story-telling. "The Golden Flood" may possibly be criticised as dealing with a somewhat impossible theme—an attempt to corner the gold supply; but the description of the manner in which it affects "the richest man in the world" is so absorbingly interesting that probabilities are forgotten. The mixture of innocence and guile in young Mr. Grinnell, assumed for the purpose of mystifying Mellen and Dawson, is a good bit of character drawing. But, though these men in the story were worked up to the point of believing that Grinnell practised alchemy, it is doubtful if their prototypes in real life could be so affected. The explanation, however, turns out to be a practical one, and it is so timed as to sustain the interest to the end.

Unquestionably the best short stories of American politics so far published are those by Elliott Flower in a volume entitled “Slaves of Success,” L. C. Page & Co. There are eight of them, a connected series in which John Wade and Ben Carroll are the chief actors.

Wade and Carroll represent two types of the political boss. The former is described as “politically unscrupulous, but personally honest”—a combination sometimes found; “Carroll, on the other hand, used politics for his pecuniary advantage;” he worked for his pocket all the time.

The two men personally had little love for each other, but as each controlled a part of the political machine, they were obliged to work together in order to produce results. Their methods of manipulating the machine, however, were not essentially different; if Wade had scruples about offering a man money, yet he would, for a political advantage, let him steal from others or from the State; and his willingness to practise blackmail to compass his own election to the Senate was what finally put an end to his career.

Carroll was disposed of at last also, but his downfall was due to a grossly covetous disposition.

The stories give a very convincing series of pictures of municipal and State politics; the incidents are all of them more or less familiar, but they are all of them extremely interesting, and the narrative is considerably enlivened by the introduction into it of a rather original character for a State legislature, Azro Craig, a man who is not only scrupulously honest, but has not the slightest hesitation in voting and speaking as he thinks. 158

A somewhat striking story, though one which, it is to be feared, is unlikely to attain a very wide popularity, is Evelyn Underhill’s “The Gray World,” Century Company. It is, to all intents and purposes, a study in spiritual development, the experiences of a soul in search of the beautiful, and disguised—unconsciously, of course—in minor respects, it is substantially indentical with Hawthorne’s “Artist of the Beautiful.”

There is in both the consciousness, vague at first, of a spiritual end to be achieved, and the struggle toward it, the depression and hopeless sense of defeat after each encounter with the material, and finally the successful climax of endeavor which sees, with a cheerful appreciation of true values, the obliteration of the physical means by which it has been reached. The spirit of the slum child after its plunge into the gray world, and its reincarnation in Willie Hopkinson, traveled the same road as that trod by Owen Warland. Both had to undergo this same pitying contempt on the part of their sensible friends and acquaintances, by whom they were mourned as men of promise who wasted their opportunities.

But if Owen Warland was isolated from human companionship, Willie Hopkinson had at least one comprehending friend in Hester Waring, who helped toward his final enlightenment. “She knew very well that he was one of her company; made for quiet journeyings, not for that frenzied rush to catch a hypothetical train, which is called the strenuous life.”

Because the company is so small, the story will probably be understood and enjoyed by but few; and that it is made the means of teaching a lesson, hard to learn, will be another reason for its lack of popularity. Nevertheless, it is a book that ought to be read.

What is essentially characteristic of George Barr McCutcheon’s stories, is his disregard of conventional methods in his selection of material for his plots. This is true of his Graustark stories—though some captious critics profess to see in them a similarity to Anthony Hope’s work—and the same quality is found in “The Day of the Dog.”

His latest book is “The Purple Parasol,” Dodd, Mead & Co., and it furnishes the same sort of more or less fantastic entertainment that distinguishes the author’s other stories. Few people, we imagine, would be likely to select, a purple parasol as a clew by means of which to track an eloping wife; it seems a little incongruous that a woman, in arranging an elopement, should include such an article among her effects. A purple parasol is not a necessity on such a trip, and, besides, it is apt to be conspicuous.

But Mrs. Wharton did take one, and, as luck would have it, Helen Dering also had one; therefore it is not to be wondered at that Sam Rossiter made the mistake that he did. Though his blunder was the cause of considerable unhappiness to him and some humiliation for Miss Dering, the explanations, when they came, were of the most satisfying kind.

The book is handsomely illustrated in colors by Harrison Fisher, and decorated by Charles B. Falls.

Alaska is a region of which much has been written in the last six or eight years, since the opening of the Klondike, but the literature on the subject, having been confined mostly to newspaper accounts of gold discoveries and the stories of Mr. Jack London and Mr. Rex E. Beach, has not been such as to impart a very wide variety of information upon important points.

A book which the publishers announce as the first “to deal in any adequate way with our great Arctic possession,” is John S. McLain’s “Alaska and the Klondike,” McClure, Phillips & Co. Mr. McLain accompanied the sub-committee of the Senate Committee on Territories on their visit to Alaska in 1903, and, of course, had unusual opportunities to gather interesting facts. 159

The trip was a comprehensive one, and the result, now embodied in this book, shows that its author lost no chances to observe and record important and more or less unfamiliar matters that will entertain as well as instruct his readers.

The book is written in a natural, unpretentious, flowing style, and the material is skillfully handled so as to concentrate the attention and stimulate the imagination. Besides this, there are a great many half-tone reproductions of photographs, which help to make the narrative more graphic.

"Miss Bellard's Inspiration," Harper's, is William D. Howells' latest story. It is one which, if it could be subjected to the right kind of adaptation, would make a successful and refreshing little comedy. For, in spite of the shadow which Mrs. Mevison casts over the tale, the very human qualities of Mr. and Mrs. Crombie and the self-communings of Miss Bellard, the results of which neutralize the British directness of Edmund Craybourne, make a delicious combination with Mr. Howells' good-natured cynicism, which, indeed, is so good-natured as to be humor rather that cynicism.

The story is rather a slight one, too slight, in fact, to be called a novel; it is one which can be read in the course of a couple of hours and with fully sustained interest to the end, when Miss Bellard explains and acts upon her inspiration. She supplies all the novelty in the story; she is by no means a commonplace character. Her manner of falling in love, her reasons for breaking her engagement with Craybourne, and the inspiration which led to its reinstatement are not what might be expected by the veteran novel reader. But she is vindicated in the end by the fact that she is a woman, and a beautiful woman.

Mrs. Crombie plays her part with a good deal of sprightliness and adds not a little to the humor of the story. Her rather fierce rebellion at the idea of being imposed upon by her niece and her subsequent abject surrender are all very funny, the more so because she has no idea of being funny.

It seems a long time—possibly it isn't really—- since a story of adventure, so thoroughly good as "Terence O'Rourke, Gentleman Adventurer," has appeared. It is written by Louis Joseph Vance and published by A. Wessells Company.

It is, of course, crammed full of action, one episode following the other in quick succession without tiresome descriptions or unnecessarily prolonged introductions; episodes that are fresh, vivid and full of color as different as possible from the hackneyed type that has been familiar for years. But the love interest has not been neglected. It is a very pretty story of the loyalty of the light-hearted Irishman, the thread of which runs through the whole book, its climax being reserved as the hero's reward at the end.

As the central figure in the series of adventures described is O'Rourke, so the most conspicuously meritorious piece of literary work is the delineation of his character. It cannot, of course, be called a character study, inasmuch as the author's obvious intention in writing the tale, was to create complications for his hero to overcome rather than to solve questions of psychology. But he has, nevertheless, presented in the person of "the O'Rourke of Castle O'Rourke," a clean, generous, whole-souled Irish gentleman, one of a type that is always lovable.

The title of William J. Locke's novel, "The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne," John Lane, is somewhat misleading, for there is nothing in the book to show that the character of Sir Marcus could be made the subject of serious criticism. His aunt's grim disapproval and ready suspicion of him may fairly be attributed to causes quite foreign to the question of his thorough respectability. It may be, however, that the reference in the title is, not to his personal morals, but to his "History of Renaissance Morals," upon which he was engaged.

He was considered by his superiors steady enough to be a good schoolmaster, and his accession to the family title does not seem to have marked any material change in his personal habits, although the sudden appearance of Carlotta was a disturbing influence in his life, as it might be in that of the most sedate among us. Carlotta's introduction is somewhat unusual, if not improbable, but it is to be remembered that a bright, attractive English girl, most of whose life has been spent in a Turkish harem, cannot be expected to conform, all at once, to English standards of conventionality.

Ordeyne's tribulations, growing out of his enforced guardianship of this extraordinary young woman, may be easily understood, but will hardly be considered a reason for condoling or sympathizing with him.

The end of his "extravagant adventure" is obvious enough. It is, in fact, the only logical conclusion under the circumstances. Naturally Judith and Aunt Jessica disapproved, though for widely different reasons.

Mr. F. Hopkinson Smith has done us all a service in his volume of short stories to which he has given the name "At Close Range," published by Scribner's. One of the principal charms of these stories lies in the unpretentiousness of them; they are modest little tales about modest people; people who sometimes seem to have little tenderness or generosity about them, but who, after all, confirm the author's theory "that at the bottom of every heart crucible choked with life's cinders there can almost always be found a drop of gold."

Each one of the stories has just the one touch of nature that always makes its appeal irresistible. Steve Dodd, Sam Makin, Jack Stirling and Captain Shortrode are common enough characters, and of a type from which not much is usually looked for except the energetic pursuit of business, but under the proper stimulus they show traits and impulses similar to those of the Dear Old Lady.

The Twenty-five Best Selling Books of the Month.

“The Marriage of William Ashe,” Mrs. Humphry Ward, Harper & Bros.
“The Orchid,” Robert Grant, Chas. Scribner’s Sons.
“The Accomplice,” Frederick Trevor Hill, Harper & Bros.
“At the Sign of the Fox,” by the author of “The Garden of a Commuter’s Wife,” Macmillan Co.
“A Dark Lantern,” Elizabeth Robins, Macmillan Co.
“The Missourian,” Eugene P. Lyle, Doubleday, Page & Co.
“Constance Trescott,” Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, Century Co.
“The Clansman,” Thomas Dixon, Doubleday, Page & Co.
“Sandy,” Alice Hegan Rice, Century Co.
“The Beautiful Lady,” Booth Tarkington, McClure, Phillips & Co.
“Mrs. Essington,” Esther and Lucia Chamberlain, Century Co.
“Pam,” Bettina von Hutten, Dodd, Mead & Co.
“The Princess Passes,” C. N. and A. M. Williamson, Henry Holt & Co.
“The Purple Parasol,” George B. McCutcheon, Dodd, Mead & Co.
“The Divine Fire,” May Sinclair, Henry Holt & 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 MacGrath, Bobbs-Merrill Co.
“The Master Mummer,” E. Phillips Oppenheim, Little, Brown & Co.
“The Plum Tree,” David Graham Phillips, Bobbs-Merrill Co.
“Terence O’Rourke,” Louis Joseph Vance, A. Wessells Co.
“The Memoirs of an American Citizen,” Robert Herrick, Macmillan Co.
“The Breath of the Gods,” Sidney McCall. Little, Brown & Co.
“The Image in the Sand,” E. F. Benson, J. B. Lippincott Co.
“The Great Mogul,” Louis Tracy, E. J. Clode & 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.

Some text in double-quotation marks contains double-quotation text within single-quotation text.

In articles beginning with a quotation, the publisher omitted the opening quotation mark.

Page 35: "We maun run for it!" was printed that way.

Page 67: Missing closing single quote added after "and my laundress."

Page 91: "morever" may be a misprint for "moreover".

Page 102: Missing closing single quote in the phrase beginning "'more life, fuller life" not remedied because the proper position is uncertain.

Page 119: An opening double quotation mark is missing before "She held up the decoys", or a closing double quotation mark is missing at the end of the quotation just before it.

Page 143: "And Huldah went" was printed that way, not as "Aunt Huldah went."

Page 152: "Capus in French is always exhilarating" was printed as "in always" and has been changed here.

Page 158: "indentical" may be a misprint for "identical".

Page 156: The introduction to "For Book Lovers" ends abruptly after the word "month".

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